



vay.

8400 Union St

ESLEIGH MFG CO

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FISK
UNIVERSITY

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

William Attaway

Miss Charlotte Carr, Director, Hull House

It has to be admitted that I know very little really about Mr. Attaway. I had one long afternoon's conversation with him when he was referred to me by Dr. Bousfield some months ago. I received a very vivid impression that he was a person of unusual promise and ability. I liked his point of view, his courage and his sensible and dispassionate reaction to the problem of his race. I was sufficiently interested in him that after he left I bought his book, which I have read and consider excellent - indeed, amazingly comparable to "Of Mice and Men", though, of course, in no sense imitative of that.

I wrote Mr. Attaway my appreciation of the book, and have recently had an application from him for residence at Hull-House. I have been delighted to accept that application whenever he can come to Chicago, and do want him to be a resident. Whether or not his residence is dependent upon his receiving a fellowship from the Fund, I do not know.

Mr. Attaway is a very different type of person from Dewey Jones, and would not, on a cooperative plan between the Rosenwald Fund and Hull-House, do the type of thing we found we were able to do with Dewey Jones. On the other hand, he has his own special qualifications, in my opinion, for a joint program. I am not - I want to make this clear - asking for money from the Rosenwald Fund, but do say that if he is a resident here, and carries out the program he has planned with the Fund, much of real value could come from the joint contact.

To sum it up, I have enough confidence in Mr. Attaway that I would bring him in here to help us out without further information

than I have of him. On the other hand, I am aware that for the purposes of your references, you will want more information than I am able to provide.

- - - - -

Mr. A. L. Foster, Executive Secretary, Chicago Urban League

I have an especial interest in this candidate because of my very close contact with him and his sister while they were at the University of Illinois. There were some of us who felt that they were both very talented, and we have followed their careers with very deep interest.

Mr. Attaway has proved his ability as a writer and it appears that the plan of work which he has submitted should be of tremendous value, if it is developed.

- - - - -

Dr. Bruce Wierick, Associate Professor of English, University of Illinois

I am glad to write you a favorable report of Mr. Attaway, who for two years was a student in my classes in creative writing. His work here was unusually promising in its ability to handle plot and to motivate plausible characters with originality and skill. His recent novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, deserved I think the praise it got, and is one of the most surprising first novels to show up recently. If Attaway can keep up the pace he sets there, he will soon be known as one of our really creative writers. The novel was the more surprising in that it dealt almost entirely with white characters - a task which I believe no other Negro has attempted with such success. It will be interesting to see if he is equally adept at interpreting his own race. If he is, he will put us all in his debt, as he is free from looking at the Negro in the usual stereotyped formulas that so much

writing about the Negro employs. How Negroes look to Negroes is something that I for one know little about; and about which I am curious. I think Attaway has a chance of telling us. I strongly suspect that he has more ability to be a good novelist than any Negro now on the scene; and I can hardly doubt the pleasure you will get in having a part in helping him along in these his formative years.

I should add that I know Attaway very well. When he was here he wrote plays which the Negroes here produced, and as a result soon got attention from some of us who are interested in such abilities, and who are not afraid of a color line. I may say that I always felt about him that he was a little too serious, a kind of Negro Hamlet, shrouded in melancholy, and feeling more than I liked to see the oppression of color discrimination; though I may add that were I in his place, I should probably get a good deal more violent than he ever did. I am a little disturbed at the propaganda aspects of his projected plan; and think you might warn him that life is bigger than the problems of life. The sociological novel is in vogue just now, of course; but those that will live will be only incidentally sociological, and primarily alive with real people that we can care about for some other reason than that they represent a problem. I say this with some diffidence, as from long experience with writers, I have found that often plans that sound the least promising turn out the best, and vice versa.

- - - - -

Mr. Archer Winsten, Motion Picture Reviewer, New York Post

Mr. Attaway's personality and qualifications are, in my opinion, admirably suited to the type of work he has outlined. His first published novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, is hardly more than an exercise

despite its somewhat derivative excellence. Later unpublished writings indicate a far greater talent and one which is peculiarly fitted for the task he has set for himself. Of course any book is a gamble. Creative work cannot be guaranteed. But I can assure you that the possibilities in this case, or, I may say, the probabilities are brilliant.

It is hard to conceive of a less stereotyped or more significant subject from the Negro point of view than the one chosen. I have suspected for some time that Mr. Attaway is on the verge of making the finest contribution to American literature of any Negro author to date. I may be wrong. People usually are when they say things like that. But I know of no author with greater potentialities. What will come of them is for the future to decide.

- - - - -

Mr. John Woodburn, Editor, Doubleday, Doran and Company, New York

I have known William Attaway for nearly two years, both as a personal friend and as his editor at Doubleday, Doran, who published his novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder. As a person, I have been impressed by his exceptional adjustment to life and to circumstance, his single-minded, honest approach to his work - in short, by the general integrity of his personality.

As a writer, and I do not limit this to a category of racial interpretation, I believe him to possess an authentic talent, a talent which I have found balanced by a maturity not often found in a young man not yet thirty. The novel now in progress exhibits, even in its unfinished, structural state, the fulfillment of the promise implied in Let Me Breathe Thunder. In my understanding of the aims and accomplishments of the Rosenwald Foundation, William Attaway is a logical and exceptionally worthy candidate for a fellowship.

Attaway, William Alexander Born, Greenville Mississippi, Nov. 19, 1911
 Entered: Feb. 8, 1932. Matriculated: Feb. 8, 1932. Matr. Number: 80181
 College: L.A.S. (Pre-Law) Degree: A.B. June 8, 1936.

Accepted from Tilden Tech. High School, Chi., Ill.

Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade	Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade
(SECOND SEMESTER 1931-32)				(FIRST SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Elementary Spanish	Span.1a	4	D	Modern Spanish	Span.2a	4	D
Modern Industry	Econ.27	3	C	Hist. of Ancient and Med. Philosophy	Phil.3	4	C
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet.1	3	C	Primitive Societies	Soc.42	3	B
English History	Hist.2b	3	D	Social Evolution	Soc.3	3	C
Hygiene & Sanitation	Hyg.3	1	C	Thesis & Honors	Engl.60a	4	A
Individual Athletics	P.E.14	1	D	Soccer	P.E.31	1	A
Cavalry Drill	Mil.22a	1	C	Cavalry Drill	Mil.23a	1	D
Cavalry Theory	Mil.22b	1	B	Cavalry Theory	Mil.21b	1	E
(FIRST SEMESTER 1932-33)				Handball	P.E.44	1	*pass
General Zoology	Zool.1	5	B	Introductory Botany	Bot.1a	2	*pass
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet.2	3	B	(SECOND SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Elementary Spanish	Span.1b	4	D	Intro. Botany-Lab.	Bot.1b	2	*pass
Intro. to Literature	Eng.10a	3	C	Social Progress and Social Values	Soc.20	3	C
Tumbling Stunts	P.E.15	1	E	Modern Spanish	Span.2b	4	D
Cavalry Drill	Mil.21a	1	B	Prin. of Secondary Ed.	Ed.6	3	C
Cavalry Theory	Mil.21b	1	E	Hist. of Modern Phil.	Phil.4	4	C
(SECOND SEMESTER 1932-33)				Thesis & Honors	Engl.60b	4	A
Vert. Zool & Anatomy	Zool.2	5	E	Music Appreciation	Mus.14	2	E
Intro. to Psych.	Psych.1	4	C	Squash Racquet	P.E.45	1	ab
Modern Spanish	Span.2a	4	E	Infantry Theory	Mil.4b	1	D
Swimming	P.E.13	1	E	Social Fact. in Personality	Soc.2	3	*pass
Cavalry Drill	Mil.24a	1	C	Tennis	P.E.33	1	*pass
Cavalry Theory	Mil.24b	1	C	Intro. to Mod. Theo. in Education	Educ.31	3	*pass
(FIRST SEMESTER 1934-35)				Contemporary Poetry	Engl.44	3	*pass
Intro. Philosophy	Phil.1	3	B				
General Psychology	Psych.2	4	C				
Principles of Sociol.	Soc.1	3	B				
Advanced Narrative Composition	Rhet.6	3	A				
American Literature	Eng.12	2	C				
Playground ball	P.E.34	1	ab				
Cavalry Drill	Mil.23a	1	E				
Cavalry Theory	Mil.23b	1	D				
(SECOND SEMESTER 1934-35)							
Rural Sociology	Soc.7	3	D				
Criminology	Soc.9	3	C				
Metaphysics	Phil.16	3	B				
General Geology	Geol.1	3	C				
Charities	Soc.8	3	C				
Soccer	P.E.31	1	E				
(Summer SESSION 1935)							
Educational Psych.	Ed.825	3	C				
Comparative Edu.	Ed.85	3	D				
Hist. of Education	Ed.82	3	B				

total semester hours 126 1/2

In good standing.

A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor; E, failure; ab. (absent)
 ex. (excused absence); Dr., dropped from class; *passed by
 examination without taking course.

Parent or Guardian: Florence Mary Attaway, 506 E. 42nd Street, Chicago
 Illinois.

Student classified as Resident

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



PLAN OF WORK

PLEASE RETURN
TO
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

This is to be a factual novel on the Negro in the steel industry from 1914 when the "jack-legs" went into the South and recruited fieldhands and sharecroppers to work the Allegheny Valley steel mills, to 1919 when the great steel strikes raged. The novel is to be divided into three sections:

The first part of this project requires some background of the rural life of the Negro in the South, so that the effects of sudden industrialization can be highlighted and shown in proper contrast to beginnings. An informed treatment of these beginnings is important because much of what happened to the migrants in the world of industry is understandable only in terms of psychological hang-overs of Southern culture. The particular Negroes whom I propose to treat came from the red clay hills of Kentucky where they had already grown tired of scratching the barren hills for a meager living. They were real peasant folk and would not have left the hills they were born on if it had not been for a realization that their fields would no longer produce. There have been many reasons given for the migration from Kentucky...But it is a fact that a peasant folk die on the soil they are born on--if it is good soil.

The second part of this work will deal with the life of the Negroes at the mills, the peculiar adjustments that were made, and the effects that these adjustments had on the morals and general culture of these peasant folk. The adjustments made generally fall into one of three categories: economic, religious and moral, and social. For example, they faced the following problems: In the mills they were paid monthly what would have been accounted a good year's profit back in Kentucky. At the mills there was not the restraining influence of the church as a social center. In the Allegheny Valley there was at that time a minimum of societal pressure and persecution. The adjustments to these problems were varied and not generally constructive in the first generation.

The third section will deal with the Negroes place in the great steel strikes of 1919. The biggest problem here is the question of the black man's attitudes toward labor unions and the causes of these attitudes. There was, for example, a conservatism to be noted at that time. The Negro incurred much criticism for his scabbing activities. Nobody took into consideration the fact that the strike issues in the mills were to the Negroes trivial by contrast to the terrible labor conditions under which they had so lately suffered. That is but one example of the different interpretation I intend to give this section of the book. That interpretation in its entirety will cause the whole question to take on proper proportion through an understanding of motivations and backgrounds. In short, I propose to draw the picture with emphasis on "why," not merely "how."

This work is reasonably sure of publication. My publishers, Doubleday and Doran, Inc., having thought so highly of the idea, that they have asked for a written option on the publication rights.

This project has threefold significances: Educational, historical, and artistic. It will, in respect to education, provide students with valuable source ideas that may be fully investigated by scholars. These ideas will be original approaches to the problem of mass movements of peoples, and will have universal application. As to history, This book is expected to approximate a personal approach to the past. That is the strong point of the historical novel: Not alone does it give us facts out of a dim past, it also permits us to experience those facts through identification with the human beings depicted. Artistic value is too great an ideal to define briefly...so I will content myself by promising and predicting that this work will surpass my late book: "Let Me Breathe Thunder."

At present I have completed all of the library research on the subject of steel, and I have compiled this research in a number of notebooks for quick reference. I have made an outline, very comprehensive, on the book to be done...My publishers have seen the outline and are very enthusiastic about it. They predict great things for the book if I get money for the field research. Having gone so far already, that is--six months on preparation for the field research, I am sure to finish this book within the time limit I have set myself on the application blank.

Although I have become well read on the subject of steel and the migrant steel worker, I have not had an opportunity to go into the homes and workplaces of these men. I have not had the opportunity to contact men who have actually lived through the era I intend writing about. Therefore, I feel that I must visit the following places to get that much needed personal contact:

1: The state of Kentucky, Cumberland River region.

2: The state of Pennsylvania, Allegheny Valley Region.

a....Pittsburgh...

Up the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Ambridge...
Visiting steel mills and towns along the way.

Down the Monogahela River from Pittsburgh to
Mc Keesport...stopping at the important steel
centers like Homestead, Rankin, Braddock, and
Duquesne, etc....

From Pittsburgh again up the Allegheny River
to Tarentum...stopping at important steel
towns en route. The U.S. Steel Mills in Illinois
and Gary Indiana will also rate a few weeks.

As to subsequent plans...I have thought of doing a sequel to this work some time in the future: the wreckage of a people drifting into Pittsburgh, settling the "bottoms" of that town. Also, the social problem they present at present--writing to Pittsburgh.

Creative Writing

*Sorry no more to relate
Wells & good luck - Bill*

Please fill out and return in order that we may complete our records on former Rosenwald Fellows:

Name: William A. Attaway

Present position: Soldier

FELLOWSHIPS

Address: 39 Whitehall St, Room 807, New York, N.Y.

Significant recent activities: New Contract for book just signed - Harcourt + Brace Pub.

(Use additional sheet if desired)





THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

Acting Director for Fellowships
Julius Rosenwald Fund
4901 Ellis Avenue
Chicago 15, Illinois

FISK
UNIVERSITY

Name William Alexander Attaway

Field: Creative Writing

Creative Writer
456 West 148th Street, New York City

Plan of Work

A book (factual novel) on the Pittsburgh industrial area with special attention to the steel mills and the Negroes' place in them from the beginnings of the world war to the great steel strikes of 1919. The library research is already finished, so now I would like to get first hand information in the great steel centers.

Study would require one year.

Personal Data Born in Mississippi, November, 1911. Single

Age: 28

Undergraduate Work University of Illinois, B. A. 1936.

Graduate Work

Experience

Accomplishments

Publications: Let Me Breathe Thunder, a novel published by Doubleday Doran, 1939.
Stories for the Pittsburgh Courier and Challenge Magazine.

Has also written a play, "Carnival", produced in 1936; a novel, Children of Night, 1934, unpublished.

References

Miss Charlotte Carr, Hull House
Mr. A. L. Foster, Chicago Urban League
Professor Bruce Wierick, University of Illinois
Mr. John Woodburn, Doubleday Doran
Mr. Archer Winsten, Critic, New York Post

Budget Summary

Total Amount Needed	\$1500
From Applicant	0
From Fund	\$1500

AMOUNT GRANTED

F S K
UNIVERSITY

LETTER OF REFERENCE

William Attaway

John M. McK. Woodburn, Editor, Doubleday, Doran and Co., New York City.

I am very happy again to recommend William Attaway to your consideration. I have just finished reading his second novel and have had the satisfaction of seeing it enthusiastically accepted for publication by Doubleday Doran, the house in which I am an editor. It more than fulfills the patent promise shown in LET ME BREATHE THUNDER, his first novel, and shows an astonishing growth in power and mastery of material. We feel very definitely here that William Attaway is well on his way to becoming what we term, in publishing jargon, a property. He is a sincere and hard-working artist and he definitely requires financial assistance in order to pursue his work. Mr. Attaway's project of further exploring the folk beginnings of the black steel worker is of great interest to me and to the house, especially in the light of his new novel. I can without the slightest hesitation recommend him for a continuance.

