

many of the latest dustups.

There was, for starters, the decision to abort a job offer to Jack Miles, a former editor at the *Los Angeles Times* and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *God: A Biography*. According to Beam's account, a deal was essentially in place to offer Miles an appointment to the theology faculty, until the esteemed literary scholar Christopher Ricks—apparently irked by an Op-Ed piece Miles had written for the *Globe* in favor of forgiving Bill Clinton—stepped in and used his influence with Silber to “put the shiv to Miles.” Theology school dean Robert Neville declines to discuss the matter. But it makes one wonder: When Silber informed BU trustees in 1993 that the school had “remained resistant to” to such left-wing ideologies as radical feminism, multiculturalism, and the Frankfurt

School, did he mean to include Clintonism as well?

BU appears more hospitable to the right-hand end of the ideological spectrum. At a November seminar on democracy, the historian Claudio Veliz reportedly shocked participants

“New York’s gain is Boston’s loss,” says one regent.

with a toast: He asked the gathering to drink to the news that Chile’s ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet had won a round in his court battle against extradition from the U.K. “The assembled dignitaries, including Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, sat in stunned, stony silence,” Beam recounted in his *Globe* column.

But it’s the Diamandopoulos hiring that has raised the most eyebrows. After all, Silber himself was not untar-

nished by the Adelphi scandal: He was the leading defender of Diamandopoulos on the school’s board of trustees, one of the eighteen members (out of nineteen) who were fired by the New York State Board of Regents for intransigence and negligence in early 1997. The hiring of Diamandopoulos could be seen as a defiant response to that humiliation—or as an act of loyalty to an old friend. After all, Diamandopoulos and Silber have been close for years; indeed, it was Silber who helped convince his onetime protégé to accept the job at Adelphi in the first place.

For Diamandopoulos, the job at BU represents something of a homecoming: For years, he taught philosophy at Brandeis University in nearby Waltham, where he was known as a colorful and flamboyant figure. At BU, Diamandopoulos will have a vague port-

folio overseeing development, education policy, and the school’s highly profitable forays into international education.

What went wrong at Adelphi was an “unorthodox and unhealthy” leadership style, says Saul B. Cohen, the New York regents’ chair for higher education—“a leadership style,” he adds, “which was clearly borrowed from and supported by the then president of Boston University.”

And now Silber, who once shared a \$546 dinner with Diamandopoulos at Adelphi’s expense, is bringing the scandal home to BU. “New York’s gain is Boston’s loss,” Cohen says.

The BU administration takes a different view of the hiring. “We hire people for their abilities,” university spokesperson David Lampe says of Diamandopoulos. “There are very controversial people in academia.”

TOM SCOCCA

AFTER THE CRISIS

IN 1940 A PRECOCIOUS YOUNG man with an interest in the theater joined a YMCA amateur drama group in Harlem. Harold Cruse, aged twenty-four, was instantly struck by one “highly curious” fact: “All the members were overwhelmingly in favor of doing white plays with Negro casts. I wondered why, and very naively expressed my sentiments about it.” What he subsequently discovered about culture and politics in Harlem formed the core of his monumental survey, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, pub-

lished to energetic critical response in 1967. “It will eventually come to be regarded as one of the landmarks of social criticism in the twentieth century,” gushed Christopher Lasch. The historian Eugene Genovese proclaimed, “In focus and depth it transcends anything written in our generation.” Critic Albert Murray judged it “the most urgently needed if not the most important book of the year.” Others were less approving. “I don’t think too much of it,” remarked the Trinidadian writer C.L.R. James. “He

doesn’t like West Indians, he doesn’t like Jews, he doesn’t like too many people.”

Despite these early portents, Cruse’s book fell into a long slumber of obscurity. *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* has remained in print—no small achievement—but occupies a precarious place in the canon of history and African-American studies. Yet the book’s thirtieth anniversary has finally ushered in a modest Cruse revival: A conference on his work was recently held at the University of Michigan; Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka honored him at a gathering at Ohio State University; NYU’s Tamiment Institute Library has acquired his papers; and a collection of essays assessing his legacy is forthcoming from Routledge.

Cruse’s six-hundred-page book is a caustic, polemical, and uncompromising indict-

ment of Harlem’s black bourgeoisie and intellectual elite for its integrationist philosophy and its historic failure to develop a sophisticated program of “cultural, political and economic advancement” along nationalist lines. Negro intellectuals, contended Cruse, “analyze nothing and clarify less and heap confusion on top of confusion” and, unlike their Jewish, Irish, and Italian counterparts, “did not teach the Negro masses the techniques of ethnic group survival under capitalism.” The results were catastrophic: a “cultural scorched earth policy” joined with political backwardness, poverty, and economic slavery. For Cruse, responsibility for this state of affairs ultimately rests with the black elite. “What is really lacking,” he wrote, “are Negro intellectuals who are economic

theorists, or who are social theorists about anything but racial integration."

