

بناء هوية الأمريكي الأسود لدى الكاتب الأفروأمريكي دبليو إي ب د بويس

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مدرس الأدب الإنجليزي

كلية التربية بالوادي الجديد-

جامعة أسيوط

يعتبر كثير من النقاد إن الكاتب والناشط الأفرو أمريكي دو بويس من أعظم الكتاب وأقوي الأصوات في القرن العشرين . وقد ساعد هذا الكاتب من خلال أعماله الأدبية والفكرية على النهوض بأحوال السود في مجتمع قائم على العنصرية والقوة وعدم السماح للثقافة السوداء بالتقدم والازدهار. قد عانى الأمريكيون الأفارقة خلال فترة العبودية وقد سلبت ثقافتهم وحتى دينهم ولغتهم كذلك وعدم تعليمهم مهارة الكتابة والقراءة ويهدف هذا البحث إلى تتبع معاناة السود داخل المجتمع الأمريكي وفقدان هويتهم وأسماءهم بمرور الأيام . مثلاً في كتاب أرواح الرجل الأسود يرى الباحث ان هناك علاقة مضطربة وتناقض في الهوية بين الأمريكي الأسود التي سماها دو بويس الوعي المزدوج ولكن هذا الكاتب كان هدفه الأساسي هو استرداد الحرية والكرامة لهؤلاء المضطهدين والمحرومين . ودو بويس مؤهل جداً للدفاع عن قضايا السود من جذور افريقية لأنه قاسى وعانى من تجارب مريرة ومتشابهة . ويعتبر هذا الكاتب إن التعليم والبحث عن المعرفة قد يضعنا نهاية لمعاناة السود وكذلك الكفاح المسلح وعدم التسليم في الحقوق المشروعة . ويوضح هذا البحث أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بينه وبين بعض معاصريه .



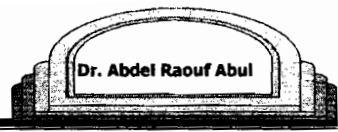
culture , language and maintained the segregation of blacks in American society . His quest for freedom and civil rights is well depicted in Souls of Black Folk . Also, he confirmed the view that Christianity strongly supported the status quo of America regarding racial injustice and class disparity . As for Bois , education plays an important part in saving Blacks from poverty, segregation and racism. Also , he wanted to correct the bad images of the black man created by the western media and American movies . It can be said that he was trying to convey to the reader the black identity that whites have taken by force from the slaves as well as their freedom . In fact , this paper shows that the theme of splitting and paradox of black identity is a central theme in all his literary works . Undoubtedly , Du Bois has left his mark on the American society as a accomplished scholar , social reformer , attacker of slavery and defender of black freedom and equality .

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**W. E . B . Du Bois and the Construction of Black American
Identity By : Dr. Abdel Raouf Abul Adab El- Naggar Gebaly
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**The main goal of the present research is to trace
thoroughly the construction of African American identity
as treated by the African American writer and activist W .
E . B . Du Bois . Du Bois has made remarkable and
significant contributions to African American literary ,
social and political thought in the twentieth century . As
we know , the struggle of black Americans for their
human , economic , political and social rights is one of the
most dominated themes in twentieth century American
history and literature. . This seriously moved Du Bois to
use literature and science to put an end to the problem of
racial discrimination and the suffering of black people
inside the American society . He violently criticized whites
because they robbed African Americans of their identity ,**



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best prove their humanity through intellectual development. Also , he has a profound understanding of the crucial role of culture and history in shaping and forming the lives and destiny of Africans. According to Martin Luther King , history can not ignore Du Bois because history has to reflect truth and Bois was a discoverer of social truths . Therefore , his works were the turning point in black literature and culture .

In any case , at the final stages of his life , Du Bois renounced the U.S. citizenship and became a citizen of Ghana . He lived the last years of his life in Africa . He never returned to the country of his birth , the one for which he had worked for and held out hope for throughout his life . Du Bois's health had deteriorated in 1962 and on August 27, 1963, he died in Accra , Ghana at the age of ninety five .

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nation and society , in its entirety . I wanted the veil to be immediately lifted so that we could just be with one another : equal , free at last , undifferentiated by race . (36)

One can understand from the above quotation that Du Bois 's intellectual and practical accomplishments succeeded in opening the eyes of his readers to racism and social injustice . The idea of the veil helps explain the unique importance of racial identity , racial oppression and resistance , and raciaized social structures in the creation and organization of the modern world . Also , Bois stressed the weakness and inability of the United States to accept the blacks' basic humanity .

Again , from what has been forwarded and discussed , one can conclude that W. E .B. Du Bois has left his mark on the American society as an accomplished scholar, scientist , social reformer , attacker of slavery and defender of black freedom and equality . He led a life of principle and example . He is the main factor behind garnering many of the human rights that Black Americans enjoy today . He believed in education as the driving force behind the solution to the African American problem . Bois felt that black people would

wants to have the greatest possible happiness and power . He wishes to learn the things that hold the world together at its core , but his attempts end in failure . Similarly , the hero and narrator of Souls of Black Folk suffers deeply because of his double identity and his two souls . Du Bois strongly believes that African Americans suffer so much from a split in self – concept because they are regarded with contempt by the majority of white Americans . Howard Winant affirms this fact :

