

Africana Philosophy Research Group

The Africana Philosophy Research Group began in 2020 at a time of considerable racial tension and unrest. There were many demonstrations, protests and the like, some of them violent in nature. It seemed that an appropriate philosophic response to this would be to study some philosophy, with the aim of coming to a better understanding of the ideas, attitudes and history that had led to the present situation.

The word 'Africana' signifies from Africa and the African diaspora, the latter being based largely, but not entirely, in the USA. 'Philosophy' we interpreted widely as including the thoughts, actions and artistic expressions of all those seeking freedom. We concentrated on primary sources, beginning with Anna Julia Cooper's book, 'Voice from the South'. Reading such people's own words is time consuming but ultimately most satisfying. For example, Frederick Douglass is a well-known figure, but reading his autobiography and some of his speeches helped get to know him in a more intimate way. WEB Du Bois presented a challenge because his work and ideas on a wide variety of subjects developed over many decades. We therefore just took his best-known work, 'The Souls of Black Folk,' which none of us had previously read but which all of us found to be profound.

This compilation is intended to share some of the group's findings, which I hope will be of interest. The composition of the group changed a little over its four years, during which time we met online every few months to discuss a particular book or person or topic. We have now concluded our work together, at least for the time being, but I would like to thank everyone who contributed to what was an illuminating, inspiring and immensely enjoyable journey.

Donald Lambie

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Compiler's Note

The aim of the compilation is to show 'our findings'. The material came from our primary sources, and supplementary research.

We listened to podcasts on the History of Africana Philosophy by Peter Adamson and Chike Jeffers. At one stage we wrote to Peter Adamson and told him about our project. These podcasts were not referred to in the compilation, though they were a great help.

Extracts of the books have been given quite liberally to give the reader an opportunity to hear the voice of the writer and appreciate a book which would not be a usual first choice. Direct quotes are in italics.

Apart from book reading the group researched two topics, African Proverbs and Ubuntu. We had two additional research subjects; to find a person of interest and record our reason for the choice; the other was to research a philosopher, artist, thinker who lives or lived in our area. The findings of this research are included in this record, but under one heading - Personal Research.

Our programme was not structured chronologically; however, we covered a wide range of literature, from the nineteenth to the twenty first century.

The group met once a term and everyone came prepared to share their findings with other members of the group. These meetings gave rise to enthusiastic and meaningful conversations.

The vocabulary used in this field is sensitive. We have used the word 'black' and and hope that no offence will be taken – certainly none is intended. Some of the

authors considered used the word 'negro' which has been retained in its context. Again no offence is intended by this.

Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964)

(Hereafter referred to as AJC)

AJC was born into slavery, which was finally abolished in America by the 13th Amendment in 1865, in her seventh year. The lives of four million people in the South were affected by this Amendment. The Freedmen's Bureau was set up to assist the process of absorbing the formerly enslaved people into society. The Bureau helped in many ways, including the provision of facilities for education. The Episcopal Church also aided in this educational endeavour.

AJC embraced these opportunities for education; her education began at nine years old and by the age of ten she was teaching her peers part time. Thus her love of teaching showed itself at an early age, and her active participation in education continued until the age of ninety. To AJC education was the key to the freedom of the formerly enslaved African Americans. Her love of learning was extensive and accompanied by a great breadth of vision. These qualities are evident in her essays. Widowed after two years of marriage, she then continued her education at Oberlin College. AJC obtained a BA in Mathematics in 1884; and a MA in Mathematics in 1887.

She returned to teaching after obtaining these degrees and served her people tirelessly. She refused to accept inferior educational curricula based on race or gender bias, either for herself or her students.

AJC was active in the formation of clubs and institutions for African Americans, who were unable to obtain membership in existing organisations because of racial prejudice.

Her interests in raising the profile of black people was not confined to America, but was also international. She attended the first Pan African Congress in London in 1900.

Oberlin College. (photo taken from Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Washington D.C. USA)



At the death of her brother in 1915, AJC postponed her doctoral research to look after his children. However, she resumed her studies later.

In 1925 at the age of sixty-seven she became the fourth African American woman to obtain her PhD. She graduated at the Sorbonne; her doctoral thesis examined the French attitudes toward slavery during the late 18th century revolutions in France and Haiti. (We read C.L.R James's account of the Haitian Revolution, which will also appear in this Record).

She lived to the age of 106, during which time she saw the end of slavery and the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.

AJC's most famous work is the book, **A Voice from the South** published in 1892.

Only the Black Woman can say, 'When and where I enter, in the quiet undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me'.(2016:12)

The book consists of a Preface and a collection of essays and speeches, eight in all, divided into two sections. A Voice from the South offers a thoughtful examination of the social conditions in the country, the failure of the Reconstruction and the emergence of the Jim Crow laws.

Preface

Raison d'Etre'

Black women have a unique voice to contribute to the national discussions about race and gender inequality, at a crucial point in the history of African Americans. A voice distinct from those black men and white women.

First Part

First Essay

Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race.

(This essay was presented to the convocation of coloured clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church at Washington, D.C.1886.)

The central theme in this essay is the vital role of women in society. The reader soon becomes aware of AJC's extensive learning and breadth of vision by the way she addresses the position of women in society generally and the black woman specifically.

The starting point for AJC to argue her case for a changed view of women in society begins with the ideals of the Western conception of womanhood founded on Christian principles.

AJC celebrates womanhood and emphasises women's significance in society as wives and mothers in character building.

The position of women in society determines the vital elements of its regeneration and progress. Now this is so on a priori grounds all must admit. And this is not because woman is better or stronger or wiser than man, but from the nature of the case, it is she who must first form the man by directing the first impulses of his character.

Their role is essential to social progress, because a race is but a total of families. The nation an aggregate of its homes.

Now the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration, the re-training of the race, as well as the groundwork and starting point of its progress upward, must be the black woman.

