

Example of the souls of black folk report

[War](#), [Civil War](#)



Abstract

The Civil War has been hailed as one of the most defining events of American history. The Civil not only led to the unification of the nation but was also accompanied by another revolutionary occurrence which was the end of slavery. Several states abolished slavery during this period. One of these states was the state Washington, District of Columbia. The District of Columbia officially ended slavery in 1862 after the signing of the document “The District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act”. The act was signed into law by President Lincoln. The signing of this document was seen as a great step towards equality between African Americas (most of who were former slaves) and the white majority. The act called for the immediate emancipation of all slaves in the DC area and also stipulated compensation for former slave owners of the state. The Act also offered voluntary transport of former slaves to places out of the US. The Act was intended to initiate the process of equality but as later years would show, equality was not enhanced. A document such as the “The District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act” could only stipulate equality theoretically but could not enhance it. In fact, the lives of former slaves had not changed much several years later. This aspect is clearly conspicuous in a literature document authored by William Du Bois titled “The Souls of Black Folk’ in 1903. The period immediately after the Civil War was also of key importance as it was a period when the nation was in a state reconstruction. William Du Bois “The Souls of Black Folk’ is a chronicle of the black experience during the period of reconstruction and shows that contrary to the expectations expressed in Civil War documents such as The District of Columbia

Compensated Emancipation Act, there was no real equality in the society and it was almost as if slavery had never ended.

“The Souls of Black Folk” is a sociological piece of American literature written by W. E. B. Du Bois. This work of literature has been heralded as a classic African American work. In this piece, Du Bois assesses the progress of African Americans on the issue of race, the obstacles hindering that progress and the possibilities that the future holds for black people. Du Bois particularly forwards a proposal combining two phrases that have in modern times become synonymous with scholars of African American sociology. The first term is “double consciousness”. According to Du Bois, double consciousness is the notion that blacks in America live with two different and conflicting identities that are impossible to merge. The first is the black identity. The second identity is the American identity, an identity that African Americans acquired by virtue of slavery. According to Du Bois, this identity is the more important of the two. The second term that Du Bois introduces is that of the “veil” which goes alongside the “double consciousness”. Here, Du Bois contends that the lives of African Americans primarily take place behind a veil. While African Americans have the ability to see and understand what life is like for the people who are out of their cocoon, it is impossible for the people out of this cocoon (mostly the whites) to understand what the African American experience is like. In this literature work, therefore, Du Bois attempts to offer the reader a glimpse of the life experience behind this “veil”.

The period in black history that Du Bois focuses on is the time immediately after the Civil War. This was the reconstruction period, and Du Bois gives several examples of black people's experience. For instance, he looks at the

failures of Freedmen's Bureau during this reconstruction period. He attributes the failures of the Bureau to national neglect of the black man, southern opposition, mismanagement, as well as bias of the courts. Du Bois also examines some of the successes of this Bureau with one them being the founding and construction of black schools. However, in terms of black achievement, Du Bois writes that the most noteworthy event that took place in black history since the reconstruction period was rise of Booker, T Washington, a black scholar who essentially rose to almost become a spokesman for the entire black race. Du Bois is however critical of Washington claiming that his approach to the relations of race is in actual sense counterproductive and detrimental to the long-term success and progress of the black race. For example, Du Bois criticizes Washington's acceptance of the principle of segregation and his focus on material progress of the race and admits that this is essentially a sign of submission to the white man. According to Dubois the segregation policy and its acceptance by some black leaders has led to even more social damage of the black race by being denied voting rights among other rights including civil status. For the progress of African Americans to take place, voting rights, civil equity and proper education that is determined by ability rather than race are mandatory.

Du Bois also gives a personal touch to his work where he talks about his experiences as a school teacher back in Tennessee. He talks about how soon after, he left, the town he previously taught became obsessed with desire for wealth especially after the rapid industrialization that took place in the south. Du Bois faults the people for prioritizing wealth above other things. He

writes that black people should not just be educated so that they can become wealthy. He also mentions that rapid industrialization has necessitated a skilled workforce which is currently not available. Black people can be part of this workforce but because of their previous submissiveness to the white men, they would need to be provided with new education and training programs to be able to work efficiently.

Du Bois then goes on to describe the lives of black people that he contends have not changed much since the days of slavery. For instance, he claims that cotton is still key to the black belt economy and mentions that very few blacks currently enjoy economic success. He also explores the development of the African religion among blacks and how it has eventually given rise to denominations such as the Baptist and the Methodist churches.

In the last parts of this literature piece, Du Bois shows the impact of racial prejudice on the society. He contends that people do not deserve to live in a world plagued by racial prejudice and uses an example of his dead son to mention that maybe he is in a better place.

The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B Du Bois and the The District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act are two documents that depict the difference between expectation and reality. Du bois' work depicts the experiences of African Americans especially after the Civil War during the Reconstruction period. He shows how the lives of the African Americans did not change much even after the signing of crucial documents that were meant to pave way for harmonized society of both blacks and whites. Du Bois' work is also a challenge to the African Americans of the time to not be contented with their lives that characterized by racial prejudice and

submissiveness to the white man but to rather wake up and demand for equal rights.

Works Cited

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. The souls of black folk. Oxford University Press, 1903.

The District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act. 1862