W . E. B. Du Bois's concept of the veil first fully articulated in The Souls of Black folk {1903}, contains the most powerful theory of race and racism ever developed Du Bois makes in presenting his concept of the veil is his idea of double consciousness . both afflicts and transfigures the black soul : dividing its experience and self –awareness, interjecting racism into the racially oppressed self , and also affording that self some means of defense against racial oppression ...Yet Du Bois is at pains to show how the veil's operation at this micro- social level is but an instance albeit a vital one , of a far broader and deeper phenomenon . The veil not only divides the individual self ; it also fissures the community ,

One can say that the problematic and tragic situation is that the black people see themselves through the eyes of white people , as entirely deformed and inferior which created troubled , split and falsified consciousness . Throughout The souls of Black Folk Bois succeeded greatly in opening the eyes of his readers that Africans found whites and European culture just as strange as whites viewed blacks and African culture . It can be said that the strength and dignity of Du Bois 's position is that he engages in the struggle to lift the veil that renders him contradictory – to solve through social and political transformation the problem of the black man identity. It can be said now that Du Bois was trying to convey to the reader the black identity and family structure that whites have taken by force from the slaves as well as their freedom . In reality , the theme of splitting up the black identity is a central theme in the Souls of Black Folks .

In this context , there are strong points of similarity to be mentioned here between The Souls Of Black Folk and Goethe's Faust . In the beginning , the tragic hero Faust suffers so much because of his unlimited and strong desire for scientific and human knowledge . He is not satisfied . He

condition remarkable and understood . Du Bois expressed this double consciousness in the following statement :

After the Egyptians and Indian , the Greek and Roman , the Teuton and Mongolian , the Negro is a sort of seventh son , born within a veil and gifted with second –sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self – consciousness , But only lets him see himself through the revelation of the world . It is a peculiar sensation , this double –consciousness , this sense of always looking at one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity . One ever feels his two-ness-an American , a warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder . The history of American Negro is the history of this strife , -this longing to attain self-conscious manhood , to merge his double self into a better and truer self . In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost ...He would not each his negro soul in a flood of white Americanism , for he knows that Negro blood has a message to the world . ((35)

strongly under the limitations of movement , education , liberty , and opportunity imposed by the white world . The result is a bitter and acute struggle between two hostile camps :

Thus it is easy to see the scientific definition of race as impossible ; it is easy to prove that physical characteristics are not so inherited as to make it possible to divide the world into races ; that ability is the monopoly of no known aristocracy ;that the possibilities of human development can not be circumscribed by color nationality , or any conceivable definition of race ; all this has nothing to do with the plain fact that throughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power , legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups and that the concentration particularly of onomic power today pus the majority of mankind into slavery to the rest . (34)

Again , this concept of dual identity appears obviously and significantly in The Souls of Black Folk and is central to the author's goal in making the African American miserable

century , found himself plagued by a similar discontent concerning African American representation during various American performances that showcased democratic ideals and civic identity . At such a celebration in New York that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation , Du Bois presented The Star of Ethiopia . A program for the performance states that The Star of Ethiopia portrays the history of the Negro and its work and sufferings and triumphs in the world by combining historical accuracy and symbolic truth ... For Du Bois , whose life work centered around exploring the Negro as a problem and defining the parameters of race , his participation in the pageantry craze to display a collective history of blacks suggests that he was aware that the pageant was a performance of democracy and a discursive form for showcasing a racially devised collective identity for its participants , its audience , and whites .(33)

Undoubtedly , Du Bois strongly believes that the basic factor behind racial order is domination and the basis of such domination is power . The white world conceives of its liberties not as universal rights but as privileges reserved for its members. At the same time , the black world struggles

**Gift of Freedom and laughter and the undying Gift of Hope
Men of America , break silence , for the play is done .(32)**

**In the end , Ethiopia triumphs over centuries of evil ,
inhumanity and social corruption . Du Bois ‘s creation of the
final scene conveys the message that blacks , through their
significant history and ancestry , are a race of survivors and
significant history . His intent with the end was for Blacks to
recognize that it is in their destiny to overcome the current
evils they face within the unhealthy and contaminated
American society .**

**One can say that many whites were angry at that sort
of drama because it reflected the truth about the life , history
and culture of African Americans . The importance of this
play is found in its historical timing . In any case , during the
Harlem Renaissance , many black writers began to use
theatre as a vehicle to address issues such as lynching ,
economics , social injustice and politics . Consider the
following quotation :**

**Perhaps , W. E . B . Du Bois , while writing a number
of istorical pageant during the beginning of thetwentieth**



The Gift of Humiliation “ is the fourth episode . In this scene, many Africans push their slaves forward to European traders in return for goods . The slave trade increases . Chaos , the lack of unity and distrust allow the Europeans and begin centuries of pain and humiliation for Africans and their descendants . The Gift Toward the Struggle of freedom is the fifth episode . This scene includes Blacks from various time periods of Black history . This episode depicts the heroism of these Blacks who resisted oppression . The Gift of Freedom For Workers is the sixth and final episode includes characters that were abolitionists or had a historic contribution to the abolishment of slavery . Among these characters are Frederick Douglass William Garrison, John Brown and Abraham Lincoln . This scene shows how the freedom of Black slaves meant freedom around the world . Du Bois expressed these attitudes in a very striking and remarkable manner :

