Harvard, where Franklin represented the historical profession, a gracious and fitting honor from one southerner and one southern historian to another.

When I teach my Africana American history survey course, I always begin it with a brief history of African American history. I introduce my students to Franklin through his essays on the evolution of scholarship in the field and on the dilemmas of being a Black scholar. For show and tell, I bring a copy of Washington's still-impressive *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens* and tell them his story, too.

I am now turning to writing about another Black intellectual too long lost to history—that of Merze Tate, a stellar Oxford and Harvard-trained scholar of diplomatic and international history who began her long tenure on the history faculty at Howard in 1942. A prolific author, she pioneered in the fields of international relations and human rights, writing about disarmament and the political history of Hawai'i and the Pacific region; a world traveler and a Fulbright scholar, she was an expert on India, and later Africa. In 1944, Tate reviewed Franklin's first book, *The Free Negro in Ante-bellum North Carolina*. She commended it as a "dispassionate social and historical study" by a "young, brilliant scholar of American history," citing Franklin's painstaking archival work and the elegance of his writing. As well, she praised him for reflecting credit upon the many teachers who "inspired and encouraged him."

Although I never studied with either Franklin or Tate, I count them both among my professors. I hope that my work will reflect well upon the many lessons gleaned from their writings and their long, engaged lives of commitment to scholarship and service. They still have much to teach all of us.

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Re-Reading "From Slavery to Freedom"

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Long before I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance in person, John Hope Franklin's writings were a vital presence in my academic life. His books were some of the earliest sign posts that I encountered when I first ventured into the new and

unfamiliar territory of the historian. *The Free Negro in North Carolina* was critical to the framework of my first research paper in graduate school. *The Militant South* was required reading in C. Vann Woodward's reading and discussion seminar in Southern history. I turned to *Reconstruction: After the Civil War* hoping that it would help me put limits to the deepening puzzles of Reconstruction. But perhaps none of these works—important as they are—has influenced the historical imagination as profoundly as what is undoubtedly his most widely read work, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, first published in 1947. It kept me company over an anxious winter when I prepared for oral exams. I adopted its fifth edition as required reading in the first course that I taught as a graduate student. Known to general and academic readers alike, *From Slavery to Freedom* does not recount the progressive unfolding of an emancipatory project, even though its title early named what has become a theme central to analysis of the historical experiences of African Americans in the United States. Instead, it locates the emergence of a distinctively brittle racial regime in the United States within the complex contradictions of modern freedom that were set in motion by Atlantic slavery and the slave trade. "It was forces let loose by the Renaissance and the Commercial Revolution," he writes, "that created the modern institution of slavery and the slave trade" (Franklin 1947, p. 43; 1980, p. 31). There are thus no postwar echoes of NATO triumphalism in Franklin's conception of Atlantic modernity:

> The Renaissance gave to man a new kind of freedom—the freedom to pursue those ends that would be most beneficial to his soul and body. It developed into such a passionate search that it resulted in the destruction of long-established practices and beliefs and even in the destruction of the rights of others to pursue the same ends for their own benefit. It must never be overlooked that the concept of freedom that emerged in the modern world bordered on licentiousness and created a situation that approached anarchy. As W. E. B. DuBois has pointed out, it was the freedom to destroy freedom, the freedom of some to exploit the rights of others. It was, indeed, a concept of freedom with little or no social responsibility. If, then, a man was determined to be free, who was there to tell him that he was not entitled to enslave others (Franklin 1947, p. 43; 1980, p. 31)?

A story with such beginnings did not regard the nation as its self-evident unit of analysis. There is remarkable currency to the diasporic and hemispheric frame in which it locates African American historical experiences. The development of plantation slavery in the Caribbean and South America and the course of antislavery and anticolonial movements in the Caribbean and South America during the age of revolution are examined in relation to events in British North America. "Ironically enough," Franklin observed, "America's freedom was the means of giving slavery itself a longer life than it was to have in the British empire" (Franklin 1947, p. 143; 1980, p. 96).[1]

Notwithstanding the importance of a trans-national framework which is seldom acknowledged in conventional genealogies of Atlantic history, *From Slavery to Freedom* also underscores the importance of re-imagining the national history of the United States. "It has been necessary . . . to a considerable extent," Franklin explained in the preface to the first edition, "to retell the story of the evolution of the people of the United States in order to place the Negro in his proper relationship and perspective. To have proceeded otherwise would have been to ignore the indisputable fact that historical forces are all-pervasive and cut through the most rigid barriers of race

and caste" (Franklin 1980, p. vii). Its analysis of the historically-varying but central roles of racial subordination in the history of the United States often circumvents the charged political geography of "North" and "South" to underscore broadly national rather than particularly sectional meanings. Slavery, Jim Crow, and racialized labor subordination emerge as elements of nation building, not mere regional peculiarities. For example, no strains of Turnerian "frontier democracy" separate an examination of territorial annexation from the "Westward March" of slavery:

> The ideal of the West was not so much, as Frederick Jackson Turner, an historian of the frontier, has suggested, the right of every man to rise to the full measure of his own stature. It was the right of every man to take advantage of every opportunity that presented itself to gain the ends he desired and to ignore the basic, ethical restraints that would have made some distinction between liberty and license. It is conceivable, therefore, that the frontier, with its attractive land and its spirit of ruthless freedom, may have actually encouraged the westward march of slavery in the early part of the nineteenth century (Franklin 1980, p. 114).[2]

In a similar vein, likening Reconstruction to another civil war, "with as much bitterness and hatred, but less bloodshed," suggests that "The peace was being lost because of the vigorous efforts of both parties and sections to recruit their strength from the ruins of war" (Franklin 1980, p. 255). The terms of post-emancipation social order in the South take hold by accommodating Northern projects of cultural and economic improvement: "There was general approval of Northern philanthropy when the white citizens of the South discovered that their benefactors showed little or no interest in establishing racial equality or of upsetting white supremacy" (Franklin 1980, p. 272). The cumulative arguments give unprecedented attention to how, by the end of the nineteenth century, reconstituted racial hierarchy structured not only domestic institutions in the United States but also conditioned the political, economic, and cultural terms of interaction between the United States and a wider world. "America's empire of darker peoples" took shape in the Pacific and Caribbean after 1898, as lynching and other violent modes of racial virulence assumed new prominence in national life. "Few regarded these manifestations of violence as an inherent part of the industrial imperialism to which America was committed," Franklin suggests, "although, to be sure, an integral part of that imperialistic ideology was the subjection of the black man to caste control and wage slavery" (Franklin 1980, pp. 303, 313). Chapters on race and twentieth-century public schooling examine the structural terms of institutional racism with an interpretive force most often encountered in monographs rather than broad historical survey.

Intellectual biography is beyond the purpose of this essay. But to re-read *From Slavery to Freedom* has been my effort to reconcile with loss and to appreciate anew its continuing challenges to the writing of history. It has permitted me to recall the graciousness that a survivor of Tulsa's 1921 riot came to extend across the ranks to fellow historians and to acknowledge indebtedness for the skill with which he drew a hard history into analytical space.

Perhaps fuller glimpses of the substance and spirit of John Hope Franklin's historical judgment are captured in the quotations that follow. They were culled with assistance of graduate student Kelly King-O'Brien in May 2003, when Professor Franklin was guest of honor at a two-day symposium "Race and Power in the Making of American History," sponsored by the history department at the University of Chicago and attended by generations of his many students and friends, on the

occasion of the unveiling of his portrait in the department's John Hope Franklin seminar room.

1. "[G]ood history is a good foundation for a better present and future" (Franklin 1989, p. x).
2. "The wide gap that separates the white world from the Negro world in this country has not been bridged by the work of scholarship, black or white. Indeed, the world of scholarship has, for the most part, remained almost as partitioned as other worlds" (Franklin 1963, p. 71).
3. "The struggle to attain freedom all over the world was essentially a struggle to attain a measure of it at home. As the editor of *Opportunity* said, 'What happens to human rights in Manila, Martinique or Lagos will affect in no small measure development in Detroit'" (Franklin 1980, p. 499).
4. "Looking back on their 350 years of residence in the Western world, Negroes could correctly visualize themselves, from the beginning, as an integral part of the struggle for freedom. . . . Frequently . . . they were active participants in the valiant warfare to destroy bigotry, repression, and subjugation. . . . They had been the nation's constant reminders of the imperfection of its social order and the immorality of its human relationships. . . . The rejections that they had suffered doubtless wounded them considerably, but such treatment also gave them a perspective and an objectivity that others had greater difficulty in achieving. They could, therefore, point out more clearly than some others the weaknesses that seemed to be inherent in Western civilization" (Franklin 1980, pp. 504–505).
5. "Every generation has the opportunity to write its own history, and indeed it is obliged to do so" (Franklin 1986, p. 13; 1989, p. 49).

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NOTES

1. This observation provoked one reader to indignant commentary in the margins of the 1947 edition in the University of Chicago's library copy: "as if the 'fathers' *invented* slavery themselves!" the reader fumed in ink at the bottom of p. 143.
2. A slightly different formulation appears in the 1947 edition, pp. 166–167.

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