

THE ATLANTA CREED

By W. E. Burghardt Du Bois

7th Edition

Foreword

[Gift of  
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
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1. We American Negroes are threatened today with lack of opportunity to work according to gift and training, and lack of income sufficient to support healthy families according to standards demanded by modern culture.
2. In industry, we are a labor reservoir, fitfully employed and paid a wage below subsistence; in agriculture, we are largely disfranchised peons; in public education, we tend to be disinherited illiterates; in higher education, we are the parasites of reluctant and hesitant philanthropy.
3. In the current reorganization of industry, there is no adequate effort to secure us a place in industry, or to open opportunity for Negro ability, or to give us security in age or unemployment.
4. The labor force and intelligence of 12 million people is more than sufficient to supply their own wants and make their advancement secure. Therefore, we must strive to build a co-operative Negro industrial system in America, which will to some extent furnish employment, direct production, and regulate consumption for gradually increasing numbers of our race.
5. We believe that if carefully and intelligently planned, this can be done in the midst of and in conjunction with the surrounding national industrial organization, and in intelligent accord with that reconstruction of the economic basis of the nation which must sooner or later be accomplished.
6. In this effort, we must avoid the past errors of capitalism and the pitfall of American Industry, in assuming that the wealth of the few and poverty of the mass can ever spell prosperity. The object of production by universal labor is consumption by the mass according to their needs; and not by the few, according to their desires.
7. We refuse to remain parasites feeding on white philanthropy, and we welcome the burden of the uplift of our own masses until they as a conscious and intelligent proletariat can themselves assume democratic control of the whole group in the interests of our working class. Only in this way can the American Negro enter the new industrial kingdoms of the world, standing on his own economic feet.
8. Not by the development of upper classes anxious to exploit the workers, nor by the escape of individual genius into the white world, can we effect the salvation of our group in America. And the salvation of this group carries with it the emancipation of the darker races of men who make the vast majority of mankind. We, therefore, propose this:

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BASIC AMERICAN NEGRO CREED

(BANC)

- A. As American Negroes, we believe in unity of racial effort, so far as this is necessary for self-defense and self-expression, leading ultimately to the goal of a united humanity, and the abolition of all racial distinctions.
- B. We would avoid all artificial and hate-engendering deification of race separation as such; but just as sternly we repudiate an enervating philosophy of Negro escape into an artificially privileged white race, which has long sought to enslave, exploit and tyrannize over all mankind.
- C. We believe that the Talented Tenth among American Negroes, fitted by education and character to think and do, should find primary employment in determining by study and measurement, the present field and demand for racial action, and the method by which the masses may be guided along this path.
- D. We believe that the problems which now call for such racial planning are Employment, Education and Art; these three: but the greatest of these is Employment.
- E. We believe in the ultimate triumph of some form of Socialism the world over; that is, state ownership and control of the means of production, and equality of income; we believe that the ultimate power in the state should rest in the hands of those who work, and that the state should be ruled by them.
- F. We do not believe in lynching as a cure for crime; nor in war as a necessary defense of culture; nor in Revolution as the only path to economic justice. Whatever may have been true in other times and places, we believe that today in America we can abolish poverty by reason, sacrifice, and the intelligent use of the ballot, and we will not join nor abet any movement with other aims or methods.

A SUMMARY

1. Business for Public Welfare, and not for Private Profit.
2. Organization of consumers to control expense and guide production.
3. Organization of production for consumption and not for accumulating wealth and concentrating despotic power.
4. Mutual exchange of service, work and money for eliminating unemployment.
5. No monopoly of land, materials, nor machines in private hands.
6. Political power not for jobs but for public recognition of the Negro's right to share equally and proportionately in all public expenditures; for protecting all labor in wage and work; and for redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor through taxation and nationalization.
7. We conceive this matter of work and equality of adequate income is not the end of our effort but the beginning of the rise of the Negro race in this land and the world over, in power, learning, and accomplishment; in self-expression through literature and art; and for the Life Complete and Beautiful, in a world of Peace for all men.

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8. This is and is designed to be a program of racial effort, and this narrowed goal is forced upon us today by the unyielding determination of the mass of the white race to enslave, exploit and insult Negroes.
9. To this vision of work, organization and service, we welcome all men of all conditions and colors so long as their subscription to this basic creed is unequivocal and sincere, and is proven by their deeds.

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The above tentative statement is not for publication, and is not the official expression of Atlanta University; it is simply a proposal made by persons resident at Atlanta University; it is written out for your careful study and criticism. I should be glad to hear from you and to have addresses of persons who would like to consider this matter. When a sufficient number of persons agree, I shall hope to issue something like this to the public with their signatures.

*N. B. DuBois*