



**FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT**

**PART 1 OF 1**

**BUFILE NUMBER: 100-157464**

*Hydrogaster fil.*

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Military Intelligence Service  
Washington

NOV 2 1942

Subject: Letter of Transmittal.  
To: Lt. Col. J. Edgar Hoover  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Department of Justice

The attached communications are forwarded for your information and such action as you consider advisable.

For the Chief, Military Intelligence Service:

*John T. Bissell*  
J. T. BISSELL  
Colonel, General Staff,  
Asst. Executive Officer, M. I. S.

Enclosures:

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED  
ON JAN 6 1988  
BY: CCR USAINSCOM/FOI/O  
AUTH: PWS 1603 DoD 5200.1-E

*Declassified  
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100-157464-1

October 13th 1942

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover  
Director  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I beg to call to your attention books by one Richard Wright designed to stir racial dissension in America confining my charges to one entitled "12,000,000 Black Voices". Its entire contents are designed to destroy the morale of an important percent of American citizens under call to the armed forces of the United States; In particular I refer to page 143 in which Japan is held up as the possible saviour of the colored race, this by inference plays directly into the hands of our enemies in arms, therefore constituting a treasonable utterance in time of war.

This publication has had a large circulation among colored people and other enemies within the United States; Responsible for serious violations of law and order in all parts of the Country, especially where there are large colored populations.

Material of this character in the hands of designing persons can lead to many forms of sabotage and result in a general breakdown of morale bound to corrupt be used to ~~corrupt~~ national unity so necessary in an all out "win the War" effort by America and her allies.

Two other books by this writer are equally dangerous to national welfare the names of which I will gladly supply upon request from your office.

In addition to the books, this ties in with one of the most dangerous appeals to racial dissension, of alien origin, being used by subversive forces at work in America.

Very truly yours

LEAGUE

OCT 14 1942

RECEIVED

David P. Harbo

215 East 17th Street,

New York, N.Y.

To: SAC, New York

Subject: **RICHARD WRIGHT**  
**INTERNAL SECURITY - SEDITION**

b7c

If your inquiry develops information of an affirmative nature, you should of course cause an investigation to be undertaken as to subject's background, inclinations, and current activities.

Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_ COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_ MAILED 10  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_ ★ DEC 10 1942 P.M.  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Kramer \_\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
Mr. McGuire \_\_\_\_\_ U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP1812/luc

b7c



# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

NY FILE NO. **100-41574 JMG**

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK, NEW YORK</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2-9-43</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2-2, 3, 5, 11-43</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>b7c</b></span>
TITLE  <b>RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>INTERNAL SECURITY SEDITION</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Subject born in Hatches, Mississippi, 1909, and at age of 15 ran away from orphan asylum and then bummed his way throughout the country. Subject employed by WPA from 1-3-38 to 5-17-39. Subject the author of "Native Son", a novel which was later adapted into a play by same name, and this play was included in "The Best Plays of 1940 and 1941". Information regarding subject's book, "Twelve Million Black Voices" set out.

AGENCY 100-41574  
REQ. REC'D 2-10-43  
REP'T FORW. 2-10-43  
BY [Signature]

- C -

**REFERENCE:** (Bureau File Number 100-157464)  
Bureau Letter to New York dated December 9, 1942.

**DETAILS:** A review of the indices of the Public Library of New York City, located at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street, reflected that the subject's true name is **RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT** and that he was born in 1909. The indices also reflected that the subject wrote the following books: "Fire and Cloud", "Twelve Million Black Voices", "Native Son", and "Uncle Tom's Children".

Mr. M. B. TOLSON, in the 1939 issue of the "Modern Quarterly", Volume Eleven, Number Five, in reviewing the works of the subject, stated that **RICHARD WRIGHT** was born "on a broken down plantation near Hatches, Mississippi, a State which leads the Union in illiteracy, Christianity and mobocracy. His family travelled from town to town like grub-worms. His father got tired of his poverty-ravaged household and deserted the family. Paralysis struck his mother down and he entered an orphan asylum but ran off at fifteen. In Memphis he haunted Beale Street and later he bummed his way all over the country, fighting, stealing, lying. He'd reached only the eighth grade in school. Somewhere

APPROVED AND FORWARDED [Signature] SPECIAL AGENT

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**COPIES OF THIS REPORT**

- ⑤ - Bureau
- 1 - Capt. R. C. MacFall, ONI
- 1 - Col. S. V. Constant, G-2
- 2 - New York

**100-157464-2**

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DATE 6-25-81 BY [Signature]

NY 100-41674

along the gutted road it dawned upon him that he needed an education. And then, whether digging ditches or clerking in the post office, he devoured the contents of newspapers and magazines as well as books that came his way."

[REDACTED] advised the writer that the subject had been employed by the WPA on a Federal Writers' Project from January 3, 1938, to May 17, 1939, when he resigned to accept private employment. At this time subject was residing at 809 Saint Nicholas Avenue, New York City.

"The Best Plays of 1940 and 1941" by BURNS MANTLE included the subject's play, "Native Son", which was produced from the subject's novel by the same name.

Mr. BROOKS ATKINSON in the New York Times had the following to say about the subject's play, "Native Son": "In the drama Mr. GREEN and Mr. WRIGHT work in a more objective style. Without the subjective background their defense of Bigger Thomas's ghastly crime in the court scene sounds like generalized pleading. It lacks the stinging enlightenment of the last third of Mr. WRIGHT's novel. But that completes this column's bill of exceptions to the biggest American drama of the season."

The novel, "Twelve Million Black Voices", which was written by the subject, was published by the Viking Press in New York City in October, 1941, and this book is divided into four parts: (1) Our Strange Birth; (2) Inheritors of Slavery; (3) Death on the City Pavements; and (4) Men in the Making. In the foreword, Mr. WRIGHT states "while this novel purports to render a broad picture of the processes of negro life in the United States, intentionally it does not include in its considerations those areas of negro life which comprise the so-called 'talented tenth' or the isolated islands of mulatto leadership which are still to be found in many parts of the South or the growing and influential negro middle class professional and business men of the North who have, for the past twenty years or more, formed a sort of liaison corps between the whites and the blacks".

The reference letter reflected that on Page 143 of the above-mentioned novel, there was material that appeared to be seditious in nature; and for the benefit of the Bureau, the above-mentioned page is being quoted in full:

"There are millions of us and we are moving in all directions. All our lives we have been catapulted into arenas where, had we thought consciously of invading them, we would have hung back. A sense of constant change has stolen silently into our lives and has become operative in our personalities as a law of living.



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"There are some of us who feel our hurts so deeply that we find it impossible to work with whites; we feel that it is futile to hope or dream in terms of American life. Our distrust is so great that we form intensely racial and nationalistic organizations and advocate the establishment of a separate state, a forty-ninth state, in which we black folk would live.

"There are even today among us groups that forlornly plan a return to Africa."

"There are others of us who feel the need of the protection of a strong nation so keenly that we admire the harsh and imperialistic policies of Japan and ardently hope that the Japanese will assume the leadership of the 'darker races'.

"As our consciousness changes, as we come of age, as we shed our folk swaddling clothes, so run our lives in a hundred directions.

"Today, all of us black folk are not poor. A few of us have money. We make it as the white folk make theirs, but our money-making is restricted to our own people. Many of us black folk have managed to send our children to school, and a few of our children are now professional and business men whose standards of living approximate those of middle-class whites. Some of us own small businesses; others devote their lives to law and medicine.

"But the majority of us still toil on the plantations, work in heavy industry, and labor in the kitchens of the Lords of the Land and the Bosses of the Buildings.

"The general dislocation of life during the depression caused many white workers to learn through chronic privation that they could not protect their standard of living so long as we blacks were excluded from their unions. Many hundreds of thousands of them found that they could not fight successfully for increased wages and union recognition unless we stood shoulder to shoulder with them. As a consequence, many of us have recently become members of steel, automobile, packing and tobacco unions."

The following quotations are found on Page 146 of the same book and is the last page of the novel:

"The differences between black folk and white folk are not blood or color, and the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us. The common road of hope which we all have travelled has brought us into a stronger kinship than any words, laws or legal claims."

"What do we black folk want? We want what others have, the right to share in the upward march of American life, the only life we remember or have



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ever known. The Lord of the Land say: "We will not grant this!" We answer: "We ask you to grant us nothing. We are winning our heritage though our toll in suffering is great!" The Bosses of the Buildings say: "Your problem is beyond solution!" We answer: "Our problem is being solved. We are crossing the line you dared us to cross though we pay in the coin of death!"

"The seasons of the plantation no longer dictate the lives of many of us; hundreds of thousands of us are moving into the sphere of conscious history."

"We are with the new tide. We stand at the crossroads. We watch each new procession. The hot wires carrying urgent appeals. Print compels us. Voices are speaking. Men are moving! And we shall be with them."

- CLOSED -

NY 100-41574

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANT

Special Agent [REDACTED] as mentioned in the report of  
New York, New York, dated February 9, 1943.  
is [REDACTED]

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b7c  
b7D

## b7c

FC

Director, FBI

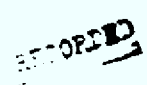
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In reference to Bureau letter of January 20, 1943, (Bureau file 100-157464) requesting the status of the above entitled matter, this is to advise this case has been reassigned and placed in line for immediate investigation.

*E. E. Conroy*  
E. E. CONROY  
SAC

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/lee

153 AUG 10 1950



**b7c**

**Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
New York, New York**

Mr. Tolson	_____
Mr. E. A. Tamm	_____
Mr. Clegg	_____
Mr. Glavin	_____
Mr. Ladd	_____
Mr. Nichols	_____
Mr. Rosen	_____
Mr. Tracy	_____
Mr. Carson	_____
Mr. Coffey	_____
Mr. Hendon	_____
Mr. Kramer	_____
Mr. McGuire	_____
Mr. Quinn Tamm	_____
Mr. Nease	_____
Miss Gandy	_____
File	_____

**FCB**  
100-41674

April 21, 1943

Director, F.B.I.

**RE: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
CUSTODIAL DETENTION (C)  
SEDITION**

Dear Sir:

There are being transmitted herewith the original and one copy of the report of [REDACTED] dated April 18, 1943, setting out information concerning the captioned individual.

An investigation of the activities of this individual is presently being conducted by the New York Office and an investigative report setting out the results of this investigation will be submitted to the Bureau in the near future.

Two copies of [REDACTED] report are being retained in the appropriate files of the New York Office for information purposes.

Very truly yours,

*E. E. Conroy*  
**E. E. CONROY**  
SAC

*2-2-77*  
*2040*  
*9-9-77*

Enclosures

cc: NY File #65-10519

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16 AUG 18 1960

RECORDED & INDEXED

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XXXXXX  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXXFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

1 Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

- ☒ Deleted under exemption(s) b2, b7D with no segregable material available for release to you.
- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.
- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- ☐ Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) \_\_\_\_\_, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

\_\_\_\_\_ Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies); \_\_\_\_\_ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

\_\_\_\_\_ Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:  
100-157464-4 enclosure

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X NO DUPLICATION FEE X  
X FOR THIS PAGE X  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

NY FILE NO. **100-41674** **JK**

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK CITY</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>5/28/43</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2/17, 3/1, 4/10, 5/6, 7/43</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED] b7c</b>
TITLE <b>RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>CUSTODIAL DETENTION - C SEDITION</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

**RICHARD WRIGHT**, popular negro writer and former reporter on Daily Worker, according to an article in Daily Worker on 4/13/41 by **RALPH WARNER**, is a Communist. Other articles in the Worker indicate **WRIGHT's** Communistic tendencies. He himself in so many words admits his affiliation.

**[REDACTED]** Selective Service classification 3- A.

- C -

**REFERENCE:**

Bureau file 100-157464.

Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** dated February 9, 1943 at New York City.

**DETAILS:**

**AT NEW YORK.**

Inasmuch as a review of **RICHARD WRIGHT's** writings indicate he is at least a fellow traveller if not a member of the Communist Party, additional inquiry has been made and is being set out below.

With reference to the reference report where certain sections of **WRIGHT's** novel "Twelve Million Black Voices"

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <b>[Signature]</b> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 5 - Bureau 1 - Capt. R.C. MacFall, ONI 1 - Col. S.V. Constant, G-2 3 - New York.	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <b>15 MAY 21 1943</b>  <b>[REDACTED]</b> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> <b>RECORDED</b>  <b>INDEXED</b>  <b>EX - 32</b> </div> </div>

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NY file  
100-41674

were set out as possibly falling within the violation of the sedition statute, a brief review of this book does not indicate that any other portion of the novel is of an sedition nature.

"Twelve Million Black Voices" is a fictitious story of the social conditions of the Negro in the United States from the first slave days to the present in which he discusses the progress of the Negro.

WRIGHT was also the author of the popular novel "Native Son" and when questioned by writers and critics why he created such a character as "Bigger", he explained same in an article which was published in "The Saturday Review" of June 1, 1940, page 18. He discussed pro and con what prompted him to write such a novel and to create such a character as "Bigger" from which, among other things, is taken the following excerpt:

"Another thought kept me from writing. What would my own white and black comrades in the Communist Party say."

From such a published statement, one would assume WRIGHT to be a member of the Party or at least a fellow traveller.

The American-Journal, New York daily newspaper of February 15, 1943 states that RICHARD WRIGHT was a former reporter on the Daily Worker. WRIGHT's picture appears in the "Negroes and the War", published and distributed by the Office of War Information.

The files of the New York office also reflect that RICHARD WRIGHT's name appears on the "Committee to Free Earl Browder", which list was published in the People's Voice, a New York Negro weekly newspaper issued March 21, 1942.

[REDACTED] advised that on March 6, 1942 WRIGHT's name appeared on the "American Committee to Save Refugees," and on September 18, 1942 was listed as one of the officers of the League of American Writers, advocating a second front in Europe.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



NY file  
100-41674

[REDACTED] b2 b7D

[REDACTED] b2 b7D

It is noted that WRIGHT's name appeared frequently in the Daily Worker during 1941 and 1942. In an issue dated February 25, 1941, page 4, column 1, it is noted that RICHARD WRIGHT was listed along with EARL BROWDER, BEN GOLD and JOE WIRTH as one of the speakers at which time the Daily Worker celebrated MIKE GOLD's 25th anniversary, in the labor movement.

In an issue dated February 28, 1941 WRIGHT was listed as one of the writers who would greet THEODORE DREISER at a testimonial luncheon attended March 1, 1941 at the Commodore Hotel under the auspices of the American Council on Soviet Relations. Others to be present were JESSICA SMITH, editor of "Soviet Russia Today", CLIFFORD ORETS, Dr. JOHN A. KINGSBURY and others.

In an issue of March 19, 1941, page 5, column 7, WRIGHT greeted WILLIAM Z. FOSTER, National Chairman of the Communist Party on his 60th Birthday.

