

Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*

October 31, November 2, 2000

[page references are to the Signet/Dover editions]

Announcements:

Upcoming response paper: Due Nov. 9, on Malcolm X: What does Malcolm X mean by "the ballot or the bullet"? Can Black nationalism lead to equality and freedom?

I. The problem of the color line

A. With Du Bois we finally come to an American's contribution to political theory. Du Bois will pick up on the contradiction we found in John Locke, the theorist of natural liberty and representative government who nevertheless had significant investments in the slave trade. This contradiction—never acknowledged by Locke—would be as built into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as would Locke's language of "life, liberty, and estate [the pursuit of happiness]." This contradiction would not come to the fore until slaves *make* it a contradiction.

B. Read "The Forethought," p. xi/v.

C. **Question:** Is the problem of the 20th century the problem of the color line?

II. Du Bois in historical context

A. **W.E.B. Du Bois** (1868-1963)

1. Was born in the North, in the small town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts. His was one of the few Black families in the area, and the discrimination they suffered wasn't so systematic and open.

2. Du Bois got his first taste of Jim Crow discrimination when he moved to Nashville, Tennessee to attend Fisk University. This first concrete sense of the "veil" separating himself and whites continued when he went to study at Harvard, where he was the first Black Ph.D. there.

3. Du Bois taught at Atlanta University (and all-Black university) for many years and was one of the founders of the NAACP in 1909. He edited its journal, *The Crisis*, for 24 years.

4. At first, Du Bois **sought to make sociology "scientific."** He was, in fact, one of the pioneers of empirical research in sociology. He at first thought that if he could gather and present the facts concerning the misery and oppression of Black people in America, these indisputably clear facts would move the white man (at least the rational, educated ones) to see the wrongs and right them. He wanted to influence the "talented tenth" of educated Black and white leaders to take the lead against racism.

5. One day while walking in Atlanta (~~Shortly after the Atlanta race riot of 1906~~ ^{Same Hoop}) Du Bois was stunned to see the **knuckles** of a Black man who had recently been lynched and left on mangled display in a grocery store. He then realized he could no longer be a cool, objective scientist while his brothers and sisters were being lynched, murdered, and impoverished. He had discovered **the limits of reason** in

humans who had an *interest* in unreason. So, Du Bois switched from science to “propaganda” (or science in the service of propaganda) and with it years of activism.

6. Disgusted and disillusioned with America, in 1961, at the age of 93, he renounced his American citizenship, joined the Communist Party, and moved to Ghana, Africa, where he lived until he died in 1963, the morning of the March on Washington and MLK’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

B. America in the time of *Souls*: Two great events that defined America

1. End of the Civil War

a. The end of the civil war brought hope for poor and educated Black people alike that finally they would be made equals to whites. For many slaves, the end of slavery was seen to be the end of their problems. Du Bois writes in “Strivings,” “[F]ew men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries... Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites.” 47/3-4 Truly, it was “The Coming of the Lord,” as Du Bois wrote in his description of the ending of slavery in *Black Reconstruction*.

b. Former slaves hoped for (and expected) political rights and land (40 acres and a mule) from the government, and they felt they deserved it; after all, they’d been working for years for free.

c. Initially, their hopes met with mixed success. There were many disappointments, but hope for optimism, too, especially during Reconstruction.

2. Reconstruction ~~[Use *Black Reconstruction* more closely, next time]~~

a. Reconstruction was the effort to rebuild the South after the Civil War. It lasted from around 1863 to 1876, when Rutherford B. Hayes became president and he removed the federal troops from the South.

b. How best to reconstruct the South, who should have political power there, the role of former Confederate officers and politicians in post-War politics, and the role of the former slaves were key issues in a very intense and bitter struggle between “radical Republicans,” moderate Republicans, and Democrats over Reconstruction. [Explain briefly the politics of Republicans and Democrats then.]

c. Du Bois, in *Black Reconstruction*, says there were four main social groups struggling over how to rebuild the South: the old white planter aristocracy of the South, the industrialists of the North, the white Southern worker, and the Black worker. The white worker, instead of allying with the Black worker (i.e. the ex-slave), had allied with the planter class, i.e. their bosses, against the North and against the Black worker. White workers feared losing what little privileges their skin color gave them, so they fought against the Black worker in defense of those privileges instead of constructing a true democracy in the South. They opposed suffrage, political, or economic rights for Black people, and tried to subject them to a new form of slavery, basically.