Cruse used razor-sharp vignettes of figures like Paul Robeson, Richard Wright and Lorraine Hansberry to demonstrate how, from the 1920s to the 1950s, black intellectuals were led astray by the integrationist politics of the American Communist Party and its often Jewish leaders. This "brainwashing," argued Cruse, blocked the emergence of any kind of serious black politics. The ideological dominance of the Negro left also obstructed the growth of black enterprise: "In Harlem radical circles after the war," Cruse contended, "anyone studying the contents of *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Journal of Commerce* was looked upon with deep distrust."

Cruse directed his further scorn at the black bourgeoisie's inability to provide patronage for its own artistic talent. "From 1910-1930, there was infinitely more theatrical activity in Harlem than occurred between 1945 and 1960," he asserted. "All Negroes in the theater are paying for the precarious integration of a few." By the 1960s, Cruse believed that black nationalists had swung to the opposite extreme, adopting a "hatred of whiteness" that was "self-defeating" in its disregard for "the critical faculties."

In its obsession with the old left (Cruse was a member of the Communist Party from 1946 to 1953), its interdisciplinary sweep, and its occasional bluster, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* is very much a document of its time. It's the work of a man who came of political age in the 1940s after serving in World War II, a man who honed his polemical skills on Harlem street corners and in Greenwich Village

haunts like Café Figaro, a man who toiled at Macy's and the U.S. Post Office by day and passed his nights reading and writing in the solitude of a Chelsea apartment. Cruse was a man who believed, as he wrote in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, that in order "to get down to the roots of this racial crisis in America...all intellectual superficiality...coming from either side of the racial fence, must be shattered with the most rigorous critical assault the collective intel-

HAROLD CRUSE



Scholars examining the book's importance from the vantage point of the late 1990s differ about its legacy and significance. At the OSU conference, Beverly Guy-Sheftall of Spelman College assailed the "masculinist paradigm" of the book, which she said led to a skewed and misleading depiction of the only woman featured in the text, Lorraine Hansberry. OSU's Ike Newsum wistfully implied that the political climate in the 1990s makes it difficult even to dis-

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ligence can muster."

Today, the book's blueprint for an uplifting, middle-class-led nationalist project—a black political party, the formation of business and housing cooperatives, massive federal aid—is decidedly unfashionable, as is the text's recurring theme: "No social movement of a protest nature in Harlem can be successful...unless it is at one and the same time a political, economic and cultural movement." Yet Cruse's fundamental arguments are still debated in different contexts, as the playwright August Wilson's recent call for an autonomous black theater demonstrates.

cuss the book: "It's not so much about nationalism or integration or communism anymore," said Newsum. "It's about careerism versus radical intellectual activism. Maybe that's the question now."

Columbia's Manning Marable, who considers *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* to be the "most complex theoretical work produced in the Black Power period," nevertheless criticizes its focus on ethnicity as an immutable category in American life and its emphasis on New York City as a bellwether for black America. Marable notes, too, that the black bourgeoisie dissected by Cruse has, in the wake of

the civil rights movement, been superseded by one that is much more demographically and politically complex.

Others have no doubt about its lasting importance. "The greatest value of his book," wrote the late John Henrik Clarke in 1991, "is that it is the work of an alarmist. Alarmists have a role to play in history.... Mr. Cruse has put many subjects on the agenda for black intellectuals to handle that cannot and should not be ignored if we are to survive as a people." Says Cornel West: "Every time I write I'm wrestling with Cruse."

In the wake of the book's initial success, Cruse won fame as well as fortune and found himself in demand. The University of Michigan tried to hire him in 1968, but, reluctant to leave New York, he declined the invitation. But when Michigan came back with a lucrative offer of \$18,500 per year, he accepted a post in the Department of History, taking it up without so much as an undergraduate degree, much less a doctorate. He retired in 1984, and in 1987 published a subsequent work, *Plural but Equal*, in which he reiterated his call for a black political party and black economic cooperatives.

From his home in Ann Arbor, the eighty-two-year-old Cruse is now completing a sequel to *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* in which he assesses intellectuals like Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates Jr. and nationalists like Louis Farrakhan. He is tight-lipped about the manuscript but quick to defend his earlier work. "The black bourgeoisie in America is a lumpen bourgeoisie," Cruse scolds. "It's a middle class that has not lived up to its class mission."

SCOTT SHERMAN