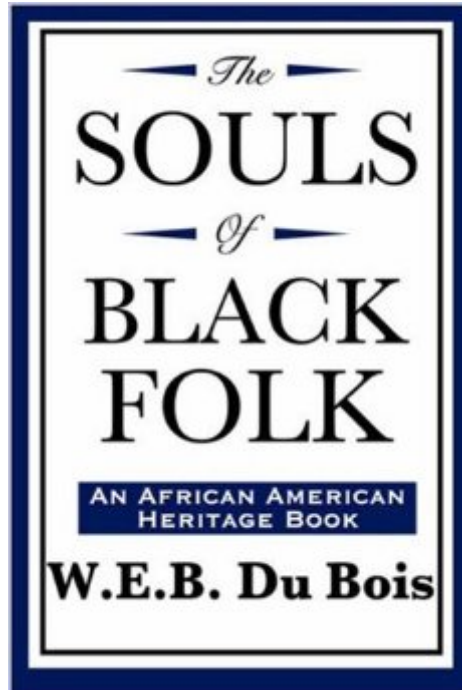


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The Souls Of Black Folk (An African American Heritage Book)



Synopsis

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African American civil rights activist, leader, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, poet, and scholar. The importance of his work to the success of the Civil Rights movement cannot be overestimated. "In the course of his long, turbulent career, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted virtually every possible solution to the problem of twentieth-century racism-scholarship, propaganda, integration, national self-determination, human rights, cultural and economic separatism, politics, international communism, expatriation, third world solidarity." -David Levering Lewis *The Souls of Black Folk* propelled Du Bois to the forefront of the Civil Rights movement when it was first published. This hard hitting masterpiece is part essays, part memoir, and part fiction. More than any other book it brought home just how racist and unjust America could be, and demanded that African Americans be granted access to education and equality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Souls of Black Folks, as other reviewers have pointed out, is a masterpiece of African-American thought. But it is even more than that when we consider the context and time in which the book was written. Most of what DuBois discusses is still relevant today, and this is a tribute to the man, not only as a scholar, but as someone who was continually adapting his views in the best image and interests of black people. Some reviewers refer to DuBois as "the Black Emerson" and, as a

university instructor, I heard similar references made: "the Black Dewey" or "the Black Park," referring to the Chicago School scholars. Du Bois was brilliant; indeed, these white men should be being called "the white Du Bois"! Du Bois literally created the scientific method of observation and qualitative research. With the junk being put out today in the name of "dissertations," simply re-read Du Bois' work on the Suppression of the African Slave Trade and his work on the Philadelphia Negro and it is clear that he needs not be compared to any white man of his time or any other: he was a renaissance man who cared about his people and, unlike too many of the scholars of day, he didn't just talk the talk or write the trite; he walked the walk and organized the unorganizable. White racism suffered because Du Bois raised the consciousness of the black masses. But he did more than that; by renouncing his American citizenship and moving to Ghana, he proved that Pan Africanism is not just something to preach or write about (ala Molefi Asante, Tony Martin, Jeffries and other Africanists); it is a way of life, both a means and an end.

"Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century." -W.E.B. DuBois, in the Forethought

This book contains essays written by W.E.B. DuBois. Some of them are very historical and recount the African American events and progress, and some of them are very personal, in which DuBois tells about his own life. I learned a lot from reading this book. For instance, I had always thought of what an awful thing slavery was- a horrible part of America's history- and that it was such a good thing that it was finally stopped. However, I never thought about the implications of life for the ex-slave after it was ended. Here were many African Americans, free, yes, but with what? Nothing. How would they get anywhere without money, education, jobs, etc.? And after freeing them leaders imposed unfair segregation and Jim Crow laws upon African Americans, so they were not really free at all. Another thing that interested me about this book was the evolution of the slave's religion. It is very interesting to me how DuBois discusses their original religion of magic/ancestor and earth worship, etc and their gradual progression to the Christian religion of their masters, and then back to the beginning in an almost cyclical pattern. I don't think the African-American culture would be the same at all today if it were not for this mix of religious belief, although some would argue about how good it was for a religion to be forced about them and I would tend to agree. W.E.B. DuBois was a pioneer of African American literature and thought. This book of essays will make you rethink the progress and status of African Americans throughout America's history, and will help you understand and sympathize much more.

These essays, actually sketches and ruminations of DuBois', remain an enduring backdrop for the picture in which race in America is framed. At the end of each decade, they seem to continue emitting new pregnant meanings: During the decade of the 60s, when I first read the book, it seemed to be an open message to white America about the Negro: an appeal, as it were, that "the Negro was on the march," and that his main instrument of entering the American mainstream (his only secure dream) was his spiritual cadence and his deep and abiding faith in religion, and equally deep faith in the meaning of the American revolution, and in the American dream and its misapplied ideals. A warning was issued in the "parable of the Coming of John": a reckoning of this fractured meaning and its implied promises inevitably had to occur. When I read it during the 70s, it seemed more like an interior dialogue between "Blacks," about "being constantly on the struggle against racism." It was especially a dialogue between the "uneducated and unsophisticated" on the one hand, and "the educated and sophisticated" (the "so-called "talented tenth"), on the other. But also it was a dialogue between the conservative forces of "compromise" that wanted to win by "turning the other cheek," and the more progressive and revolutionary forces who wanted to do so "by any means necessary." Yes, Martin and Malcolm were summoned up through DuBois' words in the same debate that had occurred two generations before between DuBois and Booker T. Washington. The words, but not the structure of the arguments, had changed. They were issued with the same degree of passion, and with the same unfortunate results: more promises, but powerful little "real progress," and then the murders of both Martin and Malcolm.

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