



Tony Brown's COMMENTS

NAACP's Black Founding Father

In my column last week I began the story of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois one of the most important figures in Black America around the turn of the century and a classic example of black self-help. As the most outstanding black figure in the founding of the NAACP, DuBois was a leader among leaders. "The Souls of Black Folk," written by him in 1903, became a literary benchmark for black progress in America. However, his brilliance, powerfulness and aggression were constantly misconstrued.

One of the criticisms of Dr. DuBois as a black leader was his aloof "snobbery." A man ahead of his time, he organized the Niagara Movement, a group of blacks concerned with the racial situation in America. It was named after the place of the first gathering, Niagara Falls.

DuBois also launched the Pan African Congress, attempting to link the struggles of black Americans with blacks in Africa. Neither organization can be labeled a success. But together and with the many other initiatives of DuBois, such as attempting and failing to organize a farmer's cooperative in the South, he helped to expand the body of thinking in the race struggle which bore fruit a later date and even until today.

As editor of *The Crisis*, he fought running battles with the NAACP Board of Directors, evincing a determination to chart its own course and let the Devil take the hindmost. When an exasperated Oswald Garrison Villard, a founder and the disbursing treasurer, sought the editor's head and the Board refused to give it to him, Villard resigned. He declared that DuBois should be recognized as "merely a paid employee" subject to the disciplining of the chairman, like the poorest paid employee. He was joined by chairman Joel Spingarn "as a gesture of courtesy." Both men, however, later agreed to remain with the Association.

DuBois always had at least one staunch champion, in the person of a white ex-social worker, Mary White Ovington. Rudwick quotes President Moorfield Storey's observation that depicts DuBois as a "tragic figure, a classic study of a talented Negro damaged emotionally after a lifetime of being treated as an inferior by many men whom he knows to be his inferiors."

DuBois was, indeed, a man born in and attenuated by his turbulent racist times and he confronted them with all the zeal, intelligence, commitment, courage and fury locked in his rather short, round frame. His exit from the NAACP was fraught with raging controversy as his

Second in series

long and stormy tenure as a founding officer of the NAACP and the blue flame editor of its *Crisis* for nearly 25 years, his emphasis changing from integration to separation. "The only thing that we not only can, but must do, is voluntarily and insistently organize our economic and social power, no matter how much segregation it involves," stressed DuBois. "Learn to associate with ourselves for effective association. Organize our strength as consumers; train ourselves in methods of democratic control within our own group. Run and support our own institutions. The only option that black people have is to use segregation to destroy segregation."

DuBois returned to the Association 10 years later after he was forced to retire as professor of sociology at Atlanta University. He returned to the NAACP staff in September, 1944, as Director of Special Research.

In 1947, he organized and prepared a 155-page petition, "An Appeal to the World," documenting the history of racism in America. This was presented to the United Nations. Incidentally, DuBois started a bitter controversy which led to his final separation in 1948 when he declared that Walter White's appointment to serve as consultant to the American Delegation at the United Nations was wrong. He said that acceptance would bind the Association to "The reactionary, warmongering colonial imperialism of the present (Truman) Administration." Word of this leaked to the press and both the Board and Walter White were "livid." DuBois resigned for the last time.

A bitter DuBois embraced socialism, wrote for many left wing organizations and chaired others.

Finally, in 1961, he went to Ghana, formerly joined the Communist Party, became a Ghanaian citizen, warmly embraced by Ghana President Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah urged DuBois to come to Ghana and revive the Encyclopedia Africana project under government sponsorship. Because he was so disillusioned with America, DuBois readily accepted both challenges.

In 1963, he died. He was given a state funeral and buried just outside the Christianborg Castle, the Ghanaian Government House and a place of honor.

"Tony Brown's Journal" TV series can be seen on public television Sundays on Channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58, Sundays at 6:30 p.m. Please consult listings.

"Too Marvelous For Words" Pays Tribute To Mercer

"Too Marvelous for Words," a tribute to Johnny Mercer, starring Margaret Whiting, Julius LaRosa, Tex Arnold, Marlene VerPlanck and the Loonis McGlohon Trio, will entertain Spirit Square audiences at 8:15 p.m. on February 24-25.

Tickets are \$14 and are available at the Spirit Square Box Office, 318 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, N.C. 28202. The Box Office will hold tickets for five days without payment. Call 704-376-2883 for information on phone and mail orders.

The late Johnny Mercer, often called America's greatest lyricist, won seven Oscars for classics like "Moon River" and the "Days of Wine and Roses." Mercer's songs are known around the world, but these songs have never been performed better than

by Margaret Whiting, Carol Woods, Julius LaRosa, Tex Arnold, Marlene VerPlanck and the Loonis McGlohon Trio. This tribute was first performed at the opening of the Mercer Library in Atlanta.

Margaret Whiting grew up learning the songs of Johnny Mercer, who used to play his songs for her father. She is currently starring in the New York production "Taking My Turn." A veteran entertainer, Julius LaRosa received wide acclaim recently when he opened at Michael's Pub in New York. Marlene VerPlanck is a Spirit Square favorite and one of America's best interpreters of popular songs. A recording star and award-winning actress, Carol Woods was recently seen on the PBS special "The Chemical People." Tex Arnold is the talented

arranger and musical director for this tribute.

The Mercer tribute is a continuation of Loonis McGlohon's successful series, "American Popular Songs" presented at Spirit Square.

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