Hear ye ,hear ye ,men of all Americas , ye who have listened o the tale of the oldest and strongest of the races of mankind , whose faces be black . Hear ye , hear ye and forget not the gift of black men to this world – the iron Gift and Gift of Faith , the Pain of Humility and Sorrow Song of Pain , the

The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood
near the mass of ordinary Negro people(30)

White playwrights creating plays that depicted the so-called true lives of African Americans offended many Blacks . This greatly motivated Du Bois to write The Star of Ethiopia . His goal for The Star of Ethiopia was that it “ would serve as a powerful catalyst for the creation of a black national theatre fostering interest in racial uplift and indigenous Black culture . “ (31) The Star of Ethiopia consists of a prologue that traces the great history of African Americans from Africa to the United States . After the prologue the play progresses through a succession of episodes portraying different and significant periods of black history . For example , “The Gift of Iron “ is the name of the first episode . The scene begins with Africans who ran away from beasts and horrific thunderstorms. Some Africans perished while others survived while fleeing , “ The Gift of the Nile “ , is the second episode , shows and reflects how cooperative the two civilizations of the Kushites and the Egyptians were in establishing Africa as the earliest place of commerce . “ The Gift of Faith ‘ is the third episode . This episode reflects Africans struggling against internal and external conflicts . “

articles allowed and succeeded in opening the eyes of his readers to different and many current issues .

Reflecting the goal of the Crisis , Bois felt that theatre might conceivably provide a stage for tackling issues that were relevant to Blacks . One of the issues he felt the need to address was the racist misrepresentation of Blacks “ No definition of race drama has been more influential than the one offered by W.E B. Du Bois .” (28) According to Krasner , Du Bois felt that “ Negro Theatre “ must follow four fundamental principles , “ about us , by us , for us , near us . “ James Hatch affirms that : “ Du Bois organized the krigwa Little Theatre to produce plays about , by , for , and near African Americans . “ (29) Du Bois himself said that Negro theatre must be :

1- About us . That is , they must have plots which reveal Negro life as it is . 2- By us . That is , Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just that it means to be a Negro today must write them 3- For us . That is . the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval 4- Near us .



its goal was black power . (26) Also , David Levering Lewis puts it the same way : “ The Crisis was created to serve different functions:

1-As a newspaper recording “ very important hapening and movement in the world which bears on the great problem of and interracial relations especially those which affect the Negro – American . 2-As a comprehensive review of opinion and literature pertinent to the race problem 3- As a forum for a few terse articles 4- The editorial page , mainly though not exclusively animated by Du Bois , standing for the rights of men , irrespective of color or race , for the highest ideals of American democracy .” (27)

One can say that The Crisis gave Du Bois a suitable place to address issues in politics , education , social uplift , organizations and meetings , science and art . The journal allowed black intellectuals to speak about issues or topics by writing articles . Blacks in various fields such as education , fine arts and literature gained notoriety through exposure from The Crisis . Du Bois had a two to four page article where he would personally address the reader .In fact , his

starve and kill them .” (25) As for Bois . black unity is the only logical way to socialism in the face of white chauvinism . African Americans must continue to resist segregation and brutality. They must not build black capitalism , but to accumulate black capital collectively . In other words , Americans negroes have got to plan for their economic salvation .

As we have seen before , the Harlem Renaissance is responsible for the emergence of various eras of Black theatre in the United States during the twentieth century because it was a time where black people became more aware of themselves as a group and discovered their own forms of literature and other types of art . Du Bois is one of the most important and influential writers responsible for creating the foundation for twentieth century Black theatre . As a pioneer for twentieth century black theatre , his contributions are outstanding . For example, The Crisis was a journal created by Du Bois , which has a connection to his interest in nature . The Crisis was established in 1910 , the same year in which Du Bois co-founded the NAACP . According to Arnold Rampersad , “ The fundamental aim of the Crisis was to defend , praise , and instruct Black people ; more simply put ,



his opinion, racism existed because it was profitable to white Americans to exploit black Americans . Du Bois said that what was needed to fight racism was black economic power . After witnessing the knuckles of a lynched man on display in the window of an Atlantic grocery store , Bois grimly concluded : “ One could not be a calm , cool , and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched , murdered , and starved . “ (24) Du Bois in The Dusk of Dawn describes the United States as a nation divided into two worlds one white and the other black . The white world claims to hold democracy but practices tyranny . Like John Steinbeck , during the Depression era which led to the collapse of American economy , Du Bois was certain that capitalism had failed . As for him , the way to industrial democracy is obstructed by the racial prejudice of the white working class who are completely indifferent to the suffering of the Black people . Bois himself asserts that: “ Today it is white labor that keeps Negroes out of decent low –cost housing , that confirms the protections of the best unions to white men that often will not sit in the same hall with black folk who already have joined the labor movement ...It mobs white scabs to force them into labor fellowship . It mobs black scabs to

system . At the same time the Black world consists of those excluded from and subordinated by this alliance . However , Du Bois gradually became indignant at the capitalistic system in the United States . Du Bois frequently affirmed that American capitalism had used racialization as an instrument and weapon for modern capital development . On the other hand , Bois asserted that the achievement of international racial equality would mean the end of modern capitalism . For example , in Darkwater Voices from Within the Veil , he depicts the majority of mankind as being remarkably subjugated by an imperialistic white race . Also, in Color and Democracy : Colonies and Peace , he presents a case against imperialism . Therefore , Du Bois encourages strongly the creation of a negro nation within the nation because the black world strongly believes in freedom and democracy . On the other hand , the white world is a form of political and social power that threatens democracy in the United States and across the globe as well. One can understand from Du Bois 's theory of race is that democracy may require not just the end of racism but also the dissolution of the white world itself . As for Bois , negroes must build race organizations such as negro colleges , business organizations and newspapers . In

components of American society , and thus to place the responsibility for solving the “ Negro problem “ upon white America . But what of the other half of Du Bois’s binary ?
(21)

