

The Dismantling of W.E.B. Du Bois' Spiritual Legacy by Contemporary Scholars

"Du Bois is the finest intellect we produced away from Africa."

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"The Blind Men and the Elephant"

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

-John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

There has been a crusade to dismantle the spiritual legacy of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois by some contemporary scholars. It has become a contemporary issue of whether or not Du Bois had any spirituality which has been give birth to in part, by two time Pulitzer Prize winning biographer Dr. David Levering Lewis. Other scholars, namely, Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Herbert Aptheker, Arnold Ramperstad and Mary Helen Washington have added fuel to this false image of Du Bois. Du Bois' spirituality is no different than those we call saints today. It is not the absence of fear that makes one courageous; rather it is the ability to persevere in face of fear. Similarly, it is not the absence doubt that causes one to lack spirituality but, the inability to function positively in the world because of doubt. Some people who are viewed as saints had serious and overwhelming doubt but their doubts never stopped them from making a positive contribution to humanity. Doing good work in the world trumps the human frailty of doubt. Du Bois is not afforded this benefit. He is continuously condemned as agnostic, and atheist for expressing

candidly things he did not know and could not answer when in reality Du Bois was far from being an agnostic or atheist. Du Bois' honesty relative to doubt is used against his spirituality while his priestly public service of seventy years is completely negated. He is the high priest of public service who dared to save the souls of black folks. "Du Bois is a phenomenon" proclaimed Ghana's President Nkrumah at Du Bois' funeral. It would be a tragedy indeed to find out that this phenomenon that had literally saved the souls of Black folks in his masterpiece of the same title was himself soul less. Like the blind men of Indostan each of these men successfully defined what they inspected but, being blind they fail to see the elephant. Similarly, contemporary scholars fail to see Du Bois' elephant like commitment to his Christian spiritual understanding of the world.

Lewis creates a religious agnosticism for Du Bois that has become the unquestionable standard that was not a central part of his biography during his life. Lewis makes a very flawed and contradictory argument relative to Du Bois' spirituality. In his argument regarding Du Bois' "philosophical turning point [and his] abandonment of organized religion" (Lewis: 1993 pg. 65) few question the authenticity of his argument. Lewis' argues against Du Bois' belief in God are as unstable and contradictory as the argument Meletus made against Socrates in *Plato's Apology* when he argued that Socrates was guilty of not believing in the God of the State or atheism. Socrates would counter and prove Meletus wrong. (Jowett: 1988 pg. 38) Lewis stumbles and inadvertently gives us definitive proof of Du Bois' theism. When Du Bois answers the question "of a Cuban priest, many years later, Du Bois provided an unambiguous reply: "[If] you mean by 'God' a vague Force which, in some incomprehensible way, dominates all life and change, then I answer Yes; I recognize such a Force, and if you wish to call it God, I do not object." (Lewis: 1993 pg. 66) Here Du Bois states for the record that he believes in God. Nevertheless, Lewis

protests and dismisses this clear affirmation by maintaining that Du Bois after a dancing incident had a short journey to what he called, “serene agnosticism.”

After losing a minister who was a central figure in Du Bois’ youthful years Lewis raises the question whether or not God had been central to Du Bois. At this early point in Du Bois’ life there was not any question of his Christianity based upon the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ. Du Bois was intellectually precocious as a child and inevitably questioned what he called ‘tales of the impossible’ specifically citing the story of “Jonah” which contemporary scholars like Rampersad and Lewis misread Du Bois’ questioning and loss of faith in crude fundamentalism as loss of all faith. From a Christian perspective this is wrong. This position accords too much power to the fundamentalist position when not all Christians are fundamentalist. In fact these early positions of Du Bois accord well with the best in biblical criticism today which stand as proof of his intellectual gifts as well as his biblical insight. It is an unfortunate reality that many of those who are critiquing Du Bois spiritually lack the theological sophistication to understand him. This questioning and doubting is a part of the Christian growth experience that eventually levels itself off and becomes a firm commitment to do good to humanity in this world; if the seeker never stops the search for God’s truth. Du Bois never lost his faith and never gave up his search for truth and continued to serve humanity to the end of his life. Du Bois’ faith in God remained stable while he learned to question and suspect what people said about God. In this regard, Du Bois’ positions represent the best in liberal theology.

Although Rampersad fails to properly contextualize Du Bois’ precocious analysis of fundamentalism he correctly reveals the sources of Du Bois’ *Soul* metaphors.

For this insight Du Bois drew on the psychology of his time. The term ‘soul’ was used synonymously with consciousness both by idealistic psychologists and by religiously orthodox James McCosh, whose philosophy Du Bois studied at Fisk. His favorite professor, William James, posited in 1890 that the structure of the brain allow ‘one

system (to) give rise to one consciousness and those of another system to another simultaneously existing consciousness.’ The psychologist Oswalds Kulpe wrote in 1893 of “the phenomenon of double consciousness or the divide self... characterized by the existence of more or less complete separation of two aggregates of conscious process... oftentimes of entirely opposite character. (Du Bois: 1989 pg.xix)

Washington posits that Du Bois and other members of the academy showed no mutual respect for black women intellectuals in spite of the reverential way in which Dr. Anna J. Cooper referred to her male colleagues. Her male counterparts rarely repaid the respect. This is a blanket indictment of the men in the Victorian era. Du Bois and Frederick Douglass are generally considered exceptions to this sexist behavior by informed scholars. Both fought for empowering women before it was politically correct. In *Women, Race, and Class*, published in 1981, Angela Y. Davis says, “As a male advocate of woman suffrage, W.E.B. Du Bois was peerless among Black and white men alike. His militancy, his eloquence and the principled character of his numerous appeals caused many of his contemporaries to view him as the most outstanding male defender of women’s political rights of his times.” Particularly unusual, posited Davis was the “relative lack of male supremacist undertones that characterized his eloquent appeals.” For Davis, Du Bois championed the full inclusion of Black women into leadership in every aspect of American life. Likewise, Dr. Nellie Y. McKay’s thought provoking 1990 essay entitled, “The Souls of Black Women Folk in the Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois” provided a refined analysis of the role of gender present in his work. McKay argues that Du Bois’ autobiographical writings “break out of standard patriarchal paradigms, in part due to the fact that he appeared to understand the political impact of gender on the lives of black women in America, beginning when he was a young man....” (Marable: 1986 p. xxi)

Du Bois is indicted further relative to his relationship with his wife and daughter. Mary Helen Washington places twentieth century standards on a nineteenth century marriage. Du Bois' first marriage occurred in 1896. The standards for marriage in the nineteenth century were extremely different from those of the twentieth century. Some if not most of what Washington complains about is part of what defined nineteenth century manhood and womanhood. For example, men were expected to be worldly and women domestic. Women took care of the home and their husbands. Women were generally not allowed to travel alone. Politics and public lectures were generally performed by white men. Maria Stewart would transcend this barrier of sexism and racism but for the most part women (and definitely not Black women) did not speak in public. This may be offensive to some feminists; nevertheless, it does not negate the fact that this was the reality for most nineteenth century women. It is wrong to blame Du Bois because as a man he inadvertently benefitted from white male sexism. Some white women enjoyed the privileges they accrued from white male sexism while other feminists like Katie Stanton and Susan B. Anthony realized early that some of these privileges came at the high expense of white women's political disenfranchising. White men's machismo and sexism would lead to Black men being given the right to vote before white women. Katie Stanton was outraged and she complained bitterly. How could white men give Black men the right to vote and deny it to the women whom they shared their beds and mothered their children? The feministic ire was set ablaze. Stanton was so infuriated that she referred to prominent Black leaders like Frederick Douglass as "Sambo" and "Gorilla." Similarly, Hillary Clinton was dumbfounded and angered when she lost the democratic nomination to a Black man, Barack Obama, who won both the nomination and the U.S. presidency in spite of her playing the feminist card which failed to trump the male card.

Washington's criticisms are too generic. One individual cannot be blamed for or expected to alter the mores and class norms into which he was born. In this regard, some of Washington's positions are more about an era than Du Bois. Du Bois had a right to have expectations of his wife and daughter that met the standard of his time. They also had the right to have expectations of him that might challenge our way of thinking today. Washington has no right to super impose contemporary standards on a bygone age. We are all products of the era that produced us.

(Blum: 2007 p. 133)

Du Bois used his understanding of the Hebrew bible creatively to defend American Africans against radical segregation under the tripartite social, political, economic domination of Blacks in America which constituted visible corporate evil in its most heinous form. "From start to finish, heaven to hell, *The Souls of Black Folk* was deeply informed by ideas and idioms. And for his unparalleled dedication Du Bois was revered as a modern day saint during his life. His *Souls of Black Folks* alone signified that the work stood against a white supremacist tradition that undermined that notion of black "soul," while the chapter titles signal that Du Bois intended the text to be read in a religious register. With historical insight, sociological questioning, literary musing, and biblical metaphors, Du Bois cast the saga of American society as a spiritual tale."

(Blum: 2007 p. 89) Du Bois' long life was dedicated to self sacrifice and fighting socio-political, economic, and religious evil. Even so, West and Lewis are major scholars who have led the intellectual pack in deconstructing Du Bois' deep spiritual commitment to elevate their own personal careers while claiming to understand that which was not a part of Du Bois' personal biography. The weight of the evidence that Du Bois was a spiritual leader is totally overwhelming that it becomes obvious that one has to begin with this negative idea as a bias in order to maintain this scandalous position.