At this point, the argument concentrates on the vital role of the voiceless black woman.

Woman, Mother, - your responsibility is one that might make angels tremble and fear to take hold! To trifle with it, to ignore or misuse it, is to treat lightly the most sacred and solemn trust ever confided by God to humankind. The training of children is a task on which an infinity of weal or woe depends.

The bishops who were present at this conference were made aware that the church had a part to play in social development and the protection of women. AJC pointed out to them that the Episcopal Church had done little to elevate the position of black women in society.

I am my sisters' keeper! Should be the hearty response of every man and woman of the race, and the conviction should purify and exalt the narrow, selfish, and petty personal aims of life into a noble and sacred purpose.

Second Essay

The Higher Education of Women

There was a belief in early nineteenth century that education would rob women of their femininity, and womanhood. AJC argues that women could have a positive impact on the world with their kind and loving nature and that the female influence would refine education.

We might as well expect to grow trees from leaves as hope to build up a civilisation or manhood without taking into consideration our women and the home life made by them, which must be the root and ground of the whole matter. Let us insist then on special encouragement for the education of our women and special care in their training.

Man and woman complement each other and form humanity. Education serves to develop the woman, who in turn would help the world.

The peace of women's souls would meet the righteousness of men's ideals.

AJC saw that it was vital to the development of the nation for women to have equal opportunity in society.

...you will not find the law of love shut out from the affairs of men after the feminine half of the world's truth is completed.

Third Essay

Woman versus The Indian

(This essay was a presentation to a gathering of African American intellectuals in Chicago.)

In this essay the spotlight is on racism as experienced by black women in such areas as the exclusion from white women's clubs, even though white women were proclaiming socially progressive ideas, these ideas were in fact limited to white citizens only. To those in favour of exclusion AJC says:

It is only from the broad plateau of light and love that one can see petty prejudice and narrow priggishness in their true perspective

AJC draws on her personal experience, during her travels, to illustrate the demeaning effect of discrimination. Of this she says, *The feeling of slighted womanhood is unlike every other emotion of the soul.*

She encourages influential women, teachers, and reformers to include in the educational curriculum the subject of 'manners', teaching the nation "to be courteous and pitiful", which would have a direct influence on society.

And this is why, as it appears to me, woman in her lately acquired vantage ground for speaking an earnest helpful word, can do this country no deeper and truer and more lasting good than by blending all her energies to thus broadening, humanising and civilising her native land.

The man who is courteous to her is so, not because of anything he hopes or fears or sees, but because he is a gentleman.

AJC pointed out that black people faced discrimination in all areas of life and this found fertile soil in the South, and those who subscribed to such ideas supported division in place of a unified nation.

The philosophic mind sees its own 'rights' are the rights of humanity. That in the universe of God, nothing is trivial or mean; and the recognition it seeks is not through the robber and wild beast but through the universal application ultimately of the Golden Rule.

AJC draws attention to the fact that the oppression of African Americans continued to persist *response:*

The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class, - it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity.

Fourth Essay

The Status of Woman in America

In this essay AJC acknowledges the service of white women in many areas of the society, and their general humane approach to its marginalised members.

She also notes the difficulties working class men and women face under capitalism. Women play an essential role in this era of social and economic change.

... If she follows the instincts of her nature, however, she must always stand for the conservation of those deeper moral forces which make for the happiness of homes and the righteousness of the country. In a reign of moral ideas she is easily queen.

Black women face both racism and gender inequality, giving them a unique perspective. They also face sexism from their own men, who do not support their participation in the changing economic opportunities. Although, black women are a silent witness, they can contribute to the flourishing of the African American people.

There are those, however, who value the calm elevation of the thoughtful spectator who stands aloof from the heated scramble; and above the turmoil and din of corruption and selfishness and listen to the teachings of eternal truth and righteousness.

American politicians are criticised for excluding women and emphasising personal advantage and gain.

Second Part

Tutti ad Libitum (all musicians should play together and have the freedom to improvise.) AJC introduces this theme for the second group of essays, using the metaphor of music to illustrate harmony in society and the freedom for individuals to express their talents for the benefit of the whole.

First Essay

Has America A Race Problem; If So, How Can It Be Solved?

There are two kinds of peace, one obtained through suppression, the other by adjusting different forces.

All through God's universe we see eternal harmony and symmetry as the unvarying result of the equilibrium of opposing forces. Fair Play in an equal fight is the law written in nature's book.

The question is, is peace gained through suppression or discovering the natural harmony?

.... the secret of true harmony is the determination to live and let live.

The beautiful curves described by planets and suns in their courses are the resultant of conflicting forces.

Historically America has not consisted of one race. Therefore, no one race can be supreme, all need to be consulted, and their claims addressed.

... Men will here learn that a race, as a family, may be true to itself without seeking to exterminate all others.

That the principles of true democracy are founded in universal reciprocity, and man's a man was written when God first stamped His own image and superscription on His child and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

Second Essay

The African As Presented In American Literature

AJC examines the development of American literature in its ability to faithfully portray the American experience. She notes that despite the presence of black people in America from the time of its foundation they were not included in the

literary form of the American experience. However, she considered the novel **Uncle Tom's Cabin** awakened the American public to their plight and influenced public thinking about the morality of enslavement.

Furthermore, AJC criticises the writers who portray African Americans as caricatures, even though they had no knowledge of them, or any idea what their aspirations might be. In this category of writing there are also those who portray the African American in such a way as to incite fear in the white population, either that African Americans will dominate politically, or that there will be a fusion of races.

No finite mind can grasp and give out the whole circle of truth. We do well if we can illuminate just the tiny arc which we occupy and should be glad that the next generation will not need the lessons we so assiduously hammer into this.