One can conclude from the above mentioned quotation that Du Bois asserted in The Souls of Black Folk the universal and ideal human brotherhood which made this book as one of the most provocative and influential works of African American literature in the 20th century . Therefore, during his stay in Germany , Bois appreciated the German people and described them as good hearted , hating oppression , widely sympathetic with suffering , and filled with longing ideals for all mankind. In this context , Bois attempted seriously to create a pluralistic view that extended beyond apparent forms of racial discrimination and national borders . In other words , Bois wrote for not only for civil rights limited to America but for universal civil right targeting the black as well as the white intellectual .

As for Bois , the white dominated society is a coalition between capitalists and a group of the working class , which benefits so much because of its complicity with the capitalistic

ultimate goal is the achievement of moral significance for the race . In The Souls of Black Folk , racial prejudice is not just a product of ignorance , but of deep rooted rational and irrational beliefs among whites. Scott affirms that :

The story of the Negro in America is the story of America ...James Baldwin poses the Negro problem as an American problem , the Negro is not a real person but rather a construct placed upon a group of people by the darkness of the American mind . Thus , for Baldwin , Du Bois 's problem of the color lone is less a problem of the social practices that divide whites from blacks than of the imaginative divide that threatens the coherence of the American identity . There is much force in Baldwin 's argument . Like Du Bois he wants to stress the national responsibility for the Negro problem . By figuring the Negro as an imaginative construct the paradoxically both enables and endangers the successful articulation of an American identity . Baldwin argues that it is in America's best interest to confront the meaning and implications of this imagined Negro . But to simplify Baldwin 's argument some , his rhetorical strategy is essentially to claim that the Negro is the product of the dominant , white

The second sight or seeing of the black man or woman through the “eyes of the white other “ is an ability that apre-colonial frican would not have possessed and indicates that first sight must involve an ability to see oneself through eyes that are not other , that are , presumably , one’s own .(20)

One can say that Bois exerted much efforts to attain a proper place to present African Americans with dignity as model human beings and historical figures . Moreover , instead of focusing characters and themes solely on blacks , Du Bois wished the themes of African Americans theatre to touch white consciousness as well . Du Bois’s theatre was designed to present themes and images of black life that would encourage change in white America’s perception of black America . However , Bois ‘s theory of race indicates that racial discrimination will be abolished by neither the elimination of race nor equality among races but by the abolition of the power of the dominant world . Significantly , he supported strongly the view that the history of the world is the history not of individuals but of groups having common blood and language. Therefore , the race of Africans in the Diaspora is the history of oppression and domination . His

would move sensible , educated whites to see the wrongs and the painful consequences of racism. Their eyes finally opened , they would join with the Talented Tenth of educated black elites to eliminate discrimination . He strongly believes that the White's superiority stands in the way of forming and shaping proper relationships between the Blacks and the Whites . In any case , African Americans were in a bitter struggle to achieve civil rights , economic security and social stability . As a matter of fact , the blacks are greatly psychologically destroyed because of the dominant whites' harsh treatment and oppression . Many critics admit this comprehensive fact :

The divisions brought on by the impact of racialization took at least two forms , according to Henry. The divided Africana psyche , he suggests , was the effect of caricature “ Negro “ as the “polar opposite of white “, where whiteness was linked to a set of prescriptive normative ideals . This isparaged any sense of meaningful collective black identity , of any coherent answer of a pre-colonial African self...Henry notes that in addition to the splitting of ranscendentale onsciousness by the experience of racialization .

illustrates the best of black life, but he is completely haunted and scarred by American racism and oppression . Angelia Gimke's play Rachel is a good and perfect example in this direction . This serious play is a representative of the type of work that Du Bois 's protest drama advocated . It is one of the most significant plays written by and for blacks .The play is basically concerned with racial injustice and black pride . In Rachel , the heroine protests against racism by refusing to marry and bring more black children into a racist America . She is a northern maiden , of fair complexion and who has been educated alongside whites , but she is reminded of the atrocities of racism through her brother's unemployment and the bad experiences of the brown children she encounters . Rachel's character and the play itself challenge the pejorative images of African American men and women and point out the emotional , psychological , economic and social effects of America racism and segregation . Undoubtedly , Rachel is a significant picture of African American culture created by an African American drama . More than this , it is realistic and it challenges stereotypical images of African American life .

