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In Memoriam

EDWARD FRANKLIN FRAZIER (SEPTEMBER 24, 1894 - MAY 17, 1962)

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It is fitting that at the time of the annual meeting of the African Studies Association we pause and pay tribute to our distinguished colleague, E. Franklin Frazier, who died on May 17 of this year.

Words are clearly inadequate to the purpose of this occasion, and one can do little more than suggest the qualities that set Frank apart as a person and marked him as a creative teacher and scholar. At the time of his death, he was vice-president of this Association and its president-elect. He had also served as a member of the Board and had been a vital participant in the affairs of the Association.

Professor Frazier brought to the study of African affairs the training and outlook of the sociologist with varied interests and wide perspectives. He was indeed one of the distinguished sociologists of his generation. Born in Baltimore, he graduated from Howard University and then taught in secondary schools and at Tuskegee Institute before he began his graduate studies in sociology at Clark University, where he received his M. A. in 1920. After pioneer work as Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work (1922-27), he continued his graduate work at the University of Chicago and was awarded the Ph. D. in 1931. From 1931 to 1934, he was Research Professor in the Department of Sociology at Fisk University. In 1934, he accepted an appointment as Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology at Howard University, a position he filled with great distinction until his retirement in 1959, spanning a quarter of a century. His retirement was an "active" one and he continued to teach and write until the very time of his death.

Frank Frazier was the recipient of many honors, tributes to him as a scholar and teacher and to his warmth and wisdom as a man. He taught for short periods at a number of universities, during the summer or on leave from Howard. He was invited to special lectureships at several universities, including London, Liverpool and Edinburgh. He spent two interesting years (1951-53) as Chief of the Division of the Applied Social Sciences at UNESCO, Paris. He was the recipient of honorary degrees from Morgan College and the University of Edinburgh. And he received the highest possible recognition for a sociologist when he was elected, in 1948, to the Presidency of the American Sociological Society. Not the least of the tributes to him was a lecture series arranged in his honor by the Howard University Student Council in March 1962, about five weeks before his death. The lectures on this

occasion were given by Professor Everett Hughes, one of Frazier's many devoted friends; and the event itself perhaps symbolizes the ultimate in a teacher's success: the esteem of his students.

Frazier's record of scholarship is impressive: ten books, not less than eighteen chapters in books, some eighty-nine articles and a number of important addresses. Some of his books have already achieved the status of sociological classics, notably The Negro Family in Chicago (1932), The Negro Family in the United States (1939) and The Negro in the United States (1949). Furthermore, in numerous articles and in the volume, Race and Culture Contacts in the Modern World (1957), he contributed significantly to sociological knowledge and theory, particularly in relation to problems of race and ethnicity. Influenced by his great teacher at the University of Chicago, Robert E. Park, Frank Frazier examined and illuminated the role, behavior, dilemmas and reactions of the less-favored peoples of the world in their quest for status.

Professor Frazier became interested in African peoples and problems early in his career. His studies of the Negro family, the free Negro and the emergence of the Negro as a people in the United States led him to investigate the African context as it related to the American Negro. He found it essential to assess the impact of the African background on the sociology of the American Negro. His studies of the Negro in Brazil reinforced his sensitivity to African realities. Moreover, in his persistent preoccupation with race and culture contacts in the modern world, he developed an acute awareness and acquired an impressive knowledge of the peoples, movements and socio-cultural features of historic and contemporary Africa.

During the last ten years of his life, Frazier's academic involvement in Africa became steadily more direct and focused. His writing increasingly reflected his African interests. Africa was the source of much of his material and the stage for many of his generalizations in his Race and Culture Contacts in the Modern World. His trip to Africa in 1952 intensified his interest in the continent. His immersion in African studies at Howard University, beginning, I believe, around 1953, deepened his involvement. Over the years, he was engaged both in the teaching and the development of the Howard program. Beginning in 1957, he shared some of the teaching in the Program of African Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, under Vernon McKay's direction. In the last decade of his career Frank Frazier therefore was basically involved in African studies, and his credentials as an Africanist were of the highest order.

While these tributes to a colleague and the recital of his accomplishments are relevant, they reflect only part of the Frazier story. To those of us who knew Frank, equally important is the memory of a man who was an astute, sometimes ironic and often witty observer of the foibles and features of man; the dedicated scholar, occasionally vigorously contentious but always of unshakable integrity; and very importantly, we remember him as the firm believer in the rights of all men, without regard to their past, place, culture or society, to freedom and dignity.