In an issue dated March 22, 1941 WRIGHT along with RUTH MCKENNEY, was reported to have accepted to serve on the Board of Honorary Chairmen of the May Day Committee.

In an issue of April 5, 1941, page 7, column 2, RICHARD WRIGHT's name appeared with other writers in what was known as the "Call to the 4th Congress of the League of America" to be held in New York City on June 6 and 8, 1941 to discuss how best writers can resist the trend toward war, what to do to restore the WPA and what to do in defense of culture.

In an issue dated April 13, 1941, the Sunday Worker, page 7, column 1, RALPH WARNER discussed the play "Native Son" and among other things admits that "Max", one of the characters in the play is symbolic of a Communist. "However, that nowhere in the play is he called a Communist but he is clearly a sympathiser." WARNER states however, that RICHARD WRIGHT is a Communist and the conception of Max and of his entire play is.

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In an issue of April 21, 1941, page 1, there is an editorial which speaks about WRIGHT's stirring condemnation of the imprisonment of EARL BROWDER and of a long forward by JAMES W. FORD contained in WRIGHT's "Bright the Morning Star", a short story in pamphlet form printed by the International Publishers. FORD highly endorsed WRIGHT and the article also pertains to a part of a letter to the International Publishers by WRIGHT in which he says he wants no royalty for this work and those that are received are to accrue to the "Earl Browder Defense Fund."

In an issue dated June 9, 1941, page 1, WRIGHT's name appears among those of the Writers Congress who adopted a firm anti-war program.

In an issue dated July 24, 1941, page 7, column 3, it is noted that WRIGHT's name appears among the American writers who pledged full support to Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

A change of attitude of RICHARD WRIGHT and other writers is pointed out in that in early June they adopted a firm anti-war program and in July they advocated full support to the Soviet Union. Further, that Germany declared war on Russia on June 22, 1941.

In an issue dated August 18, 1941 WRIGHT appears on the Citizen's Committee to Free Earl Browder and in an issue dated August 11, 1941, page 9, WRIGHT states that HARRY BRIDGES is a friend of America and has become a symbol in America and that those who fight against him are enemies of America.

In an issue dated October 22, 1941, page 1, paragraph 1, WRIGHT's name appears as one of the members of a group of citizens calling for a release of EARL BROWDER.

On November 19, 1941, page 3, in the Sunday Worker, RICHARD WRIGHT was declared winner of the Spingarn medal for the writing of "Native Son." Also in this issue WRIGHT along with A. W. BERRY, Secretary of the Communist Party, Reverend ADAM CLAYTON FOWELL, Jr., and HORACE MARSHALL, Vice-President of the National Negro Congress, protested against police brutality and general economic conditions existent in Harlem.

In an issue dated February 13, 1942, page 7, column 4, a letter of WRIGHT's was published dealing with the controversy on music which letter is dated February 10, 1942 and begins as follows:

"Dear Comrade Sender Gerlin:"

WRIGHT complimented the Daily Worker and among other

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things states that he would like to see letters from the public on "how can recruitment of negroes to the Communist Party be increased." This letter also stated that "The Communist Party is the only political party in America vitally concerned about culture and its problems."

It is also noted that in JAMES W. FORD's book "The Negro and the Democratic Front", on page 193, FORD states that he wants to "express publically the high appreciation of our Negro comrades and Negro people for the splendid contributions of RICHARD WRIGHT, LANGSTON HUGHES and other artists and musicians of our people."

On October 14, 1942 [REDACTED] advised that RICHARD WRIGHT, a former known Communist Party member, had split with the Party because of his dissatisfaction with the way the Party handled the Negro question.

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[REDACTED]  
327 Lafayette Street, Brooklyn, furnished the following information as reflected in the files of that board concerning WRIGHT.

He advised that WRIGHT's questionnaire was returned May 9, 1941 at which time WRIGHT resided at 473 West 104th Street, New York City. However, he presently resides at 7 Middagh Street, Brooklyn, New York. On May 28, 1941 WRIGHT was placed in 3-A classification because of collateral dependents. On July 1, 1942 his collateral dependency was removed and he was placed in classification 1-A.

On July 6, 1942 he was about to be inducted into the Army and he asked for a 90 day extension, which was granted. On November 2, 1942 a continuation of this extension was granted. On November 16, 1942 he was placed in 3-A in order to permit him an opportunity to take Volunteer Candidate Training, but was subsequently rejected.

The questionnaire reflects that WRIGHT was born September 4, 1906 at Natchez, Mississippi. His education was given as eight years of elementary school. He states his employment experience is that of a novelist, playwright, poet and newspaper reporter. He did not set forth his place of employment but advised that he was engaged as a writer of political and labor news from 1937 to 1938. This might possibly be the period that he was a reporter for the Daily Worker.

WRIGHT furnished a list of his writings to the Local Board. It was noted that "Uncle Tom's Children" according to WRIGHT was written by him and was later translated into Russian by the U.S.S.R. and issued in international literature.

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His questionnaire further reflects that he was married March 10, 1941 at Coytesville, New Jersey. His dependents are given as that of his mother ELLA WRIGHT, [REDACTED] NATHAN WRIGHT, father, [REDACTED] LEON WRIGHT, brother, [REDACTED] and CLEO WRIGHT, sister-in-law at the same address. b7c

WRIGHT listed as property one house valued at \$3,000. [REDACTED] WRIGHT is divorced from his first wife, because on June 7, 1942 he listed his dependents as ELLEN WRIGHT, wife, age 29 and JULIA WRIGHT, two months, daughter, born April 12, 1942.

[REDACTED] advised that the file further reflects a letter from the Office of War Information, New York City, in which was transmitted a program as prepared for them by RICHARD WRIGHT. The records further reflected that WRIGHT has lived at the following addresses: b7c

467 Waverly Avenue, Brooklyn. (1940)

473 West 140th Street, New York City. (May 1941)

11 Revere Place, Brooklyn. (July 7, 1941)

7 Middagh Street, Brooklyn. (Present address) b7c

[REDACTED] advised that the Board's association with RICHARD WRIGHT had been very pleasant and that he had been very cooperative and prompt in his transactions with them.

A description of WRIGHT as furnished by [REDACTED] is as follows:

Age	34
Born	September 4, 1908, Natchez, Mississippi.
Height	5'7"
Weight	158 pounds
Build	Medium
Eyes	Brown
Hair	Black
Complexion	Dark
Race	Negro
Occupation	Writer
Marital status	Married
Criminal record	None
Scars or marks	None
Citizenship	American
Marital status	Married

No further investigation is being conducted and this case is considered closed. C L O S E D 17

NY file  
1674

IDENTITY OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS:

[REDACTED] mentioned in the report of Special Agent [REDACTED] dated May 28, 1943 at New York City, is a flimsy report from G-2, Governor's Island, and is being made an informant in view of the fact that the Bureau has expressed a desire not to have them mentioned in reports.

b2  
b7D  
b7C

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] who is being made an Informant in accordance with a Bureau request.

Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
New York, New York

Mr. Tolson	.....
Mr. E. A. Tamm	.....
Mr. Clegg	.....
Mr. Coffey	.....
Mr. Glavin	.....
Mr. Ladd	.....
Mr. Nichols	.....
Mr. Rosen	.....
Mr. Tracy	.....
Mr. Carson	.....
Mr. Hendon	.....
Mr. Mumford	.....
Mr. Scarke	.....
Mr. Quinn Tamm	.....
Mr. Nease	.....
Miss Gandy	.....
Files	.....

DEC  
100-41674

September 14, 1943

Director, FBI

RE: RICHARD WRIGHT  
INTERNAL SECURITY (C)  
SECURITY MATTER

Dear Sir:

Enclosed are the original and one copy of the report of [redacted] received at this office on September 10, 1943 concerning [redacted] RICHARD WRIGHT, the famed colored novelist who is considered a key figure in this office.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Copies of instant report are being placed in the appropriate New York Files.

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
AND FIELD OFFICES  
ADVISED BY ROUTING  
SLIP(S)

Very truly yours,

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E. E. CONROY  
SAC

153 AUG 20 1960



Enclosure

copy for N.Y. 65-22830

ENCLOSURE

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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/lee

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100-457460-6

SEP 17 1943

**Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
New York, New York**

Mr. Tolson	.....
Mr. E. A. Tamm	.....
Mr. Clegg	.....
Mr. Coffey	.....
Mr. Glavin	.....
Mr. Ladd	.....
Mr. Nichols	.....
Mr. Rosen	.....
Mr. Tracy	.....
Mr. Egan	.....
Mr. Gurnea	.....
Mr. Harbo	.....
Mr. Hendon	.....
Mr. Mumford	.....
Mr. Starke	.....
Mr. Quinn Tamm	.....
Mr. Nease	.....
Miss Gandy	.....

DEC  
100-41674

September 14, 1943

Director, FBI

RE: RICHARD WRIGHT  
INTERNAL SECURITY (C)  
SECURITY MATTER

Dear Sir:

Enclosed are the original and one copy of the report of [REDACTED] received by this office on September 10, 1943, concerning RICHARD WRIGHT the Colored novelist who is being considered a key figure in the New York Field Division.

[REDACTED]

Copies of instant report are being placed in the appropriate New York Files.

Very truly yours,

*E. E. Conroy*

E. E. CONROY  
SAC

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
AND FIELD OFFICES  
ADVISED BY ROUTING  
SLIP(S) 2046  
DATE 6-9-77

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100-157464-7

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

NEW YORK, N. Y.

FILE NO. 100-15433

REPORT MADE AT <b>WASHINGTON, D. C.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>6/9/44</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>5/27, 29/44</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>③ RICHARD WRIGHT</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>S - C SECURITY MATTER - C</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

[REDACTED] (c)

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
AND FIELD OFFICES  
ADVISED BY SLIP  
DATE 10-21-61

- RUC -

AGENCY 100-15433  
REC. REC'D 8-1-44  
REP'T FORW. 8-1-44  
BY [REDACTED]

**DETAILS:**

AT WASHINGTON, D. C.

[REDACTED]

A review of the indices of the Washington Field Office indicated that the person referred to [REDACTED] was undoubtedly a nationally prominent negro author by the name of RICHARD WRIGHT, who resides in New York City. It was found that numerous references to this RICHARD WRIGHT have been made in the Daily Worker over the course of years, and that information with regard to him has also been developed by the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Honorable MARTIN DIES, Chairman.

[REDACTED]

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>[Signature]</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT DESTROYED 5 - Bureau 2 - New York AUG 20 1960 2 - Washington Field		<div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">100-157414-8</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">31</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> RECORDED INDEXED INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE </div>
CLOSED EXT. BY <u>841 BT/1</u> REASON - FCIM II, 1-2.4.2 DATE OF REVIEW <u>8-25-81</u>		

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WFO #100-15433

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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 c

In view of the fact that RICHARD WRIGHT is reported to reside in New York City and inasmuch as there is no further investigation to be conducted with regard to him in Washington, D. C., the New York City office is being designated office of origin herein and this case is being considered referred upon completion to that office.

- REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO THE OFFICE OF ORIGIN -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

100-15433

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **NEW YORK, N. Y.**

NY FILE NO. **100-41674** **20**

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK, N. Y.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>7/8/44</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>5/24; 6/1-3/44</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>INTERNAL SECURITY - C</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

**KEY FIGURE**

Subject presently resides 89 Lefferts Place, Brooklyn, NY.  
Registered with SS LDB #178; classified 4F, 1/31/44.

**[REDACTED]**

AGENCY  
REC'D  
REF. FORM.  
BY

P

**REFERENCE:**

Bureau File No. 100-157464.  
Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]**  
New York City.

dated 5/28/43 at

**DETAILS:**

Although it is noted that referenced report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** was a Closing Report, in view of the fact that Subject is considered a key figure in Communist activities in the New York Field Division, this case was reopened and the activities of Subject have been followed.

**[REDACTED]**

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <b>[Signature]</b> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES <b>100-157464 9</b>
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52 JUL 20 1944 347

NY 100-41674

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[REDACTED]

b7D

It has been ascertained that the Subject presently resides at 89 Lefferts Place, Apartment C23, Brooklyn 16, New York. Inquiry in the neighborhood of his former residence, Columbia Heights, at 7 Middagh Street, Brooklyn, New York, produced no information of value to this investigation.

[REDACTED]

b2

b7D

As previously reported, Subject is registered with Selective Service Local Draft Board No. 178 and has Order No. 2025. On June 1st, 1944, Agent interviewed [REDACTED] who advised that Subject had been classified 4-F on January 31, 1944. His rejection by the armed forces on January 15, 1944 had been made with the noted reason: "psychoneurosis, severe, psychiatric rejection; referred to Local Board for further psychiatric and social investigation".

b7C

[REDACTED]

b7D

[REDACTED] b7c b7D

It appeared from Subject's contacts with his Local Board that his interest in the problem of the Negro has become almost an obsession and it was said that he apparently overlooks the fact that his own rise to success refutes many of his own statements regarding the impossibility of the Negro's improving his personal position. b7c

[REDACTED]

From all the information concerning Subject in publications and according to information from Informants in the New York Office, Subject is continuing his activities as a writer. In addition to his better known books he has also been engaged in the writing of skits and stories, most of which concern the Negro. The publicity which has been received by Subject WRIGHT is typified by the rather lengthy review of his life appearing in the volume "Current Biography, 1940" published by the H. W. Wilson Company. This volume states that RICHARD WRIGHT, Author, was born September 4, 1908 and his present address is care of HARPER & BROTHERS, 49 East 33rd Street, New York City. It refers to him as a brilliant young Negro writer whose collection of short stories "Uncle Tom's Children" won a \$500 prize competition in 1938 and whose book "Native Son" was the March, 1940 selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. Much of the article contains a review of the character and theme of that book.

The life of RICHARD WRIGHT, beginning with his birth, September 4, 1908, on a plantation 25 miles from Natchez, Mississippi, is summarized, as follows:

His father, NATHAN WRIGHT, was a mill worker and his mother, ELLEN WRIGHT, a country school teacher. The family was continually on the move so his education was very much neglected. When his mother was stricken with paralysis during the first world war, the Subject was sent to an uncle's house to live. WRIGHT is quoted as having stated that he did so much fighting, lying and school-cutting that he was sent back to his grandmother who predicted that he would end on the gallows. He was put in a 7th Day Adventist



NY 100-41674

School, taught by his aunt. At 15 he left home and went to Memphis and got a job as porter and messenger. During the subsequent years he worked his way all over the country working at any kind of job from ditch-digging to clerking in a post office. He drifted to Chicago where he had heard Negroes stood a better chance of getting jobs. He was a clerk for a while and in 1933 had a taste of politics. The review then quotes what is purportedly the Subject's own statement:

"I became an assistant precinct captain in the Republican Primary Election", he said, "I was promised a job. I didn't get it. Next time I became an assistant precinct captain for the Democrats and was promised a job, which I didn't get. So then I became a Red. Now I am what the papers refer to as a card-carrying Communist."

