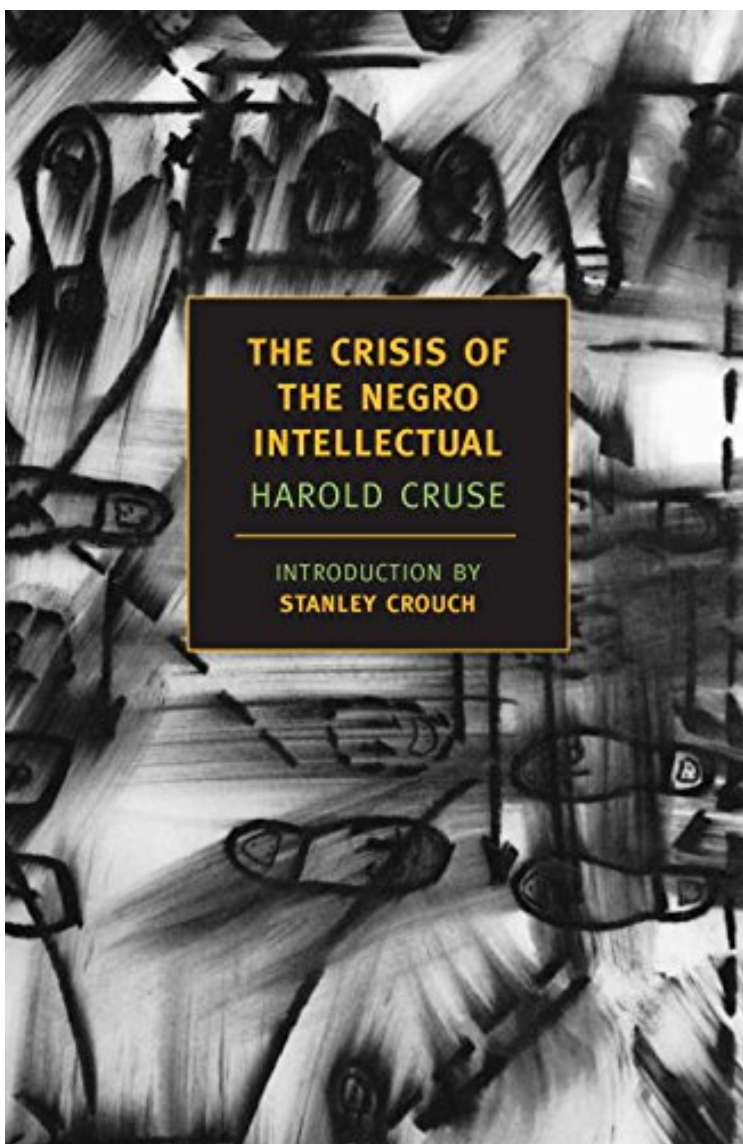


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## The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership (New York Review Books Classics)

*Harold Cruse*

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Published in 1967, as the early triumphs of the Civil Rights movement yielded to increasing frustration and violence, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* electrified a generation of activists and intellectuals. The product of a lifetime of struggle and reflection, Cruse's book is a singular amalgam of cultural history, passionate disputation, and deeply considered analysis of the relationship between American blacks and American society. Reviewing black intellectual life from the Harlem Renaissance through the 1960s, Cruse discusses the legacy (and offers memorably acid-edged portraits) of figures such as Paul Robeson, Lorraine Hansberry, and James Baldwin, arguing that their work was marked by a failure to understand the specifically American character of racism in the United States. This supplies the background to Cruse's controversial critique of both integrationism and black nationalism and to his claim that black Americans will only assume a just place within American life when they develop their own distinctive centers of cultural and economic influence. For Cruse's most important accomplishment may well be his rejection of the cliché of the melting pot in favor of a vision of Americanness as an arena of necessary and vital contention, an open and ongoing struggle.

"Harold Cruse wrote *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* for the moment and for the future. He succeeded in both. Cruse's book not only reflected the frustration, anger and confusion of its time, it also promised an explanation and a solution an enduring document." TLS "Eloquent, passionate, forceful Harold Cruse has had an electrifying impact on an entire generation of African American intellectuals." Gerald Horne "Crisis dwarfed almost all other books of the period when it came to bringing together politics, art, and social movements related to or inspired by the Afro-American condition." Stanley Crouch "Cruse repositioned the interpretive axes of the study and conduct of black political debate. Where Malcolm X was the intellectual inspiration of Black Power and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Tur) was its principal ideological architect, Cruse was without question its definitive critical interlocutor." Adolph Reed, Jr., New School University "When all the manifestoes and polemics of the Sixties are forgotten, this book will survive as a monument of historical analysis a notable contribution to the understanding of the American past, but more than that, a vindication of historical analysis as the best way, maybe the only way, of gaining a clear understanding of social issues." Christopher Lasch, New York of Books From the Publisher "[T]he most imaginatively documented and politically sophisticated working prospectus on the built-in contradictions and disjunctions of the Negro Revolution." Albert Murray From the Inside Flap "Twenty-five years after its initial publication, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* must by now be considered a classic text in Afro-American cultural studies, for it remains one of the most provocative and suggestive treatments of the political behavior and beliefs of twentieth-century Afro-American intellectuals." Jerry Gafio Watts, *Heroism and the Black Intellectual*