In any case , Bois initially believed that the scientific proof of the oppression of black people in the United States

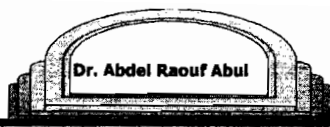
race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst , in their own and other races . Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task . Its technique is a matter for educational experts , but its object is for the vision of seers . If we make money the object of man –training , we shall develop money – makers but not necessarily men ; if we make technical skill the object of education , we may possess artisans but not , in nature , men . Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools – intelligence , broad sympathy , knowledge of the world that was and is , and of the relation of men to it – this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life . On this foundation we may build bread winning , skill of hand and quickness of brain , with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life.. From the very first it has , been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people that have led and elevated the mass , and the sole obstacles that nullified and retarded their efforts were slavery and race prejudice. (19)

Undoubtedly , Du Bois is on of the most significant and remarkable African American writers who shows and

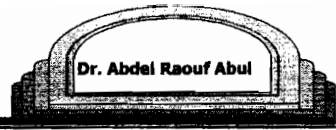


idea that the black race would advance through the efforts of its educated and cultured elite .”(18) More than this, Du Bois strongly believed that the Talented Tenth of the black race would have the capacity to lead the race and save it from its criminal problems . For example , in The Philadelphia Negro , Du Bois found direct and more convincing correlations between the low levels of education and high levels of criminal activity inside the black community. It can be said that Bois firmly believed that education was the only way the African Americans could save themselves from poverty, segregation and racism . In other words , he believed that the race problem was the result of ignorance. It can be said that Bois’s scientific efforts dominated the intellectual era of his time more than Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer . According to Du Bois , what is most important to remember is that the black crime reduced and declined as the black African people moved toward a more equal status with the whites . Consider the following comprehensive quotation :

The Negro race , like all races , is going to be saved by its exceptional men . The problem of education , then , among negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth ; it is the problem of developing the Best of this



common images of African American life to appear . These images are well suggested and depicted by Du Bois 's own dramatic play The Star of Ethiopia and Angelina Gimke's play Rachel as well . The propagandic roles by Du Bois's protested Drama were reflective of the limited elite Du Bois creates in his famous ' Talented Tenth Theory .' Harris shows that : " For this reason , Du Bois was a champion of higher education for Blacks . He believed that liberal education was the means by which Blacks could achieve a higher social status . Du Bois envisioned a leadership class – the "Talented Tenth." The "Talented Tenth" would be a highly educated and cultured ten percent of the Black population that would guide the rest of the Black community towards its goals ."(17) Yolanda's opinion seems to be identical with Harris's : "The success of the Harlem Renaissance was due not only to the presence of hundreds of talented African Americans , but also to the fact that Harlem's civil rights establishment actively sought to promote black talent as a way of eliminating prejudice and advancing the race...Efforts by upper class blacks to promote the work of African America artists also reflected a belief in W.E.B. Du Bois' theory of the Talented Tenth , the



In any case , Du Bois’s protest plays present a powerful and harsh criticism of racism and inequality . As for Bois, he firmly believed that the purpose of an African American theatre was to present characters who reflected the possibilities and the realities of African American cultural and intellectual life . As for him , this theatre should be used as an important vehicle and influential weapon to inform the intellectual and academic circles that black people desired a better life and that they could achieve that life if they were allowed all the freedoms outlined in the United States Constitution –life , liberty and the pursuit of happiness .The majority of prominent white scholars ignored and denied African American cultural, political and social relevance to American history and civic life . On the other hand , in his work Black Reconstruction , Du Bois asserted and documented how black people were central figures in the American Civil War and Reconstruction as well . It can be said now that Du bois envisioned African American theatre to be a place where the African American characters did more than perform but also proved what black life should be . Thus Du Bois viewed the stage as another weapon in his struggle . However , this stage was not to be a place for the

represented on the stage . But , the second and the most serious issue is to whom should African American drama be addressed— white American audience or an African American audience ? This latter problem was one that has perplexed and worried the African American dramatist . One can say that the black author faces a special and difficult problem while the white American writer knows nothing about . It is the problem of the double audience . It is more than a double audience . It is a divided audience . In the essay “ The Dilemma_of the Negro Author “ James Johnson puts it the same way:

The moment a Negro writer takes up his pen or sits down to his typewriter , he is immediately called upon to solve , consciously or unconsciously , this problem of the double audience . To whom shall he address himself , to his own black group or to white America ? Many a Negro writer has fallen down , as it were , between these two stools.(16

As a matter of fact , Du Bois’s protest and serious drama proved to white society that blacks had contributed greatly to the civilization of the American society . Therefore , they deserve to be recognized and treated as free citizens .

perfectibility of man in society ... His advanced study led to his earning a p D. in history at Harvard and the distinction of having his dissertation , The Suppression of the slave trade in the United States of America ...Du Bois also realized as early as 1900that organized collective action by black people needed an institutional structure in order to be effective .

In 1905 , he was the principal founder of the Niagara Movement , a civil rights protest organizationThe

organization called for direct action against racial discrimination through protest . through the use of the courts , and through education of the American people . Four years later , he was a principal organizer of the National ssociation for the vancement of colored people (NAACP) . Its mission was identical to that of the iagara Movement but its membership included both blacks and whites...He was , for nearly a quarter century , the undisputed intellectual leader of a new generation of African Americans (15)