Cornell undergraduates were not the only readers to reflect on Du Bois' spiritual gifts.... One reflector in 1902 said "I praise God that you had courage in several paragraphs to state the bald truth that the south needs to hear. In their blindness they fail to see their own peril" Du Bois stood as a prophet sent from above in the estimation of this writer... This Freedman's Aid worker promised to pray that Du Bois' "life may be long spared for the high and noble service for which are providentially equipped--- for surely you have come into the Kingdom for such an hour as this." Similarly, one year later, Reverend Francis J. Grimke, a Black Presbyterian minister, wrote to Du Bois that "God has raised you up at this juncture in our history, as a race, to speak to the intelligence of the country in our behalf." (Blum: 2007 p. 5)

In short, *The Souls of Black Folk* is the Rosetta Stone of New World letters. It gave African-American writers, artists and critical thinkers a language in which to articulate their "otherness" and caused the world to acknowledge the gravity of Black history as a subject. (Fontenot, Morgan & Gardner: 2001 p. 44) Du Bois denied that blacks were soulless and had no history. Du Bois corrected the history of American Africans that both separated them from continental Africans and their civilizations a false history that posited a polluted and marginalized West Africa in the shadow of the development of western cultures. (Fontenot, Morgan & Gardner: 2001 p.9) He fought like a lion unceasingly and believed in Black people's potential phenomenally to establish African- American's spirituality. He wrote prodigiously to re-valorize the African in the modern Western world. Du Bois' mission was to reconnect people of African descent culturally by locating Africa as the nexus of discourse. He further argued that blacks had a unique message for America when he maintains that "... the Negro is a sort of seventh son born with a veil, and gifted with a second- sight in this American world." (Du Bois, p. 3) Du Bois' pro black perspective of the Bible liberated it from its captivity to white middle-class male interpretation. Du Bois was painfully aware that the Hebrew scripture needed to be reinterpreted from the privatization and spiritualization of its white supremacist orientation. And, like the children of Israel who cried out for help because of their bondage Du Bois heard this cry and supplied an alternative perspective that gave hope for liberation. In this respect, he

was a forefather of the Black Liberation Theological Movement. God's concern for human justice and ecological responsibility for Du Bois transcended white folk's parochial abstract doctrinal interpretations. (Russell: 1985 p. 12) Finally, in *The Souls of Black Folk* and other works, Du Bois celebrated and recorded a personal and communal praise song and journey that had moved generations of enslaved Africans and their progeny from spaces of destruction and oblivion where they were perceived, described and defined on a continuum that ran from property to problem, to a sacred site of ritual ceremony where as singers they bring their gifts of songs to humanity. Du Bois sang, "Little beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom, the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty" (Fontenot, Morgan & Gardner: 2001 p. 67) Black folks lived in a world where White folks had divested their history of its empowering narrative and moral significance. Consequently, 'the shadow of the deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people....' Who faced daily the never ending reality that Blacks lived in a world that taught 'hatred of everything black'. Adopting the position of sage Du Bois hammers away at the dual problems of Black suffering and Americans myopia position on dehumanizing Africans-- in reality degraded America. (28)

He used his knowledge of the bible to identify Black and brown people as literally those for whom Jesus died and as a consequence loving them means sacrifice as Jesus was sacrificed. For Du Bois, Black folk were basically artists who rose to give the world their greatest gift: their song. "And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song --- the rhythmic cry of the slave --- stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas... To America, the Negro could bring only his music, but that was quite enough. The only real American music is that of the Negro American." (56-57)

Du Bois located Black folks souls in their music. Accordingly, he begins the fourteen chapters of his classic with bars of music taken from the master's songs of the former enslaved Africans as epigraphs. These songs were life-affirming proof that Africans were not consumed by the hell that was slavery.

Mother Teresa would later popularize the idea by identifying the poor in Calcutta as “whoever the poorest of the poor are, they are Christ for us—Christ under the guise of human suffering.” (Gonzalez-Balado: 1996 p. 24) Mother Teresa is sainted for her insight. On the other hand, when King who identified the Black hungry in America with Christ was forced to maintain, “When I say feed the hungry I am a saint. When I ask, why are there hungry people I am called a communist.” There is something strange about a theology that will allow you to feed the hungry but call you communist when you question the system that allows people to be hungry. King never apologized for this identification and he sacrificed for the people that he loved. Jesus of Nazareth Hebrew Prophet and the ultimate God of Christianity questions God's nearness while dying on the cross which is reflected in Mark 15:34 which is totally expressed in Psalms 22. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me: Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” This is the classical Hebrew prayer of deliverance. This prayer was equivalent to the 23 Psalms today. All faithful Jews who were distressed would have been familiar with this verse. Although this verse speaks of doubt and abandonment it ultimately points to the fact that Yahweh would faithfully deliver the Hebrew people. In the Christian tradition this speaks to Jesus' humanity, that is, his spiritual questioning his classic “dark night of soul” while transcending the temporary moment to assure Christians that Jesus is beyond temporary doubt. And, if Jesus (Christianity's God) had human moments of doubt why on earth is doubt denied in the biography of Du Bois who made no claim of divinity. West never

questions King's spirituality nor does the Western world question Mother Teresa's spirituality (who has one of the longest reported "dark night of the soul" which some argue lasted from 1948-1997) but when Du Bois makes Black people the incarnation of Christ his spirituality and dedication to Christ is absolutely negated and dishonored. Why? There is indeed something strange about West and contemporary scholars who question Du Bois' spirituality. In the Christian tradition love means sacrificing. In John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that the world should not perish but have everlasting life." Christ is the ultimate love sacrifice. Du Bois sacrificed for the greater good of the masses which is rooted in the Mosaic tradition of Psalms 82 of giving justice to the weak and the destitute and rescuing the needy. John Daniels, the reviewer for the black Boston periodical, *Alexander's Magazine*, pointed to "the dominating spirituality of the book" and called *The Souls* a poem, a spiritual, not an intellectual offering. Du Bois' book deserved the highest place in literary history: not that of a polemic, a transient thing, but that of poem, a thing permanent. Daniels was the first commentator to claim for *The Souls* those properties that make a 'classic' work classic. (Du Bois: 1986 pg. xv)

West and those contemporary scholars who question the spirituality and faith of Du Bois raise several disturbing questions and theses queries have nothing to do with Du Bois' spirituality, but rather with their own spirituality and faith commitment and their intellectual understanding of Jesus and the gospel of Christ. West who has the qualifications to discern Du Bois' spiritual gifts appear to miss them. Why? I believe that West does not fail to see what others have seen—that Du Bois was most spiritual and that his spirituality was Christian. West in an effort, to be the foremost intellectual of our day finds ways to degrade Du Bois to raise his own stature. In short, there is a professional jealousy of Du Bois' unique intellectual position. Du Bois for a while was

the only earned Black PhD in the world. According to Dr. Molefi Asante, Du Bois represents consistent Black genius. Until Du Bois, Black creative genius was only episodic. Du Bois was born at a time so early in publishing that a scholar could read almost all that was published in their discipline. This is impossible today. Between 1903 (the publishing of *Souls*) and 1963 (Du Bois' death) he was unchallenged as the preeminent scholar of American- Africans. Dr. Aptheker's definitive annotated bibliography of Du Bois' books, essays and poems has 1,975 entries. He literally wrote a work of some variety every twelve days between the ages of thirty and ninety-five. (Du Bois: 1989, pg xi)

West covets Du Bois' fame and his prolific nature and his position in the community. Du Bois stature cannot be replicated today. He was an enigma never to be seen again. Too many situations militate against this occurring today. Du Bois' rise to fame and emergence as prominent political figure came as result of his ability to use the written word. In fact, William Ferris, fellow Ivy leaguer and Yale graduate commented on his unique path to leadership.

Du Bois is one of the few men in history who was hurled on the throne of leadership by the dynamic force of the written word. He is one of the few writers who leaped to the front as a leader and became the head of a popular movement through impressing his personality upon men by means of a book. Ferris concludes his ascendancy was inadvertent: He had no aspiration of becoming a race leader when he wrote *Souls*. But, the book launched his brilliant career. (Du Bois: pg. viii)

West in a very Western way (Oedipus) must slay the intellectual titan (father) in order to supplant him so that he can become the most "authentic Black leader?" In West's bestselling book *Race Matters* which appears to take its name from *Racial Matters and the FBI* by O'Reilly, he systematically eliminates those he perceives as being candidates for the number one position as Black leader. In the book West calls Du Bois a Victorian. On the surface this term seems to suggest that he is one of the early African American thinkers who wanted to put thinking on a scientific basis and organize government for the improvement of humanity in general. This is

true. Some of the great enlightenment scholars in America such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Voltaire were amongst these seminal thinkers. But, the flip side to this coin is that during the enlightenment both Europe and America began to challenge some of the bedrock concepts in European theology. Some of these men emerged as atheists. In this regard West can suggest that Du Bois is an agnostic or even an atheist without labeling him as such. Du Bois never abandoned his spirituality although there is no doubt he abandoned the dogma and superficiality of the church. But, some of the most elite scholars have given up fundamentalism but rarely have they been attacked as not being spiritual. In his paper, *An Autobiography of Religious Development* King shocked his Sunday school class by denying the physical resurrection of Christ. (5) This idea for many Christians is the bedrock of Christianity and to deny this literal truth is to deny Christ and all that is spiritual. Nevertheless, West does not question King's spirituality and his ability to "feel" for Black people where he claims King by maintaining, "I am a Martin Luther King, Jr. kind of brother..." (West: 2009 p. 23) He agrees with Kings spiritual radicalism in *Brother West* and dismisses Du Bois'—why? West as a Christian theologian knows this all too well but he uses his knowledge to disavow both Du Bois' connection to Black people and his spirituality which was informed by his early Christian experiences. West further argues that Du Bois was not or did not participate in the (absurd) and struggled with the tragedy of life. He constructs a reality and then maintains that Du Bois did not grapple with it. West's attempt to dismantle Du Bois' legacy is transparent:

Indeed, my major intellectual disappointment with the great Du Bois lies in the fact that there are hardly any traces in his work of any serious grappling with the profound thinkers and spiritual wrestlers in the modern West from these two groups – major figures obsessed with the problem of evil in their time.

