

Booker T. Washington – Atlanta address, 1895

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: "Cast down your bucket where you are"— cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions.

In this connection it is well remembered that whatever other signs the South may have, when it comes to business it is in the South that the Negro is given a chance in the commercial world. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that most of us are to live by the productions of our hands and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor and put brains and skill into our occupations. . . . No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, not at the top. . . .

The wisest among my race understand that demonstrating on questions of social equality is foolish. Progress in enjoying all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is banished for long. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours. But it is much more important that we be prepared for making use of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth much more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house.

W.E.B. DuBois – Souls of Black Folks, 1903

Mr. Washington asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things, -

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth, -

And concentrate all their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. . . . As a result of this tender of the palm-branch, what has been the return? In these years since Mr. Washington's Atlanta Address there have occurred:

1. The disenfranchisement of the Negro.
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro

These movement are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. . .

... The way for a people to gain respect is not by continually belittling and ridiculing themselves; that on the contrary, Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to proper manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys.

We must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights which the worlds accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the Founding Fathers would fain forget: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

1. How did BTW believe blacks should address the issue of discrimination? What do you think he thought of the changes that took place during radical Reconstruction?
2. Why was DuBois critical of Washington? What approach did he believe blacks ought to take in trying to improve their conditions?