

I take my stand beside the millions . . . and cry 'Peace—No More War'

club," quite properly that civilization's model "murdered Indians." He was the hero of "a national disgrace called by courtesy the Mexican War," and he was the leader of the fight to be free to hold other people in slavery. "Moral obtuseness and refined brutality mark this civilization . . . a system of human culture whose principle is the rise of one race on the ruins of another is a farce and a lie." This vision, he concluded, must be replaced by service not gain, sacrifice not greed, peace not war.

For some years DuBois thought truth alone would conquer error, reason alone would eliminate injustice. He exposed the errors in his Atlanta University studies, rallied the ranks of reason. But the lies and injustice persisted, indeed they intensified. He concluded that truth was not a disembodied entity waiting to be grasped; truth was a dynamic reality moving, changing and perpetually challenging and its search was rooted in social reality. Hence, true to his secret pledge made to himself on his twenty-fifth birthday in Berlin. He wrote, in a diary, "I will confront the king and of course life itself". He answered that foursquare, into the turmoil of social reality. Here he used his unrivaled learning, wielded his scholarship, employed his artistry, and manifested his impeccable integrity and his prophetic power in a monumental confrontation with the central evils of his time: racism, poverty, colonialism, the subordination of women, the miseducation of youth, and above all, an embodiment of all the monstrosity of war.

The riddle of scholar vs participant he was always insisting that objectivity is not choosing neutrality but rather portraying reality. The problem was not partisanship, no one could avoid that, for even passivity was choice. The problem was partisanship on the side of justice, on the side of the oppressed exploited and insulted. DuBois' great advantage, ironically, was that he was naturally a scholar of, by and for the insulted and therefore was gifted with a new vision and therefore a greater clarity.

The first step toward sanity, he wrote in 1926, "is to admit the possibility of outlawing war. We must agree on some international apparatus to assure outlawing. . . . We must proceed with disarmament." He insisted in 1926 that accompanying this must be the demise of colonialism. "Peace on earth is no mirage. It is a solemn, awful necessity."

Twenty-five years later he devoted a series of his columns in a Chicago newspaper to this persistent theme of his life. "Peace cannot mean just peace in Europe. Today, rather, peace means and must mean peace in the world, peace without poverty."

He insisted then, October 28, 1950, that the hysteria in the United States did not reflect as true threat to the well-being of our nation. It was, rather, concocted by those who fear an idea and that idea is socialism. That idea, he said, did not begin with Russia and did not exist because of Russia, but came into being because of real human problems such as poverty in the midst of plenty. A week later he added that the effort to establish a *Pax Americana* was sheer madness. And finally, on November 25, 1950 he wrote, "Social control of production and distribution of wealth is coming as surely as the rolling stars. The whole concept of private property is changing and must change. Not even a Harvard school of business make greed into a science. Nor can the unscrupulous ambition of a Secretary of State use atomic energy forever for death instead of life."

The life of DuBois is that of a profound radical, a fearless and tireless scholar, a person who spoke his mind. And it was a mind of superb capacity and infinite training. Past ninety, in a book that appeared posthumously, he wrote, "I know the United States. It is my country, the land of my fathers. It is still the home of noble souls and generous people, but it is selling its birthright." And he insisted, "Today the United States is the leading nation in the world which apparently believes that war is the only way to settle present disputes and difficulties. For this reason, it is spending fantastic sums of money, wasting wealth and energy on the preparation of war which is nothing less than criminal. We spread our soldiers and arms over the earth and we bribe every nation we can to become our allies, while taxing our citizens into poverty, crime and unemployment and systematically distorting the truth about socialism."

This life tells as none other can what it meant to be black in the United States from the 1870s until the 1960s. It delineates a fighter, scholar, a genuine friend, a sweetly humorous soul, and a fiercely committed individual determined as he said in 1895, to make a name in science, to make a name in literature, "and thus to raise my race. I will go unto the king which is not according to the law and if I perish, I perish."

Study him and find indispensable information on the founding and development of the Niagra Movement, the NAACP, the Pan-African Movement; his illumination concerning Marcus Garvey, the *Encyclopedia Africana*; the battles at Fisk and Hampton to improve black education; the meaning of Booker T. Washington's and DuBois' differences; the impact of the New Deal on black people; Afro-American people in two world wars in this century and the struggle to prevent a third; the founding of the League of Nations which he himself witnessed; and of the United Nations (he was a consultant for the United States government). Here are insights into Cuba and Haiti, or into West Africa, early and late visits to the Soviet Union and China, impressions of Japan and Germany, pictures of Paul Robeson and

Richard Wright, of Jessie Fauset and Mary Wright Ovington, Alaine Lock, James Weldon Johnson, Lillian Smith, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown. And you will find views of Albert Einstein, Clarence Darrow, Albert Schweitzer, the sharecroppers who loved him and the artists who drew inspiration from him. Here is a large segment of the flesh and bones, the heart and brains, the hopes and tears, the failures and troubles of much of the world for very nearly a century.