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JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. William A. Attaway

Report Requested of Mr. John Woodburn

Doubleday Doran, Inc., Rockefeller Center,

New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's personal characteristics and qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in the field of study proposed. *An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.*

Your reply will be held in strictest confidence.

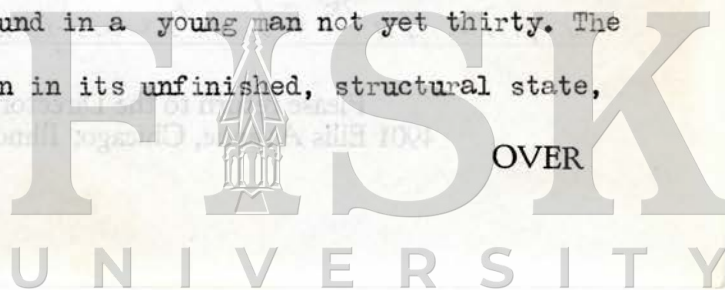
George M. Reynolds
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

I have known William Attaway for nearly two years, both as a personal friend and as his editor at Doubleday, Doran, who published his novel **LET ME BREATHE THUNDER**. As a person, I have been impressed by his exceptional adjustment to life and to circumstance, his single-minded, honest approach to his work - in short, by the general integrity of his personality.

As a writer, and I do not limit this to a category of racial-interpretation - I believe him to possess an authentic talent, a talent which I have found balanced by a maturity not often found in a young man not yet thirty. The novel now in progress exhibits, even in its unfinished, structural state,

OVER



the ~~promise~~ fulfillment of the promise implied in LET ME BREATHE THUNDER.
In my understanding of the aims and accomplishments of the Rosenwald
Foundation, William Attaway is a logical and exceptionally worthy can-
didate for the Fellowship.

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold
a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

yes

Signed John M. McK. Woodburn

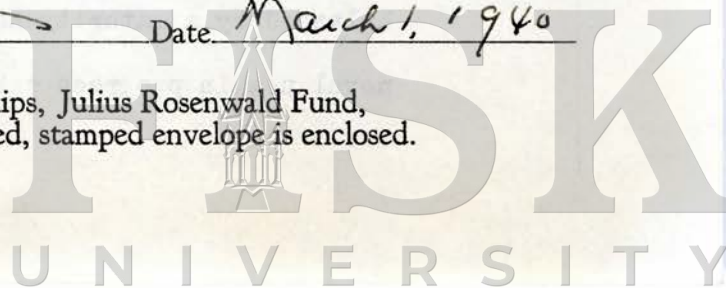
Position or Title Editor

Address 40 Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.

14 W. 49th St. New York City

Date March 1, 1940

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund,
4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.



A

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. William A. Attaway

Report Requested of Mr. Archer Winsten

New York Post, New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

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George M. Reynolds
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Dear Sir,

Mr. Attaway's personality and qualifications are, in my opinion, admirably suited to the type of work he has outlined. His first published novel, "Let Me Breathe Thunder", is hardly more than an exercise despite its somewhat derivative excellence. Later unpublished writings indicate a far greater talent and one which is peculiarly fitted for the task he has set for himself. Of course any book is a gamble. Creative work cannot be guaranteed. But I can assure you that the possibilities in this case, or, I may say, the probabilities are brilliant.

It is hard to conceive of a less stereotyped or more significant subject from the Negro point of view than the one chosen. I have suspected for some time that Mr. Attaway is on the verge of making the finest contribution to American literature of any Negro author to date. I may be wrong. People usually are when they say things like that. But I know of no author with greater potentialities. What will come of them is for the future to decide.

Sincerely,

Archer Winsten

OVER


FISK
UNIVERSITY

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND
4901 ELLIS AVENUE
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate

Report Requested of

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

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Director for Fellowships

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities? Holding a position has not a great deal to do with the utilization of such abilities as novel writing, as I myself have reason to know. But anyway, the candidate is free from personality handicaps, whatever they may be.

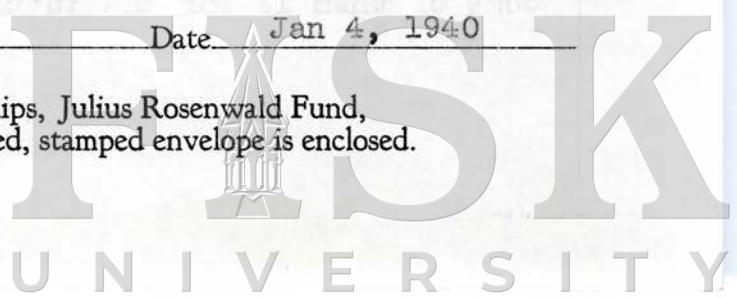
Signed Archer Winsten *Archer Winsten*

Position or Title Motion Picture Reviewer, New York Post, N.Y.

Address 75 West Street, New York, N.Y.

Date Jan 4, 1940

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.



A

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. William A. Attaway

Report Requested of Mr. Bruce Wierick

University of Illinois, Urbana

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George M. Reynolds
Director for Fellowships

REPORT Gentlemen:

I am glad to write you a favorable report of Mr. William Attaway, who for two years was a student in my classes in creative writing. His work here was unusually promising in its ability to handle plot and to motivate plausible characters with originality and skill. His recent novel, *Let Me Breathe Thunder*, deserved I think the praise it got, and is one of the most surprising first novels to show up recently. If Attaway can keep up the pace he sets there, he will soon be known as one of our really creative writers. The novel was the more surprising in that it dealt almost entirely with white characters--a task which I believe no other negro has attempted with such success. It will be interesting to see if he is equally adept at interpreting his own race. If he is, he will put us all in his debt, as he is free from looking at the negro in the usual stereotyped formulas that so much writing about the negro employs. How negroes look to negroes is something that I for one know little about; and about which I am curious. I think Attaway has a chance of telling us. I strongly suspect that he has more ability to be a good novelist than any negro now on the scene; and I can hardly doubt the pleasure you will get in having a part in helping him along in these his formative years.

OVER


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JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

1901 ELLIS AVENUE

I should add that I know Attaway very well. When he was here he wrote plays which the negroes here produced, and as a result soon got attention from some of us who are interested in such abilities, and who are not afraid of a color line. I may say that I always felt about him that he was a little too serious, a kind of negro Hamlet, shrouded in melancholy, and feeling more than I liked to see the oppression of color discrimination; though I may add that were I in his place, I should probably get a good deal more violent than he ever did. I am a little disturbed at the propaganda aspects of his projected plan; and think you might warn him that life is bigger than the problems of life. The sociological novel is in vogue just now, of course; but those that will live will be only incidentally sociological, and primarily alive with real people that we can care about for some other reason than that they represent a problem. I say this with some ~~XXXX~~ diffidence, as from long experience with writers, I have found that often plans that sound the least promising turn out the best, and vice versa.

If you think it useful, you are at liberty to show him any of this that you please.

Cordially yours,

Bruce Weirick
707 W. Cal. St.
Urbana, Illinois.

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Signed

Bruce Weirick

Position or Title

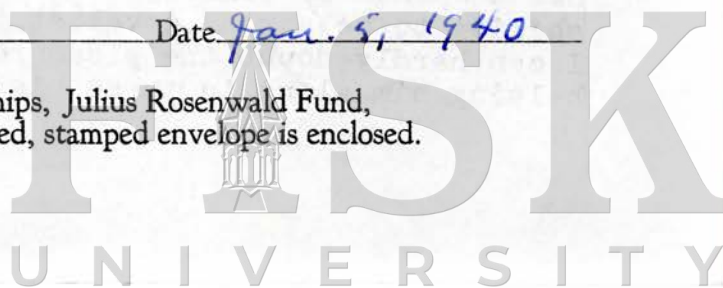
Asso. Prof. of English, Uni. of Illinois

Address

707 W. California St., Urbana, Ill.

Date *Jan. 5, 1940*

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. William A. Attaway

Report Requested of Mr. A. L. Foster

Chicago Urban League, 3032 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's personal characteristics and qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in the field of study proposed. *An early reply to this inquiry will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates who apply for grants.*

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George M. Reynolds
Director for Fellowships

REPORT I have an especial interest in this candidate because of my very close contact with him and his sister while they were at the University of Illinois. There were some of us who felt that they were both very talented, and we have followed their careers with very deep interest.

Mr. Attaway has proved his ability as a writer and it appears that the plan of work which he has submitted should be of tremendous value, if it is developed.

FISK
UNIVERSITY
OVER

JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND
4901 ELLIS AVENUE
CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate

Report Requested on

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Director for Fellowships

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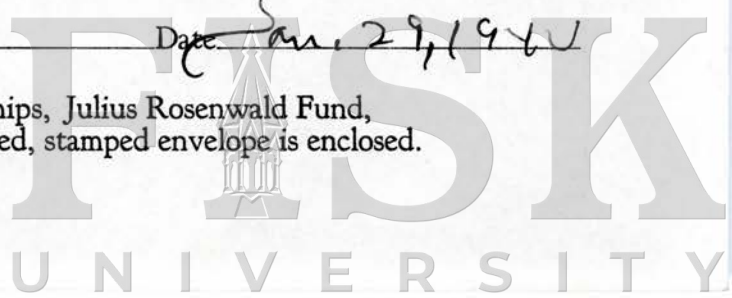
Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

Mr. [Name] has proved his ability as a writer and it is felt that the plan of work which he has submitted should be of tremendous value. It is developed.

Signed A. F. J. [Signature]
Position or Title Executive Secretary
Address 3832 S. Wabash Avenue

Date Jan. 29, 1940

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.



Friday -

FELLOWSHIPS

Mr. George M. Reynolds,
Director for Fellowships -
Julius Rosenwald Fund.

GR	22 APR 190

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I have just received word that the Fund has seen fit to grant me the fellowship for which I applied.

I accept this fellowship, of course, with the earnest hope that my work will justify the faith that the Fund has shown in making me this grant.

Sincerely,
William Attaway



My New Address is:
Route I,
Decatur, Michigan
{Care of Art Hamilton}



Name William Alexander Attaway**Field:** Creative Writing

Author
 Theresa Hotel, 7th Avenue and 125th Street,
 New York City

REAPPOINTMENT**Plan of Work**

To devote an entire book to the precarious farm background of the migrant Negro treated in my present work that has just been completed under a Rosenwald grant. To do this new book I will need to live and travel in West Virginia and Kentucky and so contact the beginnings of the Allegheny steel men.

Duration of work one year.

Personal Data

Born in Mississippi, November, 1911. Single.

Age: 29**Undergraduate Work**

University of Illinois, B. A., 1936.

Graduate Work**Experience****Accomplishments**

Publications: Let Me Breathe Thunder, a novel, Doubleday Doran, 1939.
 A play and another novel are not yet published.

Rosenwald Fund Fellowship, 1940-41, \$1,200.

References

John Woodburn, Doubleday, Doran & Co, New York

Budget Summary

Total Amount Needed
 From Applicant
 From Fund

\$ 1,800
 — — —
 \$ 1,800

AMOUNT GRANTED

FILE COPY

FILE COPY
 UNIVERSITY

PLEASE RETURN
TO
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

-PLAN OF WORK-
for Rosenwald fellowship...
William Attaway

In doing my present book on the Southern Negroes' change to a Northern industrial life, I felt that the rural background of this migrant people deserved a more searching treatment than I was able to give in a few short chapters. Now that the present work is finished and under consideration of my publisher, Mr. John Woodburn of Doubleday, Doran and Company, I feel that I should devote time to that complete treatment of the folk beginnings of the black steel worker. Only through these beginnings is an understanding of his subsequent actions and feelings possible.

To be completely fair to the symbolic characters I have tried to create, I must go in Kentucky and West Virginia to do research and write...

I hope--under a new fellowship grant.

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JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

1940 fellow

Application for reappointment should be filed by February 15, 1941. Please attach six copies of a report of your progress under your present grant, and of your plan of work for the coming year.

Name William Attaway

Present address Theresa Hotel (7th.ave.& 125th.) New York,N.Y.

Permanent address 4636 Michigan avenue, Chicago, Illinois

Field Novelist

Concise statement of plan of work I want to devote an entire book to the precarious farm background of the migrant Negro treated in my present work that has just been completed under a Rosenwald grant. To do this new book I will need to live and travel in West

Virginia and Kentucky...and so contact the beginnings of the Allegheny steel men.
If fellowship is renewed, where and how do you propose to spend your time?

Kentucky and West Virginia

Under whose supervision? _____

For what period are you requesting a renewal? One year, 1941 to 1942

Present status of work toward degree _____

List as references persons under whom you have worked during your present fellowship

My publisher, My John Woodburn of Doubleday, Doran and Company...

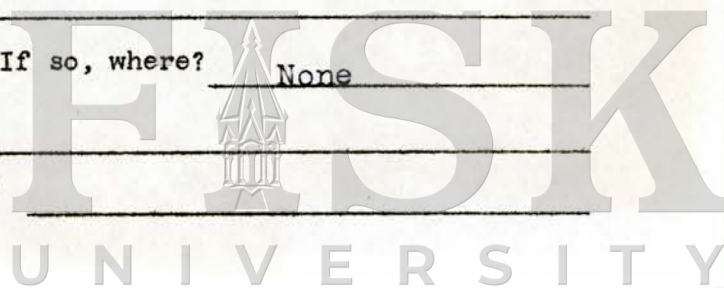
Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y.

Amount requested from the Fund \$ 1,800

Publications, if any, since you were awarded a fellowship _____

Are you applying elsewhere for a fellowship? If so, where? None

Do you plan to return to your former position? _____



JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate Mr. William Attaway
Report Requested of Mr. John Woodburn
 Doubleday, Doran and Company, Rockefeller Center, New York City

The above-named candidate has applied to this Fund for a fellowship and has given your name as a reference. The candidate's plan of work is attached. Please return it with your statement.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion of this applicant's qualifications, and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. *An early reply will be of great assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.*

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

George M. Reynolds
Director for Fellowships

REPORT

I am very happy again to recommend William Attaway to your consideration. I have just finished reading his second novel and have had the satisfaction of seeing it enthusiastically accepted for publication by Doubleday Doran, the house in which I am an editor. It more than fulfills the patent promise shown in LET ME BREATHE THUNDER, his first novel, and shows an astonishing growth in power and mastery of material. We feel very definitely here that William Attaway is well on his way to becoming what we term, in publishing jargon, a property. He is a sincere and hard-working artist and he definitely requires financial assistance in order to pursue his work. Mr. Attaway's project of further exploring the folk beginnings of the black steel worker is of great interest to me and to the house, especially in the light of his new novel. I can without the slightest hesitation recommend him for a continuance.

OVER
FISK
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JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

4901 ELLIS AVENUE

CHICAGO

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Name of Candidate

Report Requested by

The above-named candidate has applied to the Fund for a fellowship and has given you an account of his work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be given assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We shall appreciate your frank opinion on the applicant's qualifications and an appraisal of his plan of work and of his ability to make a noteworthy contribution in his field. An early reply will be given assistance in allowing the Fellowship Committee sufficient time for adequate consideration of the large number of candidates.

We request candid and critical comment. Your reply will be held in strict confidence.

REPORT

Is the candidate free from personality handicaps which would make it difficult to obtain and hold a position giving him opportunity to utilize his abilities?

His personality is exceptionally winning.