In 1935, WRIGHT was on the FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT in Chicago and had sold paper articles and some stories to the magazines. He came to New York in 1937 where he again got on the WRITERS' PROJECT. He wrote an essay on Harlem in the "New York Panorama". He also did some work on the "Daily Worker" and became a contributing editor of the "New Masses". In 1939, WRIGHT reportedly got a Guggenheim fellowship which enabled him to quit the Project and complete his novel "Native Son". He lived for some months during 1940 in Mexico but returned to the United States in November of 1940.

[REDACTED] b7E

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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NY 100-41674

UNDEVELOPED LEADS

NEW YORK FIELD DIVISION

At New York, N. Y. - Will follow and report  
activities of Subject.

NY 100-41674

IDENTITY OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANT

In the report of Special Agent [REDACTED]  
dated July 8, 1944 at New York, N. Y., the Confidential Informant is as  
follows:

[REDACTED]

A temporary informant symbol is used to further  
conceal the identity of this Informant. [REDACTED]

b7c

b2, b7c



**Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice**



IN REPLY, PLEASE REFER TO  
FILE NO. 100-241674

AHD

June 28, 1944

Director, FBI

**RICHARD WRIGHT**  
RE: **SECURITY MATTER**  
**INTERNAL SECURITY - C**

Dear Sir:

It is recommended that a Security Index card be prepared relative to the individual named below:

Name: **RICHARD WRIGHT**  
Aliases:

Residence Address: **89 Lefferts Place, Apartment C-23  
Brooklyn 16, New York**

Business Address: **None**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native Born	<input type="checkbox"/> Alien	<input type="checkbox"/> Naturalized
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communist	<input type="checkbox"/> German	<input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous
<input type="checkbox"/> Fascist (Italian)	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date of Birth Sept. 4, 1908  
Place of Birth Natchez, Mississippi  
Entered U. S. \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
Naturalized (date) \_\_\_\_\_  
Naturalized (place and Court) \_\_\_\_\_

Very truly yours,

*E. E. Conroy*  
E. E. CONROY  
SAC

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61 JUL 8 1944

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JUL 25 1944

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

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Mr. Tolson  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Mohr  
Mr. Carson  
Mr. Hendon  
Mr. Jones  
Mr. Quinn  
Mr. Nease

WASH FROM NEW YORK 2 28 1-14P

DIRECTOR URGENT

GAIN. RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT, IS-C. FOR THE BUREAU'S INFO ARTICLE IN  
TODAYS NY HERALD TRIBUNE ENTITLED "NEGRO AUTHOR CRITICIZES REDS AS IN-  
TOLERANT", STATES THAT RICHARD WRIGHT, AUTHOR OF "NATIVE SON" IN DIS-  
CUSSING HIS OWN BREAK WITH COMMUNIST PARTY SAYS PARTY FEARS NEW IDEAS  
AND THAT COMMUNIST POSITION ON AMERICAN NEGRO HAS UNDERGONE A "DISTINGUISHED  
AND LAMENTABLE REGRESSION" IN RECENT YEARS. WRIGHT WAS FURTHER CRE-  
DITED WITH DESCRIBING COMMUNISTS AS "NARROW MINDED, BIGOTED, INTOLERANT  
AND FRIGHTENED OF NEW IDEAS WHICH DONT FIT INTO THEIR OWN." THE HERALD  
TRIBUNE FURTHER STATES THAT MR WRIGHTS REMARKS WERE PROMPTED BY QUESTIONS  
GROWING OUT OF AN ARTICLE WHICH HE HAS WRITTEN FOR THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY  
FOR AUGUST UNDER THE TITLE OF "I TRIED TO BE A COMMUNIST." THE TRIBUNE  
FURTHER STATES THAT IN THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY ARTICLE THE AUTHOR OF NATIVE  
SON DISCUSSES HIS EARLIEST EXPERIENCES AS A CP MEMBER IN CHICAGO TOUCH-  
ING ON THE PROBLEMS HE FACED IN TRYING TO PRESENT HIS OWN IDEAS TO THE  
PARTY. FURTHERMORE THE AUGUST ATLANTIC MONTHLY DESCRIBES THE ARTICLE  
AS THE FIRST OF TWO INSTALLMENTS AND MR WRIGHT ADVISED THE TRIBUNE RE-  
PRESENTATIVE YESTERDAY THAT HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS THE SPECIFIC DETAILS

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153 AUG 10 1960

EX-2  
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23 AUG 8 1944  
c. e. - 2

NY2 PAGE 2

OF THE CHICAGO BREAK WITH THE COMMUNISTS BECAUSE THESE WILL BE COVERED IN THE SECOND MAGAZINE ARTICLE. WRIGHT FURTHER ADVISED THE TRIBUNE THAT HIS CP MEMBERSHIP COVERED THE PERIOD, ROUGHLY, FROM THE LATTER PART OF NINETEEN THIRTYTWO<sup>1932</sup> TO NINETEEN FORTY<sup>1940</sup> AND THAT HIS EARLY ASSOCIATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN CHICAGO HAS BEEN BROKEN IN NINETEEN THIRTYSEVEN WHEN HE WAS EJECTED FROM THE SAME. WRIGHT FURTHER ADVISED THAT HE WAS ON THE OUTS WITH THE PARTY FROM MAY UNTIL AUGUST THIRTY SEVEN AND THAT HE WAS REINSTATED IN NY IN SUCH YEAR AND "MAINTAINED A RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE PARTY UNTIL FORTY WHEN HE SAID HE LEFT THE SAME. THE TRIBUNE ARTICLE DISCUSSING WRIGHTS COMMENTS ABOUT THE LAMENTABLE REGRESSION OF THE CP POSITION ON THE AMERICAN NEGRO CREDITED MR. WRIGHT WITH STATING "PUBLICLY COMMUNISTS WILL DENY THAT THERE IS ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN THEIR MILITANCY, BUT PRIVATELY THEY OFFER ANY HANDY EXCUSE. THE MILITANCY OF THE NEGRO QUESTION HAS PASSED INTO THE HANDS OF RIGHT WING NEGROES. THAT WAS NOT TRUE EIGHT YEARS AGO. MOST OF THE BATTLES THEN WERE LED BY COMMUNISTS." THE ARTICLE FURTHER STATED THAT IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION AS TO WHAT CAUSED THE CHICAGO RIFT BETWEEN HIM AND THE COMMUNISTS WRIGHT HAD STATED "IT WAS AN ACCUMULATION OF MANY THINGS - NOT SO MUCH A LEAVING AS AN EJECTION OF A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION. I HAD MY WAY OF EXPRESSING MY CONCEPTION OF NEGRO EXPER-

END PAGE TWO



NY2 PAGE THREE

IENCE IN WRITING. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE OF VALUE TO THEM. THEY HAD THEIR IDEAS OF HOW I SHOULD REACT AS A COMMUNIST. THERE WAS AN IRRECONCILABLE GAP BETWEEN OUR ATTITUDES. I DO NOT REGARD THE COMMUNISTS TODAY AS EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE." WRIGHT FURTHER ADVISED THE TRIBUNE THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE A TERRIBLE LOT TO LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE. COMMUNISTS PECULIARLY ARE TOO MUCH THE VICTIMS OF THE VERY SOCIETY THEY ARE TRYING TO CHANGE. THIS TOO OFTEN FINDS EXPRESSI IN INTOLERANCE AND NARROWNESS." AT THE PRESENT TIME THE NY OFFICE HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION THE ADVISABILITY OF INTERVIEWING MR WRIGHT.

CONROY

HOLD

100-365400

LVO  
100-157464 - 11

SAC - New York City

August 4, 1944

John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
INTERNAL SECURITY - C

Reference is made to your teletype of July 28, 1944, concerning the reported disaffiliation on the part of the subject with the Communist Political Association. It is noted in your teletype that you have under consideration the advisability of interviewing Wright.

In connection with any interview you might undertake with Wright, it is suggested that you consider obtaining from him specific information concerning exploitation of the Negro race by the Communist Political Association. Furthermore, if the interview actually takes place a previous study should be made of Wright's articles and particularly pertinent comments he makes with regard to the Communist Political Association.

Any interview with Wright must, of course, be most discreet, particularly in light of his reported comments in which he laments the "regression" of the Communist Political Association's position with respect to the American Negro. From a review of the teletype you submitted in this regard, it would seem that Wright does not think the Communist Political Association revolutionary enough at the present time with respect to the advancement of the Negro. This should be considered seriously prior to any action on your part.

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FBI  
AUG - 1944  
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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E. A. Tamm  
Clegg  
Glavin  
Ladd  
Nichols  
Rosen  
Tracy  
Acers  
Coffey  
Harbo  
Hendon  
Quinn  
Tamm  
Trotter  
Tele. Rm.  
Holloman

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32

To Tell the Truth

# Mr. Wright Didn't Discover It

By Robert Minor

*did*  
**I**N the half-dozen years that Richard Wright was a member of the Communist Party he did not discover that the Communists have no concern whatever with persuading people to be loyal to the Communist organization per se. He sat in meetings for years, and did not discover that the only thing required is that you be loyal to the people's cause. If you are that, then loyalty to the Communist organization will take care of itself.



Wright has a place in the Atlantic Monthly, in which, whether inadvertently or not, he takes a position on far bigger questions than whether a person likes Communists.

Within the past few years, and faster in recent months, the Negro people have shaped in final form their answers to the national question for the Negro of the United States: That this is their country as well as anyone else's, and that they will have their equal place in it and will fight knock-down-and-drag-out for that equal place, and will win, and those who oppose it will go the way of Martin and Joe and Cotton Ed and Viereck and Dilling and Goebbels.

**R**ICHARD WRIGHT forgot that this fight is on, and with his head stuck into his typewriter he wrote:

"Could a Negro ever live halfway like a human being in this goddamn country?"

That was all the editor needed to have Richard Wright's signature in, in the main; but Wright kept on and said what logically goes with it—because the big, all absorbing, worldwide fight in this war keeps pushing us along. He wrote:

"Then . . . a Jewish chap . . . He introduced me to a Jewish boy (again) to a Jewish boy . . . Jewish chap . . . a short, friendly, black-haired, well-read fellow with hanging lips and bulging eyes . . . (and) a Negro Communist . . ."

like: "Der Jude mit haengender Unterlippe und Glotz Augen."

Throughout our country, as we all know, there are desperate efforts to accentuate the "racial" divisions to every possible complexity. "Negro against Jew," is the Gerald Smith way of getting Negro support for an anti-Negro movement; since anti-Semitism is only a form of white chauvinism. And Negro against trade unions, purely as an aid to the old villainy of trade-union exclusiveness against the Negro. The first demand on a man who is to remain in the Communist movement is that he be a democrat—in the broad, nonparty sense of the word—a republican in the great long-time historical meaning. And even Richard Wright's remarkably talented book, *Native Son*, had as its weakest side, as Ben Davis pointed out at the time, a certain lack of sense of the vast democratic character of the Negro's struggle of the ages. Now the greatest "national" struggle of all time is raging to its fiery climax in which the victory lies with all peoples seeking freedom. And Mr. Wright forgot that certain editorial people are glad to get anything in election time that seems to line up talented people on the untalented side of the enormous struggle.

The extermination of the Jim Crow system is going to be realized because this is not a "god-damn country." History has advanced; the day has dawned when the mass of Negro workers is entering the trade unions, and the trade unions are beginning to fight for their rights; voters of the biggest city of the world, composed of an alliance of demo-

cratic-willed white and Negro people, elect a Negro to represent them in the City Council on a platform that includes abolition of the Jim Crow system, and will elect to the United States Congress another great Negro leader—all a very modest beginning, only a bridgehead for a fight; but the people have decided. Mr. Richard Wright lends his name to the other opinion.

**C**AN we do without Richard Wright? Yes, a great movement of the people can do without any individual. The movement goes on, and rises, even when the individual we once loved pulls himself down. Didn't many get discouraged and quit before the great Scottsboro campaign in the 1930's; and didn't thousands of others then come with vision in their eyes for every individual who, with faded eyes, pulled himself down?

One who came in 1932 to the height of the surging movement of the people stirred by the Scottsboro struggle, was a fine young man, living in that Hoover day as a part-time street-sweeper in Chicago, one of those many sons of the people in whom the spark of genius needs but to be fanned by millions of brothers in a common cause, Richard Wright.

Is he gone, now? Others will come; more than you can count; and firmer; more able to reject those who say we will not succeed in living all as human beings "in this goddamn country," and—who translates into our political speech: "Der Jude mit haengender Unterlippe. . ."

Wright says, "I lay in bed thinking, I've got to go it alone. . ."

You are not alone, Mr. Wright. You are in bad company.

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page 6 of the

DAILY WORKER

Date 8-15-44  
Clipped at the Seat of  
Government.

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14-87 AUG 16 1944

EX-50  
62 AUG 25 1944

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New York 7, New York

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

KED  
100-4931

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
August 8, 1944.

Director, FBI

Re: COMMUNIST POLITICAL ASSOCIATION  
INTERNAL SECURITY - C

Dear Sir:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

b1  
b2  
b7c  
b7D

Very truly yours,

E. E. CONROY  
SAC

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Encls. (4)

cc. NY File #100-41674

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
AND FIELD OFFICES  
ADVISED BY ROUTING  
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DATE 10-21-81 ans

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REASON - FCIM II, 1-2.4.2  
DATE OF REVIEW 8-25-92  
8-25-81

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

NY FILE NO. 100-41674

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK, NEW YORK</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>9/5/44</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>7/28, 8/21, 31, 9/2/44</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>INTERNAL SECURITY-C</b>

**b7c**

## KEY FIGURE

### SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

Subject continues to reside at 89 Jefferts Place, Apt. C23, Brooklyn, 16, N.Y.

Subject author of two articles appearing in ATLANTIC MONTHLY for August and September, 1944, entitled, "I Tried To Be A Communist". Theme of articles seems to conclude with thought that subject broke with party because his friends in the Party, including those of his own race, were unable to recognize him as their friend. Articles do not appear to attack Communist Party as as revolutionary club, but because of failure of individuals in Party who properly recognize and deal with problems in society. Articles received wide-spread newspaper publication. Reports of informants and publicity indicates prominent Party members concerned over WRIGHT's articles. WRIGHT has authored new book "Black Boy", an autobiography which is not expected to appear until next year. ATLANTIC MONTHLY articles were originally final portion of this book.