We see in Du Bois no engagement with Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Alexander Herzen, Lev Shestov, Anton Chekhov, or Franz Kafka, Max Brod,

Kurt Tucholsky, Herman Broch, Hugo Bergmann, or Karl Kraus. These omissions are glaring because the towering figures in both groups were struggling with political and existential issues similar to those facing black people in America. (Appiah & Gates: 1999 p. 1973)

In as much as both groups were struggling with similar existential problems it is unnecessary to deal with the Russians when Du Bois dealt with the problems. Du Bois admired Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Tubman, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnet, John Brown, and many others abolitionists who fought for the overthrow of slavery the ultimate absurdity and human evil and oppression. Frederick Douglass and Northern abolitionists label slavery as ‘The sum of all sins which mean take every imaginable evil add them together and this would equal slavery. In fact, in 1906 a West African by the name of Ota Benga was displayed and housed in the Bronx zoo. Du Bois and other leaders protested on the grounds that Benga was a human being eventually led to freeing Benga. (Bradford & Blume: 1972 p. 270). Benga met both Du Bois and Booker T. Washington at mutual friend poet Anne Spencer’s home. They met him separately and although they differed on their positions on Africa they criticized King Leopold’s bloody and exploitive rule of the Congo one of the few places their ideas converged. (213) There is nothing more absurd than placing an African man in the Bronx Zoo as if he were a chimpanzee. This is the real evil that Du Bois fought against over seven decades in America. West delineates European’s struggle with evil as if it is superior or different from Du Bois’ struggle with American evil, that is the evil of American apartheid, lynching and the ultimate subjugation and dehumanization of Black folks.

He names Russian writers such as Tolstoy and others who grappled with this immense problem of the absurd. What is really absurd is that Du Bois was born in 1868— five years from the time of the enslavement of African human beings who were reduced to the status of property or things. To compound this absurdity West’s highbrow Eurocentric education makes it necessary

for Black people and other's reality to be legitimate it must somehow be engaged with what Europeans considered evil and suffering when in fact the Europeans were sometimes themselves the source of their suffering and that of others. From both a humanist and African perspective, West's extremely bias analysis is the height of a western miseducation that refuses to allow others to define reality for themselves. True enlightenment scholars like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison created, supported, and promoted slavery in what West would call the absurd. What West has failed to realize is that Du Bois was busy dealing with the effects of the actual absurdity of enslavement which caused him to create a literary tradition that grappled with this existential evil. This West denies. In addition, Du Bois, according to West simply could not identify with everyday people and as such was not the authentic leader for the people. King the Apostle of Love suffered from sexism and on that score was eliminated. Malcolm X was the prophet of rage, not righteous indignation. But, undirected anger he was both a sexist and a homophobe with a truncate Black supremacist lending. These character flaws must be eliminated to qualify for the position of authentic Black leader. West argues "to be a jazz freedom fighter is to attempt to galvanize and energize world-weary people into forms of organization with accountable leadership that promotes critical exchange and broad reflection." (West: 1993 pg. 150) Guesses who emerges as the authentic leader—you got it—Cornel West. Who else? He alone is the racially authentic leader. He empathizes with feminist issues, he is not homophobic, he is trans-racial and harbors no hatred towards white people, he also promotes a race transcending philosophy and he is the penultimate Jazz freedom fighter. No need for critique the answer is transparent. What West fails to realize in promoting a Jazz freedom fighter is that White America has co-opted Jazz in the words of Langston Hughes "they have taken our jazz and gone." Consequently, Jazz no longer is considered an African- American creation but rather

an American creation short for White American. Likewise, a Jazz leader would be an equally compromised and co-opted leader of little or no use to the black community. What is a race transducer and how does an individual perform this trick of transcending one's race in the racist folds of White America? White people are the problem and they do not wish to transcend (get beyond or above) their whiteness. They are race obsessed therefore it does little good for the victims of racism to transcend if the racist has no desire to transcend their race. Could a person who transcends his race be called by another name—sell out? West should be ashamed. Du Bois taught us to embrace our race not transcend it. Yes, we are aware that race is a political and theoretical construction. Nevertheless, race in America is given substance and assigned societal value by white people. West's analysis is more self serving than scholarly. White America finds no real threat in his pseudo racial positions while it is apparent he aspires to be seen as brilliant by the dominant classes contrary to his announced Marxist views.

Part of his current anger with the Obama administration is that Obama has not accorded him the position and respect that he thinks he deserves. But, what West fails to realize is that he is not the only brilliant PhD or intellectually gifted person. President Obama is under no obligation to choose him as the representative intellectual of Black America. The vitriol that accompanies his current political analysis has the unique position of being fuelled by what West sees as Obamas' political slight even after West had campaigned for him he was not brought into Obamas' elite inner circle. West critiques of Du Bois became extremely superficial and some would argue mean spirited under the guise of speaking unvarnished truth to power. This is the difference between Du Bois and West. Du Bois was attempting to solve the race problem for Black people in particular and humanity in general. To the contrary, West is engaged in stimulatory rhetoric

rather than critical analysis of Dubois' massive scholarship and he is enraged because he has personally lost social prestige and money. Du Bois is the intellectual gold standard not West.

All Christians are commanded to love God and their neighbor. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37b-40) Thus, the teaching of Jesus established an inseparable link between spiritual faith and socio-political action. With God, the private and public spheres become synonymous. (Ivory: 2008 pg.73) King's private faith was elucidated by public action subsequently his commitment to rid the world of social evil began in 1948 while he attended Crozer Theological Seminary; a bastion of liberal theology. (King: 1958 pg. 91) "If one is truly devoted to the religion of Jesus he will seek to rid the earth of social evils. The gospel is social as well as personal."(117) Finally, King maintains:

"But a religion true to its nature must also be concerned about man's social conditions. Religion deals with both earth and heaven, both time and eternity. Religion operates not only on the vertical plane but also on the horizontal. It seeks not only to integrate men with men and each man with himself. This means, at bottom, that the Christian gospel is a two-way road. On the one hand it seeks to change the souls of men, and thereby unite them with God; on the other hand it seeks to change the environmental conditions of men so that the soul will have a chance after it is changed. Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry- as-dust religion. Such a religion is the kind the Marxist like to see—an opiate of the people." (36)

That Du Bois was engaged in this spiritual battle is without question and that he was a general in this war has been firmly established! He epitomized this struggle and gave his life to this Christian mission. "Du Bois' contemporaries approached him as scared figure an American prophet with insight into cosmic realities. To the Langston Hughes and Hallie Queens, (Cornell

student) Du Bois stood as a spiritual guide, and they repeatedly characterized him as a leader called by God.” (Blum: 2007 pg. 7) He led Black folks in massive public campaigns to obtain their human rights.

Du Bois’ emphasis continues to be on the spiritual, for the ‘Negro soul’ not his Negro skin, that the Negro, in Du Bois’ word, would not whiten or make devoid of color, i.e bleach. Whereas the latter would be less than a re/ shackling of the already luminal and oppressed black body, the former continues their loftier spiritual quest for liberation and freedom, body and spirit, their ‘flight/ towards light,’ begun at the moment of extirpation from Africa. In the face of a rush towards whiteness at the turn of the twentieth century, African-Americans held firm, wishing only to merge into a better and truer self. (Fontenot, Morgan & Gardner: 2001 pg. 63)