Signed John M. McK. Woodburn

Position or Title Editor

Address Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.

14 W. 49th St. New York City. Date March 4, 1941

Please return to the Director for Fellowships, Julius Rosenwald Fund,
4901 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

FSK
UNIVERSITY

4/5/41

FELLOWSHIPS

GMR	6	6/10
DE		DE

WILLIAM ATTAWAY
 XXX WEST 125TH STREET XX
 XXX NEW YORK CITY, N. Y. XX

Care: Arthur
 Hamilton.
 Route 1,
 Decatur, Mich.

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I know that by this time
 Mr. Brickell has forwarded a report
 on my work of the past year. I trust
 the report and the work were both
 satisfactory.

I am out of New York, perhaps
 for a long time. My new address
 appears in the upper right hand
 corner of this page. If you should
 write in connection with fellowship
 business, I will be at that address.

Sincerely,

William Attaway
 William Attaway



194

PROGRESS REPORT - JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND FELLOWS

mu^o

Name William Alexander Attaway

Present position Novelist

Address 4636 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill

Since your fellowship was awarded have you received

~~(a) a salary increase?~~

(b) a promotion in rank? If so, please describe _____

Fellowship term
Degree received during award, or since, or progress made toward degree:

Title of dissertation _____

Publications, if any. (Please give titles, date, and place of publication.)

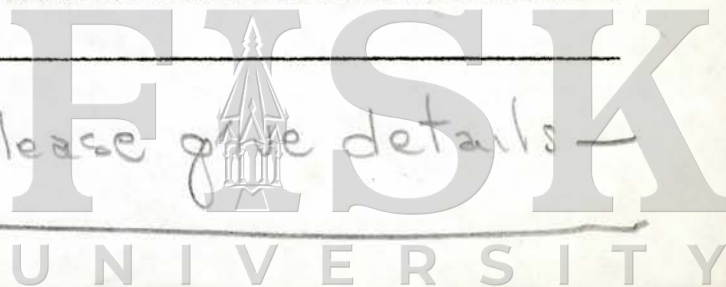
Let Me Breathe Thunder -1939 June- New York- Doubleday, Doran and Co.

Blood On the Forge -1941 August- " " " " " "

Special honors or activities _____

General remarks _____

✓ If in Armed Service, please give details _____



FELLOWSHIPS

September 20, 1939
456 W. 148th. St.
New York, N.Y.

	GMR	25	6	25

Mr. George M. Reynolds:

I was lately in Chicago and was advised by Dr. Bousfield to apply for a Rosenwald Fellowship in creative writing. I regret not having met you while there at the Fund headquarters...Some other time, perhaps.

I am writing for an application blank. I don't know if there is some special form to be followed in getting a blank, but if such is the case I hope you will advise me of it.

Thanks in advance...

William Attaway

NOV 12/18 NOV 12/18
FELLOWSHIPS

306 W. 141 Street
New York, N.Y.
December 13, 1939

Attaway, Wm

Dr. M.O. Bousfield
4901 Ellis Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Dr. Bousfield:

This day with cold winds warning me to get my heavy coat out of "hock," I recall with a great pleasure the July day when I sat in your office and later had lunch (vegetarian style) with your staff. I recall that we talked of my then recently published book, "Let Me Breathe Thunder," and plans for my intended work on the Negro in the steel industry. I was greatly helped by the source material you suggested.

Dr. Attaway used to say that when a guy receives a letter opening with praise, he should look for a request in the next paragraph. So he always used to read the second paragraph first. I had to put that in because, like all writers, I am addicted to telling on myself--even when it hurts. The fact is that I am applying for a fellowship on which to continue the research for that book on the Negro and steel...and I wondered if you would permit me to use your name as one of the references to be contacted as to the integrity of my project and myself. I remembered having talked the project over with you and, as I am a close mouthed fellow, the people to whom I have talked at length are at a premium in this hour of need. If such a thing as I ask is possible, I will be immensely grateful...If not, I will understand.

I am looking forward to being in Chicago again in the near future and also looking forward to our next talk...as anyone who can tell me an anecdote about my father is automatically a friend.

Sincerely,

William Attaway
William Attaway



FELLOWSHIPS

December 18, 1939

Dear Mr. Attaway: It is very good to hear from you. I shall be happy to give you any recommendation which I can. If your application for scholarship is directed to the Julius Rosenwald Fund, then that is quite another matter. None of the officers of the Fund ever agree to make recommendations for applicants here, and indeed if you sent in my name it would be crossed off and returned to you. As far as scholarship applications here are concerned, I can neither help nor hurt you.

Sincerely yours,

M. O. Bousfield, M.D.

MOB:RH

Mr. William Attaway
306 West 141st Street
New York City

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FELLOWSHIPS

HULL-HOUSE

800 SOUTH HALSTED STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

TELEPHONE MONROE 6006

January 10, 1940

CHARLOTTE CARR
Director

Mr. George Reynolds
Julius Rosenwald Fund
4901 Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Ill.

12 5/10 0
talked over telephone
with Miss Carr

My dear Mr. Reynolds:

I have been trying to get you on the telephone, but I learn you are out of town. I felt I could do better on the enclosed application from William Attaway in a telephone conversation than I could by letter, but I want to do nothing that would hold up his application; so I will try to present my opinion of him.

In the first place, it has to be admitted that I know very little really about Mr. Attaway. I had one long afternoon's conversation with him when he was referred to me by Dr. Bousfield some months ago. I received a very vivid impression that he was a person of unusual promise and ability. I liked his point of view, his courage and his sensible and dispassionate reaction to the problem of his race. I was sufficiently interested in him that after he left I bought his book, which I have read and consider excellent...indeed, amazingly comparable to "Of Mice And Men", though, of course, in no sense imitative of that.

I wrote Mr. Attaway my appreciation of the book, and have recently had an application from him for residence at Hull-House. I have been delighted to accept that application whenever he can come to Chicago, and do want him to be a resident. Whether or not his residence is dependent upon his receiving a fellowship from the Fund, I do not know.

Mr. Attaway is a very different type of person from Dewey Jones, and would not, on a cooperative plan between the Rosenwald Fund and Hull-House, do the type of thing we found we were able to do with Dewey Jones. On the other hand, he has his own special qualifications, in my opinion, for a joint program. I am not -- I want to make this clear -- asking for money from the Rosenwald Fund (Incidentally, that is a possibility I hope to keep open with you), but do say that if he is a resident here, and carries out the program he has planned with the Fund, that much of real value could come from the joint contact.

To sum it up, I have enough confidence in Mr. Attaway that I would bring him in here to help us out without further information than I have of him. On the other hand, I am aware that for the purposes of

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HULL-HOUSE

800 SOUTH HALSTED STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

TELEPHONE MONROE 6006

-2-

CHARLOTTE CARR
Director

your references, you will want more information than I am able to provide. I hope you will call me and let me discuss this with you in more detail.

Cordially

Charlotte Carr
Charlotte Carr

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FELLOWSHIPS

February 23, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: I should like to have for the use of the Committee on Fellowships a few of the reviews of your book, and a copy of the book. May we have this material at your early convenience? It will, of course, be returned to you after the final meeting in April.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE M. REYNOLDS

GMR:MLU

~~Mr. W. A. Attaway~~
456 West 148th Street
New York, N. Y.

FISK
UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

March 4, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: We should like to have some exhibit material for our Committee, and we will appreciate your sending us some of your work as soon as possible. Will you please include in this "Let Me Breathe Thunder", as our office copy is at the moment mislaid. Whatever you send will, of course, be returned to you later in the spring.

Very truly yours,

CMR:MLU

GEORGE M. REYNOLDS

Mr. William A. Attaway
456 West 148th Street
New York, N. Y.

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UNIVERSITY

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN AND COMPANY, INC.
14 WEST 49TH STREET • ROCKEFELLER CENTER • NEW YORK, N. Y.

FELLOWSHIPS

	GMR	14	pm 20
		March 12, 1940	

Mr. George Reynolds,
Director of Fellowships,
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND
4901 Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

In accordance with the request made through our
Mr. John Woodburn, a complete copy of LET ME
BREATHE THUNDER by William Attaway, is being
sent you, under separate cover.

We understand that you are considering Mr.
Attaway for a Fellowship, and will naturally
be glad to learn of your decision.

Very truly yours,
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.,

Dora Webster.

Dora Webster

DW:GS

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FELLOWSHIPS

Attaway, Wm

March 20, 1940

Dear Miss Webster: Mr. Attaway's book,
"Let Me Breathe Thunder,"
has not arrived, and I am wondering if it has
gone astray.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE M. REYNOLDS

GMR:MLU

Miss Dora Webster
Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.
14 West 49th Street
Rockefeller Center
New York, N. Y.

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DOUBLEDAY, DORAN AND COMPANY, INC.
14 WEST 49TH STREET • ROCKEFELLER CENTER • NEW YORK, N. Y.

FELLOWSHIPS

Attaway, Wm

	GWR	27	Mar 27, 1940	

Mr. George Reynolds
Director of Fellowships,
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND
4901 Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I am glad you wrote me on March 20th letting me know that you had not received the copy of Mr. Attaway's book, *LET ME BREATHE THUNDER*.

In checking this item with our Shipping Department, I find that the book must have crossed your letter in the mails since it was not shipped from here until the 20th - a matter which I am investigating at this time.

I am sorry if you have been caused any inconvenience by this delay.

Sincerely yours,
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

Dora Webster

DW:GS

Dora Webster

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FELLOWSHIPS

March 27, 1940

Dear Miss Webster: Thank you very much for
your note of the 25th,
and for the copy of Mr. Attaway's book which
arrived last Thursday.

Very truly yours,
GEORGE M. REYNOLDS

GMR:MLU

Miss Dora Webster
Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.
14 West 49th Street
New York, N. Y.

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FELLOWSHIPS

April 17, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: It is a pleasure to inform you that you have been selected by the Committee on Fellowships of the Julius Rosenwald Fund to receive a grant of One thousand two hundred dollars (\$1,200) to assist you in your program of creative writing during the year beginning May 1, 1940.

Please let us know at once if you accept this grant. An official announcement of the Committee's selections for the year will be made soon and it can include only those from whom acceptances have been received.

Very truly yours,

GMR:MLU

GEORGE M. REYNOLDS

Mr. William Alexander Attaway
456 West 148th Street
New York, N. Y.

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FELLOWSHIPS

May 1, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: When you are ready to begin work
 under your fellowship grant,
kindly submit a payment plan that will meet your needs.
It is customary for Fellows to prefer payment either
in monthly or quarterly installments, but if another
plan is more agreeable to you do not hesitate to
suggest it.

Very truly yours,

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

DAE:RW

Mr. William Alexander Attaway
456 West 148th Street
New York City

FISK
UNIVERSITY

	SE	5/3	SE	5/3
	MW		MW	0

FELLOWSHIPS

Route I,
 Decatur, Michigan
 {Care of
 Art Hamilton}

May 2, 1940

Dear Miss Elvidge:

I would like to
 begin working immediately under
 the fellowship grant.

It will be incon-
 venient to receive the grant in re-
 gular installments. A writer spends
 the greater part of his money in the
 first months of research - afterward,
 it costs him practically nothing to
 sit in one place and do the actual
 writing. Ergo, it would be better to
 receive the entire, or greater part
 of the grant at once.

the above is
 evident when one takes into consideration
 chance leads that are a great part
 of non-statistical research - Traveller's
 checks are a necessity in that respect.
 My research will be of an intense
 nature, and I expect to complete
 the entire project in advance of the
 maximum time I have set myself.

I have an account open at a Chicago bank: the Northern Trust Company, on the northwest corner of La Salle and Monroe streets. I wonder if it will be possible for you to deposite the entire fellowship grant under my name in that bank.

Having never applied for a fellowship before, I do not know if this arrangement conflicts with set rules of the foundation. If so, I would appreciate your advice on the matter.

Sincerely
William Attaway

Theresa
Hotel, 125th.
& 7th. Ave's.

WILLIAM ATTAWAY
~~33 WEST 125TH STREET~~
NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

GAR

7-1111-7
Mr. Reynolds...

I telephoned my publishers and I am sure that a statement from them is now in your hands. That statement will be in time for consideration by the Committee, but I am unable to get a copy of my manuscript to your literary critic immediately...the publishers and myself have been hard at work cutting and revising on the only available copy. That means that I will have to type another four-hundred page manuscript to send to Mr. Brickell, the critic. I don't see how that can be done before the meeting of the committee.

Perhaps my publishers statement that the book has been accepted for publication will be enough at the present...But, if not, will you advise me immediately?

Thank you,

William Attaway

William Attaway
FISK
UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

	Mla		Mll	o

May 3, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: I am sorry we are not going to be able to make payment of your fellowship grant in one installment as you have requested. The only restriction placed on us in setting up a schedule of payments is that payment be spread over the period for which the grant was made. I am, therefore, setting up our records to send you installments of \$500 each at quarterly intervals. The first check is being sent to the Northern Trust Company to be deposited to your account today. Future payments will be sent on August 1, November 1, and February 1, 1941. Unless we hear from you to the contrary, these last three payments will be sent to the Northern Trust Company.

Very truly yours,

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

DAE:AM

Mr. William Attaway
 c/o Mr. Art Hamilton
 Route 1
 Decatur, Michigan

FISK

 UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

May 3, 1940

Gentlemen: Kindly deposit the enclosed check
for \$500 to the account of
Mr. William Attaway, notifying him when this has
been done.

Very truly yours,

DOROTHY A. ELVIDGE

DAE:AM

The Northern Trust Company
50 South La Salle Street
Chicago, Illinois

c.c. Mr. William Attaway

FISK
UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

	DE	10/28	DE	o
	Am	—		o
	Mlu		Mlu	o
	Mek		Mek	o

*change 10/31 no +
make note on
form o*

October 25, 1940

Dear Miss Elvidge:

I am now at 33 W. 125 th. St.
New York, N.Y. Kindly forward my
next instalment on my fellowship grant
to this address.

Thank you,

William Attaway



FELLOWSHIPS

November 1, 1940

Dear Mr. Attaway: The terms of our fellowships are normally one year, but renewals are considered in exceptional cases. Should you wish to apply for a 1941 grant we shall be glad to have you write for the necessary blanks later in the year. The dead line for receipt of an application for reappointment will probably be February 15.

All good wishes to you in your present work.

Very truly yours,
MARGARET L. UTLEY

Secretary to Mr. Reynolds

Mr. William Attaway
~~33 West 125th Street~~
New York, N. Y.

FISK
UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

February 28, 1941

My dear Mr. Attaway: I am sure the Committee on Fellowships will want to know something of the progress of your work during the present year. One of our literary critics is Mr. Herschel Brickell, and I would like to have you send to him for appraisal some of the work you have done while on your present fellowship. Will you please send it to him immediately? His address is Ridgefield, Connecticut.

All of the material for the Committee will be on its way to them by the middle of next week. We have not as yet heard from Mr. Woodburn, so if you can do anything to hasten the receipt of his statement we will appreciate it. Without it your application is rather incomplete.

Very truly yours,

GMR:MLU

Mr. William Attaway
Theresa Hotel
7th Avenue and 125th Street
New York, N. Y.

FISK

UNIVERSITY

FELLOWSHIPS

abt April

GP

Dear George Reynolds:

The Attaway Ms. turned up yesterday and I read it last night. It is being delivered to Doubleday Doran by me this morning, as the author said he had only the one copy.

