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Chapter Six

AFRICOLOGY & THE DU BOISIAN INFLUENCE

"They did not want to educate us according to the vision of W.E.B. Du Bois. Instead, they wanted to educate us in conformity with the ideas of Booker T. Washington."

—James N. Eaton, Historian and Archivist

"Being a problem is a strange experience."

—W.E.B. Du Bois

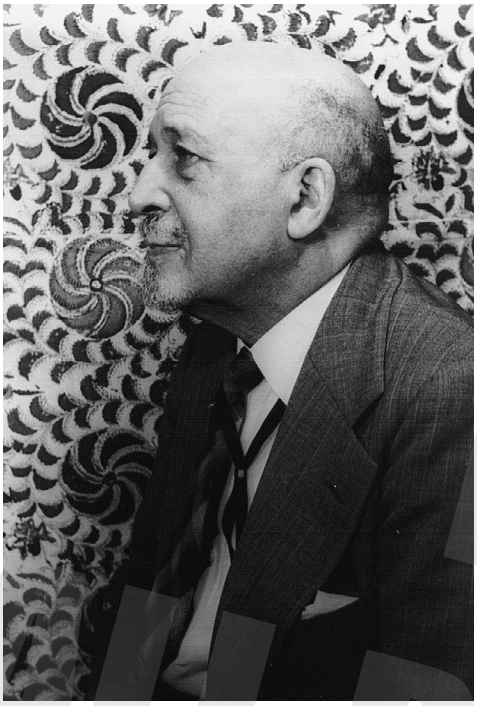
Introduction

W.E.B. Du Bois was the first African American to obtain a doctoral level education. He went on to become not only a prolific scholar, but also an educational pioneer in the areas of urban Sociology and Black Studies. His life was multidimensional. Considered the initiator of the tradition of activist scholarship, which constitutes a distinguishing mark of Africology, Du Bois is also remembered as a multifaceted figure who took on several issues simultaneously, including the domestic problem of black phobia in America, the anti-colonial struggle on the African continent and the international subject of nuclear disarmament. The following discussion, which centers on his classic work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), consists of four main sections: 1) an introduction and a summary of a sample of reviews of that work, 2) a survey of W.E.B. Du Bois's background, career, and philosophical orientation, 3) a description of the principal themes of *The Souls of Black Folk*, and 4) an Africological analysis of that work.

The Souls of Black Folk represents an eloquent and forceful historical articulation of the fate of the black inhabitants of the American landscape during a particular period. A 2005 survey of Black Studies professors in the United States shows that Dubois' *Souls of Black Folk* received "a nearly unanimous status as a canonical text" (Rojas, p. 1). *The Souls of Black Folk* captures delicately the historical, psychological, social, political, and economic forces that molded (and, in some cases, are still operative) the lives of African descendants among the population of the United States during the period of Reconstruction. Reconstruction refers to the post-Civil War period of American history, which dates from the end of that War in 1865 to the collapse of Reconstruction in 1877.

The Souls of Black Folk represents an empirically-based work that indeed resonates with the anguished souls of an African-origin community that was under siege from multiple fronts, including local, state, and federal authorities. Rampersad (1986), a biographer of W.E.B. Du Bois, suggests that the "soul" in *The Souls of Black Folk* stands for the "twoness of the Black American" (quoted in Marable, 1986, p. 47). This book is a classic testament

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W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963)
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to the African Amercan's long, arduous, and, to some degree, still-continuing struggle for social equality, for equal justice, for a real voice in this country, and against racial oppression. Originally published in 1903, *The Souls of Black Folk* has gone through more than twenty editions.

When it first came out in 1903, the book attracted various kinds of responses. Herbert Aptheker (1989) reports that those segments of the African American press, which were under the spell of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee apparatus, largely ignored the publication. But, in general, the bulk of the African American media accorded the book "careful attention and an enthusiastic reception" (p. 51). The white Southern press either ignored the book or gave it a hostile review. Surprisingly, *The Souls of Black Folk* drew its major and most sympathetic attention from the white Northern press with a focus on Du Bois's repudiation of Booker T. Washington's politics of racial accommodation (p. 62).

Among the African American reviewers of the work at its birth is Charles Alexander who wrote in *The Wilberforce Student* of June, 1903 that *The Souls of Black Folk* portrayed the emotions of the struggling African American and projected the wish of educators of black youth (Aptheker, 1989, p. 52). At Atlanta University, *The Atlanta Bulletin* of May, 1903 proclaimed that *The Souls of Black Folk* was an affirmation that the African American was an "image of God, with the aspirations and desires that belong to God's children" (p. 52). William Monroe Trotter's *Boston Guardian* acclaimed the book and pointed to its "vigor, spontaneity and spirituality" (p. 53).

As noted earlier, the Southern white press either largely ignored the work or attempted to discredit it, just as some establishmentarian authors of today attempt to do to publications that do not pander to a majority culture's pathalogic view of the black world. In the July 16, 1903 edition of *The Christian Advocate*, the reviewer's one paragraph attention to *The Souls of Black Folk* described it as a work of colored and incoherent imagination (p. 54). *The Kentucky Post* of May 2, 1903 opined that Du Bois had difficulty understanding that slavery was the only means of civilizing the African (p. 54).