Du Bois questioned what others accepted. He defined this youthful period spent in church as being “very happy.” Du Bois felt himself to “be in his element.” It is only contemporary scholars that doubt Du Bois’ comfort in a Christian environment. It is as if enjoying black spirituality is somehow impossible for Du Bois. This position is nonsense. Du Bois does not need to be a fundamentalist Christian to enjoy church. In fact, my grandmother who was a fundamentalist Christian told me once after receiving communion and being told the story of Lot and his incest with his daughters that she did not believe a man could drink enough not to know he was having sex with his own daughters. After the preacher left our home she continued, “just because I did not say anything while the preacher was here does not mean I believe everything he says I got a mind of my own.” My grandmother at the time was on the mother board of our church. I was shocked! Similarly, when Du Bois relates stories of his inquisitiveness during Sunday school discussions where he says “in the weekly Sunday school, we studied the bible with its tales of the impossible but I remember distinctly that I questioned the validity of them, like the story of Jonah.” (Zuckerman: 2000 pg. 5) Contrary to Arnold Rampersad’s analysis Du Bois’ early questioning does not in any way destabilize his Christianity rather it affirms his intellectual superiority as well as his moral integrity which would help to establish him as a

spiritually gifted leader during his life. Certainly more questions would arise later as an undergraduate at Fisk as Lewis says, he abandoned the organized church. The young Du Bois would realize that white folks manipulated Christianity like they tampered with and abused Black people. He early concluded that white people were as a collective morally corrupt with few exceptions. White America was a spiritually bankrupt society. This religious corruption caused Du Bois to rethink his position on the organized church. He maintained in *The World and Africa*, "Religion became organized in social clubs where well-bred people met in luxurious churches and gave alms to the poor. On Sundays they listened to sermons---"Blessed are the meek"; " Do unto others even as you would that others do unto you"; "If thine enemy smite thee, turn the other cheek"; "It is more blessed to give than to receive"--- listened and acted as though they read , as in very truth they ought to have read ---"Might is right" ; "Do others before they do you"; "Kill your enemies or be kill"; "Make profits by any methods and at any cost...."(Du Bois: 1965 pg. 24) According to Du Bois, this was a fair picture of the religious decadence of nineteenth century Europe and could be extended to twentieth century American religion. But, abandoning organized religion is not abandoning God which Lewis implies. The two are mutually exclusive. Lewis allows Du Bois very little space for spiritual growth without severe judgment, "constructing the myth of Imperial Self that he believed his people needed in order to take themselves as seriously as he took himself. This was his ego's learning decade, the ten or more years when the life and destiny of Africans in America merged inseparably with his own. But the transformation, though remarkably quick and thorough, proceeded unevenly and, occasionally, even faltered. It took Du Bois time and considerable effort to become himself." (Lewis: 1993, pg.81)

The critiques made by 20th and 21st century Black scholars of Du Bois are more personal than constructive. These scholars often share a singular perspective relative to Du Bois' spirituality which is he was agnostic and metaphysically alienated managing to separate Du Bois from his spiritual legacy. For example Lewis takes liberty by referring to Du Bois as "Willie" which he was known by his family and townspeople which Lewis is neither. This is the kind of liberty that initially suggests that Du Bois is going to get a fair and balanced evaluation. Reality shatters this expectation. Du Bois is candid regarding his family's poverty and that he and his mother live in a "homely, cozy cottage, with a living room, a tiny sitting room, a pantry, and two attic bed rooms." (Moon: 1972 pp. 40-43) Poverty was Du Bois' life-long enemy as it has been for many scholars; if not most. The universe sent him into the world extremely poor. And if this were not bad enough, she furnished him with an analytical mind and a penchant for truth telling, a family to support; a love of knowledge and black skin in racist white America. Certainly, a worse set of circumstances is nearly incomprehensible. (Rogers: 1972 pp. 438-439) Lewis's critique of Du Bois is literally going to bring into question his relationship with his mother whom he lived with for the first seventeen (1868- 1884) years of his life. Marable complains about Lewis's vicious and unprofessional analysis citing "the most disturbing feature of Lewis's biography is his psychosexual analysis of Du Bois. He dismisses conclusions reached by others that Du Bois' high regard for women, especially for black women, was rooted in his respect for his mother. Such analysis is unworthy of a otherwise perceptive and revealing study." (Marable: 1986 pg. xxxviii) Lewis sees her death as "liberating" to "young Willie". He makes remarks regarding Du Bois' father that are unnecessary and equally unprofessional. For example Lewis says of Du Bois' father, "it is virtually certain that he committed bigamy when he and Mary Silvina Burghardt presented themselves to be married by Reverend Amos E. Lawrence in February

1867.” Du Bois’ father either was or was not married when he wedded Du Bois’ mother. Which is it? But there is no need to cast ethical doubt and speculate negatively about Alfred Du Bois’ character simply because Lewis’ research is not definitive on this issue. Why mention this issue? But, without facts Lewis negatively speculates. In addition, he calls Alfred Du Bois a “moral chameleon”. “Maybe a stint as a physician (only a step up from barbering then), perhaps the bagging of a rich widow...” In Lewis’s own words, “No evidence having been found to substantiate any of these plausible speculations.” Why speculate negatively regarding a Black man’s character who was denigrated during his life (by white society) time unless that is the point. This is the sort of fiction that those who would destroy Du Bois love to reward. (Lewis: 1993 pg.22- 23) These contemporary scholars praise Du Bois in public while privately they hold him in contempt for his courageousness intellectual gifts and his selfless dedication to Black people.

“As crucial as she is to Willie Du Bois’ life, Mary Silvina is never more than a shaded figure, hovering, always approaching, but never to be beheld in the high noon of abundant evidence.” (23) When Du Bois could hardly remember someone he was honest about it. For example, ‘I dimly remember my grandfather, Othello, or Uncle Tallow’ (Moon: 1972 pg 41). Du Bois lived with his mother 17 years and she was not a “shaded figure” but rather she was a major figure in his life. Only to a biographer writing nearly a century after her death does she become a shady figure. But, to her son, she was real and he held her in his loving memory. Du Bois’ mother was also crippled by “a paralytic stroke that impaired her left leg or, arm or both.” ‘Willie was always a little surprised because people said how nice I was to mother.’ I just grew up that way. We were “companions,” said he, pure and simple. Willie “got the idea that anything I did displeased her, then I just didn’t do it, that’s all.” (Lewis: 1993 pg.29-30) To suggest otherwise is to do

violence to the affection that her son obviously felt for his mother. Du Bois' impressions of his mother are contrary to Lewis' commentary on her. Du Bois saw his mother as, "dark shining bronze, with a tiny ripple in her black hair; black-eyed, with a heavy, kind face. She gave one the impression of infinite patience, but a curious determination was concealed in her softness." (Walden: 1972 p. 41) Lewis absolutely denies that Du Bois' mother was determined but rather he insists that she was "rebellious." This adjective rebelliousness is a hint about her first child as being illegitimate which he takes great pain to prove. This is unnecessary, mean-spirited, sexist and puritanical. Lewis insistence on exposing every detail of Du Bois' life and then coloring it with his own personal bias is problematic. He is fictionalizing Du Bois in the name of historical biography so that we get a distorted picture of who Du Bois actually was and one that favors his most biased historical research. In fact, Lewis not only insinuates that Du Bois' mother was a burden he implies that Du Bois was relieved when she died. Lewis seems to be fascinated with Du Bois' relationships with women. He tends to dismiss Du Bois' understanding and love for his mother for his own particular brand of callousness. On this score, Lewis impugns Du Bois' reputation as a scholar in the forefront of scholars who were pro women Lewis hints that Du Bois might have been a rapist when he maintains, "frequently enough, Du Bois overreached himself, abusing the trust of young women who placed themselves in his hands out of innocent admiration." (Lewis: 2000 p. 186) Where are the footnotes and the statements from these young women to prove such a scathing accusation? Finally, to put the nail in the coffin of Du Bois' sexual philandering he gives us a quote from Anne Cooke who says "he never made me feel inferior." He follows with an undocumented source saying "he was very well hung." How on earth does this have any literary or scholarly value? Do we know whether Arnold Toynbee or Shakespeare was well-hung? Nor do we need or care to know? How is this relevant? It is clear

then that the picture that Lewis is presenting is not one that is acceptable to white people who care to know every detail of famous Black people lives. For example, to insure these facts are negatively employed they took naked pictures of Michael Jackson's genital area—this goes too far but not in the estimation of Lewis and white mainstream. Lewis has brought Du Bois down to size.

By November 15, 1968 in a *Time* article entitled, *Is God Black?* Dr. James Cone informs us that the term *Black Theology* is coined. (Cone: 1984 p. 19) But one of the primary scholars who engineered what would later be referred to as Black Theology was Du Bois in his literary classic *The Souls of Black Folks*. Du Bois was a seminal scholar who constructed his prose using strong biblical and spiritual concepts. Du Bois has been separated from his biblical roots and spiritual lyricism by contemporary scholars who refuse to see the whole man but rather pigeon-holes him as a secular scholar. Lewis is a primary architect of this contemporary secular reframing of Du Bois' legacy. In his *W.E.B. Du Bois Reader* he makes some very curious as well as false statements about Du Bois. For instance, "the appearance of Martin Luther King, Jr., therefore, was something of an enigma for Du Bois...an agnostic and anticlerical Du Bois admitted that he had expected to live to see many things, but never a militant Baptist preacher." (11) Du Bois had a healthy respect and relationships with clergymen as evidenced by Alexander Crummell whom he most respected and who he said, "instinctively I bowed before this man, as one bows before the prophets of the world" proving his respect for clergy. (Du Bois: 1979 p. 216) Crummell "believed that sanctification revealed itself in social service." In fact, he taught authentic Christianity was public service through excellent character, "No, my brethren, what our Lord desires is... religion made personal in the Christian life, act, word, conduct, and bearing of living disciples." (Williams: 1973 pg.11) Hence, a true believer in Christ had to live their

convictions not just profess them. The idea of democracy was good, for it sprang from the “idea of Christian brotherhood. (16) For Crummell, Christian character was the bedrock that would save the soul of America and “it is the few who lift and bear the burden and give character to the many” (16) I have mention these truisms of Crummell’s to elucidate the fact that Du Bois was one of his most famous and loyal disciples. He internalized and personified these principles the most important of which was a belief in God based on Christian principles. At bottom, Du Bois believed that God ruled the world. Du Bois saw his singular dedication to Black and African uplift as something that he would later emulate in his own work. “A voice and vision called him to be a priest, --a seer to lead the uncalled out of the house of bondage.” (Du Bois: 1979 p. 219) And a similar voice would call Du Bois to continue this leadership. Du Bois at age twenty-five makes what he calls a “Sacrifice to the Zeitgeist” which means literally a surrendering to the spirit of the times. Du Bois accepts the call. How ironic Du Bois “dedicated himself to the search for scientific “Truth,” the “cold and indisputable” research that was necessary to advance the interests of all black people...Nothing would deter him from the challenge, and neither “Heaven nor Hell, God nor Devil shall turn me from my purpose till I die.” (Marable 19)