Attaway can write, beyond any doubt. The prose has a fine rhythm and the speech of the Negroes is perfectly set down. There are moments of real pathos, too, but I am doubtful that he proves anything, or that he has written a novel of any particular social significance. The characters are pretty black-and-white and the story itself a slender affair. There is enough raw violence and sex to make some people read the book, although I don't believe many of them will remember it, or be moved by it to right the wrongs of the oppressed black brother.

Again, I'd have to say that Bell, Boone, and Attaway were on par, but it would be necessary to add that Attaway, whose talent is just as valid as the others, is certainly one of the very best Negro candidates you have had. In short, he will go on doing good limited work and I think that's about all. In fact, I am beginning to believe that's about all we'll get from the other side of the color line for a while, and you know I have kept up carefully with their work for years.

If this isn't perfectly clear, let me know.



Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To The Northern Trust Company - A/C -
Mr. William Attaway
50 South La Salle Street
Chicago, Illinois

Payment Voucher No. 1215

Date May 3, 1940

First quarterly payment on fellowship granted 4/17/40 - - - - - \$300.00

Ck.#22988

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	39-7	\$300.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by
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Comptroller

Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To Mr. William Attaway
Route 1
Decatur, Michigan
c/o Art Hamilton

Payment Voucher No. 1475

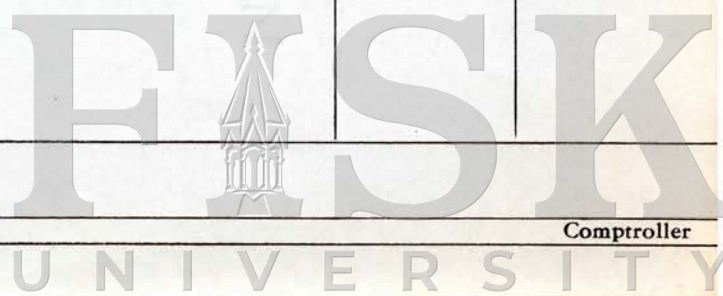
Date July 31, 1940

Second payment on fellowship granted 4/17/40 - - - - - \$300.00

Chk. #23292

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	39-7	\$300.00	

Prepared by McK	Checked by	Posted by
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Comptroller

Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To Mr. William A. Attaway

Payment Voucher No. 1850

33 West 125th Street

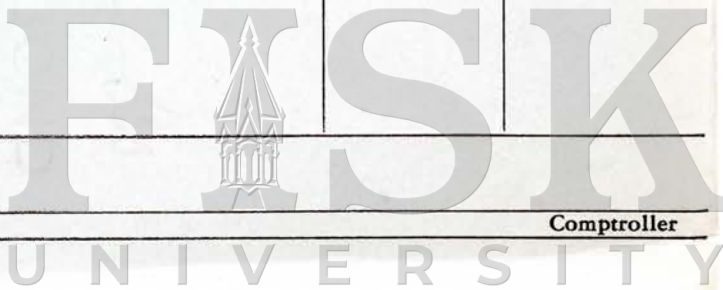
Date October 31, 1940

New York City

Third payment on fellowship grant - - - - - \$300.00

Ck.#23760

Accounts		Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships		39-7	\$300.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	 Comptroller	
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Julius Rosenwald Fund

4901 Ellis Avenue
CHICAGO

FELLOWSHIPS

To

Mr. William A. Attaway

33 West 125th Street

New York City


Payment Voucher No. 2308

Date January 31, 1941

Final installment on fellowship granted 4/17/40 - - - - \$300.00

Ck.#24275

Accounts	Appropriation No.	Debit	Credit
Negro Fellowships	39-7	\$300.00	

Prepared by AM	Checked by	Posted by	 FISK UNIVERSITY Comptroller
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Name William Alexander Attaway

Field: Creative Writing

Creative Writer
456 West 148th Street, New York City**Plan of Work**

A book (factual novel) on the Pittsburgh industrial area with special attention to the steel mills and the Negroes' place in them from the beginnings of the world war to the great steel strikes of 1919. The library research is already finished, so now I would like to get first hand information in the great steel centers.

Study would require one year.

Personal Data Born in Mississippi, November, 1911. Single.

Age: 28

Undergraduate Work University of Illinois, B. A. 1936.

Graduate Work**Experience****Accomplishments**

Publications: Let Me Breathe Thunder, a novel published by Doubleday Doran, 1939. ✓
Stories for the Pittsburgh Courier and Challenge Magazine.

Has also written a play, "Carnival", produced in 1936; a novel, Children of Night, 1934, unpublished.

References

Miss Charlotte Carr, Hull House
Mr. A. L. Foster, Chicago Urban League
Professor Bruce Wierick, University of Illinois
Mr. John Woodburn, Doubleday Doran
Mr. Arther Winsten, Critic, New York Post

Budget Summary

Total Amount Needed	\$1500
From Applicant	0
From Fund	\$1500

AMOUNT GRANTED

WILLIAM ATTAWAY

PLAN OF WORK

PLEASE RETURN
TO
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

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The third section will deal with the Negroes place in the great steel strikes of 1919. The biggest question here is the problem of the black man's attitudes toward labor unions and the causes of these attitudes. There was, for example, a conservatism to be noted at that time. The Negro incurred much criticism for his scabbing activities. Nobody took under consideration the fact that the strike issues in the mills were to the Negroes trivial by contrast to the terrible labor conditions under which they had so lately suffered. That is but one example of the different interpretation I intend to give this section of the book. That interpretation in its entirety will cause the whole question to take on proper proportion through an understanding of motivations and backgrounds. In short, I propose to draw the picture with emphasis on "Why," not merely "how."

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FISK
UNIVERSITY

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- 1: The state of Kentucky, Cumberland River region.
- 2: The state of Pennsylvania, Allegheny Valley region.

a. Pittsburgh

Up the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Ambridge...Visiting steel mills and towns along the way.

Down the Monogahela River from Pittsburgh to Mc Keesport...Stopping at the important steel centers like Homestead, Rankin, Braddock and Duquesne, etc...

From Pittsburgh again up the Allegheny River to Tarentum...Stopping at important points enroute. The U.S. Steel mills in Illinois and Gary Indiana will also rate a few weeks.

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS—THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

Name **Attaway, William Alexander** Vault No. **97323**
 Entered **Feb. 8, 1932** Matriculated **Feb. 8, 1932** Matr. Number **80181** Place and date of birth **Greenville, Miss., Nov. 19, 1911**
 College **L.A.S.** Curriculum **Pre-Law** Name of parent or guardian **Florence Mary Attaway**
 Degree **A.B. (L.A.S.)** Date **June 8, 1936** Address of parent or guardian **4504 Vincennes Ave., 4539 Wabash Ave., 449 E. 48th Place, Chicago, I l.**
 School last attended **Tilden Tech. H. S.** Residence classification of student **Resident**

ADMISSION UNITS						ACCEPTED FROM
English	3	Latin	2	Physics	1	Tilden Tech. H. S., Chicago, Ill.
		German	2	Chemistry	1	
Algebra	1	French	2	Economics	1	
Plane Geometry	1	Spanish	2	Zoology	1	
Solid Geometry	1			Com. Geography	1	
				Botany	1	
				Sociology	1	
				Biology	1	
				Other Sciences	2	
				Bookkeeping	1	
				Draw. & Man. Train.	3	
				Music	1	
				Agr. or Home Econ.	1	
				Sten. & Type.	1	
				Misc. Subjects	1	

Descriptive Title of Course	Course Number	Sem.	Hr.	Grade	Descriptive Title of Course	Course Number	Sem.	Hr.	Grade
Second Semester 1931-32					Summer Session 1935				
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1a	4		D	Educational Psychology	Educ. S25	3		C
Modern Industry	Econ. 27	3		C	Comparative Education	Educ. S5	3		D
Rhetoric & Composition	Rhet. 1	3		C	Hist. of Education	Educ. S2	3		B
English History	Hist. 2b	3		D	First Semester 1935-36				
Hygiene & Sanitation	Hyg. 3	3		C	Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4		D
Individual Athletics	P. Ed. 14	3		D	Hist. of Anc. & Med. Philosophy	Phil. 3	4		C
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 22a	3		C	Primitive Societies	Soc. 42	3		B
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 22b	3		B	Social Evolution	Soc. 3	3		C
First Semester 1932-33					Thesis and Honors	Tutor. Engl. 60 a	4		A
General Zoology	Zool. 1	5		B	Soccer	P. Ed. 31	3		A
Rhetoric & Composition	Rhet. 2	3		B	Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	3		D
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1b	4		D	Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	3		E
Introduction to Literature	Engl. 10a	3		C	Handball	P. E. 44	3		Pass
Tumbling Stunts	P. Ed. 15	3		E	Introductory Botany	Bot. 1a	2		Pass
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 21a	3		B	Second Semester 1935-36				
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	3		E	Intro. Botany-Lab.	Bot. 1b	2		Pass
Second Semester 1932-33					Social Progress & Social Values	Soc. 20	3		C
Vert. Zool. & Comp. Anatomy	Zool. 2	5		D	Modern Spanish	Span. 2b	4		D
Introduction to Psychology	Psych. 1	4		C	Prin. of Secondary Education	Educ. 6	3		C
Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4		E	History of Modern Philosophy	Phil. 4	4		C
Beginning Swimming	P. Ed. 13	3		E	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60b	4		A
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 24a	3		C	Music Appreciation	Mus. 14	2		E
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 24b	3		C	Squash Racquet	P. Ed. 45	3		D
Beginning Swimming	P. Ed. 24	3		Fail	Infantry Theory	Mil. 4b	3		D
First Semester 1934-35					Social Fact. in Personality	Soc. 2	3		Pass
Intro. to Philosophy	Phil. 1	3		B	Tennis	P. Ed. 33	3		Pass
General Psychology	Psych. 2	4		C	Intro. to Mod. Theo. in Educ.	Educ. 31	3		Pass
Principles of Sociology	Soc. 1	3		B	Contemporary Poetry	Engl. 44	3		Pass
Advanced Narrative Composition	Rhet. 6	3		A					
American Literature	Engl. 12	2		C					
Playground Ball & Skating	P. Ed. 34	3		ab					
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	3		E					
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 23b	3		D					
Second Semester 1934-35									
Rural Sociology	Soc. 7	3		D					
Criminology	Soc. 9	3		C					
Metaphysics	Phil. 16	3		B					
General Geology	Geol. 1	3		C					
Charities	Soc. 8	3		C					
Soccer	P. Ed. 31	3		E					

DEC 18 1939 IN GOOD STANDING
 E. C. Saylor, Registrar

* By Examination.
 A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor (barely passing); E, failure; Ab. (Absent), counts as a failure; Ex., excused absence; Dr., dropped from class, counts as a failure. A unit of graduate work is equivalent to four semester hours of undergraduate work. Total semester hours earned recorded in semester hour column; all other totals for office use only. This record is not official unless it bears the signature of the Recorder and the impress of the seal of the University of Illinois.



PLAN OF WORK

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WILLIAM ATTAWAY

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 Entered: Feb. 8, 1932. Matriculated: Feb. 8, 1932. Matr. Number: 80181
 College: L.A.S. (Pre-Law) Degree: A.B. June 8, 1936.

Accepted from Tilden Tech. High School, Chi., Ill.

Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade	Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade
(SECOND SEMESTER 1931-32)				(FIRST SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1a	4	D	Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4	D
Modern Industry	Econ. 27	3	C	Hist. of Ancient and			
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet. 1	3	C	Med. Philosophy	Phil. 3	4	C
English History	Hist. 2b	3	D	Primitive Societies	Soc. 42	3	B
Hygiene & Sanitation	Hyg. 3	1	C	Social Evolution	Soc. 3	3	C
Individual Athletics	P.E. 14	1	D	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60a	4	A
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 22a	1	C	Soccer	P.E. 31	1	A
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 22b	1	B	Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	1	D
(FIRST SEMESTER 1932-33)				Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	1	E
General Zoology	Zool. 1	5	B	Handball	P.E. 44	1	*pass
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet. 2	3	B	Introductory Botany	Bot. 1a	2	*pass
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1b	4	D	(SECOND SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Intro. to Literature	Eng. 10a	3	C	Intro. Botany-Lab.	Bot. 1b	2	*pass
Tumbling Stunts	P.E. 15	1	E	Social Progress and			
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 21a	1	B	Social Values	Soc. 20	3	C
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	1	E	Modern Spanish	Span. 2b	4	D
(SECOND SEMESTER 1932-33)				Prin. of Secondary Ed.	Ed. 6	3	C
Vert. Zool & Anatomy	Zool. 2	5	E	Hist. of Modern Phil.	Phil. 4	4	C
Intro. to Psych.	Psych. 1	4	C	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60b	4	A
Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4	E	Music Appreciation	Mus. 14	2	E
Swimming	P.E. 13	1	E	Squash Racquet	P.E. 45	1	ab
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 24a	1	C	Infantry Theory	Mil. 4b	1	D
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 24b	1	C	Social Fact. in			
(FIRST SEMESTER 1934-35)				Personality	Soc. 2	3	*pass
Intro. Philosophy	Phil. 1	3	B	Tennis	P.E. 33	1	*pass
General Psychology	Psych. 2	4	C	Intro. to Mod. Theo.			
Principles of Sociol.	Soc. 1	3	B	in Education	Educ. 31	3	*pass
Advanced Narrative				Contemporary Poetry	Engl. 44	3	*pass
Composition	Rhet. 6	3	A				
American Literature	Eng. 12	2	C				
Playground ball	P.E. 34	1	ab				
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	1	E				
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 23b	1	D				
(SECOND SEMESTER 1934-35)							
Rural Sociology	Soc. 7	3	D				
Criminology	Soc. 9	3	C				
Metaphysics	Phil. 16	3	B				
General Geology	Geol. 1	3	*C				
Charities	Soc. 8	3	C				
Soccer	P.E. 31	1	E				
(Summer SESSION 1935)							
Educational Psych.	Ed. S25	3	C				
Comparative Educ.	Ed. S5	3	D				
Hist. of Education	Ed. S2	3	B				

total semester hours 126 1/2

In good standing.

A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor; E, failure; ab. (absent)
 ex. (excused absence); Dr., dropped from class; *passed by
 examination without taking course.

Parent or Guardian: Florence Mary Attaway, 506 E. 42nd. Street, Chicago
 Illinois.

Student classified as Resident

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



LETTERS OF REFERENCE

William Attaway

Miss Charlotte Carr, Director, Hull House

It has to be admitted that I know very little really about Mr. Attaway. I had one long afternoon's conversation with him when he was referred to me by Dr. Bousfield some months ago. I received a very vivid impression that he was a person of unusual promise and ability. I liked his point of view, his courage and his sensible and dispassionate reaction to the problem of his race. I was sufficiently interested in him that after he left I bought his book, which I have read and consider excellent - indeed, amazingly comparable to "Of Mice and Men", though, of course, in no sense imitative of that.

I wrote Mr. Attaway my appreciation of the book, and have recently had an application from him for residence at Hull-House. I have been delighted to accept that application whenever he can come to Chicago, and do want him to be a resident. Whether or not his residence is dependent upon his receiving a fellowship from the Fund, I do not know.

Mr. Attaway is a very different type of person from Dewey Jones, and would not, on a cooperative plan between the Rosenwald Fund and Hull-House, do the type of thing we found we were able to do with Dewey Jones. On the other hand, he has his own special qualifications, in my opinion, for a joint program. I am not - I want to make this clear - asking for money from the Rosenwald Fund, but do say that if he is a resident here, and carries out the program he has planned with the Fund, much of real value could come from the joint contact.