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In the elaborate reactions of the Northern white press, the reviewers generally devoted attention to Du Bois's opposition to Booker T. Washington's programs and policies. Aptheker reports that the Northern press sounded surprised about Du Bois's disapproval of Washington's philosophy, for they "had believed their own myth of the Tuskegee Wizard as the spokesman of the black people" (p.56). In a full-page reaction to *The Souls of Black Folk*, *The Literary Digest* of July 11, 1903 wrote that Du Bois's work demonstrated that contrary to the belief of the European-American world, there were some African Americans who did not want the leadership of Booker T. Washington (p. 56). In an anonymous review, *The New York Times* of April 25, 1903 accused Du Bois of waging a personal cause in terms of nursing a desire to socialize with ". . . the white man in the south" (p. 58). The review of *The Souls of Black Folk* in *The Chicago Tribune* of May 22, 1989 was a form of poetic justice of sorts in the sense that the reviewer discussed the book in terms of the idea of double-consciousness. Asked the reviewer: "is it ungenerous, or does it add another taunt to that horrible chorus of taunts which is forever ringing in the black man's ears, to say that it is the white man in Mr. Du Bois which so tortures itself with questions which may not be answered" (p. 58)? *The New York World* accused Du Bois of placing too much stress on the import of the color-line (p. 59).

Du Bois's Background, Career, and Philosophical Orientation

This section examines the life of the man behind this literary edifice. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born in 1868 of mixed ancestry (which included a white great-grandfather) in the New England town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Du Bois had a wife, Nina, until her death after 53 years of marriage. His father was said to have deserted the family when Du Bois was still an infant; young Du Bois was thus raised by his mother to whom he was deeply attached.

After a brilliant high school experience up north in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Du Bois went to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee in the South where he did his undergraduate work, a relocation that transformed his life by opening his eyes to what Alvin Poussaint describes as ". . . the cruel realities of American racism" (cited in Du Bois, 1969, p. xxix). This Southern, eye-opening experience proved a sharp contrast to his Great Barrington life where he could "recall little experience of segregation or color discrimination" (p. xxix). In reminiscing about the youthful period of his life up north, Du Bois himself writes: "I look back upon my classmates with interest and sharpened memory. They were boys and girls of town and country, with few Irish and never but once another colored child" (1968, p. 76).

The decision of his sponsors to send him to Fisk was one that he felt was made for him because he was black, and Fisk was a black institution. His preference was to do his undergraduate studies at Harvard. Eventually, however, he went on to Harvard for his doctoral education. In any case, the Fisk experience did turn out to be a blessing in disguise, for it helped to lift the young Du Bois—a man of color in America—from his state of racial naivete. He had grown up in a relatively puritanical social environment, although young Du Bois did encounter incidents within Great Barrington that sowed in him early seeds of racial consciousness. He was raised by his mother who toiled and stretched herself to make ends meet. Nonetheless, young Du Bois did not go through the kind of excruciating poverty which individuals like Booker T. Washington had experienced as they were growing up. The puritanical environment of Great Barrington apparently left its indelible mark on Du Bois who grew up with a high sense of morality and a disdain for material wealth. This sense of morality and contempt for

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materialism is reflected in *The Souls of Black Folk* and in his contempt for politics that is devoid of moral accountability.

Du Bois was straddled between two worlds, the white world which he despised with passion and the black world who, as Nathan Hare puts it, perceived him as "cocky and self-satisfied" (cited in Du Bois, 1969, p. xviii), even though he spent the better part of his life fighting the cause of the latter. Here is a man who stuck out his neck for his people in their moment of crisis. The evidence of his commitment is legion, including his Atlanta University conferences, his services in the NAACP, his role in inaugurating the New Negro Movement, his pioneering role in the Pan-African Movement, and his literary crusade for black political and economic rights, social justice, and cultural pride. John Milton Cooper, Jr. (1986) describes him as a "leader of his people and a man who sought to share fully in their lot" (cited in Marable, p. vii). This writer cannot agree more that Du Bois's life-long career was one devoted to literary and scholarly campaigns for the democratic rights of African Americans. Cooper believes that Du Bois occupies the same place of honor in history as Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King, Jr. In his own assessment, Manning Marable (1986) considers Du Bois as the father of Pan-Africanism and a force that inspired the African independence movement (p. vii).

The Souls of Black Folk is a collection of articles that Du Bois published on various dimensions of what he usually described as the "Negro Problem." While it exuded great emotions, the book was executed with a sense of fairness, balance, and relative scholarly detachment. Despite this detachment, Du Bois did not fail to make a vigorous statement on behalf of the toiling and oppressed masses of African descendants. Francis Broderick (1959) avers that the fairness of Du Bois's approach is evidenced by the attention he accorded the arguments on both sides of the racial veil (p. 47). As Alvain Poussaint (1969) puts it, Du Bois not only pointed out the omissions and commissions of the European-American population, he also laid out the ills which beset the African American community (cited in Du Bois, p. xxxiii). And Broderick adds that while the book is emotionally intense, it exhibits restraint and has neither devils nor angels (p. 47).