Du Bois admired great preachers and teachers. Crummell (an ordained Episcopal preacher), and Bishop Daniel Payne for whom he had great respect. It is by carefully and consciously leaving out the tremendous effect that these clergymen had on the young Du Bois that we can in the 21st century argue with certainty that Du Bois had a spirituality that was deeply rooted in African-American liberation tradition. He lived his sermons as his spiritual mentor Crummell suggested that he do.

Even, Herbert Aptheker, the Marxist, conceded this point when he said, “Personally...Du Bois never lost a certain sense of religiosity, of some possible supernatural creative force.” while at the same time he maintained that Du Bois was agnostic. (Aptheker: 1980 pg. viii) Du Bois cannot be an agnostic (not know if there is a God) and affirm God simultaneously. Which is it? Du Bois believed in God he simply did not give lip service to his faith like many Americans do. He decided to give a life time of authentic public service to his belief. Crummell, his mentor, had said that Christ wanted a life of service and this would serve as a final sermon and justify one’s life. Deeds and duty, not vain boast of Christianity which was never practiced, was Du Bois’ motto.

Contrary to Lewis’ projection, “Neither the god of Moses nor the redeeming Christ appears to have spoken deeply to Mary Silvina’s brainy, self-absorbed son.” (Lewis: 1993 p. 50) On April 13, 1892 Du Bois was awarded a \$750 scholarship to do Ph.D. work in Europe. President Hayes would write in his diary upon reflecting on the character of Du Bois, “[I am] very glad to find that he is sensible, sufficiently religious, able and a fair speaker.” (127) Hayes actually met Du Bois as a graduate student. Lewis is only projecting backwards his own sentiments which are sufficiently biased. People who met Du Bois could detect his sincerity relative to his religion. Lewis does not connect Du Bois to spirituality in anyway. Biographers like Lewis participate in burying Du Bois’ spirituality under a mountain of political and social commentary “but the spirit in his works and life could not be contained. If one looks for religion in Du Bois’ life and times, it seems ubiquitous.” (Blum 221) He was thoroughly familiar with the fact that the radical preachers had grown out of the Baptist and Methodist traditions. He supported and attended church how these points are negated is simply incredible. Further, Lewis’ conception of King’s assessment of “W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of leadership was just as severe when he wrote in

Stride Toward Freedom that it was “a tactic for an aristocratic elite who would themselves be benefitted while leaving behind the “untalented’ 90 per cent.” (Lewis: 1995 p. 11) When Lewis quotes *Stride Toward Freedom*, however, we are given no footnote or any other indication of the specific place from which this quote derived. This raised questions in my mind as to whether or not the statement was true. I had read King’s book in its entirety while attending Harvard’s Divinity School and I could not remember if there were any Du Bois references or quotes. I scanned my copy of *Stride* to see if I could locate any but I could not find any quotes. Therefore, I resolved with great reluctance to reread the entire book again. After rereading all 224 pages of my first edition copy, I can say with certainty that there was not a paragraph, a phrase, nor sentence, not a word, or whisper about Du Bois in the whole of the text. This is a completely false. My discovery is consistent with Blum and Marable who have realized that Lewis falsifies, misquotes and dismisses conclusions reached by other scholars. (Blum: 2007 p. 250) (Marable: 1986 p. xxxviii) Lewis’ arguments about Du Bois are subtle and invective. He lacks the courageousness of being forthright.

Lewis is engaged in what African centered scholars call *slave rebellion reporting (researching)* which essentially is a negative report about the African to the master or in this case the dominate culture. Lewis and other contemporary scholars are now the new overseers. Under the cloak of biographies in what is supposed to be presented as a holistic or humanizing process major American African figures are assaulted. These biographers are revealing personal habits and shortcomings to show the humanity of their subject. In reality, they are confirming the negative ideas and stereotypes of white America of these major Black people exposing and dehumanizing the very people they are supposed to be celebrating. There has been a series of these negative

biographies of such greats as Duberman's *Paul Robeson*, Marable's *Malcolm X* and of course Lewis' *Du Bois*. These biographies seek to locate weaknesses in these subjects and discredit them placing these historical figures in precarious situations that welcomes ridicule and lowers the stature of these noble historical figures diminishing their legacy.

When Lewis speaks about "a Du Boisan racialism that has profoundly influenced the ideas of contemporary Afrocentrists" he diminishes Du Bois positive pro Black position. (Lewis 15) Contrary to what Lewis and his secular contemporaries believe Black Nationalism is not the opposite of white nationalism with its roots planted firmly in mass Black lynching and national violence. Black Nationalism has no similar history and all scholars know better. Black nationalists have been pro self defense but the constitution is equally on the side of self defense. Black Nationalists are for the community without being anti-white. Those who know the history know this to be true. But, Lewis and West fail to mention this because it does not serve their purpose. Black organizations that do not publicly proclaim their nonviolence are painted with the wide brush of violence mongers. This is a distortion. This language completely negates the virulent white supremacy of the 19th and 20th centuries. And when Du Bois defines God in Black and feminine terms he is actually engaged in empowering the people who have been dispossessed.

In a word, Du Bois and those who write in his alternative tradition are balancing a universe that racism has unbalanced. This was American apartheid the caste system that dominated the American landscape for centuries that according to anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells more than 10,000 American Africans were lynched between 1865 and 1900. (Blum: 2007 p. 142)

African American scholars became self conscious enough not to accept the world according to Eurocentric ideas and white supremacy. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folks* deciphered the hieroglyphs of modernity. (Fontenot, Morgan, Gardner: 2001 pg.27) From a healthy Christian point of view this is positive. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28) This oneness in Christ afforded Du Bois to paint God in Black and sometimes in female terms. Thus, the white middle class man was not the center of the universe. They the invisible Black oppressed were a part of the world too. Although they could claim oneness with whites in Christ Black people knew that this did not entail political and social equality and they were not perceived as equal in Christ. This has been part of the political march to obtain social equality. So long as the bible has been viewed as a keeper of the status quo by whites this is how long Blacks have had to fight for the social and political. In scriptures such passages as Ephesians 6:5 which states, "slave obey your master" the biblical culture itself propagated the racism and oppression that made Blacks unequal that was evident in the culture. This is why Du Bois would inevitably challenge religious dogma and the culture of white supremacy.

Du Bois reminded everybody in the world and Africa that Africans have played a major role in human events. The condition of the world cannot be properly explained without Africa's inclusion. Dr. Cain Hope Felder, biblical scholar, observations in his introduction to *The Original African Heritage Bible* (1993) are instructive to this discussion. He makes clear that Biblical distortions prevent African- Americans from making historical connections. The origin of (a particular people and a "particular God") has been shrouded in the mysteries of the various versions and translations of the Bible (especially the King James Version) for many years...due,

in part, to the misinterpretation of those who rendered the original translations from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, English, and other languages In the period between the fourth century and the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europe recast the entire Bible into a saga of European people. And their interpretation has been accepted as fact by the Western world. Readers today must understand that in biblical times “Africa” included much of what European maps have come to call the “Middle East.” Remember, Africa is actually of Latin origin and was imposed on that great continent by European explorers. (34) The white supremacists have invested much intellectual capital and money in giving Black folks an inadequate and incorrect perception of themselves. This is the purposeful misreading of history that Du Bois launched his positive alternative propaganda campaign for Black people. Du Bois realized that the Black historical narrative had been disenfranchised and degraded. The nineteenth century hatred of African-Americans was so virulent that Black folks were inculcating this disdain for everything black. As an African-American sage Du Bois hammered away at the twin demons Black suffering and white America’s denigration of Africans degraded America contrary to the popular belief of its time. (28) Lewis argues that Du Bois and Afrocentrists who followed in his alternative tradition are guilty of racism is absurd. Du Bois was not a racist nor are Afrocentrists. Lewis is aligning himself with white supremacy and the powerful unlike biblical Daniel who refused to side with the king and defile himself with his rich food and wine. Lewis and contemporary scholars are comfortable aiding and abetting the status quo position. White scholars tended “to minimize Du Bois’ legacy, they questioned the value and even the legitimacy of the bulk of his scholarship; they ridiculed Du Bois’ various political and tactical shifts and oscillations, between reformist integrationist and black nationalism; and they

criticized his austere personality as cold, aloof, and isolated from genuine human interaction and social contacts.” (Marable: 1986 p. xiv)

King who very few would question his spirituality went through a similar phase of spiritual growth and began to question the fundamentalist teachings of the church by shocking his Sunday school class at the age of 13 by denying the physical resurrection of Jesus. He is not considered an atheist today. In fact, by many, King is seen as a prophet and one of the most spiritual people that America has ever produced. Similarly, Gandhi according to Fischer did not like “the glitter and pomp of Hindu temples.” He had no “living faith in God.” And the elders could not answer and the sacred books were unsatisfactory who made the world and who directed it which led Gandhi, “somewhat toward atheism.” Gandhi had an anti-religious outlook for years.