To sum it up, I have enough confidence in Mr. Attaway that I would bring him in here to help us out without further information

William Attaway

-2-

than I have of him. On the other hand, I am aware that for the purposes of your references, you will want more information than I am able to provide.

- - - - -

Mr. A. L. Foster, Executive Secretary, Chicago Urban League

I have an especial interest in this candidate because of my very close contact with him and his sister while they were at the University of Illinois. There were some of us who felt that they were both very talented, and we have followed their careers with very deep interest.

Mr. Attaway has proved his ability as a writer and it appears that the plan of work which he has submitted should be of tremendous value, if it is developed.

- - - - -

Dr. Bruce Wierick, Associate Professor of English, University of Illinois

I am glad to write you a favorable report of Mr. Attaway, who for two years was a student in my classes in creative writing. His work here was unusually promising in its ability to handle plot and to motivate plausible characters with originality and skill. His recent novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, deserved I think the praise it got, and is one of the most surprising first novels to show up recently. If Attaway can keep up the pace he sets there, he will soon be known as one of our really creative writers. The novel was the more surprising in that it dealt almost entirely with white characters - a task which I believe no other Negro has attempted with such success. It will be interesting to see if he is equally adept at interpreting his own race. If he is, he will put us all in his debt, as he is free from looking at the Negro in the usual stereotyped formulas that so much

writing about the Negro employs. How Negroes look to Negroes is something that I for one know little about; and about which I am curious. I think Attaway has a chance of telling us. I strongly suspect that he has more ability to be a good novelist than any Negro now on the scene; and I can hardly doubt the pleasure you will get in having a part in helping him along in these his formative years.

I should add that I know Attaway very well. When he was here he wrote plays which the Negroes here produced, and as a result soon got attention from some of us who are interested in such abilities, and who are not afraid of a color line. I may say that I always felt about him that he was a little too serious, a kind of Negro Hamlet, shrouded in melancholy, and feeling more than I liked to see the oppression of color discrimination; though I may add that were I in his place, I should probably get a good deal more violent than he ever did. I am a little disturbed at the propaganda aspects of his projected plan; and think you might warn him that life is bigger than the problems of life. The sociological novel is in vogue just now, of course; but those that will live will be only incidentally sociological, and primarily alive with real people that we can care about for some other reason than that they represent a problem. I say this with some diffidence, as from long experience with writers, I have found that often plans that sound the least promising turn out the best, and vice versa.

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Mr. Archer Winsten, Motion Picture Reviewer, New York Post

Mr. Attaway's personality and qualifications are, in my opinion, admirably suited to the type of work he has outlined. His first published novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, is hardly more than an exercise

despite its somewhat derivative excellence. Later unpublished writings indicate a far greater talent and one which is peculiarly fitted for the task he has set for himself. Of course any book is a gamble. Creative work cannot be guaranteed. But I can assure you that the possibilities in this case, or, I may say, the probabilities are brilliant.

It is hard to conceive of a less stereotyped or more significant subject from the Negro point of view than the one chosen. I have suspected for some time that Mr. Attaway is on the verge of making the finest contribution to American literature of any Negro author to date. I may be wrong. People usually are when they say things like that. But I know of no author with greater potentialities. What will come of them is for the future to decide.

- - - - -

Mr. John Woodburn, Editor, Doubleday, Doran and Company, New York

I have known William Attaway for nearly two years, both as a personal friend and as his editor at Doubleday, Doran, who published his novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder. As a person, I have been impressed by his exceptional adjustment to life and to circumstance, his single-minded, honest approach to his work - in short, by the general integrity of his personality.

As a writer, and I do not limit this to a category of racial interpretation, I believe him to possess an authentic talent, a talent which I have found balanced by a maturity not often found in a young man not yet thirty. The novel now in progress exhibits, even in its unfinished, structural state, the fulfillment of the promise implied in Let Me Breathe Thunder. In my understanding of the aims and accomplishments of the Rosenwald Foundation, William Attaway is a logical and exceptionally worthy candidate for a fellowship.

Name William Alexander Attaway

Field: Creative Writing

Creative Writer
456 West 148th Street, New York City**Plan of Work**

A book (factual novel) on the Pittsburgh industrial area with special attention to the steel mills and the Negroes' place in them from the beginnings of the world war to the great steel strikes of 1919. The library research is already finished, so now I would like to get first hand information in the great steel centers.

Study would require one year.

Personal Data Born in Mississippi, November, 1911. Single

Age: 28

Undergraduate Work University of Illinois, B. A. 1936.

Graduate Work**Experience****Accomplishments**

Publications: Let Me Breathe Thunder, a novel published by Doubleday Doran, 1939.
Stories for the Pittsburgh Courier and Challenge Magazine.

Has also written a play, "Carnival", produced in 1936; a novel, Children of Night, 1934, unpublished.

References

Miss Charlotte Carr, Hull House
Mr. A. L. Foster, Chicago Urban League
Professor Bruce Wierick, University of Illinois
Mr. John Woodburn, Doubleday Doran
Mr. Archer Winsten, Critic, New York Post

Budget Summary

Total Amount Needed	\$1500
From Applicant	0
From Fund	\$1500

AMOUNT GRANTED

PLAN OF WORKPLEASE RETURN
TO
JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND

This is to be a factual novel on the Negro in the steel industry from 1914 when the "jack-legs" went into the South and recruited fieldhands and sharecroppers to work the Allegheny Valley steel mills, to 1919 when the great steel strikes raged. The novel is to be divided into three sections:

The first part of this project requires some background of the rural life of the Negro in the South, so that the effects of sudden industrialization can be highlighted and shown in proper contrast to beginnings. An informed treatment of these beginnings is important because much of what happened to the migrants in the world of industry is understandable only in terms of psychological hang-overs of Southern culture. The particular Negroes whom I propose to treat came from the red clay hills of Kentucky where they had already grown tired of scratching the barren hills for a meager living. They were real peasant folk and would not have left the hills they were born on if it had not been for a realization that their fields would no longer produce. There have been many reasons given for the migration from Kentucky... But it is a fact that a peasant folk die on the soil they are born on--if it is good soil.

The second part of this work will deal with the life of the Negroes at the mills, the peculiar adjustments that were made, and the effects that these adjustments had on the morals and general culture of these peasant folk. The adjustments made generally fall into one of three categories: economic, religious and moral, and social. For example, they faced the following problems: In the mills they were paid monthly what would have been accounted a good year's profit back in Kentucky. At the mills there was not the restraining influence of the church as a social center. In the Allegheny Valley there was at that time a minimum of societal pressure and persecution. The adjustments to these problems were varied and not generally constructive in the first generation.

The third section will deal with the Negroes place in the great steel strikes of 1919. The biggest problem here is the question of the black man's attitudes toward labor unions and the causes of these attitudes. There was, for example, a conservatism to be noted at that time. The Negro incurred much criticism for his sabbing activities. Nobody took into consideration the fact that the strike issues in the mills were to the Negroes trivial by contrast to the terrible labor conditions under which they had so lately suffered. That is but one example of the different interpretation I intend to give this section of the book. That interpretation in its entirety will cause the whole question to take on proper proportion through an understanding of motivations and backgrounds. In short, I propose to draw the picture with emphasis on "why," not merely "how."

This work is reasonably sure of publication. My publishers, Doubleday and Doran, Inc., having thought so highly of the idea, that they have asked for a written option on the publication rights.

This project has a threefold significance: Educational, Historical, and Artistic. It will, in respect to education, provide students with valuable source ideas that may be further investigated by scholars. These ideas will be original approaches to the problems of mass movements of peoples, and will have universal application. As to history, this book is expected to approximate a personal approach to the past. That is the strong point of the historical novel: Not alone does it give us facts out of a dim past, it also permits us to experience those facts through identification with the human beings depicted. Artistic value is too great an ideal to define briefly...so I will content myself by promising and predicting that this work will surpass my late book: "Let Me Breathe Thunder."

At present I have completed all of the library research on the subject of steel, and I have compiled this research in a number of notebooks for quick reference. I have made an outline, very comprehensive, on the book to be done...My publishers have seen the outline and are very enthusiastic about it. They predict great things for the book if I get money for the field research. It has taken me six months already to prepare for the actual field research. Having gone so far already, I am sure to finish this book within the time limit I have set myself on the application blank.

Although I have become well read on the subject of steel and the migrant steel worker, I have not had an opportunity to go into the homes and workplaces of these men. I have not had an opportunity to contact men who actually lived through the era I intend writing about. Therefore, I feel that I must visit the following places to get that much needed personal contact:

- 1: The state of Kentucky, Cumberland River region.
- 2: The state of Pennsylvania, Allegheny Valley region.

a. Pittsburgh

Up the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Ambridge...Visiting steel mills and towns along the way.

Down the Monogahela River from Pittsburgh to Mc Keesport...Stopping at the important steel centers like Homestead, Rankin, Braddock and Duquesne, etc...

From Pittsburgh again up the Allegheny River to Tarentum...Stopping at important points en-route. The U.S. Steel mills in Illinois and Gary Indiana will also rate a few weeks.

As to subsequent plans...I have thought of doing a sequel to this work some time in the future: the wreckage of a people drifting into Pittsburgh, settling the "bottoms" of that town. Also, the social problem they present at present-writing to Pittsburgh.

Attaway, William Alexander Born, Greenville Mississippi, Nov. 19, 1911
 Entered: Feb. 8, 1932. Matriculated: Feb. 8, 1932. Matr. Number: 80181
 College: L.A.S. (Pre-Law) Degrees: A.B. June 8, 1936.

Accepted from Tilden Tech. High School, Chi., Ill.

Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade	Course	Number	Hrs.	Grade
(SECOND SEMESTER 1931-32)				(FIRST SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1a	4	D	Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4	D
Modern Industry	Econ. 27	3	C	Hist. of Ancient and Med. Philosophy	Phil. 3	4	C
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet. 1	3	C	Primitive Societies	Soc. 42	3	B
English History	Hist. 2b	3	D	Social Evolution	Soc. 3	3	C
Hygiene & Sanitation	Hyg. 3	1	C	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60a	4	A
Individual Athletics	P.E. 14	1	D	Soccer	P.E. 31	1	A
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 22a	1	C	Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	1	D
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 22b	1	B	Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	1	E
(FIRST SEMESTER 1932-33)				(SECOND SEMESTER 1935-36)			
General Zoology	Zool. 1	5	B	Intro. Botany-Lab.	Bot. 1b	2	*pass
Rhetoric & Comp.	Rhet. 2	3	B	Social Progress and Social Values	Soc. 20	3	C
Elementary Spanish	Span. 1b	4	D	Modern Spanish	Span. 2b	4	D
Intro. to Literature	Eng. 10a	3	C	Prin. of Secondary Ed.	Ed. 6	3	C
Tumbling Stunts	P.E. 15	1	E	Hist. of Modern Phil.	Phil. 4	4	C
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 21a	1	B	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60b	4	A
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 21b	1	E	Music Appreciation	Mus. 14	2	E
(SECOND SEMESTER 1932-33)				(FIRST SEMESTER 1934-35)			
Vert. Zool & Anatomy	Zool. 2	5	E	Intro. Philosophy	Phil. 1	3	B
Intro. to Psych.	Psych. 1	4	C	General Psychology	Psych. 2	4	C
Modern Spanish	Span. 2a	4	E	Principles of Sociol.	Soc. 1	3	B
Swimming	P.E. 13	1	E	Advanced Narrative Composition	Rhet. 6	3	A
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 24a	1	C	American Literature	Eng. 12	2	C
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 24b	1	C	Playground ball	P.E. 34	1	ab
(FIRST SEMESTER 1934-35)				(SECOND SEMESTER 1934-35)			
Intro. Philosophy	Phil. 1	3	B	Rural Sociology	Soc. 7	3	D
General Psychology	Psych. 2	4	C	Criminology	Soc. 9	3	C
Principles of Sociol.	Soc. 1	3	B	Metaphysics	Phil. 16	3	B
Advanced Narrative Composition	Rhet. 6	3	A	General Geology	Geol. 1	3	C
American Literature	Eng. 12	2	C	Charities	Soc. 8	3	C
Playground ball	P.E. 34	1	ab	Soccer	P.E. 31	1	E
Cavalry Drill	Mil. 23a	1	E	(Summer SESSION 1935)			
Cavalry Theory	Mil. 23b	1	D	Educational Psych.	Ed. 825	3	C
(SECOND SEMESTER 1934-35)				(FIRST SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Rural Sociology	Soc. 7	3	D	Modern Spanish	Span. 2b	4	D
Criminology	Soc. 9	3	C	Prin. of Secondary Ed.	Ed. 6	3	C
Metaphysics	Phil. 16	3	B	Hist. of Modern Phil.	Phil. 4	4	C
General Geology	Geol. 1	3	C	Thesis & Honors	Engl. 60b	4	A
Charities	Soc. 8	3	C	Music Appreciation	Mus. 14	2	E
Soccer	P.E. 31	1	E	Squash Racquet	P.E. 45	1	ab
(Summer SESSION 1935)				(SECOND SEMESTER 1935-36)			
Educational Psych.	Ed. 825	3	C	Infantry Theory	Mil. 4b	1	D
Comparative Edus.	Ed. 85	3	D	Social Fact. in Personality	Soc. 2	3	*pass
Hist. of Education	Ed. 82	3	B	Tennis	P.E. 33	1	*pass
				Intro. to Mod. Theo. in Education			
				Educ. 31			
				Engl. 44			
				Contemporary Poetry			

total semester hours 126 1/2

In good standing.

A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor; E, failure; ab. (absent)
 ex. (excused absence); Dr., dropped from class; *passed by
 examination without taking course.
 Parent or Guardian: Florence Mary Attaway, 506 E. 42nd. Street, Chicago
 Illinois.
 Student classified as Resident

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



LETTERS OF REFERENCE

William Attaway

Miss Charlotte Carr, Director, Hull House

It has to be admitted that I know very little really about Mr. Attaway. I had one long afternoon's conversation with him when he was referred to me by Dr. Bousfield some months ago. I received a very vivid impression that he was a person of unusual promise and ability. I liked his point of view, his courage and his sensible and dispassionate reaction to the problem of his race. I was sufficiently interested in him that after he left I bought his book, which I have read and consider excellent - indeed, amazingly comparable to "Of Mice and Men", though, of course, in no sense imitative of that.

I wrote Mr. Attaway my appreciation of the book, and have recently had an application from him for residence at Hull-House. I have been delighted to accept that application whenever he can come to Chicago, and do want him to be a resident. Whether or not his residence is dependent upon his receiving a fellowship from the Fund, I do not know.

Mr. Attaway is a very different type of person from Dewey Jones, and would not, on a cooperative plan between the Rosenwald Fund and Hull-House, do the type of thing we found we were able to do with Dewey Jones. On the other hand, he has his own special qualifications, in my opinion, for a joint program. I am not - I want to make this clear - asking for money from the Rosenwald Fund, but do say that if he is a resident here, and carries out the program he has planned with the Fund, much of real value could come from the joint contact.

To sum it up, I have enough confidence in Mr. Attaway that I would bring him in here to help us out without further information

than I have of him. On the other hand, I am aware that for the purposes of your references, you will want more information than I am able to provide.

- - - - -

Mr. A. L. Foster, Executive Secretary, Chicago Urban League

I have an especial interest in this candidate because of my very close contact with him and his sister while they were at the University of Illinois. There were some of us who felt that they were both very talented, and we have followed their careers with very deep interest.

Mr. Attaway has proved his ability as a writer and it appears that the plan of work which he has submitted should be of tremendous value, if it is developed.

