

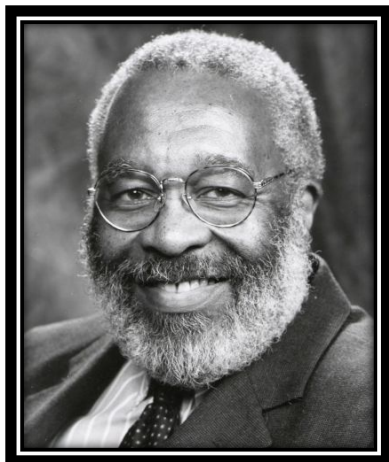
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

VINCENT HARDING

veteran, historian, writer, activist

“Transformation... begins with the fierce determination of the people to transform their reality. Only when the aspirations of the people well up in a mighty surge will the times begin to change for the better.”

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Courtesy of Sojourners

Background Information

Born July 15, 1931; Died May 19, 2014.

Vincent Harding received a B.A. in History from the City College of New York in 1952, and an M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University in 1953. He then served in the U.S. Army from 1953 to 1955 and returned to school to earn his Ph. D. in 1965 in American History from the University of Chicago.¹

Harding's Resistance

Harding was a historian, writer, and activist whose interest in democracy in American society stemmed from growing up in New York City. He went to a highly integrated school, which fed his appreciation for diversity and amplified his belief in the power of the Civil Rights Movement to spread ideas of democracy. Harding defined democracy as the process of human beings discovering their identities, first as individuals and then within the social spaces they work to develop.² Through his writings, teachings and social and political involvements, Harding preached for peace and justice by advocating for racial and economic equality. His powerful mastery of words was his tool to spread his ideas about the relationship between the African American experience and U.S. democracy and societal progress.

Achievements

In 1961 Harding and his wife established the Mennonite House in Atlanta, Georgia, as representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee. The Mennonite House became a place where Civil Rights activists came to work and rest, which then encouraged the Hardings to travel throughout the South as teachers and helpers in the Movement. In 1969 Harding and colleagues established the Institute of the Black World, whose goal was to unite African American achievements nationwide to support the rise of the Black Studies movement. Some of his most famous academic works are *The Other American Revolution*, *There Is a River, Hope, and History*, and *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*. He served as Chairman of the Department of History and Sociology at Spelman College in Atlanta, was elected director of the Martin Luther King Memorial Center, and was a professor of Religion and Social Transformation at the Iliff School of Theology at the University of Denver.³

¹ Harding, R. E. (1998). Biography, Democracy and Spirit: An Interview with Vincent Harding. Callaloo, 20(3) 682-698.

² Harding. (1988). Biography, Democracy and Spirit.

³ Ibid.