d. For a while the Northern capitalists sided with the Black worker and advocated Black suffrage, political equality, and increased economic opportunity. For a brief period during Reconstruction, Black men won the right to vote and had equal political rights. For example, the state legislature in South Carolina in the early 1870s was majority-Black and majority ex-slave. It looked like things might get better for Black people, and that they were on the road to equality. However, the

Northern capitalists soon realized that they didn't need Black support to be influential in the South, and the Republican party realized it didn't need the Southern Black vote to remain powerful, and so both the capitalists and the non-Radical Republicans left Black Southerners to their own defenses against the white planters and the white wc. The result was a huge and vicious **backlash**: lynchings, KKK, disfranchisement, economic discrimination, and **the rise of Jim Crow** in the 1890s. Whites sought to bring back slavery to the South.

3. In response to increased repression, by the 1890s, many Black Americans gave up on the South and **migrated** to the urban North by the hundreds of thousands, looking for work and a better life.

C. Du Bois is writing this 40 years after the end of slavery, 25 years after the end of Reconstruction, and in the midst of this great change in the cultural and economic lives of Black people. He is writing in this era of a vicious reaction by whites—rich and poor alike—to reestablish white supremacy in the South and North. Du Bois has a sense of the possibilities of what kind of a totally new world presented themselves during Reconstruction, and the tragedy that this opportunity was lost. This sense of tragedy is evident in *Souls*. Read 47-8/4

III. The veil and the two worlds

A. Q: What do you think of when you think of a veil? What kind of divider is it?

1. The veil separates but not like a wall or an ocean; one can see through it to the other side and what happens on one side of the veil inevitably slips through and affects the other. It is neither opaque nor translucent. The veil obscures a clear view of the world on the other side, but it also allows only hazy reflections of the self. It is neither a tangible barrier nor a metaphor, yet it divides the nation. In *Darkwater* he writes, "Surely [the veil] is a thought-thing, tenuous, intangible; yet just as surely is it true and terrible and not in our little day may you and I lift it."

2. Q: What is the veil?

B. **The veil is a metaphor for the color line, or white supremacy.** The veil divides the nation into "two worlds."

1. Q: What are these two worlds?

2. One is the **Black world** (or the Dark world), the world within the Veil of race,. The other is the **white world**. Both worlds together form the **American world**. America, then, is not all white; the Black world is just part of it and has a hand in shaping it. **Draw** a diagram.

3. The white world is the dominant race, not cos they're better but because they enslaved and colonized the rest of the world. The Black world is the subordinate race not because of inherent inferiority but because of the history of slavery and segregation. In slavery this division was epitomized in slavery/freedom. In the era of Jim Crow in which Du Bois lived it was epitomized by segregation.

4. This division of America into "two worlds" is how Du Bois defines race. It's not that because you're white you belong to the white world of privilege, it's cos you are privileged that you get defined as white. A Black man is one who has to ride the Jim Crow train in Georgia (*Dusk*).

✓ IV. Double consciousness

A. Q: What is double consciousness?

B. Double consciousness describes **the Black experience of living in both the Black world and the larger American world, yet being able to fully participate in only one.** The result is a double consciousness—**am I Black or am I an American?**

1. Read 45/2.

2. Double con refers to two divisions: a) The Black world and the American world (Am I Black or am I American?), and b) the conflict between the Black world and the white one. Both are products of the color line.

C. Double consciousness means Black folk are excluded from fully participating in American society as equals.

1. **This restriction of their liberty prevents a “true self-consciousness.”** Bf aspire to all the good things America has to offer—opportunity, freedom, culture—even as these things are systematically denied them.

2. But at the same time **Black people feel ambiguous about America: all the great things it offers systematically oppress Black people at the same time.** Whites are free because Black people are enslaved, the white man has economic opportunities in part because they are denied Bf, etc.

a. **“The white man’s heaven is the Black man’s hell.”** This phrase captures the essence of the two worlds caused by the veil, and it helps explain double consciousness: Black folks want to go to “heaven,” but the very heaven they desire forces them into a hellish subjugation.

b. **Wanting all the good things America has to offer yet feeling ambiguous about them at the same time characterizes double con.**

TL → V. Overcoming double consciousness

A. Q: How does Du Bois say we have to overcome the problem of double con?

1. Read: 45/2-3.

B. So the task is to **merge one’s “double self into a better and truer self.”** Du Bois wants a world in which Black people’s “double selves” is acknowledged and respected, and in which they don’t have to suffer for it.