- - - - -

Dr. Bruce Wierick, Associate Professor of English, University of Illinois

I am glad to write you a favorable report of Mr. Attaway, who for two years was a student in my classes in creative writing. His work here was unusually promising in its ability to handle plot and to motivate plausible characters with originality and skill. His recent novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, deserved I think the praise it got, and is one of the most surprising first novels to show up recently. If Attaway can keep up the pace he sets there, he will soon be known as one of our really creative writers. The novel was the more surprising in that it dealt almost entirely with white characters - a task which I believe no other Negro has attempted with such success. It will be interesting to see if he is equally adept at interpreting his own race. If he is, he will put us all in his debt, as he is free from looking at the Negro in the usual stereotyped formulas that so much

writing about the Negro employs. How Negroes look to Negroes is something that I for one know little about; and about which I am curious. I think Attaway has a chance of telling us. I strongly suspect that he has more ability to be a good novelist than any Negro now on the scene; and I can hardly doubt the pleasure you will get in having a part in helping him along in these his formative years.

I should add that I know Attaway very well. When he was here he wrote plays which the Negroes here produced, and as a result soon got attention from some of us who are interested in such abilities, and who are not afraid of a color line. I may say that I always felt about him that he was a little too serious, a kind of Negro Hamlet, shrouded in melancholy, and feeling more than I liked to see the oppression of color discrimination; though I may add that were I in his place, I should probably get a good deal more violent than he ever did. I am a little disturbed at the propoganda aspects of his projected plan; and think you might warn him that life is bigger than the problems of life. The sociological novel is in vogue just now, of course; but those that will live will be only incidentally sociological, and primarily alive with real people that we can care about for some other reason than that they represent a problem. I say this with some diffidence, as from long experience with writers, I have found that often plans that sound the least promising turn out the best, and vice versa.

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Mr. Archer Winsten, Motion Picture Reviewer, New York Post

Mr. Attaway's personality and qualifications are, in my opinion, admirably suited to the type of work he has outlined. His first published novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder, is hardly more than an exercise

despite its somewhat derivative excellence. Later unpublished writings indicate a far greater talent and one which is peculiarly fitted for the task he has set for himself. Of course any book is a gamble. Creative work cannot be guaranteed. But I can assure you that the possibilities in this case, or, I may say, the probabilities are brilliant.

It is hard to conceive of a less stereotyped or more significant subject from the Negro point of view than the one chosen. I have suspected for some time that Mr. Attaway is on the verge of making the finest contribution to American literature of any Negro author to date. I may be wrong. People usually are when they say things like that. But I know of no author with greater potentialities. What will come of them is for the future to decide.

- - - - -

Mr. John Woodburn, Editor, Doubleday, Doran and Company, New York

I have known William Attaway for nearly two years, both as a personal friend and as his editor at Doubleday, Doran, who published his novel, Let Me Breathe Thunder. As a person, I have been impressed by his exceptional adjustment to life and to circumstance, his single-minded, honest approach to his work - in short, by the general integrity of his personality.

As a writer, and I do not limit this to a category of racial interpretation, I believe him to possess an authentic talent, a talent which I have found balanced by a maturity not often found in a young man not yet thirty. The novel now in progress exhibits, even in its unfinished, structural state, the fulfillment of the promise implied in Let Me Breathe Thunder. In my understanding of the aims and accomplishments of the Rosenwald Foundation, William Attaway is a logical and exceptionally worthy candidate for a fellowship.

Name William Alexander Attaway
 Creative Writer
 456 West 148th Street, New York City

Field: Creative Writing

Plan of Work

A book (factual novel) on the Pittsburgh industrial area with special attention to the steel mills and the Negroes' place in them from the beginnings of the world war to the great steel strikes of 1919. The library research is already finished, so now I would like to get first hand information in the great steel centers.

Study would require one year.

Personal Data Born in Mississippi, November, 1911. Single. **Age:** 28

Undergraduate Work University of Illinois, B. A. 1936.

Graduate Work

Experience

Accomplishments

Publications: Let Me Breathe Thunder, a novel published by Doubleday Doran, 1939. Stories for the Pittsburgh Courier and Challenge Magazine.

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Budget Summary

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From Applicant	0
From Fund	\$1500

AMOUNT GRANTED

FILE COPY

F S K
 UNIVERSITY

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-2-

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William Attaway, Negro Novelist

'Let Me Breathe Thunder,' Just Issued, Creates Stir in Literary Circles

By Milton Meltzer

When William Attaway's first novel landed on the desks of the critics the other day they got excited. From left to right the reviews are alive with paragraphs punched out enthusiastically.

"Let Me Breathe Thunder" is the story of Step and Ed, young men with no childhood behind them, no security before them. They are vagrants bumming their way around the country in a never-ending circuit. With them is Hi-Boy, a little Mexican of ten. The way the three keep alive riding the rods and following the crops and the relations that develop between them make the story.

Author Has Experienced Material in Novel

The novel is real and good because Attaway knows what he's writing about. He comes from a little town in Mississippi, where he lived until he was five. Then the family moved north to Chicago. "My father, who was a doctor," says Attaway, "had a notion that Negro kids brought up in the South unconsciously accept the whites' estimate of them, and they never get to know what it is to be a human among humans. He brought us north hoping we wouldn't absorb these false Southern ideas."

In Chicago Attaway went through grammar and high school very unwillingly. Teachers told their pupils to stay away from Bill if they wanted to go straight. Tired of being rated the neighborhood nuisance, Bill started to imitate his sister, whose future was considered very bright because she was always reading books. He began to look at them, very often upside down, when people were around, but after a while the print got him and he fell

But for good stuff his own sake he had him. In high school he used to skip classes to go out to Checkerboard Field and watch the planes go up. The pilots set him to washing planes, telling him he'd learn fast that way. After six months they were taking him up with them, but Bill's father got wise and yanked him home again.

Maybe because Bill's father had sized his son up well and knew he wouldn't stay put, he didn't push him to follow his medical career. But Mrs. Attaway wanted him to be a doctor too, so off he went to the University of Illinois. Bill had started scribbling over long sheets of paper by that time, and at college he would write all night. Science courses all came in the early morning, so he slept over his microscope. Noticing that law courses were scheduled for the afternoon hours, Bill decided to take up law.

"The best course those years was a seminar in creative writing. We'd simply talk the night away. I never showed my writing to the prof and he never asked to see it. When the term was up he gave me an A, saying 'If I'm wrong, Bill, that's your funeral, not mine. I have confidence in you as a man, so what the hell, I got along fine with him.'"

Meets Richard Wright At Chicago Lecture

About this time Richard Wright, then living in Chicago, appeared at the University to talk on trade-unionism. Bill heard him and invited him to speak to the college literary society on writing. When Wright showed up that night, he faced an audience of formal clothes and gowns, lots of fancy trimmings. He didn't know whether to go ahead, but Bill urged him on and he pulled out the manuscript of his "Big Boy Leaves Home," one of the short novels in his "Uncle Tom's Children." "He started to read that swell story," said Bill, "and when he got to the second paragraph, half the audience had fled. Dick went on, set on giving it to them, and at the end, the room was empty of the literary set and only Dick and I were there."

Two years of college seemed enough, so Attaway hopped a freight

couldn't make his quota. But he did get to Canada as cabin boy. Then he got a stevedore's job on the Frisco docks.

Attaway knows most of the western states pretty well, for he followed the crops with the other migratory agricultural workers. From El Paso he made his way across the border for Mexico in a refrigerator car. He almost starved to death, and his college Spanish failed him when he tried to remember the words for sandwich or meat.

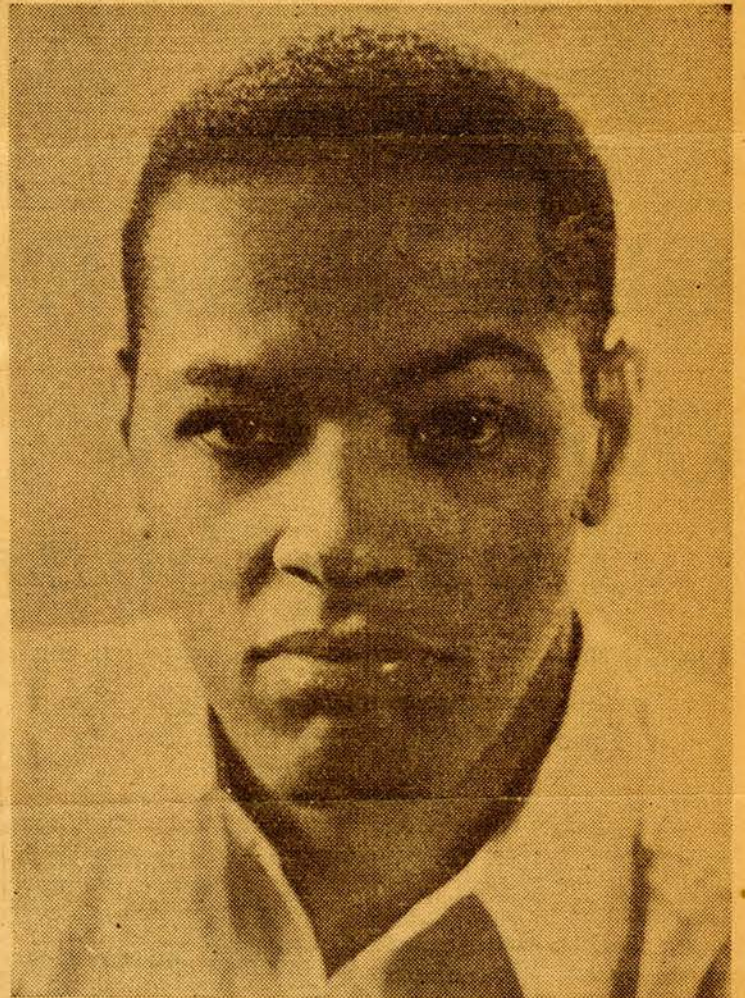
Beating it back across the border, Bill wound up on a farm near Topeka, Kansas. He worked for three months and wrote a book which he took to New York in search of a publisher. "A friend kindly told me it was lousy," says Bill, "so I thought I'd stick to hoboeing for my career." I rode the freights out to the Coast, and a Japanese family in Frisco took me in, giving me a bed in their attic. For three months I had a wonderful time, going out to the soup kitchen for my meals, then climbing up to the attic to read the slew of library books I had gathered."

Worked As Union Organizer in Harlem

It was nearing the end of 1933 and Bill thought he'd go home for Christmas. "I had a hard job making it. Going over the mountains in an empty I froze so badly I lost all sensation in my fingers for almost two years. Once home, they got me back into college, and in two years more I walked out with my B.A. That summer I cut mint in the fields to earn money for a stay in New York. The \$8 I had when I got there my sisue and I spent celebrating the first night. In Harlem I worked as a union organizer for six months, and then took a job in a dress shop, the only male clerk in the place. That was too much for me. I quit fast."

There were several odd jobs after that, until one day Bill's sister, an actress in the Broadway cast of "You Can't Take It With You," decided to make an actor of him. Kaufman and Hart and Harris were casting a road company, and Bill was dragged down to try out. "I never wanted to be an actor," he says. "I was so scared reading those lines they all thought I was very funny. I got the part and we played in Chicago for one year. Then touring all over the country, and it seemed I'd never get out of that play. In Philadelphia I wrote "Let Me Breathe Thunder" while we were playing there. It took three and a half months. When John Woodburn at Doubleday, Doran read the manuscript, that ended my two years as an actor."

Attaway is working on another novel now. It's about the sharecroppers who were brought up to work in the Allegheny steel mills during the World War.



William Attaway

Outdoor Exhibition of Art

ent as dur ur
A s grams bel tee co tury-F tatives The news t Americ is a ma Broadc CBS, v Americ
Twel and ti corner So no rate a more five-ce for-one charge. agreed. person, dustry"
Two recent regard pictur all p too! thea pro are



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"Let Me Breathe Thunder" is the story of Step and Ed, young men with no childhood behind them, no security before them. They are vagrants bumming their way around the country in a never-ending circuit. With them is Hi-Boy, a little Mexican of ten. The way the three keep alive riding the rods and following the crops and the relations that develop between them make the story.

Author Has Experienced Material in Novel

The novel is real and good because Attaway knows what he's writing about. He comes from a little town in Mississippi, where he lived until he was five. Then the family moved north to Chicago. "My father, who was a doctor," says Attaway, "had a notion that Negro kids brought up in the South unconsciously accept the whites' estimate of them, and they never get to know what it is to be a human among humans. He brought us north hoping we wouldn't absorb these false Southern ideas."

In Chicago Attaway went through grammar and high school very unwillingly. Teachers told their pupils to stay away from Bill if they wanted to go straight. Tired of being rated the neighborhood nuisance, Bill started to imitate his sister, whose future was considered very bright because she was always reading books. He began to look at them, very often upside down, when people were around, but after a while the print got him and he fell hard for good stuff. He was 12 then.

But ~~moment for his own sake~~ school he used had him. In high school he used to skip classes to go out to O'Hare board Field and watch the planes go up. The pilots set him to washing planes, telling him he'd learn fast that way. After six months they were taking him up with them, but Bill's father got wise and yanked him home again.

Maybe because Bill's father had sized his son up well and knew he wouldn't stay put, he didn't push him to follow his medical career. But Mrs. Attaway wanted him to be a doctor too, so off he went to the University of Illinois. Bill had started scribbling over long sheets of paper by that time, and at college he would write all night. Science courses all came in the early morning, so he slept over his microscope. Noticing that law courses were scheduled for the afternoon hours, Bill decided to take up law.

"The best course those years was a seminar in creative writing. We'd simply talk the night away. I never showed my writing to the prof and he never asked to see it. When the term was up he gave me an A, saying 'If I'm wrong, Bill, that's your funeral, not mine. I have confidence in you as a man, so what the hell, I got along fine with him.'"

Meets Richard Wright At Chicago Lecture

About this time Richard Wright, then living in Chicago, appeared at the University to talk on trade-unionism. Bill heard him and invited him to speak to the college literary society on writing. When Wright showed up that night, he faced an audience of formal clothes and gowns, lots of fancy trimmings. He didn't know whether to go ahead, but Bill urged him on and he pulled out the manuscript of his "Big Boy Leaves Home," one of the short novels in his "Uncle Tom's Children." "He started to read that swell story," said Bill, "and when he got to the second paragraph, half the audience had fled. Dick went on, set on giving it to them, and at the end, the room was empty of the literary set and only Dick and I were there."

Two years of college seemed enough, so Attaway hopped a freight on the Milwaukee line, \$40 in his pocket. At Kansas City he hit a carnival and played the wheel, one buck a try. Forty spins and he was broke. Once he had come across a book on Hindu philosophy, and he wanted to see the Orient and how people lived there. He got as far as the West Coast, but couldn't ship out. The seamen's union required a \$30 initiation fee at that time, and Bill could raise as much as \$29 now and then but

couldn't make his quota. But he did get to Canada as cabin boy. Then he got a stevedore's job on the Frisco docks.

Attaway knows most of the western states pretty well, for he followed the crops with the other migratory agricultural workers. From El Paso he made his way across the border for Mexico in a refrigerator car. He almost starved to death, and his college Spanish failed him when he tried to remember the words for sandwich or meat.

Beating it back across the border, Bill wound up on a farm near Topeka, Kansas. He worked for three months and wrote a book which he took to New York in search of a publisher. "A friend kindly told me it was lousy," says Bill, "so I thought I'd stick to hoboing for my career." I rode the freights out to the Coast, and a Japanese family in Frisco took me in, giving me a bed in their attic. For three months I had a wonderful time, going out to the soup kitchen for my meals, then climbing up to the attic to read the slew of library books I had gathered."