Nevertheless he has emerged as a saint from India. His skepticism did not keep him from becoming the Mahatma or the Great Soul. Finally, Mother Teresa is seen as a saint by many nationally and internationally. Mother Teresa’s atheism was not merely episodic it was permanent which is probably why she requested that her personal writings be burned after her death. Nevertheless, in spite of her permanent monumental doubt she continued to serve India’s poor who literally were Christ for her. Small wonder, she has been blessed by the Pope and put on the fast track of the Catholic Church to become a saint. Nevertheless, Mark Phillips, a CBS news correspondent released letters that revealed Mother Teresa’s secret. Her secret was that she had atheistic thoughts and doubted God’s existence. "What do I labor for?" she asked in one letter. "If there be no God, there can be no soul. If there be no soul then, Jesus, You also are not true." According to her letters, Mother Teresa died with her doubts. She had even stopped praying, she once said. But the church would appear to be judging Mother Teresa by Matthews 25:35-36 which says when I was hungry you gave me food...I was a stranger and you welcomed

me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me... By her deeds and living out the words of Jesus she is on her way to sainthood in the Catholic Church. Not because of her human frailties and her theological doubts rather because of her service to humanity in spite of those doubts. Why then is Du Bois alone being crucified for his theological questioning? Marable further affirms Du Bois' spirituality by maintaining "Du Bois remained throughout his life a harsh critic of Western Christianity, but he retained a deep spiritual identification with the radical, messianic tradition of black faith." (Marable: 1986 pg. 31) It appears that some of the greatest spiritual people have been the ones who question both society and God most while serving both with an exemplary life. In this regard, Du Bois was not alone.

Articles by West which framed Du Bois not as the prophet he was, but rather as enlightenment scholar who was not in tune with the religious sentiment of Black people is problematic. And of course, Du Bois' 1961 membership in the Communist party certainly did not help. However, this reasoning is an extremely superficial analysis of a very spiritual and engaged scholar who many considered an American African prophet during his life. A cursory review of *the Souls of Black Folk* connects us at once with Du Bois' intense love affair with Black people and his connection to the Christian tradition. For example in his concluding words in his forethought he says, "And, finally, need I add that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil?" This passage alludes to Genesis 2:23 (comes from the P or Priestly tradition of the documentary source material written about 550 BCE) which reads as follows: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man" (See Genesis 2:23, Genesis 29:14; 2 Samuel 5:1) In our Christian tradition this is the penultimate statement in marriage and partnership. This scripture flesh of my flesh bone of my bone is considered one of the most sacred in the western Christian

tradition. This lyrical bible phrase not only connects Du Bois to Black folks it identifies him as one who “feels the pain” of those within the veil. He and they were synonymous. This scripture creates genetics where there is none. This statement of biblical Adam makes Eve his wife and closest relative. This confers both the highest legal and moral status on Eve—Adam’s spouse brought to him and fashioned by God. In the western Christian tradition this is the beginning of family. Du Bois’ love affair with Black folks and his familiarity with the Hebrew scripture and his political and social dedication to Black liberation causes him to willingly make the ultimate commitment to Black people by literally marrying himself to African-American culture and its people and he never in his long life seeks a divorce. He also connects himself to the Black church and maintains that he will not allow himself to be read out of the “Episcopal church ... For four generations my family has belong to this church and I belong to it, not by personal choice, not because I feel myself welcome within its portals, but simply because I refuse to be read outside of a church which is mine by inheritance and service of my fathers.” (Zuckerman: 2000 pg. 88) He accepts his position as a Black man and scholar within the messianic spiritual tradition of his people. That today he has been secularized and read out of the Black prophetic and spiritual traditions by those who ought to have known better is blasphemous.

We must remember and never lose sight of the fact that Du Bois was born in 1868 five years after the end of the enslavement period. His early life reflects the height of white America’s political, social and economic colonization. Authors like Charles Carroll who wrote *The Negro a Beast* and Thomas Dixon’s who penned *The Clansman* represented the white supremacist spirit of the times. Du Bois grew up during the restoration of white supremacy in the south and it’s near universal acceptance in America. He witnessed the rise and fall of the populist movement. The political silence of President Theodore Roosevelt on lynching and the wooing of white

supremacist democrats, the re-segregation in Washington under the so-called progressivism of President Woodrow Wilson, World War I, Red Summer which followed it, the rise of Russia, a silly 'return to normalcy' under Pres. Harding, 'Keep Cool with Cal,' Hoover's ineptitude hastened the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt's inadequate New Deal, Truman's attempts to make civil rights meaningful for Negroes, Eisenhower's lackluster support of Black civil rights and Kennedy's forced political support of Freedom Riders because of extreme violence committed by white people, thus, Du Bois' prophecy at the London conference in 1900, that 'the problem of the "Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line."' Against this most hostile spirit Black preachers preached an alternative biblical message of liberation based on the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ. God they insisted was commander of history; and white folks who falsely believed they controlled both history and the world were wrong. They like pharaoh's army would ultimately be crushed and defeated and the oppressed and marginalized would be liberated. God will guard the feet of his faithful ones but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the lord shall be broken into pieces....(1 Samuel 2:9:10) This was Black folks hope and faith. (Swift: 1989 pg.7)

Black ministry was in no way idle during this mean-spirited and hate-filled time. Black preachers and Black folk initiated journals, started partition campaigns, mutual aid and insurance societies, had state conventions and legislated and lobbied the government for their rights. When they were not seeking legal redress they held prayer meetings and ultimately participated in physical rebellions. This rebellion was based on scripture that affirmed the Mosaic tradition that physical violence was part of the plan of liberation for the children of Israel. For example, Joshua 11:6 says, "And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their horses, and burn their

chariots with fire.” These were indeed busy times. Before and after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 Black people were fighting back. Fredrick Douglas “uttered sanguinary threats: “We must be prepared ...to see the streets of Boston running with blood...” (Painter: 1996 p. 133) Du Bois who would inherit the mantle of protest from men like Frederick Douglass, Nathaniel Paul, Samuel Cornish, Charles Ray, Henry Highland Garnet, Amos G. Beaman, and James W. C. Pennington who would use biblical language to fight the national evil of slavery. Biblical lyricism that can be found abundantly in Du Bois’ prose was thought to aid in the fighting of the entrenched evil of slavery in the American political structure. It was by no accident but rather specifically used for the uplift of the enslaved. Not only did these warriors, including Du Bois use the language they believed in it and persevered in all aspects including a foundational belief in God. (9-12) These Black abolitionists and freedom fighters were fully aware that, “none have suffered so much [as we] from the hands of people professing the Christian name.” (31) These profound words of Samuel Cornish became a mantra for Du Bois in his protest writings in the *Crisis*. Cornish was his prototype and he critiqued American religion most severely for, “he knew well, as did all other black activists of the time that enslavement was the primary evil for American blacks—the essence of white oppression.” (34) Du Bois always the wordsmith like Cornish before him perfected the language of white reformers and assured the white community that some Black people lived by the highest principles of Christianity. (31-32)

Du Bois as a Victorian was not perfect nor are any of us. He said he was shy but many read this as being aloof, callous or snobbish. Du Bois’ shyness made it difficult for him to form friendships. We all have clay feet and in the words of the character Lena Younger (Mama) of Lorraine Hansberry’s play, *A Raisin in the Sun* where she tells her family, “When you starts measuring somebody, measure him *right*, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken

into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is...”