1. Q: Is Du Bois advocating integration here? I don’t think so.

2. This merging doesn’t mean abandoning either the Black or American worlds. It means letting Black Americans be both Black and American, and not forced to give up their blackness to “integrate,” nor to completely abandon their American history in a spiritual (or actual) “return to Africa.”

C. After all, there’s an **advantage to being Black** that whites don’t share.

1. Q: What is it?

2. Black folk have a **“second sight”** on the American world cos they see it from both a Black and a white perspective, whereas whites have no such expanded vision; they only see from a white perspective.

D. Du Bois wants to keep the doubleness in double-consciousness, but he wants to **eliminate the ambiguity**—the sense that one doesn't really "belong" outside of the veil.

1. Freedom, then, means not a melting pot, not integration and assimilation into white culture (whatever that is), but **reciprocity**: the Black world and the rest of the American world coming together to share with the other the characteristics the other lacks.

2. This struggle to overcome double consciousness and to lead Black people out of their bondage characterizes Du Bois's task in *Souls*.

VI. "Of the Coming of John"

A. **Q:** What's the basic story line here?

The two Johns represents the **two worlds cast by the veil**. They share the same name, they were best friends in boyhood, and both are intelligent. Yet as they become older their paths diverge and they end up living utterly different lives and seeing the world in utterly different ways. "John & John" is a metaphor for the color line.

B. **Q:** How does John feel double consciousness?

1. **Q:** Has he always felt he's had a "double" self? When did this sense of double consciousness, this alienation emerge?

2. **Read 250/144-45**, after he got suspended from school and started to take studying seriously.

3. **Go over carefully:** His sense of double con emerged once he had enough education to realize there's another world out there, and that his whole life he's been living within a veil. The world he grew up in in Altamaha is only a small part of the whole world. Yet the contradiction is this: at the same time that he recognizes another world out there that he's been kept out of by the veil, he also realizes that he will never be able to fully enjoy that world because of the veil. Eg. when he went to the theater and listened to the music. **Education thus emancipates him and imprisons him.** Just as he begins to realize how small and parochial Altamaha is he also realizes that he's stuck there forever.

4. The best his education can do is let him rise above the veil from time to time [**Read 252/146**, then discuss how the usher forced him to move and thus come back down to the real world]. It also can help him to lead his people, for the improvement of their lot depends on the improvement of his own.

C. **Q:** But what happens when John finally returns home?

1. He's completely alienated from his home town. It's like he's a new person, a new identity. The Black world doesn't recognize this new John—they didn't even understand his speech in the church, plus he offended them by insulting their religion— and the white world thinks he's gone "uppity." John is no longer the John he once was.

2. It appears that neither the Black world nor the white world of Altamaha share in John's double consciousness. **Q:** Why? [Bw lacks education; ww lacks the "second sight"]

3. **Read:** 257/149

4. Q: Why would education make you unhappy? Is there a similarity with Nietzsche here?

D. Q: Is double consciousness not a Black thing, then, but a mc Black thing? This is one of the main criticisms of his concept of double con.

1. Remember what Nietzsche says: **all philosophy is autobiography**. Du Bois acutely experiences double con, and the feeling is definitely a class feeling in some sense: only those Bf like him, who have enjoyed education and tasted higher culture, feel it. Poor Bf who only know the Black world don't sense it. John does not feel double con or alienation whatsoever until he goes to school and gets an education.

E. Q: Do whites experience double con? Does the white John, for example?

1. I don't think they do. The white world lacks a "second sight." John Judge was just bored with his home town and had bigger dreams; he was trapped there by family obligations, not by a color line.

2. Paul Gilroy argues that Du Bois thinks that this sense of double consciousness, while a product of the Black world, is also experienced outside the world. In other words, **all people in post-slave societies experience an ambiguous feeling about the costs and benefits of progress and modernization**. Maybe some of us are better at denying or suppressing our ambiguity, but it's still there.