And paradoxical as it may seem, instead of making us narrow and provincial, this trueness to one's habitat, this appreciative eye and ear for the tints and voices of one's own little world serves but to usher us into eternal galleries and choruses of God. It is only through the unclouded perception of our 'tiny part' that we can come to harmonise with the 'stupendous whole'.

However, there are writers AJC says those who are guided by their own truthfulness and are true to nature. They write for the sheer love of it, not to prove a point.

"Know Thyself." Keep true to your own ideals, being not ashamed of what is homely and your own. Speak out and speak honestly. Be true to yourself and to the message God and nature meant you to deliver.

AJC acknowledges the support from those on the side of justice and who supported the African American people during the period of Reconstruction.

With this platform to stand on we can with clear eye weigh what is written and estimate what is done and ourselves paint what is true with the calm

spirit of those who know their cause is right and who believe there is a God who judged the nations.

Third Essay

What Are We Worth?

A sound manhood, a true womanhood is a fruit which the lowliest can grow. And it is a commodity of which the supply never exceeds the demand.

AJC initially posed the question whether we are on the credit or debit side? Her advice: *Each is under a most sacred obligation not to squander the material committed to him, not to sap its strength in folly and vice, and to see at least that he delivers a product worthy the labour and cost which have been expended on him.*

AJC not only had a fine intellect, but she was also pragmatic. How is the inherent worth of a human life evaluated?

In the final reckoning do you belong to the debit or credit side of the account according to a fair and square, an impartial reckoning?

Can racism be a reliable yardstick to measure human worth? No. Racism is based on opinions, feelings and ideas which change and for this reason it is unreliable.

Education, then, is the safest and richest investment possible to man. It pays the largest dividends and gives the grandest possible product to the world- a man. The demand is always greater than the supply- and the world pays well for what it prizes.

The next issue she addresses is the shortage of low-cost housing for African Americans because the poor white communities are given preference. The result is that African Americans pay high rents for inferior accommodation and have poor dietary habits. These conditions do not produce good labour material.

If improvement is possible, if it is in our power to render ourselves valuable to a community or neighbourhood, it should be on the work of the earnest and able men and women among us, the moral physicians and reformers, to devise and apply a remedy.

As is said, "man cannot live on bread alone."Matthew 4:4. Cooper phrases it like this:

There is the hunger of the eye for beauty, the hunger of the ear for concords, the hungering of the mind for development and growth, of the soul for communion and love, for a higher, richer, fuller living- a more abundant life! And every man owes it to himself to let nothing in him starve for lack of proper food.

How is worth assessed?

Men who dignify the world for their having lived in it.

I care not for the theoretical symmetry and impregnable logic of your moral code I care not for the hoary respectability and traditional mysticisms of your theological situations, I care not for the beauty and solemnity of your rituals and religious ceremonies, I care not even for the reasonableness and unimpeachable fairness of your social ethics, - if it does not turn out better, nobler, truer men and women.

Fourth Essay

The Gain from a Belief

A dialogue between personified nineteenth century philosophy and an individual representing humanity. Personified philosophy looks on human activities as mechanical, materialistic, with no hope of growth or spiritual development. A bleak picture of life and death, bleak and unknown.

AJC's response: *I believe there is an existence beyond our present experience; that that existence is conscious and culturable; and that there is a noble work here and now in helping men to live into it.*

Her response to Scepticism: *The great, the fundamental need of any nation, any race, is for heroism, devotion, and sacrifice; and there cannot be heroism, devotion, and sacrifice in a primarily sceptical spirit.*



This postage stamp of AJC was issued in 2009, the thirty second stamp in the Black Heritage series. The U.S. Postal Services dedicated the stamp at the Lawrence Dunbar High School, previously known as M Street High School and the Preparatory High School for Coloured Youth, the school where AJC taught. She challenged the notion that African Americans are naturally inferior and to this day is honoured for her unwavering stand against racial prejudice. (Information taken from the APS website).

Frederick Douglass 1818-1895

A Brief Historical Sketch

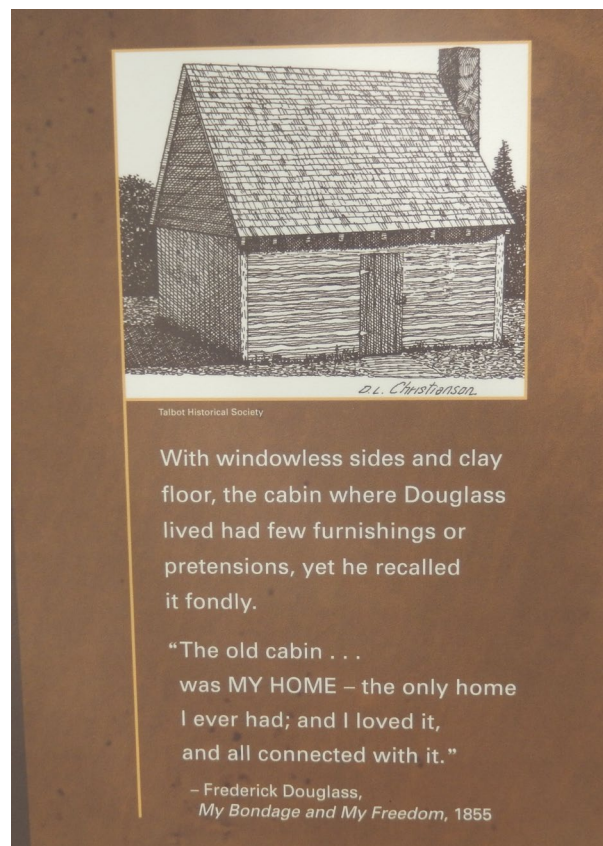
Born into slavery in Tuckahoe, Maryland in 1818 as Frederick Washington Augustus Bailey he later took the name Frederick Douglass (referred to as FD hereafter). He escaped to the North in 1838. Even though he had no formal education, FD published three autobiographies: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave* 1845; *My Bondage and My Freedom* 1855; *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* 1861. He was also an editor of a newspaper, wrote innumerable speeches; in the spoken word he was an exceptionally gifted orator. He was the first black person appointed to a position requiring senatorial confirmation; in 1877 President Rutherford B.Hayes nominated him to be Marshall of the Columbia.