The Souls of Black Folk came onto the scene when segregation and overt black phobia were still the order of the day in the United States, particularly in the South. Du Bois was himself a victim of racism: he could not get a teaching position in any white university despite his Harvard Ph.D. and his training in Germany. As Hare recalls, this was a time in U.S. history when a 1900 book entitled, *The Negro: A Beast*—which claimed to "prove" that Africans were lower animals—was received with acclaim in "prestigious" academic and non-academic circles (cited in Du Bois, p. xvii). In effect, *The Souls of Black Folk* sought to reaffirm the very humanity of the African which had been called into question by such works as *The Negro: A Beast*. *The Negro: A Beast* represents an example of the works and ideas by which the American social science and humanities establishment promoted the notion of inherent black inferiority. John Stanfield (1985) recalls that the Jim Crow social system of racial separatism was fostered by concepts generated by social scientists to rationalize the biological and cultural denigration of people of color. This, he says, is one of the means by which social scientific knowledge produces racial inequality (p. 11). Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that, as Aptheker notes, Du Bois's classic work focused upon the defense of African humanity, and in so doing, he emphasized black initiative, black leadership, black affirmation, and black power (p. 49). Through his scholarly studies of the condition of African Americans, Du Bois helped usher in the era of Black Studies as an academic field of learning. His *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) constitutes the first scientific study ever conducted of African Americans in the United States. The book provided substantial

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data on the character and social institutions of the African American population of that time. Du Bois's Ph.D. dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870*, was a work of scholarship but still a "sharp, moral and ethical condemnation of chattel slavery" (Marable, p. 23).

Although Du Bois's contributions stressed black power, as Aptheker remarks, he did not do so in "an exclusionary sense or in any way that is derogatory of other people" (p. 49). In fact, he states, Du Bois had a world vision, a dream for a world community of fraternity and justice, and his crusades included condemnations of antisemitism and discrimination against women.

Was Du Bois's philosophical evolution paradoxical as some commentators have suggested? Marable holds that contrary to a paradoxical vision, Du Bois's thoughts exhibited coherence and unity toward radical democracy. By this, Marable means that the constellation of Du Bois's ideas served one purpose: to champion the democratic rights of African people, including those on the continent. Marable argues that as a democrat, Du Bois stood against human intolerance and social inequity and defended the rights of the working class of the world (p. ix).

Double Consciousness

One of the enduring themes of *The Souls of Black Folk* is the concept of Double Consciousness. By this, Du Bois means that the dominant European American's world-view does not provide the African American with true self-consciousness. The American philosophical milieu appears to be one in which the African is compelled by the dominant forces of socialization to view himself/herself through the perspective of the dominant population. Du Bois (1969) explains that this double-consciousness remains:

> a peculiar sensation, . . . this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 45).

The life of an African American is characterized by "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood," he notes with palpable resignation (p. 45). By "self-conscious manhood" Du Bois means that the African American aspires to have the freedom and liberty to reside in the polity called the United States as an African descendant without being subjected to second-class citizenship. The African Americans, he avers, neither wants to Africanize America nor to become a white American. The African American, he posits, now understands that the way by which she could occupy her rightful place in the American scheme of things is by being herself and not someone else. But does the European American world understand or care to respect this soul of the African American? Perhaps, LeRoi Jones' (now known as Amiri Baraka) reflection on this matter is instructive. He writes:

> One of the most persistent traits of the Western white man has always been his fanatical and almost instinctive assumption that his systems and ideas about the world are the most desirable, and further, that people who do not aspire to them, or at least think them admirable are savages or enemies (1963, p. 8).

It would appear from the preceding that the African American is up against an uphill task in his striving for a self-conscious manhood in America. Du Bois does recognize this. Cognizant of the dominant social realities of his era, he writes, in the *Souls of Black Folk* that the African American is in competition with "rich, landed and skilled neighbors"

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(p. 49), whereas he himself, generally-speaking, is poor, homeless and without skills. In addition to this, the African American also faces a psychological barrier, which Du Bois describes as the "shadow of despair" (p. 51). This shadow generates self-questioning, self-disparagement and low expectations. These, in turn, engender an atmosphere of contempt and hate (p. 51).

The Father of Black Studies

As noted earlier, Du Bois paved the way for the social scientific study of African Americans, a role for which he earned the accolade of "father of Black Studies" (Hare, cited in Du Bois, 1969, p. xiii). Du Bois advocates an education for African Americans that inculcate the values of a higher culture in their recipients. This higher culture should incorporate the ideal of human brotherhood which accommodates neither opposition nor contempt for others. In this sense, he suggests that the African ideal of universal brotherhood exemplifies the true spirit of the American Declaration of Independence. Black college education should not be designed for merely job skills. Even though Du Bois insists that black education should be relevant to the experiences of African American people, he does not believe that only Blacks can teach the African American youth. It is essential, he recommends, that teachers of black students should not only be competent in their subject-matter, but must also be broad-minded and cultured. In general, black education, according to Du Bois, should:

> 1. seek the social regeneration of the black population, 2. assist in solving the problems of racial relations and racism, 3. maintain the standards of popular education, and 4. help to develop humanity (p. 163).