H. Q: Is John able to resolve his double consciousness?

No. He feels his double con so bad it ends up making him a murderer and then killing himself, too.

VII. Booker T. Washington and "industrial education"

[From Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*]

A. In these years of repression, about the only area where Black people's status had improved was in education. Black schools at all levels were growing and developing, and Black people eagerly sought education. Education was seen by many as the key to eventually challenging racism in the U.S., the debate now was over **what kind of education would be best**.

B. **Booker T. Washington** (1856-1915) was probably the most well-known Black leader during his time, and he ran the **Tuskegee Institute** in Alabama. Tuskegee was his model of the virtues and qualities Black people needed to flourish in the US: manual labor, thrift, vocational skills, and persistence.

1. Washington argued *against* Black people struggling for the vote, for integration, for civil rights, and even for higher education. That is asking for too much, too soon. Starting with so little, Black people would have to work up gradually before they could gain power and respectability in the South.

2. Instead, he argued for **industrial education**. Black people should be educated to become farmers, mechanics, domestic servants, and the like. They should not really dabble in "impractical" subjects like math, science or history. Further, Black people need to give up on going back to Africa or on migrating to the North or on political agitation for equal rights. That would just create more racial tensions in the South. Instead, they need to take what they have and make good use of it, until by patience and thrift they could advance further.

3. He said in a speech, "To those of my race who depend upon bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man... I would say '**Cast down your bucket where you are**'—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, in mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions." (from Franklin, 246) Industrial education, he believe, would not antagonize the South and it would carve out a niche for Black people in their communities.

4. **Core elements of Washington's philosophy** of Black advancement: industrial education, conciliation with whites, no struggle for poly/civil rights, separation of Black and whites.

5. Not surprisingly, **Washington's ideas were well-loved by white Southerners**, and he was very popular among white circles. They saw his ideas as against integration. "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." They also thought that Black labor could once again be used as the backbone of economic development in the South under Washington's plan. Washington saw Black folks starting out humble as a step toward equality and respectability, but many whites were happy to see it as the ultimate solution to the "Negro problem" that would permanently fix the subordinate position of Black people in America. (They also didn't know that he was secretly financing some of the earliest cases against segregation.)

skuller
↓

C. **Du Bois's critique** of Washington

1. Many Black people have internally accepted the limitations white society has imposed on them. White society has told Black people that all they are fit to do is to toil and to serve others, and some Black people have accepted that. BTW is the most eloquent and sophisticated spokesmen of this view.

2. **Washington is a Black leader handpicked by whites.** Washington's views are really white Southern elites' ideas, but when he says them whites can say that Washington is a "spokesperson for his people." Those who disagree are just troublemakers. Whites have, in essence, handpicked Washington to be Black people's leader. In fact, Du Bois argues, Washington does *not* speak for the majority of Black Americans.

a. Malcolm X will make similar criticisms of the civil rights leadership.

3. **Du Bois is attempting to stake out an alternative position** to BTW's politics and leadership. He's trying to create another pole of Black leadership.

4. The three things Washinton says Black people shouldn't be agitating for, **political power, civil rights, and higher education**, are the cornerstones of Black struggle.

a. DuBois says okay, Washington, your program has been implemented for 15 years. What's happened to the conditions of Black people in those 15 years? a) they've been disfranchised, b) segregation or legal inferiority has been entrenched in law, c) money for Black higher education institutions has been drying up steadily. *These* are the effects of ignoring these three struggles. They're harmful effects; no improvement is being made with this strategy. **Read 88/31.**

~~land, light, liberty~~ + L.I. formulation (adding land, implying civic duty + USA together)
energy later. i- BR + ?

b. The right to vote, civic equality, and the education of youth according to ability have to be made the primary goals of Black struggle. How can Black people advance if they don't have political power to protect and further their gains? How can they advance without higher education, especially in a rapidly-changing economy? How can they advance when even the highest, most educated, most esteemed, and wealthiest Black person is still subordinate to the poorest, meanest, and most uneducated white on the social hierarchy?