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AGENCY  
REC'D  
RE: NEW YORK

### REFERENCES:

Bureau File 100-157464.  
Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] at New York, New York.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN  
OTHERWISE  
dated 7/8/44

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### DETAILS:

Subject has been considered a Key Figure in Communist activities in the New York Field Division.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>E. C. Conroy</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	RECORDED
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 5-Bureau 1-Col. S.V. Constant-D. of I., 2SC 3-New York		100-157464-13 SEP 8 1944	INDEXED
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1 Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

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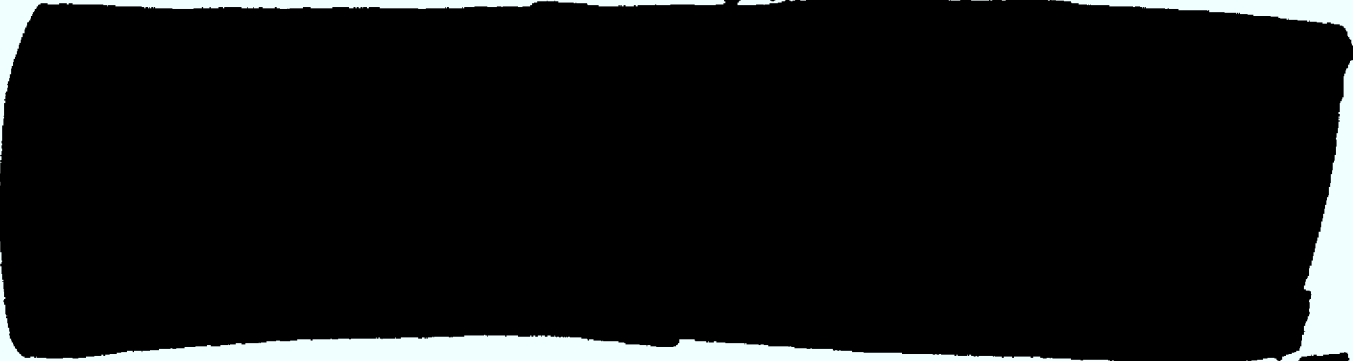
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ARTICLES IN ATLANTIC MONTHLY:

Subject, RICHARD WRIGHT's articles appearing in the August and September, 1944 issues of the "ATLANTIC MONTHLY" magazine were emphatically brought to the public's attention by considerable publicity in the New York newspapers.

On July 28, 1944 the New York Herald Tribune gave a lengthy article entitled, "NEGRO AUTHOR CRITICIZES REDS AS INTOLERANT". This article states that WRIGHT in discussing his break with the Communists said that the Party fears new ideas, and that the Communists position regarding the American Negro has undergone a "distinct and lamentable regression," in recent years. He described the Communists as "narrow-minded, bigoted, intolerant and frightened of new ideas which don't fit into their own." The Herald Tribune's article referred to WRIGHT's article in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

In an interview, Mr. WRIGHT is reported to have stated that his Communist Party membership roughly covered the period from the latter part of 1932 or early 1933 to 1940, and his early association with the Communists in Chicago was broken in 1937 when he said he was "ejected" from the Party. WRIGHT stated that he was reinstated in New York in 1937 and maintained a relationship with the Party until 1940 when he left the Party. (The paper quoted WRIGHT as saying, "Publicly, Communists will deny that there is any substantial change in their militancy but privately they offer any handy excuse. The militancy on the Negro question has passed into the hands of right-wing Negroes. That was not true eight years ago. Most of the battles then were led by Communists." He said further that he did not regard the Communists of today as effective instruments for social change, and described them as being too much the victims of the very society they are trying to change, resulting

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often in intolerance and narrowness.

A similar article appeared in the New York Journal-American for July 28, 1944 entitled "REDS ALL WRONG, WRIGHT QUILTS 'EM". This article states that until recently WRIGHT was one of the high priests of the Communist Party staunchly defending Red ideology as the only possible political philosophy for his race, but today he is hurling epithets at his former Communist comrades. This article also referred to the story appearing in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY and quoted the same statements which appeared in the other newspapers.

The Washington Field Office also forwarded a letter to the New York office bringing to its attention an item from the column, "The World Today" by GEORGE S. SCHUYLER appearing in the August 5, 1944 issue of the Pittsburgh Courier. This item called attention to WRIGHT's articles in the Atlantic Monthly and commented briefly upon it.

It is also interesting to note that considerable publicity was given WRIGHT's articles in the Daily Worker newspaper. In the Daily Worker for August 6, 1944 the column by BENJAMIN J. DAVIS, JR. entitled, "New Times" contains what it terms "a few words on RICHARD WRIGHT and New Ideas". DAVIS considers first the promises of WRIGHT as an author, which was indicated by his book, "Native Son". He then refers to what he calls the public and wholly unjustifiable attack on the Communists, who were the very organization whose outlooks had helped WRIGHT create his masterpiece. DAVIS stated that according to WRIGHT's statements, he withdrew from the Communists in 1940. DAVIS asked why he waited until now to make this break public and questions whom WRIGHT is trying to impress. DAVIS refers to WRIGHT's attitude as a form of superleftism which puts him in a class with NORMAN THOMAS and other "Red-Baters". DAVIS comments that this attack by WRIGHT comes at a crucial election time when the future state of the negroes requires the re-election of Roosevelt.

It is also noted that in the Daily Worker of August 15, 1944 an article by ROBERT MINOR is entitled, "Mr. WRIGHT DIDN'T DISCOVER IT". MINOR begins his article with the comment that in the half dozen years that RICHARD WRIGHT was a member of the Communist Party he did not discover that the Communists have no concern whatsoever with persuading people to be loyal to the Communist organization per se; that WRIGHT did not discover that the only thing required is that you be loyal to the peoples cause and that if you are that then loyalty to the Communist organization will take care of itself.

MINOR says that in WRIGHT's article in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY he takes a position on far bigger questions than whether a person likes Communists. He says that RICHARD WRIGHT forgot the fight of the Negro people and has taken

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UNDEVELOPED LEAD

NEW YORK FIELD DIVISION

AT BROOKLYN, NEW YORK- Will, after careful consideration, discreetly interview subject WRIGHT concerning his association with the Communist Party.

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articles were originally the final portion of WRIGHT's new book, as yet unpublished, an autobiography entitled, "Black Boy".

CS [REDACTED] furnished this information concerning [REDACTED] b2 b7D

In view of the fact that the publicity and the information furnished by informants indicated WRIGHT's break with the Communist Party was an actual fact, it was felt that a discreet and careful interview with WRIGHT might be productive. However, it was ascertained on August 31, 1944 that WRIGHT is presently on his vacation and will not be back in New York City until about September 15, 1944.

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would exact of himself that made him tell of his wrongdoings. The Communists had talked to him until they had given him new eyes with which to see his own crime. And they sat back and listened to him tell how he had erred. He was one with all the members there, regardless of race or color; his heart was theirs and their hearts were his; and when a man reaches that state of kinship with others, that degree of oneness, or when a trial has made him kin after he has been sundered from them by wrongdoing, then he must rise and say, out of a sense of the deepest morality in the world: 'I'm guilty. Forgive me.'

WRIGHT continues with the comment, "This, to me, was a spectacle of glory; and yet, because it had condemned me, because it was blind and ignorant, I felt that it was a spectacle of horror. The blindness of their limited lives—lives truncated and impoverished by the oppression they had suffered long before they had ever heard of Communism—made them think that I was with their enemies. American life had so corrupted their consciousness that they were unable to recognize their friends when they saw them. I knew that if they had held state power I should have been declared guilty of treason and my execution would have followed. And I knew that they felt, with all the strength of their black blindness, that they were right."

The foregoing portion of WRIGHT's article has been quoted because of the fact that it is believed significant in indicating that WRIGHT disapproves whole heartedly of the American way of life and living even though he has publicly at this time announced a breach with the Communist Party organization.

The concluding portion of his article tells of his transfer from the Federal Experiment Theater to the Federal Writers Project and leads up to the event of May Day 1936 when WRIGHT was refused the right to march in the parade and was physically rejected from the line of march by white Communists while other Communists, white and black, looked on without coming to his assistance. WRIGHT again refers to the blindness of these individuals and made the statement "I remembered the stories I had written, the stories in which I had assigned a role of honor and glory to the Communist Party, and I was glad that they were down in black and white, were finished. For I knew in my heart that I should never be able to write that way again, should never be able to feel with that simple sharpness about life, should never again express such passionate hope, should never again make so total a commitment of faith."

He then tells of his resolution to write and to do what he could by his writing to fight and 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.\*

In regard to the articles by WRIGHT it may be noted that these two

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WRIGHT attended the National John Reed congress in the summer of 1934 and was stunned at the decision announced by a nationally known Communist to dissolve the clubs. WRIGHT said that he asked "Why", and was told that the dissolution was because the clubs did not serve the new peoples front policy.

The concluding portion of this first article deals with WRIGHTS attempts at the Congress of American Writers held in New York City in 1935.

The second article in the September 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly commences with WRIGHT's work after the dissolution of the John Reed Clubs. He said that at this time he avoided unit meetings for fear of being subjected to discipline. He tells them in an assignment by the Party directing him to organize a committee against the high cost of living, and he subsequently entered into this work. Later on he was asked to go to Switzerland as a Youth Delegate and then to the Soviet Union, but he refused because it would have interfered with his writing.

He relates the story of a unit meeting at which he requested that his membership be dropped from the Party rolls, although he desired to retain his membership in those organizations in which the Party has influence, and hoped that sometime in the future he could meet and talk with Party leaders as to what tasks he could best perform. Wright tells of unjustified attacks by other members on which he was labeled "a Trotskyite" and accused of other ideas contrary to those of the Communist Party. A considerable portion of this final article is devoted to the trial within the Communist Party of WRIGHT's friend ROSS concerning whom he had once accumulated material for with the purpose of using it in his writings. He dwells at considerable length on the development of the charges in this trial, the manner of its conduction and the presentation of charges including the attitude of the members present. He pictures the trial as being as such a nature so talkatively presented and so sincerely made and with the ultimate charges being made by the accused's best friends, so that it resulted in the confession of the accused that he was guilty of the charges. In regard to ROSS at the conclusion of the trial, WRIGHT states "his voice broke in a sob, no one prodded him. No one tortured him. No one threatened him. He was free to go out of the hall and never see another Communist, but he did not want to. He could not. The vision of the communal world had sunk down into his soul and it would never leave him until life left him. He talked on, outlining how he had erred, how he would reform." WRIGHT continues, "I knew, as I sat there, that there were many people who thought they knew life who had been skeptical of the Moscow trials. But they could not have been skeptical had they witnessed this astonishing trial. Ross had not been doped; he had been awakened. It was not a fear of the Communist Party that had made him confess but a fear of the punishment that he

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REVIEW OF ATLANTIC MONTHLY ARTICLES:

"I TRIED TO BE A COMMUNIST" by RICHARD WRIGHT.

The first article appeared in the August 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly magazine and commenced with an invitation which WRIGHT received from a group of white boys he had known while working in the Post Office in Chicago. He lost he was amazed to learn that many of these boys had joined the Communist Party and he describes his entries into the work in the John Reed Club. In regard to the Communist literature which he first read he stated that "it was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade Unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of the experiences of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred peoples into a whole. It seemed to me that here at last, in the realm of revolutionary expression, Negro experience could find a home, a functioning value and role."

WRIGHT became a leader in the John Reed Club and contributed to such publications as "Left Front", "Arvil", and "New Masses". In his presentation WRIGHT points out that his first misunderstanding with other Negro Communists grew out of the fact that because of his publications and writing they classified him as an intellectual.

He also had difficulty with the Party in Chicago because of his efforts to learn of the life of one ROSS, a Negro Communist. WRIGHT says that ROSS typified the effective street agitator, and was a Southern born Negro who had migrated to the North, and whose life reflected the crude hopes and frustrations of the peasant in the city. WRIGHT felt that if he could get ROSS' story he could make known some of the difficulties inherent in the adjustment of a folk people to an urban environment. Word spread of this activity of WRIGHT in the Communist Party, and he was warned to stop such activities.

These articles by WRIGHT are auto-biographical in nature, and WRIGHT points out at this time that he gave up the idea of biographical sketches on individuals he met, and settled upon writing short stories using the material he had gotten from ROSS and his friends. One such story was published in an anthology under the title of "Big Boy Leaves Home."

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up the cause of those who are endeavoring to accentuate racial divisions. He points out that in his article WRIGHT in several instances refers to individuals as "a Jewish chap", "a Jewish boy", and "his Jewish wife".

In answer to the question purposely put by Mr. MINOR, "Can We Do Without RICHARD WRIGHT?", MINOR says "Yes", that any great movement of the people can do without any individual.

It appears from the fact that articles were written concerning Mr. WRIGHT's, "I Tried To Be a Communist", by both BENJAMIN J. DAVIS, JR. and ROBERT MINOR that the Communist organization has laid considerable importance upon this statement by WRIGHT. The matter even reached the Broadway Columns and appeared in the column of DANTON WALKER in the New York Daily News of August 28, 1944 wherein it is stated that "RICHARD WRIGHT, author of "Native Son", has started an uproar with his two-part serial in the Atlantic Monthly called "I Tried to Be a Communist."

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CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS

[REDACTED]

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A confidential symbol was used for [REDACTED] to protect the identity of the informant because of [REDACTED] and also because of the information he furnished.

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## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

LVO 100-135- **DTL**

TO : MR. STRICKLAND *W*

FROM : MR. E. H. WINTERROWD

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF NEGROES  
(Richard Wright)  
INTERNAL SECURITY - C

DATE: October 12, 1944

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Mohr \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Mumford \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Jones \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_

Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_

Miss Beahm \_\_\_\_\_

Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

There are attached for record purposes two photostatic copies of Wright's second installment of "I Tried To Be A Communist" appearing in the September, 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly, beginning on page 48.

Attachment

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# I TRIED TO BE A COMMUNIST

by RICHARD WRIGHT

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WITH the John Reed clubs now dissolved, I was free of all party relations. I avoided unit meetings for fear of being subjected to discipline. Occasionally a Negro Communist — defying the code that enjoined him to shun suspect elements — came to my home and informed me of the current charges that Communists were bringing against one another. To my astonishment I heard that Buddy Neelson had branded me a “smuggler of reaction.”

Buddy Neelson was the Negro who had formulated the Communist position for the American Negro; he had made speeches in the Kremlin; he had spoken before Stalin himself.

“Why does Neelson call me that?” I asked.

“He says that you are a petty bourgeois degenerate,” I was told.

“What does that mean?”

“He says that you are corrupting the party with your ideas.”

“How?”

There was no answer. I decided that my relationship with the party was about over; I should have to leave it. The attacks were growing worse, and my refusal to react incited Neelson into coining more absurd phrases. I was termed a “bastard intellectual,” an “incipient Trotskyite”; it was claimed that I possessed an “anti-leadership attitude” and that I was manifesting “scraphim tendencies” — a phrase meaning that one has withdrawn from the struggle of life and considers oneself infallible.