He urges colleges and universities to endeavor to teach their students patience, humility, manners, taste, and tolerance.

But Du Bois makes a rather controversial observation about scholars of Black Studies of his time. As he puts it, scholars of the black experience seldom engage in a systematic, honest, and careful study of the condition of African Americans. Rather, "it is much easier to assume that we know it all. Or perhaps, having already reached conclusions in our minds, we are loth to have them disturbed by facts" (p. 163–164). In making this criticism, he was standing on a firm foundation of bountiful scholarly productions. It is imperative, however, to place on record the fact that since his time, Black Studies has grown in stature and is now at a point where, in fact, the African world is being studied more systematically, critically and carefully than ever before by a vibrant population of scholars, undergraduate and graduate students. With its attainment of the status of a Ph.D. awarding discipline at various institutions, Africology now ranks shoulder to shoulder with other disciplines in its teaching, service, and scholarly productivity.

Writing of the black contributions to the American society, Du Bois opines that such contributions constitute "the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence" (p. 52) in a climate pervaded by the clamor for material wealth. For instance, African music, he says, provides cheer, joviality, love, and humor to an American world marked by "cruel wit" (p. 52) and "vulgar music" (p. 52). Although bountiful black contributions to American artistic health are not in doubt, it is important to note that blacks have also contributed to the scientific and technological innovations and inventions of this country. From the time of the Great Enslavement up to the present, African Americans have been inventing various devices that have assisted the industrial and technological development of this country. Even in the midst of

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enslavement, they invented various kinds of equipment to reduce their labor. But such antebellum inventions were not patented because the enslaved did not have the status of citizens. For instance, in 1858, U.S. Attorney-General Jeremiah S. Black ruled that an enslaved African could not be granted a U.S. patent because the patent was a contract between the citizen and the government. However, free "persons of color" were allowed to register and were accorded proprietary rights for their inventions. Henry Blair was the first African American to be issued a patent. This was in 1834, and the patent was for a seed planter. By 1913, more than one thousand inventions by African Americans had been registered by the U.S. Patent Office in such fields as industrial machinery, rapid transportation, and electrical equipment.

The Problem of the 20th Century

A remarkably famous line of *The Souls of Black Folk* is Du Bois's belief that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" (p. 54). This is a reference to the relationship between the world's people of color and white people. The color-line, or the veil as he metaphorized it, was the root cause of the American Civil War which was fought over the question of freedom for enslaved Africans. Examining the consequences of Europeans' contacts with other human societies, Du Bois suggests that the record does not form a pleasant chapter in the annals of human history. The Western European "civilization" and "blessed gospel," he says, have meant "war, murder, slavery, extermination and debauchery" (p. 187) for the cultural other. In examining the same subject, Festus Ugboaja Ohaegbulam (1990) recalls that Western European intrusion upon Africa, for instance, had been driven by a greed for African resources disguised as the "white man's civilizing mission" (p. 5).

The Freedmen's Bureau

Du Bois's description and analysis of the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau of the Reconstruction Era provide important insights on the Great Enslavement, Southern racism, the African's history-induced distrust of the white man, and the economic crisis that engulfed the African American community. The Freedmen's Bureau was an agency which the Federal Government established at the end of the Civil War in 1865 as a means of implementing the post-war three-prong program of reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Du Bois views the bureau as the Federal Government's attempt to come to terms with the problems of race. Set up primarily for the rehabilitation of the emancipated and worn-torn Africans, the bureau was empowered to supervise and manage abandoned lands and exercise control of refugees and "freedmen." Established by an Act of Congress in 1865, the bureau was named the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (p. 56). It is believed that the bureau had promised to lease and eventually sell to each of the freed Africans forty-acre parcels of land (p. 62). This, of course, never materialized. Not surprisingly, nearly a century and half after the Civil War, descendants of Africa in America are still craving for reparations for the unrequited labor rendered by their ancestors during the two and half centuries of African enslavement in the United States.

The Freedmen's Bureau was also designed to serve as courts of law where courts did not exist or where the courts did not recognize Africans as free citizens. It was also given the task of establishing the institution of marriage among the Africans—an institution that the Great Enslavement had obstructed by design. In addition, the

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bureau was authorized to ensure that Africans had the liberty to choose employment of their choice and on the basis of fair conditions.

How did the bureau fare in these charges? Du Bois reports that the bureau did not enforce its responsibilities and powers to the letter. And, he suggests that the performance of the bureau should be weighed against the backdrop of the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions, including the post-war climate of hate, spite, suspicion, and cruelty.