5. Washington's propaganda are full of "dangerous half-truths" when he says that the South is justified in its attitude toward Black people's degradation, that the main cause of African American's bad situation is improper education, and that the future success of Black people depend on Black people's efforts alone.

a. These are all partially true, Du Bois argues, but the other side of the truth is that 1) slavery and racial prejudice are the primary reasons for Black people's degradation; 2) even schools that emphasize "industrial education" depend on highly-educated Black teachers; and 3) while Black people have to help themselves, whites have the resources (and the moral duty) to help out, and so they must. (93-4/34)

b. Washington's views shift the burden of the blame for Black people's conditions on Black people themselves, and this is clearly wrong and dangerous, as well as self-serving to whites. Black self-help is important, but it is not their fault for the conditions they are in, nor is it only up to them to improve these conditions.

Read 94/35

5. [See Franklin 249-50 for more criticisms: Washington's philosophy is based on an uncritical acceptance of capitalist individualism, "industrial education" is already an outmoded form of education in the Industrial Revolution, and he denied the fact that most economic opportunities to Black folks were in the cities, not in the rural South.]

VIII. The Talented Tenth

A. Q: Who has the duty to oppose BTW? All Black men?

1. No, it is the particular responsibility of the few educated Black men, the T10th.

2. Note how right after defining double consciousness in "Strivings" he starts to discuss the "Black artisan," i.e. the Black middle class (46/3). The purpose of education is to train a Black elite, a **talented tenth**, that can lead Black people out of their current social condition.

B. The importance of education for Du Bois

1. Du Bois believed that the emancipation of Black folk would take generations. The primary tool in this struggle is education. Not industrial education like BTW advocated; that might be all right for some Bf but not all. No, the Black race needs its best and brightest to receive a **top-notch liberal arts education**, just like the best and the brightest of the whites receive.

2. To the extent that BTW opposes liberal arts education, he strangles one of the chief tools of Black progress: an intelligent Black leadership elite.

3. Du Bois argued for Black universities that offered a solid liberal arts education rather than just industrial education, and that focused on Black and African history, culture, and ideas as well as European culture (prefiguring the Black studies movement by 40 years).

4. **Education will produce a solid, educated Black middle class, a T10th, that can lead Bf to a world without the veil.**

C. For Du Bois, **education is universal. It lies “above the veil.”**

1. **Read 139/ 67.** The T10th, like John Jones, can dwell above the veil in learning (sorta like Plato’s contemplation of the forms), and then come back down and lead their people behind the veil.

1. In a sense, **Du Bois’s talented 10th are American philosopher kings.**

D. **Q:** Is Du Bois’s theory of a talented 10th elitist?

[use Joy James to respond next time]

1. His T10th argument could be seen as further evidence that his concept of double consciousness is peculiar to the BMC, not all Bf.

2. Later Du Bois would flip his strategy for emancipation around. Rather than the Black middle class leading the rest of Bf to emancipation, the Black working class will lead the BMC to emancipation. **Explain**

IX. “Of the Meaning of Progress”

A. **Q:** What was the rural area in Tennessee where he taught during the summer at Fisk like?

1. Du Bois gives a glimpse at **the other side of progress in the 19th century:** a log hut school house with no door, no glass windows, a desk made of three boards, and the kids’ seats being plank benches without backs, and no desks. Further, school wasn’t even a regular occurrence; it only took place when some naive lad like Du Bois came by and was willing to hold it.

2. The opportunity for Reconstruction to improve the lives of these people has passed them by, mostly due to the mean-spiritedness of whites. Instead of progress in that area, history is more a story of new tragedies. When Du Bois returns to the area ten years later, Josie (who dreamed of going to college) has died, other kids died, families lost their homes. It’s also a story of some successes—one family bought a farm (they’re still in debt, though), school is open every year now and the old school has been replaced by a mobile home with real windows (still no desks and the windows are broken, anyway)—but none of this really adds up to any progression or improvement. Life just keeps going on, even as it is rapidly changing elsewhere in the country. And that’s tragic. **Read 105/43**

3. **Q:** What prevented progress in this area? “the Veil that hung between us and Opportunity.” (102/41)

4. Progress, then, is uneven at best, or nonexistent in some areas and for some peoples at worst. **We can’t assume progress, even in the 20th century,** because it’s just not there, or what we could call “progress” is just a new string of tragedies for some. **Read 107-8/45**

B. **Q:** At this point we need to ask, how much does Du Bois’s argument apply today? Does the veil still exist? Will the problem of the 21st century still be the color line?