(Nemiroff 39) Finally, there must be a reevaluation of Du Bois’ spirituality and religion although he clearly in his growth was not a fundamentalist nor were King or Douglass nevertheless Du Bois was not without faith. He simply defined spirituality differently than the dominant culture. This abuse of Du Bois’ spirituality has essentially led to a total misunderstanding of both his scholarship and his person. I disagree in particular with West’s artificial and superficial and strained efforts to make Du Bois a Victorian elitist and enlightenment scholar in the most negative sense. West gives the academy and Du Bois’ education too much credit for his intellectual development without regard to his Black influences such as Crummell, Douglass and most of all ancient biblical tradition. This is also done with King by white scholars regarding his intellectual development in the Black church. Dr. Mays, Daddy King and the Black community’s influence are almost never mentioned in favor of his education from Boston University, his white teachers, colleagues and friends which are accredited with his academic growth. Although West is sensitive to the Black church’s major contribution to King’s intellectual development he is tragically insensitive to the fact that Du Bois was in touch with the theological condition and ancient Israel that promoted a God of liberation not the ancient tradition of dominance that promoted a God of the status quo. Du Bois challenged the Euro-centered perspective as much as any prior scholar. In fact, he taught those of us who have come after him not to measure ourselves by western standards. West fails to afford Du Bois the independence of mind that he bequeathed to all black scholars. These mistakes are common among white scholars, but for a scholar of West’s caliber this kind of error is suspicious. West appears to be deliberately framing Du Bois as an elitist in order to impugn his character. Du Bois was not trapped by the convention of Victorian and enlightenment sexism and mores. It has been

firmly established in Du Bois' scholarship that he fought for both women rights and average people before it was politically correct. Similarly, He had problems with the limitation of Marxism as he felt that racism impeded the unity of Black and white laborers. Du Bois always maintained the right to think for himself and Black people that's why these efforts to stereotype him are extremely problematic. West's examples are contrived and sophomoric. West like Mary Helen Washington is using the perceived defects of an era to dismantle Du Bois' legacy, "hence, rhetoric becomes a substitute for critical analysis... and serious reading"

Du Bois never denied God or the metaphysical as did many rationalists. Du Bois was never metaphysically alienated as many enlightenment scholars were unlike those with whom West would categorize him. Du Bois was always a Du Boisian. He always was an independent thinker. West in his stereotyping of Du Bois tends to ignore this dominant factor in his character. For example, a young John Henrik Clark met Du Bois as an older man and Du Bois was impressed with Clark's ability to recall and recite passages of history from memory. Clark informed Du Bois that he had been self-taught for the most part and did not have a college degree. Du Bois repeated, "you do not have a college degree?" He seemed amazed but this ought not have been an amazing fact to Du Bois because one of his cultural heroes Frederick Douglass had no formal education either and he had a similar ability. He knew Harlem's autodidact Hubert Henry Harrison a genius by general consensus. Du Bois knew that American-Africans produced organic intellectuals like Clark, Harrison and Douglas without a college degree. Nevertheless, he seemed dumbfounded by Clark. Du Bois like other Victorians fell into the trap of believing that intellectually gifted individuals were college trained. In addition he felt that he had a personal duty to instruct the masses of Africans in correct behavior. This was arrogance but it was not Du Bois' alone. It was partly Victorian Europe's mode of operation. In the *Souls of Black Folk* he

would argue that Blacks knew little of life. Although this statement may have contained a grain of truth it was not the total truth. Blacks knew much of American life and suffering. Blacks were disbarred from learning about much that was positive in American life because of segregation and slavery.

Du Bois' youth was peopled and consumed with white and European iconography of biblical characters and the greatness of the great white race. Nevertheless in what some might call a fluke of nature and what many Blacks would call an act of God was born a boy who would challenge this white supremacy in every conceivable dimension. With apocalyptic bitterness--- Du Bois once again showed himself to be the incomparable mediator of the wounded souls of Black people. In its original form, his earlier essay hissed with the fury of a tightly clamped pressure cooker over a building flame, as Du Bois, "high in the tower, above 'the loud complaining of the human sea, mocked the arrogance that cause his and his people's historic trouble – this modern European discovery of 'personal whiteness' as the supreme virtue. A two- hundred-year-old dogma of stupendous fraudulence was well on the way to supplanting Christianity, humanity, and democracy, said Du Bois, as he and other colored men and women had it drummed into their heads that whiteness is ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!" (Lewis: 2000 p.13) Du Bois would be uniquely qualified for this challenge. Du Bois is one of the few African American who had earned not only one PhD from Harvard which incidentally he would comment, "was his constellation prize"(Lewis: 1993 p. 4) he would later have conferred on him November 3, 1958 with his first doctorate which the Rector remarked before conferment, "Records of this student's work have been preserved here. We have taken them out and carefully studied them. These records reveal the depth of this student's promise" Thus bestowing upon him his first doctorate degree. The Germans actually used Du Bois' brilliance against him. He finished his PhD work

early. The racist Germans said that he had not spent enough time in residence. This would cause Du Bois to cancel a planned vacation and reapply to the Slater Foundation for more funding. He was denied the additional funding and being poor he could not raise the money for another semester of study to fulfill a residence requirement that was being strictly enforced to deny Du Bois his first earned doctorate. It should be noted that contrary to the labeling of the picture of the confirmation in Graham's pictorial biography this is not conferring of an honorary degree. Marable was also misled when he labels the ceremony honorary. The position that this doctorate was honorary is false. It was in fact his earned doctorate which had been denied. This special ceremony bestowed upon him "was a doctorate of Economics for matriculating at the university in the past century." Du Bois' response was simply "today you have fulfilled one of the highest ambitions of my young manhood," thus bringing his academic career full circle at 92 years old. (Graham: 1978 p. 120)

Du Bois' biography on John Brown legitimizes John Brown and discounts him being considered a law breaker and a murderer as he is seen in Western culture. Du Bois argues "that temporal laws were subordinate to a transcendent moral law, which was the ultimate foundation for the politics of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr." (Marable: 1986 p. 66) Although, West identifies with King and his methods, when Du Bois uses similar techniques West argues for Du Bois' spiritual alienation which was not the case. Rather, Du Bois constructed his spirituality based in African conception that Europeans (like the one's suggested by West) were not the spiritual example but they were instead closer to the devil as a group. West has truly lost his way.

Additionally, West creates a political straw man argument against Du Bois' Talented Tenth position when he charges that it was a Victorian concept. He continually uses the fact that Du

Bois had an elite education during the Victorian age as a weapon against him. Du Bois' Talented Tenth argument may have had a high-brow origin but Du Bois would apply this idea in a communalistic fashion. Moreover, by 1948, he not only revised his construction of the 'Talented Tenth,' but he also reframed and restated it into a position he termed the 'Guiding Hundredth,' which he presented in his 'The Talented Tenth Memorial Address. "Du Bois was eighty years old and acknowledged that he designed the Talented Tenth Theory based on information available up to the end of the nineteenth century base on his false assumption that with knowledge, sacrifice would automatically follow. Du Bois was a young scholar of thirty-five when he developed the idea of the 'Talent Tenth.' Blaming 'youth and idealism" Du Bois says, "I did not realize that selfishness is even more natural than sacrifice...Du Bois argued that expert knowledge of economics should be acquired to affect Negroes. Basic to his plans success "would be its willingness to sacrifice and plan for such economic revolution in industry and just distribution of wealth, as would make the rise of our people possible." (Fontenot, Morgan & Gardner: 2001 p. 88) At age eighty-three Du Bois actually rejected the Talented Tenth notion in his book, *In Battle for Peace* where he laments, "The intelligentsia, the "Talented Tenth," the successful business and professional men, were not for the most part, outspoken in our defense..." (75-76) invariably concluding that, "naturally, out of the mass of the working classes, who know life and its bitter struggle, will continually rise the real, unselfish and clear-sighted leadership." (77)

West utilizes the Talented Tenth argument published in 1903 as if Du Bois never rejected or reframed the idea. West does not inform us that Du Bois changed his mind on this subject: 1) he does not know it (which argues for his incompetence which West is not) or 2) it does not match his political purpose for proving Du Bois as a snobbish, elite, enlightenment scholar. Given this

political manipulation of Du Bois' scholarship it's clear that West is in his own words, "too hungry for status to be angry, too eager for acceptance to be bold, too self-invested in advancement to be defiant. And when [he does] drop [his] mask and try to get mad (usually in the presence of black audiences), [his] bold rhetoric is more performance than personal, more play-acting than heartfelt. (West: 1993 p. 58) West is duplicitous, sophisticated and brilliant. He attacks Du Bois subtly while praising him publicly. He praises Du Bois as a titan intellectual and "The brook of fire" that we must all cross to be true intellectuals and then proceeds to dismantle his spiritual legacy.

Conversely, he has written one of the most scandalous articles in Dr. Gate's and Dr. Appiah's, *Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. The mean-spiritedness of his diatribe is only matched by its cowardice. It takes an enormous amount of patience to wade through this article and witness the half-true ideas and attacks on both Du Bois' scholarship and personal character. For example, West's attack on Du Bois' spirituality speaks as if Du Bois was disconnected from the masses which he was not because he lived among the Black people of the seventh ward in Philadelphia with his new bride in 1896. When he wrote his classic *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois stated, "We lived there a year, in the midst of an atmosphere of dirt, drunkenness, poverty and crime. Murder sat on our doorsteps..." (Du Bois: 1967 p. xix) West manufactures an aloofness that did not exist in reality Du Bois was aware of the suffering of Black people because he shared their suffering. He was a participant observer of the society he carefully studied. Du Bois saw the role of the elites' differently than his Victorian contemporaries. West obscures and rejects this fact which takes for granted that the reader has no knowledge of Du Bois' scholarship in this area where Du Bois maintains "...the first duty of an upper class is to serve the lowest classes." (xxvii) Certainly, Du Bois' position was unique in his

time and in our time the socially elite do not see themselves as servants of the people. West and his contemporary scholars cannot square this with snobbery and being estranged from the masses. Nevertheless, according to West, Du Bois was estranged from Black folks. “But he didn’t feel it in his bones deeply enough, nor was he intellectually open enough to position himself alongside the sorrowful, suffering, yet striving ordinary black folk. Instead, his own personal and intellectual distance lifted him above them... Du Bois’ inability to immerse himself in black everyday life precludes his access to the distinctive black tragic-comic sense and black encounter with the absurd” (Appiah & Gates: 1999 p. 1967)

Nonsense. This is West’s vulgar fabrication of Du Bois as a stereotypical western scholar. Du Bois took no refuge in the social laboratory removed from the daily struggle of his people according to Marable. For example Sam Hose, a friend of Du Bois who was crucified in Atlanta and his knuckles placed on display. Du Bois lamented, “one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved.” (Marable:1986 p. xi) This is feeling Black pain. Du Bois further argues in *Souls*, “A people thus handicapped ought not be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems”(Du Bois: 1979 p.9) Contrary to West’s position Du Bois used his elite education in the service of the masses. He counterbalanced the European manifest destiny, ethnocentric perspective.