Some successes were achieved, however. Du Bois observes that "the largest element of success lay in the fact that the majority of Freedmen were willing, even eager to work" (1969, p. 70). The bureau's accomplishments include the establishment of a system of wage labor for the Africans, facilitation of freedmen's private enterprize initiatives, recognition of freedmen, before the court of law, as free citizens and the founding of free schools in the South.

The big disappointment was that, although a few Africans who possessed "tools and capital" received some parcels of public land, the promise of forty acres and a mule never materialized in most cases. To say the least, this huge disappointment did not strengthen trust in inter-racial communications between Blacks and Whites. It exerted a demoralizing impact, as Du Bois notes:

> . . . The opportunity of binding the [black] peasant willingly to the soil was lost on that day when the commission of the Freedmen's Bureau had to go to South Carolina and tell the weeping Africans, after their years of toil, that their land was not theirs, that there was a mistake—somewhere (p. 71).

Du Bois also points out that the bureau failed to lay an enduring foundation for goodwill between Africans and Europeans. The bureau applied paternalistic methods which militated against the spirit of self-reliance on the part of the Africans.

Du Bois contends that the key success of the Freedmen's Bureau lies in the establishment of free schools for the liberated Africans, as well as in the setting up of free elementary education for all in the South. But he is quick to point out that the South remained stoutly opposed to education for Africans—a carry over from the days of Enslavement when Africans were, by law, forbidden from going to school. The South, he notes, believes that "an educated Negro . . . was a dangerous Negro" (p. 71). In *The Souls of Black Folk*, it is revealed that it was during the life of the Freedmen's Bureau that such African American institutions of higher learning as Fisk, Atlanta, Howard, and Hampton, emerged. Du Bois informs the reader that despite their generally meager financial situations, African Americans contributed financially towards the establishment of such higher institutions of learning.

The bureau performed the poorest in the area of justice dispensation. Du Bois attributes this performance to a host of factors. First, he notes that the "character of the bureau's personnel prejudiced the bureau in favor of the black litigants, and led without doubt to much injustice and annoyance" (p. 73). What accounted for this? Du Bois offers a philosophical explanation:

> In a distracted land where slavery had hardly fallen, to keep the strong from wanton abuse of the weak, and the weak from gloating insolently over the half-shorn strength of the strong, was a thankless, hopeless task (p. 72).

And then, he reports:

> Former masters of the land were peremptorily ordered about, seized, and imprisoned, and punished over and again, with scant courtesy from army officers. The former slaves were intimidated, beaten, raped, and butchered by angry and revengeful men (p. 72).

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Du Bois reports further that the legislators of the South employed every method and every law devisable to try to re-enslave the African. On the other hand, he says, the bureau granted the Africans a power and freedom which they were ill-prepared to handle after two hundred and fifty years of chattel slavery. Ella Forbes (1991) has challenged this notion, contending that this is an instance of Du Bois "blaming the victim."

To those who dismiss the performance of the bureau with a wave of the hand, Du Bois had this say: "It is all well enough for us of another generation to wax wise with advice to those who bore the burden in the heat of the day" (p. 73). He observes that the bureau faced a number of obstacles, including "bad" officials and national neglect. The bureau, he explains, operated in a climate in which the South considered Emancipation as a crime, a climate in which the South was not ready to admit Blacks to its legislative houses, and a climate in which the South did not believe in the concept of free black labor.

The collapse of the Freedmen's bank had both short-term and long-term effects on the African American community. The freedmen's bank refers to the set of savings banks set up by the government to assist the rehabilitation of the freedmen. Their collapse led to the loss of the hard-earned dollars of African Americans and their loss of faith in saving as a safe and viable economic tool, along with their loss of faith in fellow men. It was a "loss that a Nation which today sneers at [black] shiftlessness has never yet made good" (p. 75). However, Du Bois could not pinpoint the factors responsible for the failure of the freedmen's bank, and he describes it as a puzzle which "even time will never reveal, for here lies unwritten history" (p. 75). Had Du Bois lived to witness the collapse of savings and loans banks across America in the last quarter of the 20th century, he probably would have been able to find a clue to that puzzle.

Du Bois regrets that the bureau did not continue as a permanent institution, for it represented a form of governmental guardianship for the freed Africans. Today's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Civil Rights Commission, though forms of government's guardianship for racial minorities, are probably viewable as scaled down and transformed remnants of the Freedmen's Bureau.

On Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington is another major theme of *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois's assessment of Washington once more exemplifies his sense of balance and fairness. First, he acknowledges that the ascendancy of Washington was the "most striking" event in the history of the African American since 1876. Washington, he avers, came onto the scene at a special time in the history of the freedmen: when their sons and daughters were pervaded by a sense of doubt and hesitation (p. 79). However, he believes that Washington came to leadership as a compromise between the South, the North, and African Americans (p. 86).