X. “Of the Sons of Master and Man” — the early Du Bois on politics

A. By “sons of master and man” he means the generation of whites and Blacks after slavery.

B. Du Bois fears that the “best elements” of whites and Blacks are becoming so segregated that they now have little in common. If this situation continues the consequences for race relations will be disastrous.

C. **Q:** Does Du Bois come off as a bit elitist here?

1. The chapter reflects the early aristocratic and anti-democratic tendencies of Du Bois. He talks of “the best of the Negroes” and “the best of the whites,” etc. 190/101, 205/110 [Read if you want 199/106-07.] He also says that “we must accept some of the race prejudice in the South as a fact” and deal with it. So he’s willing to accommodate some of the South’s intransigence as long as Black folk are able to develop a talented 10th, empowered by education and the ballot, that can fight for the civil rights and opportunity for all Black people. 194-95/104

2. He seems to be most concerned about the color line because it keeps the “better class” of Bf from mingling with the better class of wf, constantly throwing the Black elite down with the Black masses. 208/112-13

3. There’s a tension here between an emerging civil rights radical and an elitist. (Lewis, 285)

4. Du Bois will have abandoned these tendencies and his belief that the Black elites would lead the Black masses, by the 1930s, when he became a Marxist.

D. **The role of the police** (200-01/107-08)

1. Under slavery, the entire police system of the South was primarily designed to control slaves. As a result there was no prison system, hardly any jails, and scarcely even a thing called “crime”: If a slave did something wrong, his or her master dealt with it on that plantation.

2. The entire policing system (which largely consisted of slave patrols), was designed almost exclusively for Black people. After emancipation, the function of the justice system did not change; if anything, he argues, it was used as a means to *re-enslave* African Americans.

a. The system was designed for Black people—not just Black criminals, but to control *all* Black people—and it “tacitly assumed that every white man was *ipso facto* a member of that police.”

b. Since the criminal justice system wasn’t set up for whites, it treated white suspects with “undue leniency” and gave whites “practical immunity” from the law, while it erred on the side of “undue severity, injustice, and lack of discrimination” on the part of Bf.

3. Given this, “It was not then a question of crime, but rather one of color, that settled a man’s conviction on almost any charge. Thus Negroes came to look upon courts as instruments of injustice and oppression, and upon those convicted in them as martyrs and victims.” 201/108

4. **Q:** Does this dilemma and public perception of the police have any resonance for today? What does it say about the continuing problem of “the veil”?

E. **Q:** Does Du Bois ever romanticize Black folk? Does he ignore their failings and limitations?

1. No. (Examples: 199-200/106-07; .) He always points out their limitations, though he notes that they are due to discrimination and the legacy of slavery as much as they are of their own doing. **Du Bois treats Black folks as if they were humans:** sometimes beautiful, sometimes cruel, occasionally brilliant, more often mundane, but always deserving of respect and dignity and equal treatment.

XI. "Of the Passing of the First Born"

A. I mostly assigned this one because I think it's a beautiful piece of writing.

B. At the core of the piece is a shocking dilemma: Du Bois is grief-struck at his ~~1/2~~ ^{2-year old} year old son's death, but he is also relieved in a way, for his death means that he will never have to experience the veil. **Read 231/130.**

C. The only hope for Du Bois's generation (and now Burghardt) is to dwell above the veil in the world of knowledge from time to time, because the veil is not coming down soon.

XII. "Of the Sorrow Songs"

A. The Black folk song is not only the sole truly American music, it is "the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas." "It still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people." 265/156

B. Black folk have given **three gifts** to America: the toil that is the backbone of the American economic empire, "the gift of the Spirit" (i.e. a new interpretation and fervor for Christianity), and the sorrow songs. 275/162-63

C. **Du Bois puts slaves specifically and Black people generally at the heart of the American experience.** Black folk do not exist at the margins of American culture as is generally assumed, they stand right in the center of it, producing America's only truly original art form and contributing to the quest for democracy for all. **The sorrow songs are the political theory of the slave.**

1. Du Bois takes the slaves seriously—as Americans, as humans, as *creators* of art and culture. In a sense **his interpretation of the sorrow songs is a revaluation of values:** it flips the old, standard morals on its head.