My Bondage and My Freedom (1855)

There is a prophet within us, forever whispering that behind the seen lies the immeasurable unseen.

There are twenty-five chapters in this book: the first twenty are the years in bondage, from chapter twenty-one to twenty-five he describes events after his escape, first as a fugitive slave and finally as a free man.

Chapter One



Frederick Douglass describes various aspects of his childhood.

The dwelling of my grandmother and grand father had few pretensions. It was a log hut, or cabin built of clay wood and straw. To my child's eye, however, it was a noble structure admirably adapted to promote the comforts and convenience of its inmates.

Living here, with my dear old grandmother and grandfather, it was a long time before I knew myself to be a slave... As I grew larger and older, and learnt by degrees the sad fact, that the little hut, and the sight on which stood, belong not to my dear old grandparents, but to some person who lived a great distance off, and who was called by my grandmother, Old Master. I further learnt the sad effect, that not only the house and the lot, but that grandmother herself, (grandfather was free,) and all the little children around her, belong to the mysterious person called by grandmother with every mark of reverence, "Old Master."

Sorrows and joys of childhood

But the sorrows of childhood, like the pleasures of after life, are transient. It is not even in the power of slavery to write indelible sorrow, at a single dash, over the heart of a child. There is, after all, but little difference in the measure of contentment felt by the slave child neglected and the slaveholder's child, cared for and petted. The spirit of the All Just mercifully holds the balance for the young.

Chapter Two

Down in a little valley not far from grandmammy's cabin, stood Mr. Lee's mill, where people came often in large numbers to get their corn ground. It was a watermill; and I shall never be able to tell the many things thought and felt, while I sat on the bank and watched that and the turning of that ponderous wheel. (2019:44)

Chapter Nine

FD described Austin Gore, an overseer on Col. Lloyds plantation.

This quotation illustrates for the reader, how the machinery of slavery ran. The brutality of the overseer played a key role in this.

The name of the new overseer was Austin Gore. Upon this individual I would fix particular attention, for under his rule there was more suffering from violence and bloodshed than had, according to the older slaves, ever been experienced before on this plantation. I confess, I hardly know how to bring this man fitly before the reader. He was, it is true, an overseer, and possessed, to a large extent, the peculiar characteristics of his class; yet, to call him merely an overseer, would not give the reader a fair notion of the man. I speak of overseers as a class. They are such. They are as distinct from the slaveholding Gentry of the South, as are the fish-women of Paris, and the cold- heavens of London, distinct from other members of society... They have been arranged and classified by the great law of attraction, which determines the spheres and affinities of men, which ordains, that men, whose malign and brutal propensities predominate over their moral and intellectual endowments, shall, naturally fall into those employments which promised the largest gratification to those predominating in statements or propensities. The office of overseer takes this raw material of vulgarity and brutality and stamps it as a distinct class of southern society. Everything must be absolute here. Guilty or not guilty, it is enough to be accused, to be sure of a flogging.

F.D. continued to describe specific occasions of inhumane cruelty, and the fact that perpetrators did not account for their crimes. A slave could not give evidence in a court of law against his owner. FD has described the brutal characteristics of slavery; absolute power and no accountability.

However, FD, also re-counted acts of kindness which he received from other slaves on the plantation, and Captain Anthony's daughter, Lucretia.

After two years with Captain Anthony on the plantation, FD was sent to Baltimore, to the Auld family, related to the captain by the marriage of his daughter Lucretia to Thomas Auld. He was not ten years old when he left the plantation.

FD's thoughts on his move from the plantation to Baltimore:

I may say here that I regard my removal from Colonel Lloyd's plantation as one of the most interesting and fortunate events of my life.

I was not the only boy on the plantation that might have been sent to live in Baltimore. There was a wide margin from which to select. There were boys younger, boys older, and boys of the same age, belonging to my old master - some at his own house, and some at his farm - but the high privilege fell to my lot.

I may be deemed superstitious and egotistical, in regarding this event as a special interposition of divine Providence in my favour, but the thought is a part of my history, and I should be false to the earliest and most cherished sentiments of my soul, if I suppressed, or hesitated to avow that opinion, although it may be characterised as irrational by the wise, and ridiculous by the scoffer. From my earliest recollections of serious matters, I date the entertainment of something like an ineffaceable conviction, that slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace and this conviction, like the word of living faith, strengthened me through the darkest trials of my lot. This good spirit was from God; and to him I offer thanksgiving and praise.

Chapter Ten

FD describes his reception by the Auld family:

Mr and Mrs Hugh Auld, my new mistress and master, were both at home, and met me at the door with their rosy cheeked little son, Thomas, to take care of whom was to constitute my future occupation. In fact, it was to 'little

Tommy', rather than to his parents, that old master made a present of me, and though there were no legal form or arrangement entered into, I have no doubt that Mr. and Mrs. Auld felt that, in due time, I should be legal property of their bright- eyed and beloved boy, Tommy. I was struck by the appearance, especially, of my new mistress. Her face was lighted with the kindest emotions; and the reflex influence of her countenance, as well as the tenderness with which she seemed to regard me, while asking me sundry little questions, greatly delighted me, and lit up, to my fancy the pathway of my future.

Mrs. Auld (Miss Sophia) introduces FD to his first literacy class.