Viewing this land and therefore verging at times upon despair, as any of us must, I urge upon you to think of William Edward Burghardt DuBois. For example, can the promise of humanity be fulfilled? Can one live completely and die boldly? Can one make a difference in the world and a difference that endures? Is it possible to be both lion and dove?

What can be more fitting than to draw to a close with prayers he wrote for himself and shared with his students over seventy years ago, *Prayers for Dark Folk*.

This is for young people. He wrote it in 1909 on scraps of paper and spoke it to them—1909, in Georgia. "Let us be afraid neither of mere physical hurt, nor of the unfashionableness of our color, nor of the unpopularity of our cause. Let us turn toward the battle of life undismayed and above all, when we have fought the good fight, grant us the shadow of death with the same courage that has let us live. . . . Give us in our day, God, to see the fulfillment of our vision of peace. May these young people grow to despise false ideals of conquest and empire and all the tinsel of war. May we strive to replace force with justice and armies of murder with armies of mercy. May we believe in peace among all nations as a present practical creed and count love for our country as love, and not hate, for our fellowmen."

When his body gave out, when he was 95, though his spirit and mind never did, he went gladly to his final rest for he knew he had conquered death, hence he welcomed it.

James Russell Lowell wrote, "Great souls are portions of eternity." The heritage of DuBois is part of that eternity. And there is a comrade of ours holding before all of us the flaming sword of that great angel who keeps the way of life.

Dr. Herbert Aptheker, DuBois' friend and colleague for many years, was selected by DuBois to compile and publish his works. Aptheker is preparing a 40-volume series.



Dr. DuBois with Paul Robeson, World Peace Conference, April 20, 1949



DuBois with Alphaeus and Dorothy Hunton and Paul Robeson after A. Hunton's release from federal prison, New York, 1955

William Edward Burghardt DuBois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868. He received a B.A. from Fisk University in 1883, a B.A. at Harvard University, and after two years of study, a Ph.D. at the University of Berlin. From 1894 to 1896 he taught at Wilberforce; from 1896-1897 at the University of Pennsylvania; at Atlanta University from 1897-1910. He was chairman of the Sociology Department of Atlanta from 1934-1944.

In 1896 he married Nina Gomer, who was the mother of his two children—Burghardt, who died at 3, and Yolande. His wife died in 1950 and he married Shirley Graham the next year.

As a journalist he wrote for the *New York Age*, the *New York Globe*, the *Springfield Republican*, and the *Chicago Defender*. He edited the *Fisk Herald* as a student, edited the *Moon* and the *Horizon*. From 1910 to 1934 he edited the NAACP's *Crisis* Magazine and from 1940 to 1944 he edited Atlanta University's *Phylon* Magazine.

DuBois organized collective action. He was principal founder of the 1905 Niagra Movement and five years later was prominent in the founding of the NAACP. From 1910 to 1934 he was director of Publicity and Research for the NAACP and from 1944 to 1948 was director of special research. Beyond scholarship, he actively organized public demonstrations against lynching, discrimination and war.

DuBois was the father of Pan-Africanism, serving as Secretary of the First Pan-African Congress in 1900. He attended the First Universal Races Congress in London in 1911 and was a leading participant in successive Pan-African Conferences in 1919, 1921, 1923, and 1945. During the McCarthy era his passport was withheld and he was unable to attend international conferences.

During the 1950s and 1960s he was closely identified with world peace forces, was a strong supporter of liberation movements and was friendly toward the Soviet Union and China.

In 1961 DuBois joined the Communist Party. He became a citizen of Ghana in 1963 and died in Ghana that year on the eve of the "March on Washington."

A tape of this speech is available through the John Reed Book Store, Dekum Bldg., Portland

Mary Ellen Pleasant

The woman who came to be called the "mother of the civil rights struggle in California" has her beginning shrouded in mystery. One story is that *Mary Ellen Pleasant* was born in Georgia in the early 1880, freed by her master and educated in Boston. Another is that she was born in Philadelphia. However she came to be, there is no question that she fought vigorously for the rights of blacks.

As the widow of a wealthy abolitionist, she used her inheritance to further anti-slavery causes while living in the East. She is reported to have supported John Brown's crusades with a \$30,000 donation, aided fugitives from the South, worked with the Underground Railroad, and agitated for civil rights. When Brown was captured, she fled to California during the Gold Rush.

Settling in the San Francisco area, she opened several chic boarding houses and a chain of laundries; all on money she had received from speculating in gold and silver. She used much of what she earned to work towards the total freedom of blacks in California and often rode into rural areas to rescue slaves.

After receiving rude treatment on a street car in San Francisco, Pleasant successfully sued the company. The result was that discrimination on public transportation ended in the state. Mary Pleasant died in 1904.



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