In assessing Washington's philosophy about American race relations and black education, Du Bois begins by acknowledging that "some of [the] opposition" to Washington stemmed from "mere envy, the disappointment of displaced demagogues and the spite of narrow minds" (p. 82). He points out that Washington's program of industrial education, espousal of conciliation of the South, and social subordination were not new ideas. Industrial education, he recalls, had been engaged in by freed Africans as from the 1830s with the assistance of the American Missionary Association. The new factor in Washington's program was his success in promoting all these ideas and programs in an integrated form. Du Bois also suggests that Washington's espousal of conciliation of the South would be viewed with more understanding if one

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took into consideration the fact that at the time that Washington made these moves, Blacks had thought of such conciliation as an impossible objective. Thus, Washington's was a daring move.

One of African American history's major themes about Washington is his "Atlanta Compromise" speech in which he told the European American world that "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" (p. 80). Du Bois recalls that "radical" Africans (which, no doubt, included him) interpreted this speech as "a complete surrender of the demand for civil and political equality" (p. 80). Of course, Southern Whites in general were pleased with it, for it, in a way, gave a blessing to the Jim Crow system of institutionalized racial segregation. Washington's Tuskegee machine was financed by white Southern philanthropic organizations which at the same time funded social scientists who helped to produce the generation-specific sphere of knowledge that accommodated the Jim Crow societal structure.

But in his critique, Du Bois states that Washington was an embodiment of the New World Africans' old attitude of adjustment and submission. He describes Washington's message as one of work and money, almost to the exclusion of the higher objectives of life like African Americans' aspiration for civil and political rights. In fact, he accuses Washington of accepting the "alleged inferiority of the black race" (p. 87), pointing out that Washington preached submission during a crisis that instead required self-assertion. Du Bois declares:

> In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing (p. 87).

Du Bois charges that Washington was asking African Americans to abandon the demand for political power, for civil rights, and for higher education for black youth in favor of industrial education, accumulation of wealth and conciliation of the South. Washington's doctrine, he points out, had led to the following consequences for the African population:

1. The disfranchisement of the African American
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the African American, and
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions of higher training of the African (p. 88).

Du Bois was gracious enough, however, to say that he did not imply that these events were caused directly by Washington's program, but that his "propaganda" had provided the political excuse for them.

Du Bois also addresses the "Triple Paradox" in Washingtonian ideas. By this, Du Bois meant that Washington had engulfed himself in a paradox consisting of three parts:

1. He is striving nobly to make [black] artisans business men and property-owners; but it is utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for working men and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.
2. He insists on thrift and self-respect, but at the same time, counsels a silent submission to civic inferiority such as is bound to sap the manhood of any race in the long run.
3. He advocates common school and industrial training, and depreciates institutions of higher learning; but neither the [black] common schools nor Tuskegee itself, could remain open a day were it not for teachers trained in [black] colleges, or trained by their graduates (p. 89).

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Du Bois's maturity, even-handedness, and rationality radiate through the pages of this work. In spite of distress from the racism that he was experiencing, he suggests that Blacks should not judge Whites indiscriminately and advocates for discriminatory and broad-minded criticism on the part of African intellectuals. One cannot agree more with Du Bois. Scholarship degenerates into jingoistic jargon, if not childish reasoning, when racial/ethnic groups are portrayed in terms of "them" as implacable devils and "us" as angels of the planet.

Du Bois's even-handed approach to issues can also be seen in his balanced evaluation of the work and philosophy of Washington—never failing to give the proverbial devil his due. For instance, while he charges that Washington's "propaganda" had, on balance, given rise to the impression that "the south is justified in its . . . attitude towards the Negro" (p. 93), he concedes that Washington had spoken out against the racial injustices perpetrated by Southerners. Reminding Washington that the Great Enslavement and race prejudice were the "potent, if not sufficient causes" of the difficulties faced by the African American community, Du Bois contends that Washington's charge to Africans to work hard was inadequate because the African alone could not solve the social, political, and economic troubles engendered by the Great Enslavement and racism. Du Bois, in fact, accuses Washington of shifting the burden for the redress of the plight of the Africans onto their shoulders, leaving the white Southerners to watch as critical and pessimistic spectators. Southern Whites and their Northern "co-partners in guilt," he says, owed a duty to the black race which they had "cruelly wronged" and are "still wronging" (p. 94). In his interpretation of Washington's philosophy, Molefi K. Asante (1989) differs slightly from Du Bois's viewpoint. Although he criticizes Washington for not understanding the "indivisibility of freedom," he suggests that what is often dismissed as Washington's "accommodation" is a "deliberate manipulation of his white audience" (p. 8).

A New World Order

Nonetheless, Du Bois advocates a New World Order in which:

> the strife of all honorable men . . . [is] to see that in the future competition of races the survival of the fittest shall mean the triumph of the good, the beautiful, and the true; that we may be able to preserve for future civilization all that is really fine and noble and strong, and not continue to put a premium on greed and impudence and cruelty (p. 188).

This author believes that in order to attain such a world order, the system of academia must engage in a conscientious study of race relations based on frankness, courage, and fairness. Du Bois suggests that the tension and animosity between Blacks and Whites are fueled by the fact that the "better class of Blacks" interact with the "worst representatives of the white race" (p. 191). It is the "Talented Tenth" that could lead African Americans to this new world order. By the talented tenth, Du Bois meant college-trained black leaders of character and intelligence, and who are skilled and knowledgeable about modern culture. Cheikh Anta Diop (1991) articulates a similar world order in terms of an emerging "ethical conscience of humanity" (p. 375). Diop believes that the world's moral conscience is improving. This improvement is marked by an opening towards OTHERS across ethnic, and one may add, racial lines, as well. He suggests that this brand of ethical perspective will form a basis for genuine humanity.