The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the Bible - for she often read aloud when her husband was absent - soon awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading and aroused in me the desire to learn. Having no fear of my kind mistress, before my eyes,(she had then given me no reason to fear), I frankly asked her to teach me to read; and, without hesitation, the dear woman began the task and very soon, by her assistance, I was master of the alphabet, and could spell words of 3 or 4 letters. My mistress seemed almost just proud of my progress, as if I had been her own child; and, supposing that her husband would be as well pleased, she made no secret of what she was doing for me. Indeed, she exultingly told him of the aptness of a pupil, of her intention to persevere in teaching me, and of the duty which she felt it to teach me at least to read the Bible. Here arose the first cloud over my Baltimore prospects, the precursor of drenching rains and chilling blasts.

Hugh was amazed at the simplicity of his spouse. And, probably for the first time, he unfolded to her the true philosophy of slavery, and the peculiar rules necessary to be observed by masters and mistresses, in the management of their human chattels. Mr Auld promptly forbade the continuance of her instructions; telling her, in the first place, that the thing itself was unlawful;

that it was also unsafe and could only do mischief. To use his own words, further, he said, "if you give and slave an inch he will take a mile; he should know nothing but the will of his master and learn to obey it. Learning would spoil the best slave in the world; If you teach that slave - speaking of myself- how to read the Bible, there will be no keeping him; It would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave, and as to himself, learning would do him no good, but probably a great deal of harm - making him disconsolate and unhappy. If you teach him how to read, he'll want to know how to write, and this accomplishment he'll be running away with himself." Such was the tenor of Master Hugh's oracular exposition of the true philosophy of training a human chattel; and it must be confessed that he very clearly comprehended the nature and the requirements of the relation of master and slave. His discourse was the first decidedly anti- slavery lecture to which it had been my lot to listen.

Mrs Auld evidently felt the force of his remarks; and like an obedient wife began to shape her course in the direction indicated by her husband.

The effect of his words, on me, was neither slight no transitory. His iron sentences - cold and harsh- sunk deep into my heart and stirred up not only my feelings into a sort of rebellion but awakened within me a slumbering train of a vital thought. It was a new and special revelation, dispelling painful mystery, against which my youthful understanding had struggled, and struggled in vain, to wit: the white man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the black man. Very well, thought I, knowledge unfits a child to be a slave. I Instinctively assented to the proposition; and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom. This was just what I needed; and I got it at a time, and from a source, whence I least expected it. I was saddened at the thought of losing the assistance of my kind mistress; but the information, so instantly derived, to some extent compensated me for the loss I had sustained in this direction.

Despite the loss of Mrs. Auld's affection and help, F.D. tells the reader how he pursued his studies and his discoveries.

Seized with the determination to learn to read, at any cost, I hit upon on many expedients to accomplish the desired end. The plea which I mainly adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of using my young white playmates, with whom I met in the street, as teachers. I used to carry almost constantly, a copy of Webster's spelling book in my pocket; and, sent on errands, or when playtime was allowed me, I would step with my young friends, aside, and take a lesson in spelling. I generally paid my tuition fee to the boys, with bread which I also carried in my pocket.

FD discovers a piece of literature which influenced his life.

We know that by the age of 13 years FD had succeeded in learning to read, and as he says, *every increase of knowledge, especially respecting the free states, added something to the almost intolerable burden of the thought- 'I am a Slave For Life'. To my bondage I saw no end.*

Once aroused by the silver trump of knowledge, my spirit was roused to eternal wakefulness. Liberty! The inestimable right of every man, had, for me, converted every object into an asserter of this great right. It was heard in every sound, and beheld in every object. It was ever present, to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. The more beautiful and charming the smiles of nature, the more horrible and desolate was my condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, and heard nothing without hearing it. I do not exaggerate, when I say, that it looked from every star, smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm."

Fortunately, or unfortunately, about this time in my life, I had made enough money to buy what was a very popular schoolbook, viz. The Colombian Orator.

This volume was indeed a rich treasure, and every opportunity afforded me, for a time, was spent in diligently perusing it. Among much other interesting matter, that which I had perused and re-perused with unflagging satisfaction, was a short dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave is represented as having been re-captured, in a second attempt to run away; and the master opens a dialogue with an upbraiding speech, charging the slave with ingratitude, and demanding to know what he has to say in his own defence.

The slave wins the argument, and the master graciously frees him.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that a dialogue, with such an origin, and such an ending, read when the fact of my being a slave was a constant burden of grief, powerfully affected me; and I could not help feeling that the day might come, when the well directed answers made by the slave to the master, in this instance, would find their counterpart in myself.

Chapters 13-20 in *My Bondage and My Freedom* cover five years in the life of FD in which he recounts his series of re-locations, which began with the death of Captain Anthony.

FD then returned to the Eastern shore of Maryland, *to be valued and divided with other property. But the whole thing as a feature of slavery, shocked me. It furnished me a new insight into the unnatural power to which I was subjected. My detestation of slavery, already great, rose with this new conception of its enormity.*

During one of his re-locations an event occurred which had a significant effect on FD. Thomas Auld, unsuccessful in his attempts to subdue FD's spirit as befitting a slave, hired him out for a year to Edward Covey, who was reputed to be a first-rate hand at breaking young slaves. After much cruelty FD struck Covey down.

Well, my dear reader, this battle with Mr Covey, undignified as it was, and as I fear my narration of it is, was the turning point in my life as a slave. It rekindled in my breast the smouldering embers of liberty; it brought up my Baltimore dreams and revived a sense of my own manhood. I was a changed

being after that fight. I was nothing before; I was A Man Now. It recalled to my life my crushed self-respect and my self-confidence and inspired me with a renewed determination to be A Freeman. A man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted, that it cannot honour a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise.

Covey was a tyrant, and cowardly one, withal. After resisting him, I felt as I had never felt before. It was a resurrection from the dark and pestiferous tomb of slavery to the heaven of comparative freedom. I was no longer a servile coward, trembling under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but my long-cowed spirit was roused to an attitude of manly independence. I had reached the point, at which I was not afraid to die this spirit made me a free man in fact, while I remained a slave in form.

