

Suggested draft of letter to Allyn + Bacon —

ETC., ETC.

DATE

Dear Mr. Workman:

It has become impossible to compile the anthology which we planned and agreed to do with your publishing house. The fact is beyond our control: most prominent black poets, principally LeRoi Jones and those younger, together with some elder--in an understandable decision to act together against the long practice which has exploited and excluded their black brothers from equal participation with whites in social institutions, a practice which has obviously too long persisted--have agreed to boycott white publishers.

The decision to boycott came about after we had supposed that the widest distribution we could obtain of, especially, these poets' works would be most advantageous to them and to their potential readers. But in the meantime, we learn, our recent supposition is definitely not the contemporary black poet's priority. Because we highly value their poetry, we must respect the poets' common judgment as to where they place their work and their assessment of the effects.

Even if we weren't inclined to support the solidarity which would advantage those overlong disadvantaged, there would be nothing we could do about it, without plainly compromising our original intentions toward black poetry, without escalating the historical strain upon relations between black and white human beings, and--were we to embarrass ourselves and our reputations by "successfully" persuading contributors, against our inclination and motivation--if such action were conceivable: all we could foresee for result would be 1) an ineffective "Tom" anthology or, could it come to that, 2) permission fees (for real poets) so high that the sum of them would symbolize utter contempt for what the prevailing commerce has, apparently fatally, valued--unless, eventually, it can learn to value people in practice before material profit.

So it has developed that our agreement is impossible to keep, due to circumstances beyond our control. The lesson of the facts is painful, but any human growth seems to be.

If you have a "written instrument" with which Publisher and Author may mutually agree to dissolve our now-impossible agreement, we shall release Publisher of all obligation to the contract.

Enclosed please find a check in the sum of \$39.80, the total of what we have spent of our "initial payment" (a detailed accounting for which we can render on request).

Shall we meet in person soon, or can we manage the necessary mutual dissolution of contract by mail?

Very best personal regards,

Bernard Bell

ROT
Robert Tucker