We can say from the very beginning that the African American dramatist encountered two basic and serious issues . The first one is how should the African American be

beside the millions in every nation and continent and cry peace No More War .”(14) Generally speaking , one can say that the black writers created creative , striking and versatile productions for the general public that greatly reflected the significance of their black history and culture . In other words , they wanted to define and form a culture of their own in a country where they believed they were not wanted or respected . Consider the following comprehensive quotation :
At the turn of the twentieth century , William Edward Burghardt Du Bois , the most outspoken civil rights activist in America , committed himself to a style of political leadership which emphasized that , in order for African Americans to survive the inordinate stress and cruelty of racial discrimination , they had to make a determined attempt at self- development , self- realization in spite of enviroing discouragement and prejudice. The style called upon African Americans to seek full exercise of civil rights in the United States through militant protest and agitation .
Du Bois’s political idealism was a product of his childhood observations of his home town and of his formal education in the 19th- century disciplines of history and sociology , both of which held firm to a belief in human progress and the

to assert and adopt the policy of self- determination, self- definition and self-reliance inside the black community :” Du Bois advocated challenging racial barriers because , as a scholar of the social sciences , he believed restrictions on social grounds lacked any scientific or intellectual merit . He strived for African Americans to be on equal footing with Whites in all political , social and economic arenas ...He was of the opinion that society could solve its problems through adherence to scientific principles and research... Blacks had to be free of the restrictions that Whites imposed on them and lead their race unimpeded by discrimination .” (13) Undoubtedly , he rejected the idea that African Americans were biologically inferior to whites . Therefore , he was one of the major opponent of the scientific justifications for racism of his day . One can say that the search for freedom and self-realization is one of the core component of Bois’s literary works . More than this , his hatred of wars is very apparent in his works : “ I want progress ...I want freedom for my people . And because I know and you know that we can not have these things , and at the same time fight , destroy and kill all around the world in order to make huge benefits for big business ; for that reason I take my stand

through injustice , fraud and lies to crush the unfortunate and the downtrodden . Those were words that Garvey used to indict the system of colonial and imperial exploitation that held whole races of people in bondage and captivity . But it was in the American political theatre that Garvey commanded center stage few Black leaders in United States history have been able to equal Garvey's contribution to the

Black Liberation struggle , not only in America , but in the entire Black Diaspora . Today the legacy of Marcus Mosiah Garvey is the sum total of his philosophy , opinions and actions called Garveyism ...But also central to the teachings of Garveyism is the issue of race .

Marcus felt that the Black man was universally oppressed at the hands of white power structure and that any program of emancipation would have to be developed around the question of race first . By establishing a clear perspective on the racial question Garveyism outlined a comprehensive program of political , social and economic action aimed at the total liberation of the Black race .(12

But , when Bois came to recognize the hypocrisy of American democracy and racist mentality of the white man , he began



would eradicate the racist mentality directed against Blacks . In the beginning , Du Bois did not reject the strategy of assimilation of the African American into the American society . He tried seriously to bridge the cultural gap between blacks and whites . Conversely , Marcus Garvey stressed that blacks must be in control of their own community and their own destiny . He violently attacked the practice of racism . Also , he did not worry about offending others or achieving respect from white people . As for Garvey , blacks were a nation within a nation in need of their own identity , self-help and social autonomy . In this context , he identifies Africa as the most logical course of direction and as a source of rootedness for an African American in search of dignity , culture , identity , equality and independence . Also , Garvey strongly believed that the Blacks should not seek assistance from their oppressors in forming and shaping their own nation and identity . Michael Robert remarks :

Garveyism , the philosophy of Garvey Marcus , one of the most outstanding Black leaders of the 20th century , holds that modern civilization has gone drunk and crazy with power and seeks

to promote and convey the African American search for true identity and self-actualization . Also , Hughes acknowledges Africa as the source of life and vitality for Africans in the Diaspora . One can say that Langston Hughes was one of the most famous and chief poets responsible for the development of American literature of the Harlem Renaissance which witnessed the influential increase of self- identity , dignity and freedom .

In fact , many critics agree that the voice of the writers depends greatly on the environment from which they come , their bringing , good and bad experiences . In this context , Du Bois wrote plays and novels that allowed the readers to understand and see what things were going on in that particular era . Du Bois has been regarded as the father of Pan African movement because of his role in establishing and shaping this movement and in promoting self-respect among Africans . This movement later became a more radical and unified struggle of African peoples against all forms of foreign aggression and invasion . Bois strongly believed that the American Negroes needed intellectual development and education to support and maintain their rightful place as American citizens . As for Bois , this educational process

**But I laugh ,
And eat well ,
And grow strong .
Tomorrow ,
I'll be at the table
When company comes,
Nobody 'll dare
Say to me,
Eat in the kitchen ,
Besides ,
They 'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed ..
I , too , am America . (11)**

One can conclude that the above poem demonstrates how Hughes writes specifically about racial discrimination and about being black in a white- dominated society . The poem describes a black man's personal experience with racial discrimination . As for Hughes , America is a place for all people who are black or white . Therefore , he felt indignant at the ill treatment of the black man by the white man under the garb of freedom and democracy . Hughes used his poetry

American movies . As we know , these media and movies exploited greatly the black image and dehumanized the black figure in their depictions . Also , the writers of the Harlem Renaissance challenged the negative stereotypes of blacks as perceived in the white theatre . However , they exerted much efforts to remove the atrocities imposed on the black psyche through the images of blacks portrayed in media , films and theatre . The Harlem Renaissance gave blacks a sense of unity and identity . Among the most famous writers is the poet Langston Hughes who was greatly connected with the Harlem Renaissance . Hughes first received attention in the 1922 poetry collection , The Book of American Negro Poetry . In Harlem , he seems to be warning whites that there might be eruption of black violence if blacks can not get social justice and freedom for themselves . Also , he warns oppressed in America of the painful and tragic consequences of ignoring struggle and revolution against capitalism and the forces of tyranny . His famous poem , I , Too , Sing America is a good example in this direction :

I am the darker brother .