In 1838 FD left Covey to work for William Freeland, “a well-bred southern gentleman”, noting that he was the best master I ever had until I became my own master. After his first year with William Freeland, FD conspired with five other young slaves to escape. Their plan was detected, and FD spent some time in prison; finally, Thomas Auld sent him back to Hugh in Baltimore.

While working in a Baltimore shipyard as a hired labourer, FD was savagely beaten and nearly killed by four white ship carpenters. Nevertheless, the job allowed FD to save money, finally enabling him to make his escape in September 1838.

It was a bold and dangerous flight, which took less than a week for FD to arrive in New York. The initial exhilaration soon faded when confronted by his present needs. He had very little money, no place to sleep and was friendless in a strange city. But help came in the form of a sailor named Stewart who took FD to meet David Ruggles who was active in all forms of anti-slavery works. Once he was comparatively safe, FD sent for his sweet-heart Anna Murray, and they were married. FD was advised to move to New Bedford which would not only provide employment opportunities but, also, would be safer.

In four or five months after reaching New Bedford, there came a young man to me, with a copy of the Liberator, the paper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, and published by Isaac Knapp, and asked me to subscribe for it. I told him I had just escaped from slavery and was of course very poor and remarked further that I was unable to pay for it then; the agent, however, very willingly took me as a subscriber, and appeared to be much pleased with securing my name for his list. From this time, I was brought in contact with the mind of William Lloyd Garrison. His paper took its place with me next to the Bible. The Liberator was a paper after my own heart. It detested slavery, exposed hypocrisy and wickedness in high places, made no truce with the traffickers in the bodies and souls of men; it preached human brotherhood, and denounced oppression, and, with all the solemnity of God's word, demanded the complete emancipation of my race.

I had not long been a reader of the Liberator, and listener to its editor, before I got a clear apprehension of the principles of the anti-slavery movement. I had already the spirit of the movement and only needed to understand its principles and measures. These I got from the Liberator, and from those who believed in that paper. My acquaintance with the movement increased my hope for the ultimate freedom of my race, and I united with it from a sense of delight, as well as duty.

FD attended an anti-slavery meeting in Nantucket. As a reader we have followed FD through various defining phases of his life and the following event catapulted his life in new direction- from labourer to orator. Prior to this meeting he had joined a small body of black Methodists, known as Zion Methodists. There he became a local preacher and had some experience in public speaking before he attended this large gathering in Nantucket.

Indeed, I was not aware that anyone connected with the convention even so much as knew my name. I was, however, quite mistaken. Mr William C. Coffin, a prominent abolitionist in those days of trial, had heard me speaking

to my coloured friends, in the little schoolhouse on Second Street, New Bedford, where we worshipped. He sought me out in the crowd and invited me to say a few words to the convention. Thus sought out, and thus invited, I was induced to speak out the feelings inspired by the occasion, and the fresh recollection of the scenes through which I had passed as a slave. My speech on this occasion is about the only one I ever made, of which I do not remember a single connected sentence.

The following is Garrison's account, in the Preface of *The Narrative*, of the impact of FD's first speech on the Abolitionist's platform.

I shall never forget his first speech at the convention—the extraordinary emotion it excited in my own mind—the powerful impression it created upon a crowded auditory, completely taken by surprise... I think I never hated slavery so intensely as at that moment; certainly, my perception of the enormous outrage which is inflicted by it on the godlike nature of its victims, was rendered far more clear than ever. There stood one in physical proportions and stature commanding and exact—in intellect richly endowed—in natural eloquence a prodigy.

Garrison spoke immediately after FD at this convention, and this is FD's description of the speech:

It was an effort of unequaled power, sweeping down, like a very tornado, every opposing barrier, whether of sentiment or opinion. For a moment, he possessed that almost fabulous inspiration, often referred to but seldom attained, in which a public meeting is transformed, as it were, into a single individuality- the orator wielding a thousand heads and hearts at once, and by the simple majesty of his all controlling thought, converting his hearers into the express image of his own soul.

At least one thousand people were present at the Nantucket meeting, and at its conclusion FD was approached to join the anti- slavery society and publicly express its principles. He was reluctant at first to accept the invitation but finally agreed to

lecture for three months. At first FD withheld his name and details about his owner and place of enslavement, but this caused people to doubt that he had been a slave. He gave no details, did not speak or look like a slave. FD's first autobiography, *The Narrative of a Slave*, was intended to quell the criticism. It became an instant success; five thousand copies were sold in four months. However, he risked his personal safety by this endeavour.

The allotments of Providence, when coupled with trouble and anxiety, often concealed from finite vision the wisdom and goodness in which they are sent; and, frequently, what seemed a harsh and invidious dispensation, is converted by after experience into a happy and beneficial arrangement.

The situation had become too dangerous for FD as it risked his capture and return to enslavement. It was decided that he would be safer in England. The prevailing racism did not allow him to travel as a cabin passenger but despite this his journey was eventful and enjoyable.

FD described his experiences in Britain in a letter to Mr. Garrison which was published in the *Liberator* in 1846. An extract of this letter follows:

I can truly say, I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country. I seem to have undergone a transformation; I have a new life. The warm and generous cooperation extended to me by the friends of my despised race, the prompt and liberal manner with which the press has rendered me its aid, the glorious enthusiasm with which thousands have flocked to hear the cruel wrongs of my downtrodden and long enslaved fellow- countrymen portrayed, the deep empathy for the slave, and the strong abhorrence of the slave holder, everywhere evinced; the cordiality with which members and ministers of various religious bodies, and various shades of religious opinion, have embraced me, and lent me their aid, the kind hospitality constantly proffered to me by persons of highest rank in society; the spirit of freedom that seems to animate all with whom I come in contact.

