

OUR GIANTS SPEAK

W.E.B. DuBOIS AND
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
REVISITED

We continue a most important in-depth look at Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. Booker T. Washington. Older persons and thoughtful college and university (or high school) honor students will want to examine the bibliographies of these men. A period of 2 to 4 years of leisurely focus upon their lives will bring the kind of rich insight needed to reinterpret their lives today. Shorter periods of formal study, or of work on your own, will also be rewarding. In this part of the series, you may enjoy listing fresh insights and intuition which you have gained.

Part I of Two Parts
W.E.B. DuBois' New Year Resolution

I am resolved to play the man—to stand straight, look the world squarely in the eye, and walk to my work with no shuffle or slouch. I am resolved to be satisfied with no treatment which ignores my manhood and my right to be counted as one among men.

I am resolved to be quiet and law abiding, but to refuse to cringe in body or in soul, to resent deliberate insult, and to assert my just rights in the face of wanton aggression.

I am resolved to defend and assert the absolute equality of the Negro race with any and all other human races and its divine right to equal and just treatment.

I am resolved to be ready at all times and in all places to bear witness with pen, voice, money and deed against the horrible crime of lynching, the shame of Jim Crow legislation, the injustice of all color discrimination, the wrong of disfranchisement for race or sex, the iniquity of war under any circumstances and the deep damnation of present methods of distributing the world's work and wealth.

I am resolved to defend the poor and the weak of every race and hue, and especially to guard my mother, my wife, my daughter and all my darker sisters from the insults and aggressions of white men and black, with the last

strength of my body and the last suffering of my soul.

For all these things, I am resolved unflinchingly to stand, and if this resolve cost me pain, poverty, slander and even life itself, I will remember the Word of the Prophet, how he sang:

*"Though Love repine and Reason chafe,
There came a Voice, without reply,
'Tis man's Perdition to be safe
When for the Truth he ought to die!"*

- Key Questions:
1. What are three main issues raised in this article?
 2. What does this article suggest about our life situation today?
 3. How many words did you look up in the dictionary? (If we do not use a dictionary daily, and for every word whose full meanings we may not know, we cannot grow individually and assure the best use of our resources for group freedom and a better America.)



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.
Human Rights Activist

THE FALSE ILLUSION OF JONESTOWN

The almost unprecedented horror in the mass suicidal deaths of some 900 persons, black and white, in Jonestown, Guyana, seems to have come and gone now. Still the sense of numbness and bewilderment remain with us, and it does so in a particularly significant way for black Americans.

It was black Americans who gave to Jim Jones much of his base of support. It was to black Americans that Jones made his initial appeals as a religious leader who had come with the promise—and often with the fact—of "pie on earth" right now.

Indeed, at the very time of the Jonestown mass suicide—but before news of the actual occurrence had been reported—a prominent black San Franciscan spoke to a national audience assuring the American public that Jim Jones was an altogether harmless and a thoroughly beneficent man.

Such was the hold which the Rev. Jim Jones was able to exercise over countless lives—that he was looked upon by many as the prophet of hope for the hopeless, the downtrodden and the forsaken. The record, however, suggests a picture of Jim Jones which at best is cloudy. He was in some sense an eccentric visionary; in other ways he was a predator who rode to wealth and power on the backs of those he projected himself as serving.

Of the most immediate importance for black Americans are the reasons why so many blacks would literally cast themselves at his feet,

forsaking their families and handing over to Jim Jones whatever fortunes—large or small—which they possessed.

The answer given by most who have been close to Jim Jones' work is that those who turned to Jones for guidance were deeply disillusioned about many aspects of our nation's life as they saw it. Jones promised them a better way.

It was clear from the earliest interviews on national television and from those appearing in the press that many blacks and whites had become followers of Jones because he promised a society—or a community—where integration could truly work. Jones had capitalized upon the failure of our society to give sufficient realization to the brotherhood of those who are black and white.

At heart here there may be a massively faulty or a thoroughly impossible dream.

What other groups have done to move toward the American mainstream is not create artificial situations in which they "made pretend" that differences or unique characteristics among them did not matter. Rather they have tended to encourage a broader sense of respect for unerasable differences of which they could remain proud.

In this light, Mr. Jones's idealized society in which blacks and whites called each other "brothers" and "sisters" while trying to overlook color, racial circumstance and inherited experience may be seen as both an

unworthy and an unworkable travesty.

We are what we are; and in the very fact of our differences rests our potential attractiveness, our beauty and our unique worth as persons. Many of us learned with our ABC's a stirring hymn in which we sang the words: "I'm a lily of the valley and a bright morning star." Of the lilies of the field Jesus had suggested that each one was arrayed in its very own special way. God had made it that way.

Many of us also had death explained to us in terms of the stars, the suggestion being that for each one of us there is to be added a freshly beautiful star in the heavens.

The Rev. Jim Jones's efforts to create an illusion of brotherhood was thus doubtless a faulty, even though perhaps idealistically inspired, approach to dispelling the cynicism of those who had lost faith in America's promise of acceptance for all, both black and white. Brotherhood can never be an "act." Rather it is the logical outgrowth of a firm and abiding sense of our own self worth.

For black Americans there is a major moral or lesson here. It is that no one can confer dignity upon us any more than they can paint a rainbow in our tomorrow morning's sky and thereby fill our future days with a magical wealth and happiness forever. We must still look to our own racial leaders for guidance. But even more, we must find a life's light in ourselves!!

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