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes ,



Also , the Harlem Renaissance from 1920 to 1940 was a turning point in black literature , and its effects have helped to shape and form greatly African American literature today . Undoubtedly, it was a period of creativity among black artists , writers and musicians . It was an era in which the black talent was recognized not only by African Americans themselves , but also by the white society in general . More books were written by black authors during the 1920s than any previous era in the history of American literature . Most importantly , the Harlem Renaissance produced racially and socially conscious writers who reached back to Africa and the African American community for inspiration and salvation. Undoubtedly , the artists and writers who participated in the Harlem Renaissance were brought together by their common culture and experiences . They focused on such themes as African heritage and racial pride , and black culture and consciousness . They had a “ motivation to write about black heroes and heroic episodes from American History as well as the need for African Americans to express a franker and deeper revelation of the black self “ (10) Also , the writers of the Harlem Renaissance made concreted efforts to correct the image of the black man created by the western media and

Freedom . This work supplemented a more detailed account of his life as a slave with the impressive record of his intellectual growth and personal achievement since he had joined forces with the abolitionist movement .”(8) Also , Harriet Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) , the first autobiography by a formerly enslaved woman , frankly describes her experience of the sexual exploitation that made slavery especially oppressive for black women : “ In Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Jacobs tried to do more than create sympathy for her plight : she sought to win the respect and admiration of her readers for the courage she forestalled abuse and for the independence with which she chose a lover rather than having one forced on her ...Incidents is also distinguished by its awareness of the kinds of stories written by and about white women in the same era , for it self-consciously addresses women readers and carefully distinguishes the slave woman’s experiences from theirs . “ (9) We can say that Frederick Douglass , Harriet Jacobs as well as other slave narrators literary work helped greatly to change the consciousness of the American public which led to changing the miserable status quo .

literature . Some critics and historians believe that slave narrators wrote their stories to change the social status quo and social consciousness . Others believe that these slaves were trying to prove to the world that blacks were just as intellectual and intelligent as whites by being capable of writing just as well as they do . In fact , the stories written to inspire abolitionist struggle are undoubtedly the most famous and significant form of slave narratives because they tend to have a strong autobiographical motif and succeeded so much in opening the eyes of many readers to the tragedy of blacks in the American society . Many of these are now recognized as the most literary of all nineteenth century writings by African Americans . For example , Frederick Douglass became the most prominent African American of his time and one of the most influential lecturers and authors in American history . In his autobiography , My Bondage and My Freedom (1855) , Douglass depicted himself as a product of a slave community in Maryland's Eastern Shore and explained how his struggles for independence and liberty did not end when he reached the so called free states of the North : “ In 1855 Douglass published a revised and enlarged version of the Narrative under the title My Bondage and My

that happened between Malcolm and his white English teacher , Mr. Ostrowski , when Malcolm disclosed to him that he wanted to be a lawyer :

Malcolm , one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic .
Don't misunderstand me , now . We all here like you ,
you know that . But you've got to be realistic about being
a nigger . A Lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger .
You need to think about something that you can be .
You're good with your hands –making things .

Everybody admires your carpentry shop work . Why
don't you plan on carpentry ? people like you as a person
– you'd get all kinds of work . (7)

Among the central themes and issues explored and significantly reflected in African American literature are the role of African Americans within the American society , African American culture , racism , slavery and inequity . To present the true reality of slavery , a number of former slaves such as Frederick Douglas and Harriet Jacobs wrote slave narratives which became the main and the most important component of African American literature . In other words , slave narratives play a major role in African American



been always used for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy . I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda .”(5) Therefore , Du Bois firmly stated that literature was an important tool and vehicle in the struggle for African American political liberation . In reality , Bois was the most prominent black intellectual and spokesperson for civil rights in the United States . Consider the following quotation :

By the time of his death in 1963 , William Edward Burghardt Du Bois made his mark on American history .throughout his lifetime he completed an immense amount of literary study and works intended for the dvancement of blacks in their struggle for equality and civil justice . He devoted his life to this social issue which he called in his best known work *The Souls Of Black Folk* “ the problem of the color line “-and has become one of the most well known , influential intellect and race leader of his time . (6)

Like Du Bois , Malcolm X suffered so much both physically and psychologically because of racial discrimination inside the American society . Consider the following tragic situation

and audience that Christianity strongly supported the ugly and disgusting status quo of America regarding racial injustice and class disparity : “ Christianity is to be understood as the religious dimension of American and , indeed , of Western cultural life ...That is , it remains co-opted within the logic of modern racism as a colonized and colonizing discourse – a discourse working in the interests of racialized objectifying power .(4) Most importantly , he encouraged his audience to use the church differently as the central vehicle of the organized and political life of the black community . Interestingly , Bois believed that education and modern culture could guide the black man into civilization. In the opinion of Du Bois , the black man should not have to allow himself to be defined by American standards or be subordinated because of his race . Also , in Africa , the black man , undoubtedly , would find his sense of self , and therefore , restore his humanity and dignity . Du Bois repeatedly calls for African Americans to work toward attaining self-conscious manhood . Du Bois strongly affirms that fact : “ ...all art is propaganda and even must be , despite the waiting of pursuits . I stand in utter shamelessness and say whatever art I have for writing has

humanity , identity and self-respect is apparent in the following quotation :