FD spent twenty-one months in Britain; time was spent in England, Ireland Scotland and Wales, where he successfully increased support for the Abolitionist Movement. The letter also reveals that the visit was a life changing experience.

In England a successful fund- raising campaign raised sufficient funds to purchase his freedom. The fugitive slave left the United Kingdom as a free man.

FD chose to return to America where he felt he had a duty to perform.

Again, let it be remembered, for it is the simple truth, that neither in this speech, nor in any other which I delivered in England, did I ever allow myself to address Englishmen against Americans. I took my stand on the high ground of human brotherhood, and spoke to Englishmen as men, on behalf of men. Slavery is a crime, not against Englishmen but against God, and all the members of the human family; and it belongs to the whole human family to seek its suppression.

A contemporary tribute to FD.



On the 31st.July 2023 this statue of Frederick Douglass was unveiled in Belfast City Centre.

Historian Dr. Thorpe said the statue of Mr. Douglass, “takes us into a history, which united us rather than divided.” A student from Pennsylvania described Douglass as a “story of hope.” She spoke of, “the idea that you can take whatever circumstances that you are born into and make it better, not only for yourself but for the next person after you.”

Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832- 1912)

Edward Wilmot Blyden (hereafter referred to as E.W.B.) was born in Saint Thomas, in present times the US Virgin Islands. His parents were both free and from Igbo descent. From an early age his academic abilities were evident, and a Dutch Reform minister, impressed by his character, sent him to the USA at the age of eighteen years to study at the minister's former seminary. However, he was refused entry because of his racial background. This experience impelled him to work for changing the perception of the African Race. In 1850, he emigrated to Liberia, a colony founded by the USA for freed African Americans, and which had recently become a sovereign nation. It was a dangerous time in America where the Fugitive Slave Bill came into effect in 1850. EWB lived in Liberia for twenty-two years. He studied Hebrew and the Classics at the Alexander High School and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister and later became the Principal of the School.

He served in various official missions, including visiting Islamic kingdoms in the interior of West Africa. He played a prominent role in both public affairs and education in Liberia. He retired to Sierra Leone, after his bid for presidency failed. There he continued to write and undertake missions to the interior. His most well known book is:

Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race first published in 1887.

E.W.B. explored the influence of the Christian and Islamic religions on the African race. He drew on his own experience as a Christian minister, his missions into the interior and quoting extensively from renowned liberal writers in the U.K. This is an academic work which although not written in the first person has personal references.

The book is divided into essays and lectures, grouped into thematic chapters, with the first three chapters laying the groundwork for his thesis.

Chapter One- the focus is on the influence of Islam on African societies.

Chapter Two- the focus is on the influence of Western Christianity.

Chapter Three-E.W.B. critically examines the influence of Christian missionaries on African societies.

Chapter One

Islam and the African Race. (This chapter appeared as an article in Frazer's Magazine in 1875)

The example given by E.W.B. compares two African communities to illustrate the influence of Islam.

No one can travel any distance in the interior of West Africa without being struck with the different aspects of society in different localities, according as the population is Pagan or Islamic. Not only is there a difference in the methods of government, but in the general regulations of society, and even in the amusements of the people. The love of noisy terpsichorean performance, so noticeable in Pagan communities, disappears as the people come under the influence of Islam.

Those who would once have sought pleasure in the excitement of the Tom Tom, now repair five times a day to the mosque, where they spend a quarter of an hour on each occasion in devotional exercises.

When we left a Pagan and entered an Islamic community, we at once noticed that we had entered a moral atmosphere widely separated from, and loftier by far than the one we had left. We discovered that the character, feelings, and conditions of the people were profoundly altered and improved.

E.W.B illustrates the unifying effect of the Koran on different African tribes.

The Koran is, in its measure, an important educator. It exerts among a primitive people a wonderful influence. It has furnished to the advantage of its teachings in Africa a ground of union which has contributed vastly to their

progress...all read the same books and mingle in worship together. They are united by a common religious sentiment...Not only the sentiments, but the language, the words of the sacred book are held in the greatest reverence and esteem.

E.W.B argues that Islam combined with the African identity in such a way that people felt equal and not inferior.

Christian travellers, with every wish to think otherwise, have remarked that the African who accepts Islam acquires at once a sense of the dignity of human nature not commonly found even among those who have been brought to accept Christianity.

In contrast.

Wherever the African is found in Christian lands, his leading trait is not docility, as has been alleged, but servility. He is slow and unprogressive.

E.W.B. saw a relationship between the method of introducing the religion and the ensuing influence on the African race.

Islam endowed them with self- respect which men feel who acknowledge no superior. While it brought them a great deal that was absolutely new, and inspired them with spiritual feelings to which they had before been utter strangers, it strengthened and hastened certain tendencies to independence and self -reliance which were already at work. Their local institutions were not destroyed by the Arab influence introduced.

Christianity, on the other hand, came to the African race as a slave, or at least as a subject race in a foreign land.

E.W.B spoke of the Second Commandment which is the same in Islam and Judaism, namely the prohibition of making images of any living thing to represent God. Those who embraced Islam were not faced with a blue eyed, flaxen haired deity. Hence, they did not have a barrier of colour to overcome, which faced those who embraced Christianity.

Another example E.W.B. gave shows the correlation between the method of receiving the religious influence and its effect:

Long prior to the rise of Islam, communication as we have seen above, the Arab merchant had been in communication with the Interior of Africa, and had opened the way for the Arab missionary. When, therefore, the Muslim missionary came as the propagator of a higher religion than had been known, he did not enter the country as a stranger.

The sympathy, therefore, between the Arab missionary and the African is more complete than that between the European and the Negro. With every wish, no doubt, to the contrary, the European seldom gets over the feeling of distance, if not repulsion which he experiences on first seeing the African.