Working all day and writing half the night brought me down with a severe chest ailment. While I was ill, a knock came at my door one morning. My

another admitted Ed Green, the man who had demanded to know what use I planned to make of the material I was collecting from the comrades. I stared at him as I lay abed and I knew that he considered me a clever and sworn enemy of the party. Bitterness welled up in me.

“What do you want?” I asked bluntly. “You see I’m ill.”

“I have a message from the party for you,” he said.

I had not said good day, and he had not offered to say it. He had not smiled, and neither had I. He looked curiously at my bleak room.

“This is the home of a bastard intellectual,” I cut at him.

He stared without blinking. I could not endure this standing there so stone-like. Common decency made me say, “Sit down.”

His shoulders stiffened.

“I’m in a hurry.” He spoke like an army officer.

“What do you want to tell me?”

“Do you know Buddy Neelson?” he asked.

I was suspicious. “Was this a political trap?”

“What about Buddy Neelson?” I asked, committing myself to nothing until I knew the kind of reality I was grappling with.

“He wants to see you,” Ed Green said.

“What about?” I asked, still suspicious.

“He wants to talk with you about your party work,” he said.

“I’m ill and can’t see him until I’m well,” I said.

Ed Green stood for a fraction of a second, then turned on his heel and marched out of the room.

When my chest healed, I sought an appointment with Buddy Neelson. He was a short, black man with an ever ready smile, thick lips, a furtive manner, and a greasy, sweaty look. His bearing was nervous, self-conscious; he seemed always to be hiding some deep irritation. He spoke in short, jerky sentences, hopping nimbly from thought to thought, as though his mind worked in a free, associational

RICHARD WRIGHT is an American Negro whose schooling carried him through the grammar grades, and who has been educating himself ever since. His novel, *Native Son*, which was widely discussed in the year of its publication (1940), and his forthcoming autobiography, which will appear later this year, proclaim him as one of the most forthright and eloquent authors of his race.

This is the second of two installments.

man. He suffered from asthma and would snort at unexpected intervals. Now and then he would punctuate his flow of words by taking a nip from a bottle of whiskey. He had traveled half around the world and his talk was pitted with vague allusions to European cities. I met him in his apartment, listened to him intently, observed him minutely, for I knew that I was facing one of the leaders of World Communism.

"Hello, Wright," he snorted. "I've heard about you."

As we shook hands he burst into a loud, seemingly senseless laugh; and as he guffawed I could not tell whether his mirth was directed at me or was meant to hide his uneasiness.

"I hope what you've heard about me is good," I parried.

"Sit down," he laughed again, waving me to a chair. "Yes, they tell me you write."

"I try to," I said.

"You can write," he snorted. "I read that article you wrote for the *New Masses* about Joe Louis. Good stuff. First political treatment of sports we've ever had. Ha-ha."

I waited. I had thought that I should encounter a man of ideas, but he was not that. Then perhaps he was a man of action? But that was not indicated either.

"They tell me that you are a friend of Ross," he shot at me.

I paused before answering. He had not asked me directly, but had hinted in a neutral, teasing way. Ross, I had been told, was slated for expulsion from the party on the ground that he was "anti-leadership"; and if a member of the Communist International was asking me if I was a friend of a man about to be expelled, he was indirectly asking me if I was loyal or not.

"Ross is not particularly a friend of mine," I said frankly. "But I know him well; in fact, quite well."

"If he isn't your friend, how do you happen to know him so well?" he asked, laughing to soften the hard threat of his question.

"I was writing an account of his life and I know him as well, perhaps, as anybody," I told him.

"I heard about that," he said. "Wright. Ha-ha. Say, let me call you Dick, huh?"

"Go ahead," I said.

"Dick," he said, "Ross is a nationalist." He seemed to let the weight of his accusation sink in. He meant that Ross's militancy was extreme. "We Communists don't dramatize Negro nationalism," he said in a voice that laughed, accused, and guffawed.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"We're not advertising Ross." He spoke directly now.

"We're talking about two different things," I said. "You seem worried about my making Ross popular because he is your political opponent. But I'm not concerned about Ross's politics at all. The man struck me as one who typified certain traits of the Negro migrant. I've already sold a story based upon an incident in his life."

Neelson became excited.

"What was the incident?" he asked.

"Some trouble he got into when he was thirteen years old," I said.

"Oh, I thought it was political," he said, shrugging.

"But I'm telling you that you are wrong about that," I explained. "I'm not trying to fight you with my writing. I've no political ambitions. You must believe that. I'm trying to depict Negro life."

"Have you finished writing about Ross?"

"No," I said. "I dropped the idea. Our party members were suspicious of me and were afraid to talk." He laughed.

"Dick," he began, "we're short of forces. We're facing a grave crisis."

"The party's always facing a crisis," I said.

His smile left and he stared at me.

"You're not cynical, are you, Dick?" he asked.

"No," I said. "But it's the truth. Each week, each month there's a crisis."

"You're a funny guy," he said, laughing, snorting again. "But we've got a job to do. We're altering our work. Fascism's the danger, the danger now to all people."

"I understand," I said.

"We've got to defeat the Fascists," he said, snorting from asthma. "We've discussed you and know your abilities. We want you to work with us. We've got to crash out of our narrow way of working and get our message to the church people, students, club people, professionals, middle class."

"I've been called names," I said softly. "Is that crashing out of the narrow way?"

"Forget that," he said.

He had not denied the name-calling. That meant that, if I did not obey him, the name-calling would begin again.

"I don't know if I fit into things," I said openly.

"We want to trust you with an important assignment," he said.

"What do you want me to do?"

"We want you to organize a committee against the high cost of living."

"The high cost of living?" I exclaimed. "What do I know about such things?"



"Wright, how would you like to go to Switzerland?" Smith asked with dramatic suddenness.

"I'd like it," I said. "But I'm tied up with work now."

"You can drop that," Nealson said. "This is important."

"What would I do in Switzerland?" I asked.

"You'll go as a youth delegate," Smith said.

"From there you can go to the Soviet Union."

"Much as I'd like to, I'm afraid I can't make it," I said honestly. "I simply cannot drop the writing I'm doing now."

We sat looking at one another, smoking silently.

"Has Nealson told you how I feel?" I asked Smith.

Smith did not answer. He stared at me a long time, then spat: "Wright, you're a fool!"

I rose. Smith turned away from me. A breath more of anger and I should have driven my fist into his face. Nealson laughed sheepishly, smorting.

"Was that necessary?" I asked, trembling.

I stood recalling how, in my boyhood, I would have fought until blood ran had anyone said anything like that to me. But I was a man now and master of my rage, able to control the surging emotions. I put on my hat and walked to the door. "Keep cool," I said to myself. "Don't let this get out of hand."

"This is good-bye," I said.

I attended the next unit meeting and asked for a place on the agenda, which was readily granted. Nealson was there. Evans was there. Ed Green was there. When my time came to speak, I said:—

"Comrades, for the past two years I've worked daily with most of you. Despite this, I have for some time found myself in a difficult position in the party. What has caused this difficulty is a long story which I do not care to recite now; it would serve no purpose. But I tell you honestly that I think I've found a solution of my difficulty. I am proposing here tonight that my membership be dropped from the party rolls. No ideological differences impel me to say this. I simply do not wish to be bound any longer by the party's decisions. I should like to retain my membership in those organizations in which the party has influence, and I shall comply with the party's program in those organizations. I hope that my word will be accepted in the spirit in which they are said. Perhaps sometime in the future I can meet and talk with the leaders of the party as to what tasks I can best perform."

I sat down amid a profound silence. The Negro secretary of the meeting looked frightened, glancing at Nealson, Evans, and Ed Green.

"Is there any discussion on Comrade Wright's statement?" the secretary asked finally.

"I move that discussion on Wright's statement be deferred," Nealson said.

A quick vote confirmed Nealson's motion. I looked about the silent room, then reached for my hat and rose.

"I should like to go now," I said.

No one said anything. I walked to the door and out into the night and a heavy burden seemed to lift from my shoulders. I was free. And I had done it in a decent and forthright manner. I had not been bitter. I had not raked up a single recrimination. I had attacked no one. I had disavowed nothing.

The next night two Negro Communists called at my home. They pretended to be ignorant of what had happened at the unit meeting. Patiently I explained what had occurred.

"Your story does not agree with what Nealson says," they said, revealing the motive of their visit.

"And what does Nealson say?" I asked.

"He says that you are in league with a Trotskyite group, and that you made an appeal for other party members to follow you in leaving the party."

"What?" I gasped. "That's not true. I asked that my membership be dropped. I raised no political issues." What did this mean? I sat pondering. "Look, maybe I ought to make my break with the party clean. If Nealson's going to act this way, I'll resign."

"You can't resign," they told me.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"No one can resign from the Communist Party."

I looked at them and laughed.

"You're talking crazy," I said.

"Nealson would expel you publicly, cut the ground from under your feet if you resigned," they said. "People would think that something was wrong if someone like you quit here on the South Side."

I was angry. Was the party so weak and uncertain of itself that it could not accept what I had said at the unit meeting? Who thought up such tactics? Then, suddenly, I understood. These were the secret, underground tactics of the political movement of the Communists under the tears of Old Russia! The Communist Party felt that it had to assassinate me morally merely because I did not want to be bound by its decisions. I saw now that my comrades were acting out a fantasy that had no relation whatever to the reality of their environment.

"Tell Nealson that if he fights me, then, by God, I'll fight him," I said. "If he leaves this damn thing where it is, then all right. If he thinks I won't fight him publicly, he's crazy!"

"It's easy. You can learn," he said.

I was in the midst of writing a novel and he was pulling me from it to tabulate the price of groceries. "He doesn't think much of what I'm trying to do," I thought.

"Comrade Neelson," I said, "a writer who hasn't written anything worth while is a most doubtful person. Now, I'm in that category. Yet I think I can write. I don't want to ask for special favors, but I'm in the midst of a book which I hope to complete in six months or so. Let me convince myself that I'm wrong about my hankering to write and then I'll be with you all the way."

"Dick," he said, turning in his chair and waving his hand as though to brush away an insect that was annoying him, "you've got to get to the masses of people."

"You've seen some of my work," I said. "Isn't it just barely good enough to warrant my being given a chance?"

"The party can't deal with your feelings," he said.

"Maybe I don't belong in the party," I stated it full.

"Oh, no! Don't say that," he said, snorting. He looked at me. "You're blunt."

"I put things the way I feel them," I said. "I want to start in right with you. I've had too damn much crazy trouble in the party."

He laughed and lit a cigarette.

"Dick," he said, shaking his head, "the trouble with you is that you've been around with those white artists on the North Side too much. You even talk like 'em. You've got to know your own people."

"I think I know them," I said, realizing that I could never really talk with him. "I've been inside of three fourths of the Negroes' homes on the South Side."

"But you've got to work with 'em," he said.

"I was working with Ross until I was suspected of being a spy," I said.

"Dick," he spoke seriously now, "the party has decided that you are to accept this task."

I was silent. I knew the meaning of what he had said. A decision was the highest injunction that a Communist could receive from his party, and to break a decision was to break the effectiveness of the party's ability to act. In principle I heartily agreed with this, for I knew that it was impossible for working people to forge instruments of political power until they had achieved unity of action. Oppressed for centuries, divided, hopeless, corrupted, misled, they were cynical—as I had once been—and the Communist method of unity

had been found historically to be the only means of achieving discipline. In short, Neelson had asked me directly if I were a Communist or not. I wanted to be a Communist, but my kind of Communist. I wanted to shape people's feelings, awaken their hearts. But I could not tell Neelson that; he would only have snorted.

"I'll organize the committee and turn it over to someone else," I suggested.

"You don't want to do this, do you?" he asked.

"No," I said firmly.

"What would you like to do on the South Side, then?"

"I'd like to organize Negro artists," I said.

"But the party doesn't need that now," he said.

I rose, knowing that he had no intention of letting me go after I had organized the committee. I wanted to tell him that I was through, but I was not ready to bring matters to a head. I went out, angry with myself, angry with him, angry with the party. Well, I had not broken the decision, but neither had I accepted it wholly. I had dodged, trying to save time for writing, time to think.

## 10

MY TASK consisted in attending meetings until the late hours of the night, taking part in discussions, or lending myself generally along with other Communists in leading the people of the South Side. We debated the housing situation, the best means of forcing the city to authorize open hearings on conditions among Negroes. I gritted my teeth as the daily value of pork chops was tabulated, longing to be at home with my writing.

Neelson was cleverer than I and he confronted me before I had a chance to confront him. I was summoned one night to meet Neelson and a "friend." When I arrived at a South Side hotel I was introduced to a short, yellow man who carried himself like Napoleon. He wore glasses, kept his full lips pursed as though he were engaged in perpetual thought. He swaggered when he walked. He spoke slowly, precisely, trying to charge each of his words with more meaning than the words were able to carry. He talked of trivial things in lofty tones. He said that his name was Smith, that he was from Washington, that he planned to launch a national organization among Negroes to federalize all existing Negro institutions so as to achieve a broad unity of action. The three of us sat at a table, facing one another. I knew that another and last offer was about to be made to me, and if I did not accept it, there would be open warfare.

I was not able to know if my statement reached Nelson. There was no public outcry against me, but in the ranks of the party itself a storm broke loose and I was branded a traitor, an unstable personality, and one whose faith had failed.

My comrades had known me, my family, my friends; they, God knows, had known my aching poverty. But they had never been able to conquer their fear of the individual way in which I acted and lived, an individuality which life had scored into my bones.

# 11

I was transferred by the relief authorities from the South Side Boys' Club to the Federal Negro Theater to work as a publicity agent. There were days when I was acutely hungry for the incessant analyses that went on among the comrades, but whenever I heard news of the party's inner life, it was of charges and countercharges, reprisals and counterreprisals.

The Federal Negro Theater, for which I was doing publicity, had run a series of ordinary plays, all of which had been revamped to "Negro style," with jungle scenes, spirituals, and all. For example, the skinny white woman who directed it, an elderly missionary type, would take a play whose characters were white, whose theme dealt with the Middle Ages, and recast it in terms of Southern Negro life with overtones of African backgrounds. Contemporary plays dealing realistically with Negro life were spurned as being controversial. There were about forty Negro actors and actresses in the theater, lolling about, yearning, disgruntled.

What a waste of talent, I thought. Here was an opportunity for the production of a worth-while Negro drama and no one was aware of it. I studied the situation, then laid the matter before white friends of mine who held influential positions in the Works Progress Administration. I asked them to replace the white woman—including her quaint aesthetic notions—with someone who knew the Negro and the theater. They promised me that they would act.