Du Bois draws a distinction between the cultural outlook of New World Africans of the American South and that of New World Africans of the American North. The former, he claims, exhibits hypocritical compromise, while the latter tends towards radicalism. In between these two cultural outlooks, he says, lie the broad masses of disaporic Africans.

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Another major segment of *The Souls of Black Folk* is Du Bois's discussion of the Black Church. Du Bois characterizes it as the "social center" of African life in America and "the most characteristic expression of African American character" (p. 213). This church serves the African American community as a fountain of morals, a facilitator of the family, and the arbiter of questions of right and wrong. The church, he avers, represents the world from which the African had been cut off by race prejudice. He traces the evolution of the Black Church from its roots in African traditional religion through its transformation on the plantations into voodooism to its adaptation to European Christian theology.

An Africological Analysis

Africological research seeks to discover and apply codes, paradigms, symbols, motif, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for gathering and interpreting data. In articulating these, the leading proponent of the Africological school of thought, Molefi Kete Asante, suggests that while Africological researchers can disagree over what constitutes African ideals and values, they cannot question their primacy. But Asante recognizes that cultural manifestations are transitional. A set of three paradigmatic approaches has been advanced for research in Africology. These are the functional, categorical, and etymological paradigms. The functional paradigm stands for needs, policy, and action; the categorical embodies issues of schemes, gender, class, themes, and files; while the etymological paradigm relates to language in general, but specifically word and concept origin.

Scholars of Africology perceive Africa in a holistic, Pan-Africanist sense. Asante defines the "African" as a "composite" concept that transcends ethnic boundaries. This could also be described as a conceptualization of the African in terms of the Diopian portrayal of Africa as a universe of cultural unity amidst language diversity. In a sense, the African American of today is an African that has emerged from the forced merging or synthesis of the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, Ga, Asante, Bambara, etc. prototypes of the African cultural manifestations. This does not overshadow the American side of what Du Bois has characterized as the "twoness" of the African American cultural outlook, the "two warring ideals in one dark body," as Du Bois defined it.

The Africa-centered perspective requires that Africans be treated as the subjects of their own history, as opposed to being a subset of the history of some other group and that African ideals and values, based on an evolving and transitional cultural context, should serve as a core frame of reference for the analysis of Africans and their affairs. It is important to note that African ideals and values mean ideals and values as they have crystallized across space and time within the framework of a dynamic African cultural system, encompassing continental and diasporic experiences. The Africological school of thought enjoins its adherents to promote African culture, promote a high sense of morality, strive to bring harmony to the world, and project a world vision.

Given this understanding, a question is posed here as to whether the needs, policy/policies, action/actions (the functional paradigm), issues of schemes, gender, class, themes, files (the categorical paradigm), the language, word and concept origin (the etymological paradigm) of *The Souls of Black Folk* are located within the Africological framework as defined above? African ideals and values are not just about questions

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of humanism and morality; they are related to questions of epistemology, cosmology, axiology, aesthetics, politics, economics, science, and technology.

It must be noted that this writer understands that it does not make sense to interpret a text's words, concepts, and ideas in isolation from the context of the entire work or the context of the time in which it was constructed.

Du Bois's articulation of the needs of the African diasporic people is in consonance with the ideals and values of the African Americans of his generation and even of latter generations. It has been written that Du Bois lived 50 years ahead of his time in terms of his ingenuity, vision, and ideals (Hare, cited in Du Bois, 1969, p. xiii). The needs of African Americans which he forcefully articulated include civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social equality, cultural integrity, and true self-consciousness, devoid of the problematic twoness. Has Du Bois not been rightly described as "the father of serious black thought?" Had Du Bois been dislocated in his understanding of black thought, would he dominate scholarly and non-scholarly discussions of black thought as he does today?

Du Bois's sensitivity to and advocacy of women's rights at a time in history when such a topic was not the center piece of men's intellectual discourse is also another manifestation of the Africological vision. The African-centered paradigm decries subjugation of women and advocates gender equality within the context of gender complementarity. As C.T. Keto (1989) opines, gender complementarity is necessary for the survival of the human species.

Du Bois's schemes and classifications reflect the currents and strands of thought within the New World African community. For instance, he correctly diagnosed the "double-consciousness" that apparently haunts the African American as she/he tries to make sense of his environment. No recorded study has disputed that thesis.

What can be said about the manner in which he classified the cultural outlook of African Americans who grew up in the South and the cultural outlook of African Americans who were raised in the North? Is Du Bois not successful in taking his reader into the psychological being of his subject?