2. He asks, "Would America have been America without her Negro people?" 276/163

XIII. What Du Bois wants

B. **Education**

C. **Equality: political rights**

D. **Freedom through self-determination:**

1. "The need for Black people to control their own organizations and work for the separate autonomy of the Black community." —Nathan Hare in the Signet edition

2. He also advocated Black economic cooperatives and all-Black political parties. He insisted that Black people control their own political organizations, quitting the NAACP partly over this issue.

3. Part of Du Bois's critique of Washington is that he sees Washington as an opponent of Black self-determination. "Cast down your buckets where you are," don't create your own institutions. Be patient and wait, the white man will eventually

give you your freedom, Washington seemed to be saying. Further, while Washington sanctioned cultural and social separation of Black and white people, it was a separation in which Black folks continued to be subordinate to whites.

4. Du Bois did not advocate racial separation. He became disillusioned with whites by the end of his life, but he never argued for a "back to Africa" movement or for separation in the U.S. In fact, he fought for integration and the end to discrimination in the U.S. However, his integration was not that Black people abandon their culture and history to become part of America. His conception of self-determination was somewhere in between total integration and total separation.

E. To merge one's "double self into a better and truer self." Du Bois wants a world in which Black people's "double selves" is acknowledged and respected, and in which they don't have to suffer for it. This merging doesn't mean abandoning either world. Nor does it mean creating a totally new one. It means letting Black Americans be both Black and American, and not forced to give up their blackness to "integrate," nor to completely abandon their American history in a spiritual (or actual) "return to Africa." **Read 45/2-3** Du Bois wants to keep the doubleness in double-consciousness, but he wants to **eliminate the ambiguity**—the sense that one doesn't really "belong" outside of the veil. Freedom, then, means not a melting pot, not integration and assimilation into white culture (whatever that is), but reciprocity: the Black world and the American one coming together to share with the other the characteristics the other lacks, while not eliminating either world. **Freedom means reciprocity.**

Questions for discussion

1. What is the color line? Was it the problem of the 20th century?
2. What do you think of when you think of a veil? What kind of divider is it?
3. What does the veil represent?
4. What are the two worlds?
5. What is double consciousness?
6. How does Du Bois say we have to overcome the problem of double con?
7. How does John feel double consciousness?
8. Does everyone experience double con? Poor Blacks? Whites?
9. What is Du Bois's critique of Washington's philosophy?
10. Who are the Talented Tenth and what is their role? Is it elitist?
11. Will the problem of the 21st century be the color line?
12. Is Du Bois trying to apply American ideals of freedom, equality, and opportunity to Black folk or is he critiquing (and thereby trying to revise) these ideals as well? Is Du Bois's argument about inclusion or challenging American ideals?

-Does MK want to make put DBois concept
An exp? Does he want to make BF

-Does MK let. DB + MK?

Key questions:

1. What is the color line? Was it the problem of the 20th century?
2. What do you think of when you think of a veil? What kind of divider is it?
3. What is the veil?
4. What are the two worlds?
5. What is double consciousness?
6. How does Du Bois say we have to overcome the problem of double con?
7. How does John feel double consciousness?
8. Does everyone experience double con? Poor Blacks? Whites?
9. What is Du Bois's critique of Washington's philosophy?
10. Who are the Talented Tenth and what is their role? Is it elitist?
- x. Will the problem of the 21st century be the color line?

*- is it worth it
- does everyone exp. DC*

*T_h →
T_h →*

- how does DB say we overcome DC? (p. 45)

Question for MX:

- x. Does MX experience double consciousness?

Questions on Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk

Is double consciousness the defining characteristic of all African Americans, or only middle class African Americans with access to education, culture, and "the good life"? [compare DB with MX, or with segregated Altamaha: Du Bois acutely experiences double con, and the feeling is definitely a class feeling in some sense: only those Bf like him, who have enjoyed education and tasted higher culture, feel it. Poor Bf who only know the Black world don't sense it. John does not feel double con or alienation whatsoever until he goes to school and gets an education. On the other hand, Paul Gilroy argues that Du Bois thinks that this sense of double consciousness, while a product of the Black world, is also experienced outside the world. In other words, **all people in post-slave societies experience an ambiguous feeling about the costs and benefits of progress and modernization.** Maybe some of us are better at denying or suppressing our ambiguity, but it's still there.]

Do whites experience double con?

Will the problem of the 21st century be the color line?