Within a month the white woman director had been transferred. We moved from the South Side to the Loop and were housed in a first-rate theater. I successfully recommended Charles DeSheim, a talented Jew, as director. DeSheim and I held long talks during which I outlined what I thought could be accomplished. I urged that our first offering should be a bill of three one-act plays, including Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun*, a grim, poetical, powerful one-acter dealing with chain-gang conditions in the South.

I was happy. At last I was in a position to make suggestions and have them acted upon. I was convinced that we had a rare chance to build a genuine Negro theater. I convoked a meeting and introduced DeSheim to the Negro company, telling them that he was a man who knew the theater, who would lead them toward serious dramatics. DeSheim made a speech wherein he said that he was not at the theater to direct it, but to help the Negroes to direct it. He spoke so simply and eloquently that they rose and applauded him.

I then proudly passed out copies of Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* to all members of the company. DeSheim assigned reading parts. I sat down to enjoy adult Negro dramatics. But something went wrong. The Negroes stammered and faltered in their lines. Finally they stopped reading altogether. DeSheim looked frightened. One of the Negro actors rose.

"Mr. DeSheim," he began, "we think this play is indecent. We don't want to act in a play like this before the American public. I don't think any such conditions exist in the South. I lived in the South and I never saw any chain gangs. Mr. DeSheim, we want a play that will make the public love us."

"What kind of play do you want?" DeSheim asked them.

They did not know. I went to the office and looked up their records and found that most of them had spent their lives playing cheap vaudeville. I had thought that they played vaudeville because the legitimate theater was barred to them, and now it turned out they wanted none of the legitimate theater, that they were scared spitless at the prospects of appearing in a play that the public might not like, even though they did not understand that public and had no way of determining its likes or dislikes.

I felt—but only temporarily—that perhaps the whites were right, that Negroes were children and would never grow up. DeSheim informed the company that he would produce any play they liked, and they sat like frightened mice, possessing no words to make known their vague desires.

When I arrived at the theater a few mornings later, I was horrified to find that the company had drawn up a petition demanding the ousting of DeSheim. I was asked to sign the petition and I refused.

"Don't you know your friends?" I asked them.

They glared at me. I called DeSheim to the theater and we went into a frantic conference.

"What must I do?" he asked.

"Take them into your confidence," I said. "Let them know that it is their right to petition for a redress of their grievances."



DeShain thought my advice sound and, accordingly, he assembled the company and told them that they had a right to petition against him if they wanted to, but that he thought any misunderstandings that existed could be settled smoothly.

"Who told you that we were getting up a petition?" a black man demanded.

DeShain looked at me and stammered wordlessly.

"There's an Uncle Tom in the theater!" a black girl yelled.

After the meeting a delegation of Negro men came to my office and took out their pocketknives and flashed them in my face.

"You got the hell off this job before we cut your bellybutton out!" they said.

I telephoned my white friends in the Works Progress Administration: "Transfer me at once to another job, or I'll be murdered."

Within twenty-four hours DeShain and I were given our papers. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

I was transferred to a white experimental theatrical company as a publicity agent and I resolved to keep my ideas to myself, or, better, to write them down and not attempt to translate them into reality.

## 2

One evening a group of Negro Communists called at my home and asked to speak to me in strict secrecy. I took them into my room and locked the door.

"Dick," they began abruptly, "the party wants you to attend a meeting Sunday."

"Why?" I asked. "I'm no longer a member."

"That's all right. They want you to be present," they said.

"Communists don't speak to me on the street," I said. "Now, why do you want me at a meeting?"

They hedged. They did not want to tell me.

"If you can't tell me, then I can't come," I said.

They whispered among themselves and finally decided to take me into their confidence.

"Dick, Ross is going to be tried," they said.

"For what?"

They recited a long list of political offenses of which they alleged that he was guilty.

"But what has that got to do with me?"

"If you come, you'll find out," they said.

"I'm not that naive," I said. "I was suspicious now. Were they trying to lure me to a trial and expel me? This trial might turn out to be mine."

They swore that they had no intention of placing me on trial, that the party merely wanted me to

observe Ross's trial so that I might learn what happened to "enemies of the working class."

As they talked, my old love of witnessing something new came over me. I wanted to see this trial, but I did not want to risk being placed on trial myself.

"Listen," I told them. "I'm not guilty of Nealson's charges. If I showed up at this trial, it would seem that I am."

"No, it won't. Please come."

"All right. But, listen. If I'm tricked, I'll fight. You hear? I don't trust Nealson. I'm not a politician and I cannot anticipate all the funny moves of a man who spends his waking hours plotting."

Ross's trial took place that following Sunday afternoon. Comrades stood inconspicuously on guard about the meeting hall, at the doors, down the street, and along the hallways. When I appeared, I was ushered in quickly. I was tense. It was a rule that once you had entered a meeting of this kind you could not leave until the meeting was over; it was feared that you might go to the police and denounce them all.

Ross, the accused, sat alone at a table in the front of the hall, his face distraught. I felt sorry for him; yet I could not escape feeling that he enjoyed this. For him, this was perhaps the highlight of an otherwise bleak existence.

In trying to grasp why Communists hated intellectuals, my mind was led back again to the accounts I had read of the Russian Revolution. There had existed in Old Russia millions of poor, ignorant people who were exploited by a few educated, arrogant noblemen, and it became natural for the Russian Communists to associate betrayal with intellectualism. But there existed in the Western world an element that baffled and frightened the Communist Party: the prevalence of self-achieved literacy. Even a Negro, entrapped by ignorance and exploitation, — as I had been, — could, if he had the will and the love for it, learn to read and to understand the world in which he lived. And it was these people that the Communists could not understand.

The trial began in a quiet, informal manner. The comrades acted like a group of neighbors sitting in judgment upon one of their kind who had stolen a chicken. Anybody could ask and get the floor. There was absolute freedom of speech. Yet the meeting had an amazingly formal structure of its own, a structure that went as deep as the desire of men to live together.

A member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party rose and gave a description of the world situation. He spoke without emotion and

called up hard facts. He painted a horrible but magnificent picture of Fascism's aggression in Germany, Italy, and Japan.

I accepted the reason why the trial began in this manner. It was imperative that here he postulated against what or whom Ross's crimes had been committed. Therefore there had to be established in the minds of all present a vivid picture of mankind under oppression. And it was a true picture. Perhaps no organization on earth, save the Communist Party, possessed so detailed a knowledge of how workers lived, for its sources of information stemmed directly from the workers themselves.

The next speaker discussed the role of the Soviet Union as the world's lone workers' state—how the Soviet Union was hampered in its enemies, how the Soviet Union was trying to industrialize itself, what sacrifices it was making to help workers of the world to steer a path toward peace through the idea of collective security.

The facts presented so far were as true as any facts could be in this uncertain world. Yet no one word had been said of the accused, who sat listening like any other member. The time had not yet come to include him and his crimes in this picture of global struggle. An absolute had first to be established in the minds of the comrades so that they could measure the success or failure of their deeds by it.

Finally a speaker came forward and spoke of Chicago's South Side, the Negro population, their suffering and handicap, taking all that also to the world struggle. Then still another speaker followed and described the tasks of the Communist Party of the South Side. At last, the world, the national, and the local pictures had been fused into one overwhelming drama of moral struggle in which everybody in the hall was participating. This presentation had lasted for more than three hours, but it had enthroned a new sense of reality in the hearts of those present, a sense of man on earth. With the exception of the church and its myths and legends, there was no agency in the world so capable of making men feel the earth and the people upon it was the Communist Party.

Toward evening the direct charges against Ross were made, not by the leaders of the party, but by Ross's friends, those who knew him best! It was crushing. Ross wilted. His emotions could not withstand the weight of the moral pressure. No one was terrorized into giving information against him. They gave it willingly, citing dates, conversations, scenes. The black mass of Ross's wrongdoing emerged slowly and irrefutably.

The moment came for Ross to defend himself. He had been told that he had arranged for friends to

stand in his behalf, but he relied upon no one. Instead, strumbling; he tried to talk and his words would not come. The hall was as still as death. Guilt was written in every pore of his black skin. His hands shook. He held on to the edge of the table too deep on his feet. His personality, his sense of himself, had been obliterated. Yet he could not have been so humbled unless he had shared and accepted the vision that had crushed him, the common vision that bound us all together.

"Comrades," he said in a low, charged voice, "I'm guilty of all the charges, all of them."

His voice broke in a sob. No one prodded him. No one tortured him. No one threatened him. He was free to go out of the hall and never see another Communist. But he did not want to. He could not. The vision of a communal world had sunk down into his soul and it would never leave him until life left him. He talked on, outlining how he had erred, how he would reform.

I know, as I sat there, that there were many people who thought they knew life who had been skeptical of the Moscow trial. But they could not have been skeptical had they witnessed this astonishing trial. Ross had not been doped; he had been awakened. It was not a fear of the Communist Party that had made him confess, but a fear of the punishment that he would exact of himself that made him tell of his wrongdoings. The Communists had talked to him until they had given him new eyes with which to see his own crime. And then they sat back and listened to him tell how he had erred. He was one with all the members there, regardless of race or color; his heart was theirs and their hearts were his; and when a man reaches that state of kinship with others, that degree of oneness, or when a trial has made him kin after he has been sundered from them by wrongdoing, then he must rise and say, out of a sense of the deepest morality in the world: "I'm guilty. Forgive me."

This, to me, was a spectacle of glory; and yet, because it had condemned me, because it was blind and ignorant, I felt that it was a spectacle of horror. The blindness of their limited lives—lives truncated and impoverished by the oppression they had suffered long before they had ever heard of Communism—made them think that I was with their enemies. American life had so corrupted their consciousness that they were unable to recognize their friends when they saw them. I knew that if they had held state power I should have been declared guilty of treason and my execution would have followed. And I knew that they felt, with all the strength of their black blindness, that they were right.



I could not stay with the god. I was anxious to get out of the hall and into the streets and shake free from the gigantification that had hold of me. I rose and went to the door; a comrade shook his head, warning me that I could not leave until the trial had ended.

"You can't leave now," he said.  
"I'm going out of here," I said, my anger making my voice louder than I intended.

We glared at each other. Another comrade came running up. I stepped forward. The comrade who had rushed up gave the signal for me to be allowed to leave. They did not want violence, and neither did I. They stepped aside.

I went into the dark Chicago streets and walked home through the cold, filled with a sense of sadness. Once again I told myself that I must learn to stand alone. I did not feel so wounded by their rejection of me that I wanted to spend my days bleating about what they had done. Perhaps what I had already learned to feel in my childhood saved me from that futile path. I lay in bed that night and said to myself: "I'll be for them, even though they are not for me."

## 13

From the Federal Experimental Theater I was transferred to the Federal Writers' Project, and I tried to earn my bread by writing guidebooks. Many of the writers on the project were members of the Communist Party and they kept their revolutionary vows that restrained them from speaking to Senators of the working class. I sat beside them in the office, ate next to them in restaurants, and rode up and down in the elevators with them, but they always looked straight ahead, wordlessly.

After working on the project for a few months, I was made acting supervisor of essays and straightway I ran into political difficulties. One morning the administrator of the project called me into his office.

"Wright, who are your friends on this project?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "Why?"

"Well, you ought to find out soon," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Some people are asking for your removal on the ground that you are incompetent," he said.

"Who are they?"

"He named several of my erstwhile comrades. Yes, it had come to that. They were trying to take the bread out of my mouth.

"What do you propose to do about their complaints?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said, laughing. "I think I understand what's happening here. I'm not going to let them drive you off this job."

I thanked him and rose to go to the door. Something in his words had not sounded right. I turned and faced him.

"This job?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"You mean to say that you don't know?" he asked.

"Know what? What are you talking about?"

"Why did you leave the Federal Negro Theater?"

"I had trouble there. They drove me off the job, the Negroes did."

"And you don't think that they had any encouragement?" he asked me ironically.

I sat again. This was deadly. I gaped at him.

"You needn't fear here," he said. "You work, write."

"It's hard to believe that," I murmured.

"Forget it," he said.

But the worst was yet to come. One day at noon I closed my desk and went down in the elevator.

When I reached the first floor of the building, I saw a picket line moving to and fro in the streets. Many of the men and women carrying placards were old friends of mine, and they were chanting for higher wages for Works Progress Administration artists and writers. It was not the kind of picket line that one was not supposed to cross, and as I started away from the door I heard my name shouted:—

"There's Wright, that goddamn Trotskyite!"

"We know you, you —!"

"Wright's a traitor!"

For a moment it seemed that I ceased to live. I had now reached that point where I was cursed aloud in the busy streets of America's second-largest city. It shook me as nothing else had.

Days passed. I continued on my job, where I functioned as the shop chairman of the union which I had helped to organize, though my election as shop chairman had been bitterly opposed by the party. In their efforts to nullify my influence in the union, my old comrades were willing to kill the union itself.

As May Day of 1936 approached, it was voted by the union membership that we should march in the public procession. On the morning of May Day I received printed instructions as to the time and place where our union contingent would assemble to join the parade. At noon I hurried to the spot and found that the parade was already in progress. In vain I searched for the banners of my union local. Where were they? I went up and down the streets, asking for the location of my local.

"Oh, that local's gone fifteen minutes ago,"

Negro told me. "If you're going to march, you'd better fall in somewhere."

I thanked him and walked through the milling crowds. Suddenly I heard my name called. I turned. To my left was the Communist Party's South Side section, lined up and ready to march.

"Come here!" an old party friend called to me.

I walked over to him.

"Aren't you marching today?" he asked me.

"I missed my union local," I told him.

"What the hell," he said. "March with us."

"I don't know," I said, remembering my last visit to the headquarters of the party, and my status as an "enemy."

"This is May Day," he said. "Get into the ranks."

"You know the trouble I've had," I said.

"That's nothing," he said. "Everybody's marching today."

"I don't think I'd better," I said, shaking my head.

"Are you scared?" he asked. "This is *May Day*."

He caught my right arm and pulled me into line beside him. I stood talking to him, asking him about his work, about common friends.

"Get out of our ranks!" a voice barked.

I turned. A white Communist, a leader of the district of the Communist Party, Cy Perry, a slender, close-cropped fellow, stood glaring at me.

"I — It's May Day and I want to march," I said.

"Get out!" he shouted.

"I was invited here," I said.

I turned to the Negro Communist who had invited me into the ranks. I did not want public violence. I looked at my friend. He turned his eyes away. He was afraid. I did not know what to do.

"You asked me to march here," I said to him.

He did not answer.

"Tell him that you did invite me," I said, pulling his sleeve.

"I'm asking you for the last time to get out of our ranks!" Cy Perry shouted.

I did not move. I had intended to, but I was beset by so many impulses that I could not act. Another white Communist came to assist Perry. Perry caught hold of my collar and pulled at me. I resisted. They held me fast. I struggled to free myself.

"Turn me loose!" I said.