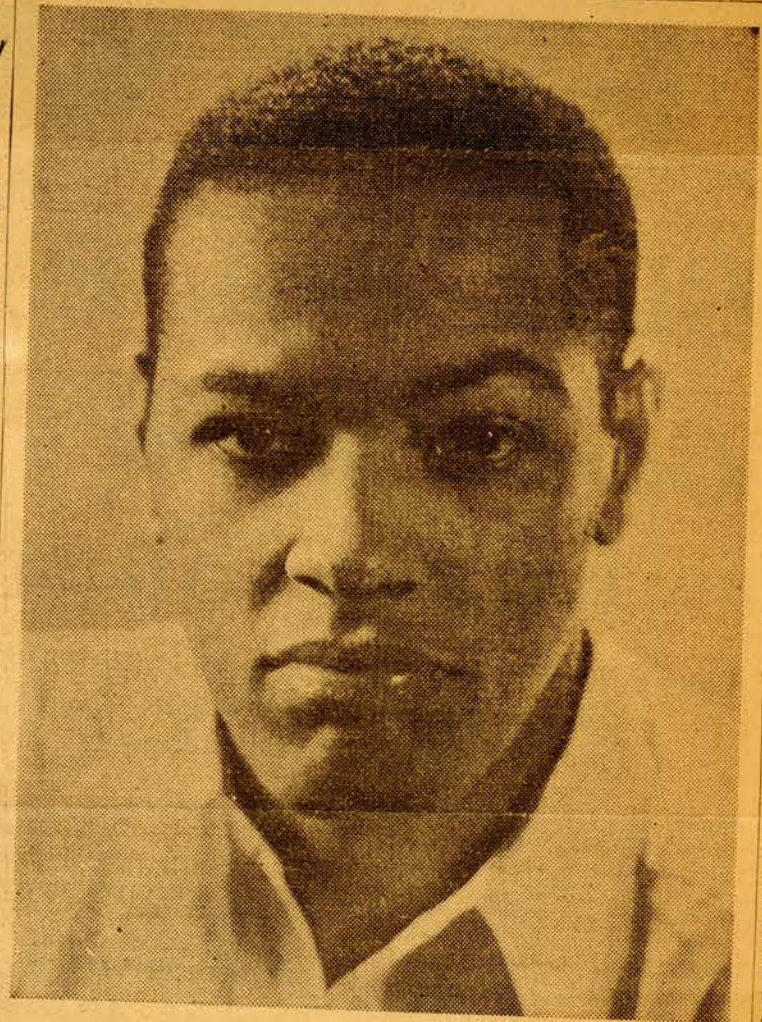
Worked As Union Organizer in Harlem

It was nearing the end of 1933 and Bill thought he'd go home for Christmas. "I had a hard job making it. Going over the mountains in an empty I froze so badly I lost all sensation in my fingers for almost two years. Once home,

got me back into college, and in two years more I walked out with my B.A. That summer I cut mint in the fields to earn money for a stay in New York. The \$8 I had when I got there my sister and I spent celebrating the first night. In Harlem I worked as a union organizer for six months, and then took a job in a dress shop, the only male clerk in the place. That was too much for me. I quit fast."

There were several odd jobs after that, until one day Bill's sister, an actress in the Broadway cast of "You Can't Take It With You," decided to make an actor of him. Kaufman and Hart and Harris were casting a road company, and Bill was dragged down to try out. "I never wanted to be an actor," he says. "I was so scared reading those lines they all thought I was very funny. I got the part and we played in Chicago for one year. Then touring all over the country, and it seemed I'd never get out of that play. In Philadelphia I wrote "Let Me Breathe Thunder" while we were playing there. It took three and a half months. When John Woodburn at Doubleday, Doran read the manuscript, that ended my two years as an actor."

Attaway is working on another novel now. It's about the sharecroppers who were brought up to work in the Allegheny steel mills during the World War.



William Attaway

Outdoor Exhibition of Art

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Nora, Maria and John alike. Only Wilhelm von Rautten, Maria's father, going back to the land and farming almost as a peasant, arrives at contentment.

The book is thronged with real, unforgettable people and with scenes that are both strong and poignant.

JANE SPENCE SOUTHRON.

Tough and Tender

LET ME BREATHE THUNDER.
By William Attaway. 267 pp.
New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. \$2.

THIS first novel by a 25-year-old Negro quite definitely proves two things: that it is possible for a Negro to write about whites, and that William Attaway has a legitimate reason to face a typewriter in the years to come. His tough and tender story of two young box-car wan-

men are torn between their desire for the boy's future and their own need of him, and William Attaway makes their decision seem urgent and humanly important.

All the emotions of the book are direct and primitive, and the bareness of the speech cuts the action to lean and powerful lines. The scenes in Mag's roadhouse, Step's relations with the emotionally starved rancher's daughter, Hi-Boy's moment when he jabs a fork into his hand to prove his courage to Step—these and a dozen other incidents are as jarring to the nerves as a power-drill. Less ably written the book would only be melodrama and sentimentality, but the characterizations are sure and the dialogue distilled to the point that a poet writing a cablegram could not better.

It is surely true, however, that the understated writing and the hard-boiled characters cloaking their semi-conscious good intentions are ingredients of novels that have become rather familiar of late. Before James Cain or Edward Newhouse or Benjamin Appel, or even the early Hemingway, this book would have caused great excitement. It is no particular discredit to William Attaway to say that in his first work he has paralleled the style of his more eminent contemporaries.

He has, in many moments of this book, equaled them, and, in the poetic overtones of the writing, occasionally surpassed them. He is an authentic young artist not to be watched tomorrow but now.

STANLEY YOUNG.



William Attaway.

derers and their love for a little Mexican waif who rides the reefers with them has some of the emotional quality and force of the familiar relationship of George and Lennie in "Of Mice and Men." We see two rootless men faced by hard reality yet still susceptible to dreams and affection.

Ed and Step, the major characters, represent in these times the vast army of drifting young Americans who grab their scenery from the top of a freight and take their emotions from an empty stomach. They are apparently living from day to day and waiting for nothing. They are not professional hoboes given to talk about the "romance of the road." Their single thought is to keep alive, to push on over the next mountain, to pick hops in California, berries in Washington, back-doors in Ohio, until by some miracle they land and take root.

In New Mexico Ed and Step meet Hi-Boy, an inarticulate Mexican kid with dreams in his eyes and a wistful, trusting way that breaks through their casual, tough veneer until the men appoint themselves as road guardians to the boy. It is in no way the average jockey-lamb relationship of the hobo jungle. The kid becomes a kind of domestic symbol to the wanderers and a kind of outlet for their affection and all the tenderness which is missing in their abnormal lives.

No matter what brothel or bar or circumstance Step's primitive urges lead him into, Hi-Boy's reactions to the scene take precedence over everything else. They delight in him when they find he is a crack shot with a rifle; they are paternally concerned when he is ill. He is their cub and they want to keep him happy and rolling in the sun they have not seen. When the rancher at Yakima Valley wants to keep Hi-Boy, the

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NEW YORK TIMES

JUN 25 1939

Tough and Tender

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Outgoing training in September with a view to becoming a librarian.

Attaway Writes Stirring Novel Of American Scene

LET ME BREATHE THUNDER, by William Attaway, Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., New York, 1939, 9x6, 267 pages (\$2.00)

Reviewed by BAREFIELD GORDON

Young William Attaway has woven the substance that is his youthful spirit into a strong, arrogant American story, patterning a segment of that restless youth whose speeding away from pious restraint, has made the West and the American continent grow in splendor and power.

Those of us who are "too old or too young to rend our meat" may not enjoy this literature. For this is the warp and woof of the American fabric. Cain in "The Postman Always Rings Twice," Faulkner, Steinbeck—all are recording the realities that are the America of today. This is the country we live in, whether we wish to own it or not.

For those of us who love America with its brutal, harsh, heart-rending sentimental democracy, Attaway has written a great little novel in "Let Me Breathe Thunder." This saga of the boys, Step, Ed and the little Mexican, Hi Boy, adventuring in the Northwest have no Negroes as central characters even though Negroes play their part. Lust and violence play a part, but of such the novel is not. This is a sentimental story of two road wanderers whose love for a Mexican kid leads to frustration and poignant loss.

THE STORY

Step is the hero. This young ex-county-fair-all-comers boxer centers the story in his unbending arrogance under the whip of fortune. Ed, the narrator, adores Step and follows his pal about, getting him out of trouble. Hi Boy, the Mexican lad, is the embodiment of "Puck." He, too, adores Step. But Hi Boy is the spirit of eternal

youth who delivers Step and Ed to sure defeat.

On a box-car Step and Ed find Hi Boy who has ten dollars. They agree to take him along with them to Seattle before "ducking out on him." They continue to postpone the "ducking" and take Hi Boy with them to work on a farm in the Yakima valley. After being there several months they agree to leave Hi Boy in a secure home, but events prevent their doing so. Their escape with Hi Boy brings on the exciting ending.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Attaway's "Let Me Breathe Thunder" is a story-teller's gem. It is something that we have been hoping to see a Negro writer do—write his story and let race propaganda fall where it may—anywhere but in the author's or the story's way. Attaway has done this and more. His descriptions are sharp; his plot has movement; his details are pared down to the bare essentials of terse expression—his writing is literature.

The Excelsior club of Greater Bethesda Baptist church will present Dr. J. W. Eichelberger as guest speaker at a banquet in the community house, 109 East Fifty-third street, Friday, June 30, 8:15 p. m. A deluxe dinner will be served.

Let Me Breathe Thunder

THE SHEER SIMPLICITY with which William Attaway relates his story, "LET ME BREATHE THUNDER", (Doubleday, Doran & Co.), makes it one of those first novels not so soon forgotten and marks another contribution to American literature by one whose talents have wide possibilities.

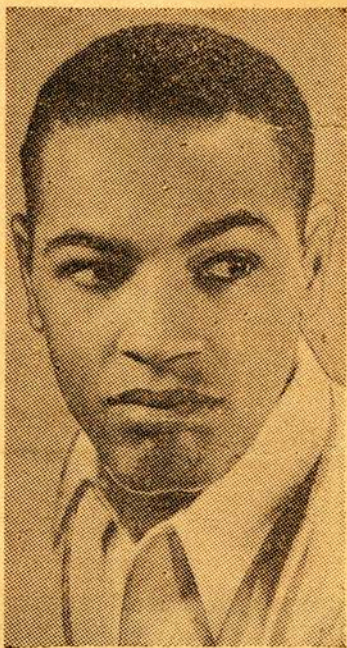
Aside from the unusual situation—that of a Negro author writing of white characters, analyzing them, weighing their emotions with sure and deft delineation—"Let Me Breathe Thunder" has that absorbing quality marking the work of a writer who has arrived.

Two hoboes, itinerant sons of the railroads and the "jungles," Step and Ed, find their lives intertwined in the antics of a little Mexican boy of ten, Hi-Boy, who exerts so much influence upon them that he nearly succeeds in changing their philosophy of life.

Hi-Boy just tagged himself onto the two hoboes who take his money and then find they don't want to be rid of the little beggar who has brought a shaft of sunlight into an otherwise, squalid, bawdy sort of life. Life in the boxcars, in the apple orchards of the far-north-west; passion and lust for the flesh coupled with a desire to live on the part of both Step and Ed make "Let Me Breathe Thunder" worthwhile reading.

Mr. Attaway is a native of Mississippi and according to him, since his father was a doctor, "there was no trouble at all in getting born." However, Mr. Attaway, a youngster, says his only recollection of the South concerned itself with two chinaberry trees in the front yard and a little charcoal-colored girl singing over the fence as she passed with her load: "Nigger Nigger never die; black face and shiny eye . . ."

"My second and real birth was in Chicago," an autobiographical note by the author relates, where his family settled after following the tail end of the great migration north. In Chicago Attaway received the advantages not obtainable in his Mississippi hometown. But an urge to wander was extant in him and after the death of his father, he spent much time hobo-



WILLIAM ATTAWAY

ing to the exasperation of his mother who had gone into the public school system as a teacher.

A brother of Miss Ruth Attaway, a talented young actress who played in several Broadway successes, including "You Can't Take It With You", young Attaway finally finished high school with intervals of writing and acting for his sister's dramatic groups. He was then packed off to the University of Illinois. He quit and rambled about the United States, Mexico and Canada, working on boats, etc., for two years before returning to the University and getting his B. A. degree.

Mr. Attaway later came to New York as a free-lance writer but found it hard to make an impression and through the intercession of his sister, he went on the stage and spent another two years traveling throughout the country. Meanwhile, he was at work on "Let Me Breathe Thunder". He received notice that the book had been accepted for publication while traveling in Texas.—DAN BURLEY.

BOOKS ON OUR TABLE

New Negro Writer Makes His Bow

By MAY CAMERON

Stories about white people written by Negro writers are so rare that I cannot recall even one such specimen. However, a twenty-five-year-old Negro writer, William Attaway, has now appeared with "Let Me Breathe Thunder" (Doubleday Doran, \$2), the tale of two foot-loose young whites and their little Mexican pal, Hi Boy.

For the first few pages, this new novel reads as if it were simply another tough-guy tale; but as soon as Mr. Attaway gets his fictional spell working smoothly, you will be so thoroughly captivated by his fresh and powerful talent that I don't believe you will be able to put the book aside until you have finished it.

Step and Ed were two young men on the road, willing to work if they had to, but ready to win bed and board by any means, fair or foul, that came to their hands. Step, hot-tempered and proud, had once been a prizefighter, but beyond that neither know much about the other's past; and neither knew anything at all about the future, even of the brief time that separated one meal from another.

He Had Ten Bucks

In New Mexico the pair picked up Hi Boy, ten years old, homeless, friendly as a puppy. Hi Boy knew little English and couldn't, or wouldn't, tell anything about his family, where they had come from, where they had gone.

But Hi Boy had ten dollars, and he wouldn't tell where he got that, either. Step had taken it for "safe-keeping"; it was his and Ed's intention to ditch Hi Boy and skip with the money as soon as their freight car finally reached Seattle.

However, they hadn't counted on Hi Boy's effect on them. There was so much profound integrity in him, such a bottomless reservoir of kindness and unselfish humanity, that the two young thugs-in-the-making found their lives and outlooks changing.

They blew in a lot of Hi Boy's money for liquor, but they fed him and cared for him, became his unofficial guardians and even found jobs for themselves with a rancher who promised to provide a home for the Mexican waif.

But Sampson, the rancher, had a daughter who was boy-hungry and rebellious. Ed did all he could to keep Step away from her, but even Ed couldn't keep her away from Step. There was something in Step's nature that spontaneously generated trouble, whatever his intentions might be. Partly through this recklessness (which was really a feeling of insecurity and inferiority in disguise) and partly through the girl's resolution to get her man and keep him, tragedy came to her and to her father, to the two young hoboes and to Hi Boy.

Exciting New Talent

Obviously, a theme and plot of this nature might easily beguile a young writer into sentimentality. Mr. Attaway has completely avoided this pitfall. Indeed, the only unfortunate thing about this book is its rather pompous title. The novel is tightly, economically and cleanly written. "Let Me Breathe Thunder" is a fine and moving work and uncovers a new talent as exciting and promising as any I have encountered in months.