Du Bois spoke in what abolitionist and role model Samuel Cornish called “Thunder Tone” fighting the dual evils of slavery and race prejudice. (Swift: 1989 pg .84) Comparatively, Du Bois would fight segregation in the church and in American civilization. Hypocrisy is what Du Bois was against and not Christianity. When he posits, “It is painfully true that White Christianity has in the twentieth century been curiously discredited The leading nations

representing His (Jesus') religion have been murdering, maiming and hurting each other on a scale unprecedented in the history of mankind into the White Church of Christ race prejudice has crept to such an extent it is openly recognized.... And is considered the natural and normal thing.... These facts do not impugn Christianity but they do make terrible commentary upon the failure of its white followers. (Zuckerman: 2000 p.11) In fact, there can be a linear line drawn from Douglass' critique of the slaveholding religions and Du Bois' critique of Christian dogma. Douglass in the appendix of his autobiography further elaborates, "What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the *slaveholding religion* of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper: for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ I recognize the widest possible difference..." (Douglass 155) Douglass' critique of American white religious hypocrisy is nothing less than scathing. He points out the contradictions in slaveholders' Christianity and the reality of genuine Christianity. His position is so strong Douglass is labeled infidel in the 19th century. This is tantamount to being called an atheist in the 20th and 21st centuries. This is the same theological bus that Lewis, West and other contemporary scholars throw Du Bois under, rendering him anti-religious or lacking any religious conviction. Du Bois like Douglass had a penchant for highlighting contradictions in the world and especially in religion that was supposed to be humane and life affirming when in fact it was not. (Douglass 123) Douglass's extreme critique goes so far as to maintain that if white America's so called slaveholding religion is true Christianity then bring on atheism. Du Bois appropriates similar visceral feelings in his attacks which are equal to a crusade against such an evil religion. Small wonder those who either superficially study him or have an alternative political or religious agenda cannot and do not comprehend Du Bois' Old Testament passion.

This mind set gives us a misreading of Du Bois by biographers which circumvent his spirituality with impunity and diminish his faith at almost every opportunity. Faith and church at the time Du Bois was being reared played a major role. The secularization of American culture in general has aided the secularizing of Du Bois. He like most Americans shared fundamentalist Christian values initially. However, he maintained, “Had it not been for the race problem early thrust upon me and enveloping me, I should have probably been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the established social order and of the economic development into which I was born.” (Lewis: 1995 p. 12) “Who today actually believes that this world is ruled and directed by a benevolent person of great power who, on humble appeal, will change the course of events at our request? Who believes in miracles? Du Bois refashioned traditional Christian creeds and told the world in his “Credo: “I believe in God, who made of one blood all nations that on earth do dwell... I believe in the prince of peace... (Jesus) I believe in Patience... Patience with God.” (Blum: 2007 p. 8) When Du Bois was hard on both the church and preachers it was only because he was profoundly disappointed when clergy sided with what he perceived as evil. To properly contextualize Du Bois’ disappointment let us remember the enlightened words of King when he related his own disillusionment with the white preachers in Alabama citing that there can be no great disappointment where there is no great love.

Du Bois never swerved from seeing the world in conflict with the dominate capitalistic, oppressive, racist, culture which he saw as the problem to the harmonious lifestyles for Black people in particular and brown people in general. Du Bois subscribed to the philosophy that loud and critical language was needed like that used by the radical abolitionists before him. Du Bois could be most severe in his rhetoric to unplug the ears of those filled with southern cotton where he regularly abandoned polite restraint of discourse. In fact, he had such a penchant for the

shocking in his epithets he might label capitalism as vulgar in its naked nastiness, or better still America is not the land of the free and the home of the brave rather it is the land of the thief and home of the slave. (Quarles: 1969 p. 15) Dismissing Du Bois' spirituality in the 21st century demonstrates how far astray the Black intellectual elite have gone for mainstream acceptance. Du Bois' spirituality was never an issue initially in his career nor was it by those who knew him and his work at the time of his death. Contrary, to popular belief Du Bois was far from being an agnostic or atheist. He affirms his belief in God. But, his theism is dismissed and rejected without any valid reason except that he was educated in Europe when enlightenment (rationalism) was dominant. Nevertheless, Einstein and Descartes are considered great rationalist when these men affirm their spirituality and aligned themselves with their countries in theological beliefs their affirmations are accepted. (Copleston: 1963 ps. 20-28) Why then when Du Bois affirms his belief in God do contemporary scholars discredit his affirmation?

Du Bois' spirituality only becomes an issue when he is divorced from his own personal role models namely Fredrick Douglass (an ordained preacher). Many if not most people are unaware that Douglass was licensed to preach in the AME church in 1840 in New Bedford, Baltimore before he became a speaker in the abolitionist movement. (Painter: 1996 p. 133) (Foner: 1950 p. 25) Du Bois had a large oil painting of Frederick Douglass in his apartment in New York City in 1946. He was extremely proud of this portrait. He offered to show it to anybody who was willing to view it. (Graham-Du Bois: 1978 p. 79) There is an expression that says show me who a person admires and I can tell you what kind of person they are. Du Bois' deep reverence for preachers also appeared in his own personal religious standards. Edward Wilmot Blyden an intellectual influence argued Black people were spiritually distinctive and rejected materialism. These men were major influences on Du Bois' early spiritual an intellectual development (Marable: 1986,

p.32) African scholar John Mbiti maintains that Africans are “notoriously religious.” Similarly, it may be argued Du Bois was notoriously spiritual. In fact, to fail to understand Du Bois’ spiritually is to fail to properly understand Du Bois. Scholars like August Meier criticized Du Bois’ career as ‘paradoxical’ and in constant in flux shifting from one radical ideology to another. However, historian, Herbert Aptheker, maintains that Du Bois was a ‘radical democrat’ with political affiliations that varied as times changed while he simultaneously kept his profound cultural and philosophical anchor to the overarching project to black freedom and the dismantling of structure racism on a transnational scale. It can be added that Du Bois’ religious and spiritual anchor were deeply rooted in the African American tradition that saw Christianity as practiced by American white folks as both hypocritical and evil and in need of transforming into legitimate spiritual system that made no color distinctions. (xix)

A Reflection on Being Called:

Being called to the ministry is sacred and has prominence in the Black church. In most cases being called to preach is the pentacle of professions. In America the title reverend is actually given prominence over doctor. It is the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I make this distinction to clarify the significance of being called. King says, “my call to the ministry was not a miraculous or supernatural something, on the contrary it was an inner urge calling me to serve humanity.” (Carson: 1992 p. 361) King unlike a great many preachers actually demythologizes or de spiritualizes what many see as most spiritual that is his call to the ministry. By revealing the existential bases of his metaphysical call he allows us to see as least through his eyes that his call was his desire to serve humanity. This for many Christians represents a heretical or according to one’s perspective a revolutionary view of the calling. Du Bois remained faithful to his mission for seventy years and to question his spirituality is beyond reason. However, in *Brother*

West Living and Loving Out Loud, West shares with us an apocryphal story of his christening which he claims his mother says are not “usually memorable.”

The Holy Spirit just took over. Everyone began to shout. Reverend Branch himself started shouting—“This child is anointed! This child is anointed!—and then the choir started signing, ‘Jesus Be a Fence All Around Me.’ The celebration couldn’t be contained. Reverend was preaching about how ‘Jesus *will* be a fence around this child every single day of his life, oh yes, He will!’ Even after we returned to our seats, the rejoicing and praising and hallelujahs grew louder and louder. It was a phenomenon that none of us could explain.” (West 21)

This story simply does not pass the giggle test. First and foremost West is representing himself in a very exclusive manner. However, the fourth gospel gives us the divine motivation for human redemption. John 3:16-17, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son whosoever believeth in him should not perish but should have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. The whosoever means simply that anybody who chooses and believes in Christ has everlasting life. West has no more right to Jesus’ protection than anyone else. He tells this fantastic story to give himself favor and position when in fact West has no more favor or position with Christ than does any other Christian. He should know better than to suggest that he does.

By now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnesses by the law and the prophet; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe for there is no difference; For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Romans 3:21-28

Christ came into the world that all may have life and whosoever chooses Christ has that life.

There are at least two ways to read this, i.e., everybody is special or no one is for God has no favorites. West is clearly trying to show that he has some special favor with God. This is a

position that is incompatible with the universal God who loves us all. But, in a capitalist society classifications and hierarchies are very important and West knows this although he claims he's a democratic socialist with Marxist tendencies in reality he is a capitalist. Or how can you explain him seeing himself as a baby with favor from God. And accusing a first rate scholar like Du Bois who dedicated the lions' share of 95 years of living to fighting for the humanity of the world's oppressed people of having no spirituality. West has become a victim of his own politics.

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