Hands lifted me bodily from the sidewalk; I felt myself being pitched headlong through the air. I saved myself from landing on my head by clutching a curbstone with my hands. Slowly I rose and stood. Perry and his assistant were glaring at me. The rows of white and black Communists were look-

ing at me with cold eyes of non-recognition. I could not quite believe what had happened, even though my hands were smarting and bleeding. I had suffered a public, physical assault by two white Communists with black Communists looking on. I could not move from the spot. I was empty of any idea about what to do. But I did not feel belligerent. I had outgrown my childhood.

Suddenly, the vast ranks of the Communist Party began to move. Scarlet banners with the hammer and sickle emblem of world revolution were lifted, and they fluttered in the May breeze. Drums beat. Voices were chanting. The tramp of many feet shook the earth. A long line of set-faced men and women, white and black, flowed past me.

I followed the procession to the Loop and went into Grant Park Plaza and sat upon a bench. I was not thinking; I could not think. But an objectivity of vision was being born within me. A surging sweep of many odds and ends came together and formed an attitude, a perspective. "They're blind," I said to myself. "Their enemies have blinded them with too much oppression." I lit a cigarette and I heard a song floating out over the sunlit air: —

"Arise you prisoners of starvation!"

I remembered the stories I had written, the stories in which I had assigned a role of honor and glory to the Communist Party, and I was glad that they were down in black and white, were finished. For I knew in my heart that I should never be able to write that way again, should never be able to feel with that simple sharpness about life, should never again express such passionate hope, should never again make so total a commitment of faith.

"A better world's in birth . . ."

The procession still passed. Banners still floated. Voices of hope still chanted.

I headed toward home alone, really alone now, telling myself that in all the sprawling immensity of our mighty continent the least-known factor of living was the human heart, the least-sought goal of being was a way to live a human life. Perhaps, I thought, out of my tortured feelings I could fling a spark into this darkness. I would try, not because I wanted to but because I felt that I had to if I were to live at all.

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.

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

100-41674

:MICG

TO : Director, FBI

DATE: February 26, 1945

FROM: SAC, New York City

SUBJECT: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER C  
(Bureau file 100-157464)

Reference is made to the report of Special Agent [REDACTED] made at New York City on September 5, 1944 entitled RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT; INTERNAL SECURITY C. This report sets out a lead for the New York Field Division, "After careful consideration interview the subject WRIGHT concerning his association with the Communist Party."

After very careful consideration it is felt inadvisable to interview WRIGHT particularly as the basis of his break with the Communist Party, as appears from his recent articles in the Atlantic Monthly Magazine, is the Communist Party's failure to be sufficiently radical and militant with respect to the advancement of the Negro. These articles also indicate a complete disapproval by WRIGHT of the American way of life.

Also considered in arriving at the decision not to interview WRIGHT are the facts that he has been classified 4-F due to severe psycho-neurosis and his contacts with his Local Selective Service Board have reflected his interest in the problem of the Negro to be almost an obsession.

In view of the subject's public break with the Communist Party, he is no longer being carried as a Key Figure by the New York Field Division, however, a Security Index Card on him is being maintained by the New York Office due to his militant attitude toward the Negro problem.

The only information secured by this office concerning WRIGHT that has not already been reported is that he was listed as a member of the National Committee of the International Labor Defense in a pamphlet entitled, "Equal Justice and Democracy in the Service of Victory," published by the International Labor Defense in September 1944. WRIGHT'S residence address has been verified as Apt. C-23, 89 Lefferts Place, Brooklyn, New York, as of February 15, 1945.

This investigation is being placed in a closed status by the New York Field Division. In the event further investigation becomes necessary, it will be reported under a Security Matter C character.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/ke

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# New Times

IN **BLACK BOY**, Richard Wright has written a furious and terrifying story of the impact of the Jimcrow system upon human beings in the deep South. The result is a picture which challenges America.

There may be exaggerations in the book.

Many of the incidents may be highly fictional, and never really happened to Wright. But what difference does that make if they happened to some other young Negro. The point is that they should not happen to any Negro and the conditions which corrode the Negro family must be eliminated. For they victimize not only the Negro citizen; they suffocate the poor whites to a more or less degree, and retard the development of the whole South.

It does no good to run away from this essential significance of the book for the purpose of grappling with the secondary aspects, some of which are contained in the book, and others of which surround the author's views and his writing of the book. It is of supreme importance that this main picture of the life and death of the Negro under the reign of white supremacy should hit America with full force. For it concerns America. Any attempt to bypass this over-all picture will lessen its force and thereby lead to an underestimation of its starkness and blunt the sharp need for correctives. When this main picture is changed in its principal outlines, the derivative secondary aspects will disappear. But until it does, naturally there are going to be all kinds of corollaries, badly



by Benjamin J. Davis, Jr.

focused perspectives, and misleading ambiguities and conclusions—many of which mar **Black Boy**.

**THE** book is intensely subjective. In fact, it is limited by its subjectiveness. But people are not born subjective, and it is clear that a young Negro who has to run the gauntlet of every type of oppression—just short of lynching—has subjectiveness forced into his marrow. This heavy pressure pushes him to view the world in which he lives entirely through glasses colored by his own personal suffering from national oppression, which suffering in one form or another he meets every day. Those who complain of that intense subjectivity are forever stopped from doing so, unless they realize what brought it about, and also help to eradicate the diseased soil from which it grows.

It is important, however, that this subjectiveness be overcome. It can be done and is being done since there are new trends and factors which make the overcoming possible. It is also necessary to overcome it, lest one fall into the trap of frustration and defeatism which the white supremacy forces have set. **Black Boy** says some wholly unacceptable things about the Negro's capacity for genuine emotion. Here the author's subjectivity has overcome reality. For the truly remarkable achievement of the Negro is that he has made such singular contributions to America—culturally and musically and in all other fields—despite the system of national oppression which tends to thwart his every effort. The point is: Will Wright himself be able

## Some Impressions Of **Black Boy**

to overcome this limitation of subjectivity imposed upon him in order that he may see clearly, and participate with, the forces which would destroy the myth of white supremacy. Inasmuch as Wright has attained literary prominence, and some circles have thrust upon him the mantle of spokesman for his people he above all must maintain a clear head.

**THERE** is no doubt that Wright wields a brilliant and stormy pen. Few story tellers are his equal. But is this sufficient when there are brilliant writers on both sides of the barricades. It is vitally important that the artist who reflects and the artist who sees the way out should be one and the same person. For both these factors exist in the objective real world, outside one's self. Jimcrow is here, yet Jimcrow is also being driven defeated from the scene. Life is not static. One has to see both to be realistic, and to shape the future.

Wright does not see the positive, constructive side, and therefore the mirror of his pen does not give a complete picture. He omits the biggest new thing which is happening in the world today—the main progressive currents from which even the South is not immune. Apparently he is isolated from these developments—and far removed from the people. Such isolationism can lead to stagnation—to form without content. It is pretty difficult to see what happened in 1915 if one is isolated from 1945. While Wright is, of course, not responsible for **Black Boy** conditions, he is, however, responsible for his own voluntary act of withdrawal from the forces which are among the leaders of the fight for a better world. He can blame himself.

INDEXED

85-15716-1

NOT RECORDED

APR 18 1945

This is a clipping from  
page 9 sec. 1 ofTHE WORKER  
Date 4-1-45Clipped at the seat of  
Government

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY 876/bee

Index + file

PRESCOTT

**R**ICHARD WRIGHT is the author of one of the most widely read and hotly debated novels of recent years, "Native Son," an acknowledged leader of his race. But the way was long and the road was rocky. Not very many years ago he was just "a black boy in Mississippi," which means few men in the world have begun life under a burden of



Richard Wright

graver handicaps or faced more difficult obstacles. That he has gone so far, accomplished so much, entitles Mr. Wright to an honored rank among that traditionally American select group, the "self-made men." His success story does him great credit. The troubles he knew in his childhood and youth were terrible, the wounds he received deep. He carries indelible scars and still burns with bitter fury. The life he knew as a child is

not over. It has not changed. Hundreds of thousands of other little black boys are enduring it today. Such a life is usually completely outside the comprehension of white Americans, either Southern or Northern. But those who care to can now share it, in Mr. Wright's "Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth."

This is a story from America's own lower depths. No nostalgic memories of childhood are these, no sentimental yearnings for innocent years when the hills were so much higher. Mr. Wright's childhood was an obscene and monstrous nightmare, a malign inferno that might well have destroyed him utterly. He survived, but not unscathed. "Black Boy" is not the work of an objective artist or of an open mind. It could not have been. The neuroses, the over-emphasis, the lack of balance and the emotion recollected in turmoil are the bitter fruit of an old injustice.

**Shows Harsh Dramatic Power**

Mr. Wright in this explosive autobiography does not suggest any constructive means for improving the lot of the Negro in this country. Like Lillian Smith, he can only display suffering and cruelty with harsh dramatic power, he can only arouse anger and sympathy. If enough such books are written, if enough millions of people read them, maybe, some day, in the fullness of time, there will be a greater understanding and a more true democracy.

Richard Wright grew up in the slums of Mem-

phis and in the rural slums of Mississippi near Jackson. His father deserted his mother, so the poverty he knew was double the usual lot. The two dominant influences of his childhood were hunger and fear, a gnawing hunger that kept him weak and half-starved and a fear that grew and multiplied and filled his entire life. He feared his mother's anger, the whippings of his uncles and aunts, the abuse of other children, ghosts, white men with their inexplicable and capricious cruelties, fear itself. Terror was his companion night and day, violence the norm of all experience. Foul language and foul habits, ignorance and superstition, primitive religious fanaticism surrounded him on all sides. The proud, sensitive, intelligent child looked up from below at a grotesque, outrageous world.

Some of the evils he knew were caused by poverty and ignorance alone and would not have been much different in Ireland or Iran. But even these evils were intensified by the shibboleth of color and many others were caused by race alone. Mr. Wright's uncle was murdered by a white man and no one dared even to protest. A boyhood acquaintance was lynched. He learned to be servile and obsequious, to say "sir" to drunken and contemptible white men, to conceal his thoughts and emotions beneath a mask of humble good humor and deference. Not to do so, to forget the "sir" or the "mister," to aspire to learn a skilled trade, to show resentment of sneers, condescension and abuse, was to invite "trouble." And trouble could mean death.

**Author Distorts Bleak Story**

"Black Boy" only takes Mr. Wright into his late teens when he escaped to Chicago. His experiences there and in radical politics will doubtless be material for another book. It could conceivably be an intellectually more interesting book, one more concerned with thought and ideas. But it could hardly be a more emotionally dreadful one. Part of the raw shock of "Black Boy" is caused by Mr. Wright's excessive determination to omit nothing, to emphasize mere filth. This springs from a lack of artistic discrimination and selectivity. He has not added to the bleak tragedy of his story; he has only distorted it and confused it with such material.

It is also obvious in reading "Black Boy," and Mr. Wright admits it, that his is not a typical story. He felt isolated from Negroes as well as from whites; other Negroes resented their lot but did not feel at all so acutely as he did. Perhaps with the hindsight of the years in which he has brooded and with a natural literary instinct to capitalize and dramatize his emotions Mr. Wright has exaggerated his sufferings. It would be only human if he had.

"Black Boy" has little subtlety, little light and shade, no restraint. It is written in a continuously strained and feverish manner. It is over-written. But it is powerful, moving and horrifying. It is certain to be extravagantly praised and roundly condemned. It will be widely read.

\*BLACK BOY: A Record of Childhood and Youth. By Richard Wright. 228 pages. Harper. \$2.50

INDEXED  
NOT RECORDED  
86 MAR 20 1945

This is a clipping from page 21 of the New York Times for

Feb. 28, 1945  
Clipped at the Seat of Government.

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HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/bce

59 MAR 24 1945

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

**Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

HGF  
100-41674

TO : Director, FBI

DATE: April 17, 1945

FROM : SAC, New York

SUBJECT: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
(Bureau File 100-157464)

Reference is made to New York letter to the Bureau dated February 26, 1945 in the captioned matter wherein it was pointed out that in view of the subject's public break with the Communist Party, he is no longer being carried as a key figure by the New York Field Office, but that a Security Index card on him was being maintained by this office. This statement was made in error in view of the fact that although the New York Office recommended to the Bureau by letter dated June 28, 1944 that a Security Index Card be prepared on the subject, no authorization was actually received by the Bureau to prepare such a card.

Therefore, no Security Index card is being maintained in the New York Office on the subject unless contrary advice is received from the Bureau.

*let New York  
5-7-45*  
**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY 88612/ka**

**RECORDED** 1 - 746-16

**EX-26**

VB  
100-157464 -1

May 7, 1945

RECORDED

SAC, New York

John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C

Reference is made to your letter of April 17, 1945, in the above captioned matter.

In view of the militant attitude of the subject toward the Negro problem, as set forth in your letter of February 26, 1945, it is believed that you should submit a recommendation for the preparation of a Security Index Card in this case.

You may consider this letter as the Bureau's approval of such a recommendation and you should place a Security Index Card in your files at this time.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/lka

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION	
Mr. Tolson	MAILED 8
Mr. E. A. Tamm	
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Coffey	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Ladd	
Mr. Nichols	
Mr. Rosen	
Mr. Tracy	
Mr. Carson	
Mr. Egan	
Mr. Hendon	
Mr. Pennington	
Mr. Quinn	
Mr. Nease	
Miss Gandy	

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MAY 12 1945

Los Angeles Cal

June 22-45

Dear Sir. RICHARD WRIGHT

Richard Wright the negro who wrote  
12 million black voices and Black boy books  
should be toned as they are spreading  
race hatred and causing disunity.

It seems to feel as because of American  
prejudice that the American negro is  
living under horrible conditions. Well  
I am an American negro and proud  
of it because we colored people in  
America have come a long ways in  
the last seventy years. Only in America  
have the negro been as successful.

If you get a copy of the negro hand book  
of 1942 and turn over to page any of its  
pages you will see just how successful  
that we colored people are. <sup>157464</sup> <sup>157464</sup>

Richard Wright doesn't approve of our America  
way of life we wish you would put him  
in the Army on the first line in the  
Pacific theater of war and if a Jap kill  
him give the Jap a medal. And if you

DATE 8-25-81

5008792

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

RECORDED & INDEXED

JUN 26 1945

ack. 6-30-45  
b7c



Believe me mister we are tired and disgusted and discouraged. And if you don't want America behind the eighth ball you had better put a stop to some of this run American literature. Because we want peace and not having to be dragged.

2  
Don't do that for god sake but that Adole pated Laps books for they are driving us nuts. And besides he put to much filth in his books.

You know what Adolph Hitler says  
say: I evade and conquer. Well if you don't want that to happen in America you had better put a stop to these American

uncle Toms with there type writer from writing so much belly aching hog wash.

Because take it from me mister there are only sixty million people in Japan and she is fighting all most 2 Billion people one billion of those people are colord.