One of the July selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club is a mild and often amusing little tale of

English country folk called "The Brandons," by Angela Thirkell (Knopf, \$2.50). The author, whose "Pomfret Towers" delighted a great many American readers, is herself a member of a distinguished English family; her approach to society, servants and near-servants is that of long familiarity with their little manners and deceptions. She takes them apart with tolerance and affection and manages by sheer skill as a writer to lend momentary interest and amusement to the unimportant problems of what seem, in retrospect at least, pretty trivial lives.

Rolls-Royces roll in and out of the driveways as a matter of course; servants of the various houses function as perfectly as fiction has taught us British servants should, except that occasionally they become human over small jealousies or infinitesimal shifts in prestige. There is a bit of romance, an old harridan of a wealthy aunt and no problem more serious than what to do about her large estate nobody wants to inherit.

"The Brandons" is most concerned with Lavinia Brandon, a wealthy widow with two grown children, sufficient good looks to ensnare any passing male and an intelligence that had best be described by Angela Thirkell. Sir Edmund Pridham once remarked that certainly Lavinia was no child; a child would have more sense. Her son, Francis, once wondered what his mother thought of when she knelt in church and, so Mrs. Thirkell tells us, Mrs. Brandon looked guilty.

She Holds Her Breath

"I never quite know," she said. "I try to concentrate, but the only way I can concentrate is to hold my breath very hard, and that stops me thinking. And when I shut my eyes I see all sorts of spokes and fireworks. I always mean to ask to be nicer and kinder, but things like Rose wanting to change her afternoon out, or Aunt Sissie's letter, come into my mind at once. But I did have one very good idea, which was that if Rose changes her afternoon we could have the picnic that day and kill two birds with one stone."

So we have a picnic, visits to horrible Aunt Sissie, the expected "bad news," a vicarage fete and the problem and solution of Miss Morris, who had been Aunt Sissie's companion. Romantic Mr. Grant and his somewhat horse-faced mother who had "gone Italian," the vicar and the lawyer, familiar necessities of any such English comedy, are other more important figures in the story. All in all, "The Brandons" is a good enough escapist book if the headaches in the more serious books of today are too much with you.

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Lehigh Valley

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WOMAN 107 JULY 4 SETS GOAL AT 125

DUBOIS, Pa., June 29 (AP).—The nation's 163d anniversary July 4 will mark the 107th for Mrs. Katherine Micko of nearby Sykesville, who says she expects to live until she's 125.

Born in Austria July 4, 1832—she has her birth certificate to prove it—Mrs. Micko came to this country at the age of seventy.

Until she was 100 she could

thread a needle with ease. Now she is blind and partly deaf but still manages to get around. Much of her time is spent in prayer.

WHO'S A FLAT TIRE? HUSBAND WONDERS

SYRACUSE, June 29 (AP).—Suing for divorce, William Kaulbach offered as evidence in court a postcard he said his wife had sent him while vacationing in New Jersey. The card bore a picture of a

girl with tion C per tin A

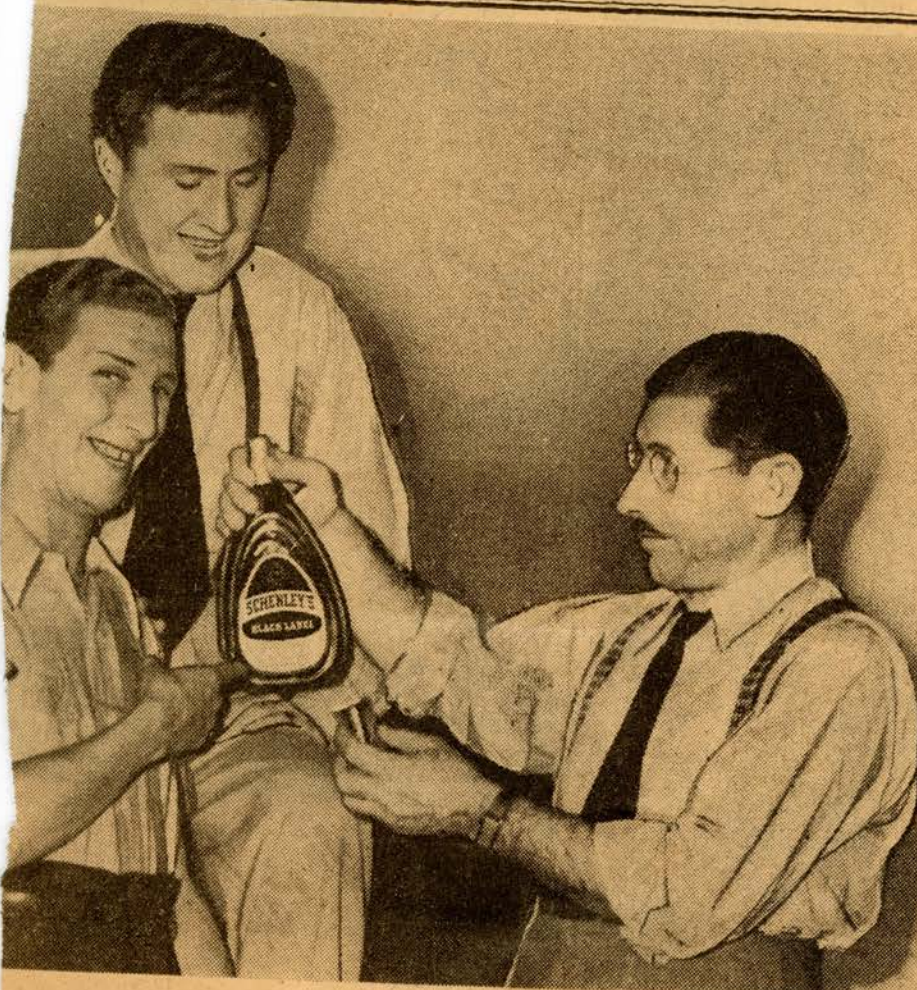
AT CLASSES

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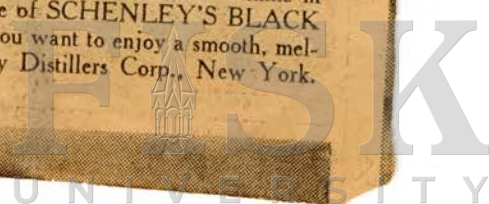
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AL HIGHLIGHT



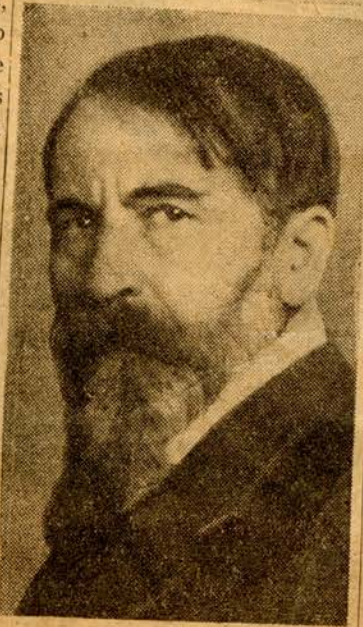
oice of whiskey-wise men and a wonderful mixer for 4th of July parties!" chime in ery A. Gourfrin (Strand's stage director) offers a bottle of SCHENLEY'S BLACK % grain neutral spirits. On your July 4th tour, when you want to enjoy a smooth, mel- st on SCHENLEY'S BLACK LABEL!! Schenley Distillers Corp., New York.



Schnitzler, Through His Widow Tells of a Kindly Giant Dreaming



MRS. SCHNITZLER. HER FAVORITE IS "THE LO



ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

happened to be hidden behind the trees on the stage.

"This amazed, shocked and, in a way, delighted the boy. He got a glimpse of make-believe and reality playing themselves out, you might say, at the same time.

"A childish incident, but it determined an attitude toward life that Schnitzler never lost. What was real? What was make-believe? What was truth? What was dream? Those questions, as you know, occupied Schnitzler always. He never found the answers, and none of us ever will

He summed up a few lines of comedy. Dr. Fridolin and the end of his sody."

Almost to the Schnitzler retained a childish sense of wonder as a playwright characters that joys and sorrow

Behind

When his last zum Weiber" (The Forest

First the tenor, then the bass, waved to Schnitzler's father when they

NEGRO NOVEL ACCLAIMED

ATTAWAY, EX-HOBO, TELLS OF VAGRANTS

By MILTON MELTZER

WHEN William Attaway's first novel landed on the desks of the critics the other day they got excited. From left to right the reviews are alive with paragraphs punched out enthusiastically. "Let Me Breathe Thunder" is the story of Step and Ed, young men with no childhood behind them, no security before them. They are vagrants bumming their way around the country in a never-ending circuit. With them is Hi-Boy, a little Mexican of ten. The way the three keep alive riding the rods and following the crops and the relations that develop between them make the story.

The novel is real and good because Attaway knows what he's writing about. He comes from a little town in Mississippi, where he lived until he was five. Then the family moved north to Chicago.

Fell for Books

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Maybe because Bill's father had sized his son up well and knew he wouldn't stay put, he didn't push him to follow his medical career. But Mrs. Attaway wanted him to be a doctor too, so off he went to the University of Illinois.

Wright Lectures

About this time Richard Wright, then living in Chicago, appeared at the University to talk on trade-unionism. Bill heard him and invited him to speak to the college literary society on writing.

When Wright showed up that night, he faced an audience of formal clothes and gowns, lots of fancy trimmings. He didn't know whether to go ahead, but Bill urged him on and he pulled out the manuscript of his "Big Boy Leaves Home," one of the short novels in his "Uncle Tom's Children."

"He started to read that swell story," said Bill, "and when he got to the second paragraph, half the audience had fled. Dick went on, set on giving it to them, and at the end, the room was empty of the literary set and only Dick and I were there."

Two years of college seemed enough, so Attaway hopped a freight on the Milwaukee line, \$40 in his pocket. At Kansas City he hit a carnival and played the wheel, one buck a try. Forty spins and he was broke.

Once he had come across a book on Hindu philosophy, and he wanted to see the Orient and how people lived there. He got as far as the West Coast, but couldn't ship out. The seamen's union required a \$30 initiation fee at that

time, and Bill could raise as much as \$29 now and then but couldn't make his quota. But he did get to Canada as cabin boy. Then he got a stevedore's job on the Frisco docks.

Followed Crops

Attaway knows most of the western states pretty well, for he followed the crops with the other migratory agricultural workers. From El Paso he made his way across the border for Mexico in a refrigerator car. He almost starved to death, and his college Spanish failed him when he tried to remember the words for sandwich or meat.

Beating it back across the border, Bill wound up on a farm near Topeka, Kansas. He worked for three months and wrote a book which he took to New York in search of a publisher.

"A friend kindly told me it was lousy," says Bill, "so I thought I'd stick to hoboing for my career. I rode the freights out to the Coast, and a Japanese family in Frisco took me in, giving me a bed in their attic. For three months I had a wonderful time, going out to the soup kitchen for my meals, then climbing up to the attic to read the slew of library books I had gathered."

Union Organizer

It was nearing the end of 1933 and Bill thought he'd go home for Christmas.

"I had a hard job making it. Going over the mountains in an empty I froze so badly I lost all sensation in my fingers for almost two years. Once home, they got me back into college, and in two years more I walked out with my B.A. That summer I cut mint in the fields to earn money for a stay in New York. The \$8 I had when I got there my sister and I spent celebrating the first night. In Harlem I worked as a union organizer for six months, and then took a job in a dress shop, the only male clerk in the place. That was too much for me. I quit fast."

There were several odd jobs after that, until one day Bill's sister, an actress in the Broadway cast of "You Can't Take It With You," decided to make an actor of him. Kaufman and Hart and Harris were casting a road company, and Bill was dragged down to try out.

"I never wanted to be an actor," he says. "I was so scared reading those lines they all thought I was very funny. I got the part and we played in Chicago for one year. Then touring all over the country, and it seemed I'd never get out of that play. In Philadelphia I wrote 'Let Me Breathe Thunder' while we were playing there. It took three and a half months. When John Woodburn at Doubleday read the manuscript, that ended my two years as an actor."



WILLIAM ATTAWAY

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8/24/41

New Novels of Trouble

BLOOD ON THE FORGE.

By William Attaway
279 pp. . . . New York:
Doubleday, Doran and Com-
pany. . . . \$2.

Reviewed by
MILTON RUGOFF

IT IS inevitable that "Blood on the Forge" should recall the work of Richard Wright—not simply because the author is Negro, but because he writes of the frustration and suffering of his people and does so with crude power and naked intensity. "Blood on the Forge" is a short novel packed with the same sense of the animal terrors of the hunted and the dream of the long oppressed that marked "Uncle Tom's Children." Mr. Attaway is willing to portray Negro life at its lowest in order to make stunningly clear to what a pass life in a white land has brought his people. But this is implicit and it may well be that some readers will be content to think his book merely violent and sensational.

At the opening the Moss brothers are sharecropping a piece of



Harold Stein

William Attaway

worked-out Kentucky earth, starving, clinging desperately, with childish faith, to the soil. The three men act as foils for each other: Big Mat, a giant of a man, twisted by a strangled desire to preach; Melody, who turns his troubles into guitar music, and Chinatown, he of the slant eyes and the lazy joking. In each the thwarted craving for recognition of personality has its strange outlet: Big Mat occasionally flies into insane rages, Melody indulges in wishful-dream games, and Chinatown treasures a gold tooth in his mouth as though it were the window of his soul. Their farm is a Negro "Tobacco Road"—which means that it belongs even lower on the social scale than the demesne of the Lesters, descending, in fact, into a region where the only relief is an iron stoicism or crazy yearnings.

When Big Mat finally rises against the boss and the trio are forced to flee they are lured by strikebreaking agencies to Northern steel mills. If the picture of Negroes-against-the-soil seemed raw and shocking, that in the post-war Pennsylvania steel towns is like something out of a revivalist's damnation-sermon conception of hell—a vision of writhing souls seen through smoke and flame, heightened by glimpses of the debauchery of Sodom and Gomorrah and the smouldering dump heaps of Gehenna.

On the soil the brothers had at least been able to breathe untainted air, grapple with an element, earth, that was capable of giving life; here there are only the monstrous machines disembowelling and consuming the earth, with puny creatures chained to them in a slavery that drained them utterly, that shriveled

them until even the green-corn whisky, the city whores and strikebreakers' extra pay could not slake the thirsts of body and soul.

The Moss brothers sense what is happening to them but cannot understand it. Frantically groping for life, haunted, moreover, by a steel mill superstition that the earth resents their work and in the end will take its toll in flaming flesh and pulverized bone, they lead incredibly hectic lives—brawling, drinking, gambling from break dawn to dawn. The climax comes when a catastrophe resulting from neglect by the management precipitates a strike. It is by no means an unusual climax, but the reactions of the three brothers certainly are—particularly that of Big Mat, who gets his big chance to assert his personality, to strike back at white men, when he is made a strikebreaker deputy. He realizes dimly that he is fighting his fellow workers, but greater than his sympathies or even his fear of death is his soul's need to cast off the feeling of his own impotence and nothingness. All other outlets having been cut off, he turns, like Bigger Thomas, to the anti-social, killing blindly.

There are in "Blood on the Forge" flashes of the humor, the lazy good nature, the music, the exuberance of the traditional Negro of fiction, but here these are obviously the mechanisms of defeated, aimless spirits. The keynotes in these lives are spiritual strangulation, social maladjustment, cravings that break out in myth-making dreams or desperate orgies of the senses. Mr. Attaway has a rich vein

of human experience to explore, and he has, I think, the equipment to do so. "Blood on the Forge" is only a beginning.