In a wee wooden schoolhouse , something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting cards , - ten nts apackage – and exchange . The exchange was merry , till one girl , a tall newcomer , refused my card –refused it peremptorily , with a glance . Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others : or like , mayhap in heart and life and longing , but shut out from their world by a vast veil . (3)

As a result , Du Bois realized that there would always be a concreted barrier between the white man and the black man . Historically . blacks have been denied many social , economic and political rights . This seriously moved Du Bois to place literature and science in the service of propaganda in order to solve the problem of racial discrimination which he openly declared to be one of the most serious problems of the twentieth century in The Souls of Black folk . Du Bois strongly believed that African Americans should , because of their common interests , beliefs , experiences and behavior , work together to put an end to prejudice , segregation , oppression and inequity . Additionally,he warned his readers

community is shown to be more aggressive , cruel and brutal . Also , the most important and obvious element which the book dramatizes is the quest for freedom : “ Du Bois is justly most famous as the author of Souls. A collection of fourteen interconnected essays examining the legacies of slavery and the effects of racism from a variety of disciplinary perspectives .”(2) However , Du Bois himself witnessed the painful aftermaths of the mutilation of an African American because of deep racism . He and his wife were also seriously oppressed and victimized by the racial discrimination and injustice in the South . For example , when Bois’s son became sick neither the white doctor nor the African American physician would come to treat him. The white doctor would not come because the boy was black .The black physician refused to treat him because he feared strong repercussions and reproach . Needless to say , the child died because of the lack of medical attention and neglect. This tragic situation really crushed Du Bois and his family to the core . Also , while he was in school , Du Bois suffered so much because he was black . He suffered greatly from the failure to belong because of his racial society . His failure to achieve complete

organization of Protestant white men called Ku Klux Klan which always used violence and oppression against blacks in the North . By the 1920s , this organization which played a leading role in promoting the attacks on blacks was at the climax of its power , brutality and inhumanity .This racial organization was also the main factor behind the assassination of many renowned black heroes like Martin Luther King and others . In any case , the relationship between Africans in the Diaspora and America has been marked on the one hand , by exploitation and on the other by resistance to this . So , African diasporan literature portrays the manner in which Diaspora Africans cope with oppression , labor and racial discrimination and dehumanization .

Du Bois's recognition of the need for struggle to achieve freedom and equality is well reflected and depicted in his creative writings . For example . Du Bois's influential book The Souls of Black Folk is a successful and serious start in the right direction. This renowned book is based on Du Bois's personal experiences and strong observations. It describes how African Americans lived inside the American society . This book also examines the cultural and political psychology of the African American Diaspora . The white

gave them any respectable treatment or place in society . Also , while black men were being lynched and denied work and the right to any level of education , black women continued to work for the white family . It can be said that the American society placed the black man in a position where his manhood , dignity and self-respect have been difficult to achieve . Additionally , many critics and historians believe that race has been and continues to be a main factor in the educational achievement gap between blacks and whites inside the American community . For years , education in America has been the primary domain of white people . In any case , the white man dominated the educational process and led society in all categories of educational attainment . In this context , the similarities between the United States and South Africa under the former apartheid regime are quite remarkable and striking . African Americans faced tremendous economic and social obstacles in both the northern and southern states . Undoubtedly, these economic and social conditions left them with no control over their lives and destiny . In the South , especially, government laws were used to keep black Americans in a low social , economic and political position . There was also a powerful secret

owners to allow their slaves to read or write because reading at this time was the only way to freedom . Also , historians document that black women nursed and raised the white man , his wife and their children . Worse than this , enslaved women were violently compelled to have sexual relations with the white men . In other words , the whites were able to enslave blacks because blacks were not considered citizens or humans . In any case , slavery had removed the black man from his identity , dignity and his power in his family and society as well .

During the Civil War, president Abraham Lincoln won political support in the Northern U. S . states because of his audacity and strong speeches against slavery. In 1863 he announced the Emancipation Proclamation , by which all slaves in the U.S became free : “ Lincoln committed himself to the elimination of slavery throughout the country by degrees ...and he proceeded cautiously , with the Emancipation Proclamation issued in 1863. ”(1) But their position in American society remained very bad and miserable . The serious problem is that dominant whites could not see blacks as being fully humans . The white community still looked upon negroes in contempt , and never

The purpose of this paper is to explore and trace the construction of black American identity as treated by the African American writer and activist W. E .B. Du Bois (1868-1963). Du Bois made remarkable contributions to African American literary , social and political thought in the twentieth century and he has been regarded as one of the most significant leaders of the African American community . In reality , he dominates the African American intellectual history and consistently is being recognized as one of the most truly remarkable intellectuals of the twentieth century . One can say that the struggle of black Americans for their human , economic , political and social rights is one of the most important and dominant themes in twentieth century American history and literature . In fact , the majority of African Americans were not interested in revolutions greatly but in making the American laws treat them on an equal footing with whites . Before emancipation , black men were not able to protect their black women and their children because of the legality of slavery . More than this , they were completely isolated from their native language , culture and denied the right to acquire the language and culture of America . More than this , it became entirely illegal for slave



**W. E. B. Du Bois and the Construction of
Black American Identity**

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