

CONVERSATIONS UNLIMITED - Monday, March 25, 1985

INTRO UP AND UNDER

Hi, everybody. Who and what are you? That's a serious question with its roots in history. Who are you? How did you become what you are? Is having white skin, or black skin, a genetic accident of birth, as most of us might respond, or are we white, or black, or some other color, as a matter of moral choice?

These intriguing and challenging questions have been asked publicly most recently by the noted novelist, James Baldwin. Today, we'll hear some of what Mr. Baldwin had to say about this during a recent lecture at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Mr. Baldwin raised the question of identity while calling for reconciliation and confrontation --- reconciliation with ourselves through confrontation with our history. Mr. Baldwin, of course, has answers to such questions. His answers might be unsettling to some. It has to do with the American experience, and how about different that experience is for white people and for people of color. He began by recalling a Roberta Flack song called "Compared to What?"

TAPE - Side 1 - cue: "...compared to what?"

000 - "We're trying to make it real, compared to what?"

166 - "...they might as well have been monks."

11:00

AFO: Mr. Baldwin believes Americans are at a crossroads, at a point of decision. He put it this way:

TAPE cue - "...in other words..."

368 - "The people who deny my identity..." through

375 - "...grim, but it's also very fruitful." 00:38

AFO: James Baldwin has a suggestion for Americans in how to avoid this problem of identity.

TAPE cut - "...and find out whence you came."

437 - "If you know whence you came..." through

441 - "...because you can't find out what to do." 00:14

14:00

AFO: We'll return in a moment with more from novelist James Baldwin.

BRIDGE MUSIC UP AND UNDER

AFO: Hi. I'm Al Oickle, and I'm at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where the noted American novelist James Baldwin gave a lecture recently. It was a lecture on history, on philosophy, on social relations. Mr. Baldwin has a marvelous way with words. He is a spellbinder on the platform as well as on the written page. In his talk ~~at~~ at Stony Brook, Mr. Baldwin challenged Americans to consider their sense of history, their sense of self as part of that history. Here is some more of James Baldwin:

TAPE SIDE 1 cue: "Now, what am I trying to say?"

180 - "I'm not standing here to complain..." through

289 - "Now, we black people are once again alone." 9:45

AFO: James Baldwin, speaking at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, had thus defined the problem, the crossroads at which the Republic he loves finds itself. He asked ~~3/~~ "What are we to do?" Here is how he answered ~~3/~~ the question:

TAPE SIDE 1 cue: "What are we to do?"

307 - "Well, we can't simply lie down..." through

366 - "...architects of what we call the new world." 5:50

AFO: James Baldwin claims no simple solutions. But, he suggests, reconciliation and confrontation are the way to begin.

TAPE SIDE 1 cue: "I know that it must be done."

459 - "And I know that the first step..." through

465 - "...who package and sell to us our politicians." 00:35

AFO: James Baldwin, the American novelist, speaking at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

29:00 OUTRO