And if those Billion colord people wasent disgusted and discouraged this war could have been over long ago.

we colord people don't mind the truth but we do hate lies or any thing that distorts the peace of mind.

The back stabin Southern white people are on one side nagging send the colord people back to Africa and a bunch of damn fools like Richard Wright

are on the other side lying, complaning criticism so we Billion colord people say. This is your

Washington, reporter

If enough such books are written, if enough millions of people read them, maybe, someday, there will be a greater understanding and a more true democracy."

—Orville Prescott,  
N. Y. Times



# BLACK BOY

By RICHARD WRIGHT  
Author of *Native Son*

"A deeply disturbing document in race relations."—Howard Mumford Jones, *Saturday Review of Literature*

"Possibly the most sensational confession of an American boyhood ever put on paper."—Harry Hansen, *N. Y. World-Telegram*

A Book-of-the-Month Club  
Selection for March  
At all bookstores • \$2.50

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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/abc

100 - 177464 - 17

VB

b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

June 30, 1945

EX-61

[Redacted]  
Los Angeles, California  
[Redacted]

b7c

I desire to acknowledge your letter of June 22, 1945, with enclosure.

You may be assured that the content of your communication has been very carefully noted and I want to thank you for your interest in communicating with me.

If in the future you should obtain information which you feel is of value to this Bureau, please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/ace

*Handwritten signature/initials*

MAILED

56 PM '45

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Carson
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

*Handwritten initials*

104  
JUL 9 1945

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

June 30, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

67C

I desire to acknowledge your letter of June 22, 1945, with enclosure.

You may be assured that the content of your communication has been very carefully noted and I want to thank you for your interest in communicating with me.

If in the future you should obtain information which you feel is of value to this Bureau, please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

*J. E. Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP-1 BTG/lca



37 JUL 21 1945

100-157464-17

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

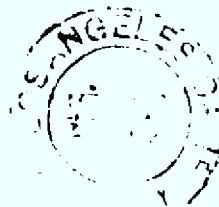


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Los Angeles, California

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**b7c**

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DATE 8-25-81 BY 3884/91



**Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice**

New York 7, New York

IN REPLY, PLEASE REFER TO  
FILE NO. 100-41674

WHR

Director, FBI

RE: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
Bureau File 100-157464

May 18, 1945

Dear Sir:

The copy of the Security Index Card maintained at this field office relative to the above-named individual has been revised and is now captioned as follows:

WRIGHT, RICHARD NATHANIEL  
NEGRO

NATIVE BORN

COMMUNIST

Apartment C-23  
89 Lefferts Place  
Brooklyn, New York (Res.)

Born Sept. 4-08  
Natchez, Miss.

Free-lance writer at residence (Bus.)

REFER TO BUREAU LETTER DATED MAY 7, 1945 IN INSTANT CASE. NEW YORK CARD HAS BEEN MADE UP.

In accordance with Bureau instructions, a white 5" x 8" card, captioned as above, has been prepared and filed in the Confidential Security Index Card File of this office. Appropriate disposition has been made of the card previously maintained in the Card File, in accordance with existing instructions. It is suggested that the original Security Index Card maintained at the Seat of Government be revised in agreement with the caption above set out.

Very truly yours,

E. E. Conroy  
RECORDED  
E. E. CONROY  
Special Agent in Charge

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DATE 8-25-81 BY 8889/lee

~~WHEN THE ACTION REQUIRED HEREBY HAS BEEN COMPLETED, THIS LETTER  
SHOULD NOT BE FILED BUT SHOULD BE DESTROYED.~~



RECORDED 100-157464-19

July 6, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

b7c

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 18, 1945, with enclosure.

The material which you have submitted has been carefully reviewed and I want to thank you for your interest and courtesy in writing to this Bureau.

In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the FBI, I want you to feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 B19/BCE

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Pennington \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

JUL 13 1945

b7c

John Edgar Hoover  
JUL 13 1945  
b7c  
15

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

July 6, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

*No such address  
JSL b7c*

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 18, 1945, with enclosure.

The material which you have submitted has been carefully reviewed and I want to thank you for your interest and courtesy in writing to this Bureau.

In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the FBI, I want you to feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

*J. E. Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director



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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BJA/bja

165  
JUL 13 1945

100-157464-19

*File-5-17d*



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

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HOLLYWOOD,  
CALIF.

10-22420  
FBI

Not in Director's

HOLLYWOOD,  
CALIF.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8Bry/bca

Los Angeles Calif  
June 18 - 45

Dear sir

Richard Wright the negro who wrote  
Black boy and native son books are doing no good  
and a lot of harm they are causing disunity  
and spreading race hatred and if you people dont  
want America tore up the same as Germany  
you had better put a stop to such people as that  
poor old ass of a Southern Senator with his  
back to Africa move next and such old fools as  
that poor crazy old Richard Wright. We colored people  
are good natured all we want is justice a good  
job with good pay for work well done. Every time  
we turn around some one is complaining nagging  
constantly ~~criticizing~~ criticizing every thing we do  
Richard Wright seems to be run happy in America  
so we wish to god he would leave and go some  
place else for he is getting on our nerves.  
I and all the other colored people know that  
ninety percent of the trash that he put in  
his books are lies, but if people in the  
should get a hold of Black boy I'm awfull  
afraid Uncle Sam's face is going to be red  
for you cant rule a German if you cant  
rule America. And the lies that poor sick  
frankel fool Richard Wright put in his books sure  
America any good in the foreignness

ack.  
25-43  
676

eye sight. we colored people want Richard Wright's  
books banned if he cant write a story with out  
trying to agitate race trouble we want him  
to pick him self a new vocation. Just get  
a copy of his books and go through them  
we dont see why he isnt in the Army any  
way. If he went to India or some other place  
and saw how horrible those people live then  
he would see how far advanced we are.  
After all we colored people are doing the best  
we can if you would get a copy of the Negro  
hand book for 1942 you would see just how  
well we are doing. we are only a small race of  
people. we colored people are very discouraged  
and that is the reason sixty million little bitty  
Japanese in Japan can fight all most two Billion  
people with out a allie and hold out so long.  
Because that Billion colored people are on the  
point of giving up. After all this is not our war  
and if we win we dont care. I suppose there is  
nothing to do but just say to hell with the whole  
bloody mess.

this is from that poor old fool book Black boy  
this is enough to provoke the devil

b7C



# What The People Say

toxicants at the early age of six.

There isn't any question about the undemocratic practices in America. It doesn't matter if one is a resident of the North or South, as Black Boy was the glaring discrepancies between the ideals and the realities are sufficient to floor the idealist and shock the realist. But it is hard to imagine a life like Black Boy's. It seems that someone would have come into the picture to redeem our faith in human-kind. Perhaps "Black Boy" is that character. In the face of all the circumstances a flicker of ambition kept within him. He even possessed the "foreign" desire to write.

Richard Wright has little pride in his own people for he says:

"Whenever I thought of the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of Western civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it. And when I brooded upon the cultural barrenness of black life, I wondered if clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember were native with man. I asked myself if these human qualities were not fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another."

As I reflect about the human qualities of Western civilization, I wonder about the "positive tenderness" of the whites. Could there be much genuine feeling within the hearts of a people who could stand by and permit conditions such as exist in "Black Boy" to prevail? What kind of people are these who kept others in slavery, freed them in name only, tried to make sure that they didn't become enlightened through education, signed restrictive covenants to keep them living in the slums, maintained the idea of white supremacy? The only "genuine passion" that I ever saw exhibited was the unleashed spirit that moved the mobs to lynch.

How hollow are the memories of white America that send Gold Star mothers over to Europe to visit the graves of their fallen black sons in Jim-Crow transports! How hollow are the memories of white America that maintain a Jim-Crow army and navy in the second World War. Where is this grand compassion of Western civilization? This "emotional strength," this "clean, positive

tenderness, love, honor, loyalty," leaves me groping in the darkness.

Negroes do feel deeply! Could they have given America folk music otherwise? It is agreed that our masses need education. Through education they will arrive. But I believe that the way of life of the Negro, the humble folk, with the white humble folk, is the only redeeming factor in America. It's the humble soul that makes life livable anywhere. It is he who offers a helping hand in the time of trouble; it is he who practices the golden rule; it is he who doesn't clamor for wealth and position, (the shallow possessions.) . . . In happy contrast to the materialists, the capitalists, the exploiters, he makes a pretty picture. It is he, the meek soul, black and white, who will one day inherit the earth.—Ruth Apilado, Maywood, Ill.

## Sorry For Race Haters

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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8BT/gha

100-157464-19


COPY

COPY

Los Angeles, Calif.  
June 18 - 45

Dear Sir:

Richard Wright the negro who wrote black boy and Native Son books are doing no good and a lot of harm they are causing disunity and sreading race hatred and if you people dont want America tore up the same as Germany you had better put a stop to sutch people as that poor old ass of a Southern Senator with his back to Africa move ment and sutch old fools as that poor crazy old Richard Wright. We colored people are good natured all we want is justice a good job with good pay for work well done. Every time we turn around some one is complaining nagging constantly critercising every thing we do. Richard Wright seem to be unhappy in America so we wish to God he would leave and go some place else for he is geting on our nerves. I and all the other colored people know that ninty percent of the trash that he puts in his books are lies, but if people in Germany should get a hold of Black boy I'm awfull afraid Uncle Sam's face is going to be red for you cant rule a German if you cant rule America. And the lies that poor sick braned fool Richard Wright put in his books sure dont do America any good in the foreigner's eye sight. We colored people want Richard Wright's books baned if he cant write a story without trying to agitate race trouble we want him to pick himself a new vocation. Just get a copy of his books and go through them. We dont see why he isn't in the Army anyway. If he went to India or some other place and saw how horrible those people live then he would see how far advanced we are. After all we colored people are doing the best we can if you would get a copy of the negro hand book for 1942 you would see just how well we are doing. We are only a small race of people. We colored people are very discouraged and that is the reason sixty million little bity Japanese can fight all most two billion people without a allie and hole out so long. Because that Billion colored people are on the point of giving up. After all this is not our war and if we win we loose So I suppose there is nothing to do but just say to hell with the hole bloody mess.

 b7c  
This is from that poor old fools book Black boy this is enough to provoke the devil.

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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP1 BT/bee



Los Angeles Cal

July 145

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DATE 8-25-81 BY SP6 BT/600

We are writing you people in  
hope you will be able to have books  
like Black boy and also native son  
by the negre Richard Wright <sup>RICHARD WRIGHT</sup> banned  
as he is spreading race hatred  
and causing disunity. If you  
will look through the mans books  
you will see how he rant and  
have like a mad man. It is terrible  
and also he use to much filthy  
expressions the white writers don't  
do that. <sup>RECORDED 100-157464-29</sup>  
<sup>INDEXED</sup> Why should he be so for  
the sake of unity please have his  
books banned. they are doing no good

and a lot of harm.

If the negro another  
cant write a book with trying to stir  
up race hatred between the white  
and colored folks it will be better  
for them to not write at all.

RECEIVED JUL 16 11 30 AM '45  
RECEIVED JUL 7 9 26 AM '45  
U. S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE  
F B I  
RECEIVED SECURITY DIV  
JUL 6 7 06 PM '45

Los Angeles Cal  
July 1-45

Dear Sir

We are writing you people in hope you will be able to have books like black boy and also Native Son by the Negro Richard Wright baned as he is spreading race hatred and causing disunity. If you will look through the mans books you will see how he rant and rave like a mad man. It is terrible and also he use to much filthy expressions the white writers don't do that so why should he. So for the sake of unity please have his books baned. They are doing no good and a lot of harm.

If the Negro author cant write a book without trying to stir up race hatred between the white and colored folks it will be better for them to not write at all.

[REDACTED] b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY *SP8 BTJ/bia*



LVO  
100-157464 - 20 ✓  
RECORDED  
EX-1

Mr. James M. McInerney  
Acting Head, Criminal Division  
John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

July 11, 1945

PUBLICATIONS OF RICHARD WRIGHT

Enclosed herewith for such consideration as you may deem appropriate  
is a copy of a communication received by this Bureau from [redacted]  
[redacted] Los Angeles, California. The letter of [redacted]  
has been acknowledged by this Bureau.

b7c

cc - Assistant Attorney General  
Herbert Wechsler

Enclosure

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 1-25-81 BY SP1 BTJ/bce

Mr. Tolson  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Carson  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Hendon  
Mr. Pennington  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Mr. Nease  
Miss Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

MAILED 15

★ JUL 11 1945 P.M.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

58 JUL 16 1945

b7c

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20  
JUL 11  
11-PM  
1945

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID  
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300

REASON FOR NON-DELIVERY RETURNED

Moved - No Address  
Unknown to Addressee  
No Such Number  
Firm Discontinued No Order  
Carrier's Initials

Los Angeles, California

JUL 11 1945  
LOS ANGELES  
CALIF.

b7C

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6-25-88 BY SP4/BJA

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

July 11, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

I have received your letter of July 1, 1945, and appreciate your interest in making the observations contained therein available to me. In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division whose address is 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California, telephone Madison 7241.

Sincerely yours,

*J. E. Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bw  
*File Fair*

*8-7-45*  
EX-105 1045

LVO  
100-157464-20

RECORDED

July 11, 1945

b7C

Los Angeles, California

I have received your letter of July 1, 1945, and appreciate your interest in making the observations contained therein available to me. In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division whose address is 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California, telephone Madison 7241.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/Kce

LVO  
Mr. Tolson  
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Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Carson  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Hendon  
Mr. Pennington  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Mr. Nease  
Miss Gandy

b7C

88347

THURSDAY

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 3-25-81 BY SP6 BTJ/bce

RECORDED 100-157414-11  
EX-22 F H I  
30 JUL 6 1945

30 JUL 1 1945

FILE 2  
anonymous and  
handwritten notes  
necessary

Los Angeles Cal

July - 4 - 45

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bce

Dear Sir

do you see this trash here this  
nigger is one of the biggest spreaders of race  
hatred there is in the world he is nothing  
but a black nazi and for that reason we  
people think it is best to band his books  
as they are doing no good and a lot of harm  
other people have wrote to you folks to  
have this mans books banded. They are to  
filthy and they are giving the whole world  
a wrong empession about the way the negre  
live in America. we do not know how  
to have undesirable books banded so  
we are writing to you folks so please  
do some thing to put a ~~hand~~ <sup>stop</sup> on this lying  
black beast trash. He is ~~doing nothing~~ <sup>trying to stir up race trouble</sup>  
but trying to stir up race trouble. ~~he is~~  
only thirty seven ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> do wish you folks  
would put him in the Army. ~~he is~~  
Get a copy of his books and you will  
see just how that lying dog is ~~going~~  
trying to agitate trouble between the

RECORDED

INDEXED

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JUL 10 1945

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