
Dr. Du Bois Explains

Will you allow me to correct your statement of March 3d as to my attitude toward the education of colored children?

I did not decry common labor. On the contrary I emphasized the importance of doing present tasks well and faithfully. What I did emphasize was the fact that it was the duty of every group and nation to eliminate the hardest and most exhausting manual toil; that this is done by the selection of ability and the training of men through education. The primary function of education then is not the output of goods but the training of men.

If now a group of people like American Negroes are advised to turn all their attention or their chief attention to the training of laborers and servants, they are advised to commit social suicide. They will soon find that in the rapidly changing technique of industry their laborers will be displaced while they will have developed no intelligent leadership in industry or thought to guide the mass.

Such leadership will not be supplied by the whites because of race prejudice. Yet these same whites are the first to criticise lack of it. They demand loudly and angrily the great social virtues on the part of the freedmen's sons—thrift, organization, co-operation, suppression of crime, upbuilding of homes, etc. These virtues are not developed simply by individual action, but by group experience and compulsion. If Negroes wish, then, to rise in efficiency and civilization, shall they bend their energies to the training of good servants or of good men? Shall they select and push ability and efficiency among their children, or shall they try and make street laborers and "hands" of all?

The answer is perfectly clear. The present lowly tasks should be done by colored people and done well, but they should bend every energy and make every sacrifice to select and discover through education the brains and ability which will raise the Negro race to its rightful equality with the rest of the races of the world. Persons who oppose this perfectly rational program—a program which every civilized nation is following today—are those who wish to keep the black man forever as a "hewer of wood and drawer of water." It is such people who are trying to make the colored public schools of Indianapolis places for making bread, clothes and tables, and not for making men. It is such people that discourage gifted colored children from entering the high school and going to college. It is such people who pay Negro

From a Letter, *Indianapolis* (Indiana) *Star* (April 8, 1912).

demagogues to advocate industrial education as a sole and sufficient educational program.

If I mistake not the colored people of the United States have been deceived in this matter long enough and are beginning to see the light.¹