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The Articulate Voice of the Negro

Who Speaks for the Negro?
by Robert Penn Warren; Random House, New York; 444 pp., \$5.95.

The civil rights revolution mushrooms. The tremors of discord and flashes of achievement blend into a voluminously reported and intensely scrutinized collage.

And every day, when another objection to this movement toward freedom is lodged, when another argument in favor of race equality is registered, there is the wonder at complexity. The militant student, the distant suburbanite, the angered segregationist, the beleaguered politician—all have their views of what the furious encounter is about.

Years pass. Events beget events. And then it can be seen that the civil rights movement — essentially surrounding the quest for upward mobility by those iden-

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tified as Negroes in America — has become the dominant domestic issue and dwells now as a profoundly unresolved tale.

There is a voice to the Negro. There are leaders of several stripes and there is intense participation by their followers. And in any debate of the Negro revolution, with or between persons of any persuasion, it is more usual then not that the question will eventually be asked, "Who speaks for the Negro?"

Robert Penn Warren has told us. He has told us by doing two things. First he took the best possible approach and went to talk personally to those who wage the revolution and those who experience it.

He talked with young Ne-



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groes rights workers and the "big brass," Adam Clayton Powell, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, James Farmer, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Dr. Kenneth Clark, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin.

From hours of taped interviews he composed a record of thought and attitude that bounds about freely — cross-

and recrossing all the rampant theories and conclusions about the black man and the freedom fight in which he is engaged.

The other thing Warren does is clarify. He finds a couple of dozen very crucial areas in which attitudes among Negro leaders are diverse.

And he also indicates with quiet force some of the lies with which the white majority has lived so long in America concerning the black man.

That is as much of a statement as Warren makes. It is enough. The truth of the Negro's grievance and the truth that it cannot be addressed without pain and difficulty are what Warren says in the brief commentary he allows himself.

For the rest of it, others do the talking. It is a reference book on the minds of the Negroes engaged in and leading a revolution. Warren's roving interview technique and the resultant document implants a fascinating background of the divergent attitudes within the movement itself.

The one apparent common-ground is the unanimous exposition of the ugly nature of segregation in all its guises.

And it is plain enough that it is the Negro who is at last speaking for the Negro.

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