In the area of policy/policies, Du Bois's repudiation of Washington's racial policy of social subordination and industrial education for African Americans represents an Africological condemnation of a policy direction which would not have augured well for the well-being of the African American. In pointing out that Washington's policy prescription would lead New World Africans down the path of social and political inferiority, Du Bois was trying to uphold the dignity and equality of the African descendant. He told Washington in effect that "man shall not live by bread alone." In doing this, he exhibited Afrocentric courage by challenging the political colossus of his day, not minding the risk to his career. In so doing, Du Bois set an example of what Asante describes as Afrocentric "intellectual vigilance" (1989, p.38) at a time he could have chosen the convenient path of intellectual sycophancy. As one listens to those who wax eloquent in their often ill-thought condemnation of this courageous and community-minded New World African, one's mind returns to the words of the man himself: "It is all well enough for us of another generation to wax wise with advice to those who bore the burden in the heat of the day" (Du Bois, 1969, p. 73).

Du Bois's pioneering role in the formation of the Pan-African movement, which helped to call world attention to the plight of colonized Africans and galvanized African intellectuals behind the struggle for independence, remains a bold example of an effort towards advancement of human freedom, which is an Africological goal. Du Bois's opposition to human intolerance and social inequity is also another manifestation of a human-centered, Africological view of life. His balanced and fair attitude towards his

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ideological foes attests to his Africological sense of balance and fairness. Africological researchers are expected to strive for balance and fairness. "The [Africologist] speaks of research that is ultimately verifiable in the experiences of human beings, the final empirical authority" (Asante, 1989, p. 25).

Du Bois's contention that the New World African wanted to have the liberty to live like an African descendant in America falls in line with the aspiration of the diasporic African to have a niche in a pluralistic cultural climate of America. The pluralist perspective—as opposed to the separatist or assimilationist perspectives—undergirds Africological schools of thought. In asserting the right of the New World African to her cultural space in the American multitude of cultures, Africologists recognize the existence and validity of other cultural manifestations on the American landscape. Du Bois was asserting the legitimacy of African cultural expression when he advocated black power and black cultural pride, and he did not do it in an exclusionary sense or in a manner that seeks to dehumanize others. Unlike the hegemonic Eurocentric perspective, Du Bois's perspective is not hegemonic—it does not seek to Africanize America. The very hegemonic tendency of the Western outlook is exemplified by not only the colonial mission of "Westernizing" the colonized as a means of controlling and exploiting them, but also by its apparent intolerance towards cultural expressions that depart from the Western tradition. An example is the media campaign against centric thoughts different from the Eurocentric paradigm. Advocates of those centric thoughts are dismissed as "political," "culturalists" (as if academia did not emanate from cultures), and "extremists" (meaning extreme from the Western cultural center). Another example of this intolerance can be seen in the fact that the Establishment in this country had consigned Du Bois's work and name to oblivion. The message seems to be that a person is "moderate" and "reasonable," as long as that person sees the world through hegemonic Western eyes, as long as the person agrees with what Western intelligentia have decided to be the priorities of humankind, and as long as that person goes along with their self-serving prescriptions about how the world's resources should be controlled and distributed.

The main pitfall of *The Souls of Black Folk* lies in its language which often employs words and concepts which carry negative connotations about the humanity of the very people it was meant to affirm. The book indiscriminately employs words which are characteristic of hegemonic, Eurocentric anthropological studies of the OTHER in describing Africans and artifacts of their culture. These degrading terms include "primitive," "backward races," "underdeveloped races," "practical paupers," "America's dark heritage from slavery and the slave trade," "heathen rites," and "the unlettered Negro." It is noteworthy that Du Bois hardly applies such terms to his "southern gentle men." Could we say that those words reflect acts of the subconscious? If one claimed to know the answer one would be engaging in an exercise in mind-reading for which one has no training. Only Du Bois could have provided the answers. But suffice it to say that Du Bois could have borrowed a leaf from other intellectuals like Edward Wilmot Blyden whose literary project in defense of the African cultural heritage had sought to impress in the minds of men and women that human races and cultural groups were neither primitive nor superior; they were equal and complementary. Du Bois did affirm the inherent equality of the African people, but on several pages and lines of *The Souls of Black Folk* he employed words and terms which had been widely used by detractors of the African world to try to prove the "inferiority" of the race. Therein lies the biggest weakness of *The Souls of Black Folk*, but this weakness is more than adequately counter balanced by its strengths as enumerated on the preceding pages. Perhaps *Encyclopedia Africana*, which he never completed before he died in Ghana on August 27, 1963, might have compensated for the etymological weaknesses noted in the foregoing passage.

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CHAPTER SIX

End of Chapter Reading Comprehension Exercise

Instruction

In the blank spaces that follow, provide at least a one paragraph summary of the themes or questions listed below.

1. W.E.B. Du Bois's biography, career, & philosophical orientation

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2. Double consciousness

3. The father of Black Studies

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4. The problem of the 20th century

5. The Freedmen's Bureau

6. On Booker T. Washington

7. A new world order

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8. Explore the World Wide Web for additional information about the life and contributions of W.E.B. Du Bois.

9. What are your own thoughts about "the problem of the 21st century?"

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