

Black reconstruction in america by w.e.b dubois

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Cutting essay on the decades of reconstruction and their impact on the early 20th century is gripping on its own, but when considered in context, it becomes even more powerful. Reading this text one year ago is what sparked my interest in the unique problems the African diaspora faced, this interest developed into a passion for social, political and human sciences. The erasure of African history and reassignment of a new American identity based entirely in oppression is a fascinating issue that plagued (and arguably still plagues) the diaspora and its effects are widely discussed by many social anthropologists and political scientists, but DuBois presented a different argument: that erasure of black efforts, black history and black impact continues to take place even within the diaspora, even after they've lost their connection to Africa.

The essay was written when many academics such as James Ford Rhodes and even Woodrow Wilson saw Reconstruction as a failure and disparaged the contributions of African Americans. As such, the narrative of Reconstruction for many years before DuBois' writing and rightful criticisms gained traction was whitewashed, negative and has tainted our interpretation of the Reconstruction Era to this day. Without texts like Black Reconstruction, written by a person directly affected by the social policies and laws being discussed, an era remains distorted because we only have access to the voices of the powerful. If the Western world ever aims to rectify the issues of their "chequered" past, to live in a post-racial, non-patriarchal society, to dismantle the pillars of inequality that have propped up the success of the developed world, Political Science is necessary. P

olitics is not only what political scientists study, but also an activity in which professional politicians, civil servants and ordinary citizens take part.

Everyone can profit from a culture of learning based on critical enquiry, debate and self-motivation. Everyone can benefit from understanding how their culture has evolved and developed, why we hold certain truths and laws to be fundamental and necessary. Political science is a subject that does not exist in a vacuum, simply because it's foundation is critical thought. Since childhood, I have adored the study of history. Growing up in rural Nigeria, I learned the history of my ancestors through the oral tradition: long stories spanning from tribal wars to colonialism passed from generation to generation.

When I arrived in the UK at age 11, my pursuit of knowledge led me to place these stories in their appropriate context. I began to understand why villagers closer to the coast were lighter skinned than those from the North, why an entire nation ended up crippled by corruption after decolonisation, how a terrorist group came to form from Nomadic travellers. My A-level history course has introduced me to the development of the Soviet Union and a 'modern' type of imperialism that began in the relatively recent 20th century. Study of the Soviet takeover of eastern Europe captivated me because of how impactful it was on the American political landscape despite its geographical distance. Truman's Fair Deal, for example, was stunted by the American Medical Association because it was labelled "socialised medicine". The longer-term effects of the failure of the New Deal are still felt in America today as they continually struggle to create a healthcare system that benefits more than just the one per cent.

The lectures I attended given by Gresham college over the month of May captured events surrounding the Cold War instilled in me a greater appreciation for World History. Additionally, my Sociology studies introduced me to aspects of postmodernism and New Right, which I found equally stimulating. I am drawn to the inherent logicity of conservatives and right-wing, nationalist establishments. The philosophy of the new right that education must exist to socialise the youth into one, singular national identity and that ethnocentricity is necessary for a well-functioning state is something that I, as a relatively recent immigrant was fascinated by. I would have never thought to criticise multiculturalism because it is key to my very experience of the UK, but the study of sociology has brought me closer to seeing the logic behind ideas that oppose my own.

My regular attendance at my school's debating club has also helped me confront concepts I previously thought of as irrefutable such as free speech, pacifism and religious freedom. My favourite to date has always been English Literature, and for the past ten months, I've worked through a fantastic anthology, three novels spanning three centuries and an iconic tragic play. For me, the greatest power of this subject is its ability to chronicle history: to capture the anxieties, the victories, the wars and losses and legends of a time and deliver them to both a contemporary and modern reader. The text that does this particularly well is Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. On the surface it may appear to be a raunchy tragedy, perhaps even a southern gothic with no heroes, but as I have learnt both from my lessons and a reading of Thomas Adler's *Lantern and The Moth*, the play is, in fact,

an in-depth conjecture of what the destruction of the Old South must have been like for the aristocrat class on an individual level.

The devastation of the main character, Blanche DuBois is a reflection of how an entire ruling class succumbed to the changes implemented by the new Melting Pot, or perhaps even criticism directed at the state for abandoning a whole section of their population and watching as their way of life collapsed. This resulted in a generation with grandparents who were wealthy landowners but lived underneath the poverty line. Writing from this time reflected the failure of Southern values to withstand the passage of time and the demographic change of the 20th century, and almost all of it is written from the position of the victors: Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner.

History is written very often by the victors, which is why the previously mentioned Black Reconstruction in America is crucial and enduring. The perspective of an oppressed class during times of social change is so often ignored- laws are passed and plays are written, and poems are published, and we learn the tale of humanity from those who survived to write it.

DuBois, as a biracial free man who was well educated in an Ivy League university, has his own degree of privilege over black people in the deep south still working under their former masters during Reconstruction, but he is one of the closest we, in the 21st century, have to the perspective of the oppressed.

My interest in systemic oppression and its effect on the general population led me to seek out two weeks' worth of work experience at a small solicitor's

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firm in Hackney that specialised in immigration and housing, with the majority of the clients of an Afro-Caribbean, working-class background. I wanted to see what legal protection was available for people who made up a significant population of the borough but were ignored by politicians except during elections. I am still on a mission to learn more about human, social and political sciences and to hear more from those that history ignored, silenced or forgot.