

family. And the family has decided to accept it, to support it, and to allow it a degree of eccentricity denied the other members.

Document on Race

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO? by Robert Penn Warren. Random House. 444 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by
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PERHAPS it is unfair to read through one man's book wishing that another had written it. Still, as I turned the pages of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* by Robert Penn Warren, I kept saying to myself: "Bayard Rustin should have done this one."

The idea of this book is a good one—of taking a portable tape recorder around to various Negro leaders and others and talking with them about the aspirations, goals, and methods of the "Negro struggle for freedom and equality."

Robert Penn Warren is a distinguished writer but could scarcely claim to be sophisticated within the realm of civil rights. This shows through in some of his crucial interviews. Someone like Rustin would know these leaders and the internal history of the movement so well that they would not dare "pull" on him some of the answers they give to the Southern-born, Pulitzer-prize-winning novelist who now teaches at Yale.

Warren seems to get on best with the old time semi-literate preacher who bravely took his stand to become the first black voter in his Louisiana parish and with the gentlemanly leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Roy Wilkins. On the other hand, Warren describes the late Malcolm X with the inhuman objectivity that he might apply to a jungle tiger.

Who speaks for the Negro? Warren does not really tell us, but he does document what the keen eyes and ears of a sensitive white liberal sees and hears when he talks with front line leaders of the current Negro revolution. All this is interesting and important, but it is hardly what they say

to themselves or to each other.

In his own commentary, Warren makes a ferocious—and somewhat successful—assault upon the logic and personality of James Baldwin. This book is perhaps the most intimate, skillful, and passionate defense of white America that has appeared in intellectual circles for some time. No, Warren concludes, the Negro will not redeem "white civilization"; he cannot. "For, in the end, everybody has to redeem himself."

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