The examples taken from Chapter One illustrate E.W.B.'s argument that the influence of Islam was in harmony with the spiritual and cultural essence of the African people. Furthermore, this influence encouraged social cohesion, dignity and education.

Chapter Two

Christianity and the African Race (This chapter appeared in Frazer's Magazine, 1876).

The aim of the chapter in E.W.B.'s own words:

The object of this paper is to trace the influence of Christianity upon the African race, and to enquire how far the method of its dissemination has affected the reception of it. And our illustrations will be drawn principally from the Western world, as containing the largest portion of the African race which has been brought under the influence of Christianity, and especially from the United States, where the largest number of Africans live together under the same Christian Government.

First E.W.B. examined the form of Christianity the enslaved Africans received in America. He also noted that the system, which evolved to Christianise the African,

shocked John Wesley who then renounced slavery as the work of the devil. However, the practice of slavery continued:

Generations descending from Huguenot and Puritan ancestry were trained to believe that God had endowed them with the right to enslave the African forever. And upon those Africans who became members of the Christian Church, the idea impressed on them that it was their duty to submit, in everything, to their masters.

E.W.B. then examined the influence of the form of Christianity as received by Africans who were free:

The advantages enjoyed by the African in the Western world, now that he is free, are hardly greater for the attainment of true manhood than when he was in bondage... Because he is taught from the beginning to the end of his book training not to be himself, but somebody else... From the lessons he every day receives, the African unconsciously imbibes the conviction that to be a great man he must be like the white man. He is not brought up, however he may desire it, to be the companion, the equal, the comrade of the white man, but his imitator, his ape, his parasite. To be himself in a country where everything ridicules him, is to be nothing- less, worse than nothing.

How this cultural alienation affects the reception of Christianity, E.W.B. describes in the following passage:

Imitation is not discipleship. The Mohammedan African is a much better Mohammedan than the Christian, because the Muslim, as a learner, is a disciple, not an imitator.

Despite the past history of suppressing the human spirit in the African people, E.W.B. notes a positive movement:

Since the proclamation of freedom in the United States, however, the effects of the schools which have been thrown open to the African is becoming

more and more palpable. We observe in discussions in American newspapers published by Africans, an incipient movement towards mental emancipation.

The examples presented should give the reader a taste of E.W.B.'s critical examination of the form of Christianity given to the enslaved Africans, but not to Christianity as such, which embodies universal brotherhood and love.

He ends the chapter in this manner:

Such are the curious facts which history unfolds. And what do they teach? Only that the best and holiest of men are not infallible, not perfect, only what the Apostle Paul announced eighteen hundred years ago- "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power be of God and not of us."

Whatever, then the shortcomings of our teachers, they have been the instruments of introducing large numbers of us into the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Three

Christian Missions in West Africa

The impression of the African Race as inferior to other superior races was difficult to efface even years after emancipation. E.W.B. did not think that would happen in his generation. This prevailing attitude, E.W.B. argued, formed the heart of the difficulties experienced by the missionaries of his day, although adverse climactic conditions also hindered their work.

However, he considered the successful results, and the hindrances met by the missionaries. There had been missionary activity in the Western part of Africa for almost four hundred years.

The Portuguese had been in Sierra Leone for two hundred and forty-one years, but after their departure they left hardly a trace behind. Protestant missionary activity began late eighteenth century.

Now, what was the outcome of these missionary operations?

Numerous churches have been organised, and are under an African ministry, and thousands of children were in schools under Christian teachers.

The West African Reporter, a weekly news paper owned and published at Sierra Leone exclusively by Africans.

But other useful men besides preachers have come forth under the instruction of the missionaries; many able and useful Government officials, skilful mechanics, especially at the Basle Mission, and merchants, who by their intelligence, industry and enterprise have risen to equality in wealth and influence with the European merchants on the coast.

Still, these results in their largest measure are confined almost exclusively to the European settlements along the coast and to their immediate neighbourhood. No mission station of any importance has been established among the any of the powerful tribes of the interior, or on the coast at a distance from the European settlements.

W.E.B. looked at the adverse climactic conditions contributing to the lack of missionary success in the interior and the contemptuous attitude of the missionaries. After visiting an African Islamic community, impressed by their library and the level of literacy, E.W.B. writes:

Every traveller who enters the Islamic regions of West and Central Africa with sufficient basis of information to understand what he sees and hears, is forced to admit that the man makes a great mistake who approaches the African Muslim with the idea that they are "benighted Africans".

The more adaptable approach of the Islamic missionary was shown to be more effective in areas where Christian missionaries were less successful.

Two further quotations serve to illustrate his vision for recognising African dignity within the context of embracing the Christian message.

We believe that Africans can attain to a knowledge of science, receive intellectual culture, acquire skill to develop the resources of their country, and be made 'wise unto salvation', without becoming Europeans; 'for God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him'.

The Christian missionaries in Africa should not only be well trained, highly educated, and large minded men, but they should be men of imagination, logical power, and large minded men, with a philosophic spirit, understanding how to set most effectively to work in clearing away what is really evil, in order to lay a durable foundation and erect a permanent superstructure of good.

This ends the quotations from E.W.B.'s **Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race**.

We also read the following work by E.W.B.:

African Life and Customs (1908)

In this work E.W.B. examines the richness of the African culture and traditions, which had been in existence long before the arrival of the European. It is a call for Africans to take pride in their heritage. His own words best explain his aim. The quotation is taken from the Preface:

The following pages have been written with the desire, if possible, of unfolding the African, who has received unmixed European culture, to himself, through a study of the customs of his fathers; and also of assisting the European overlord, ruling in Africa, to arrive at a proper appreciation of conditions.

This book consists of various topics which illustrate the value of African customs, namely: that the core value of African customs is communally based; communal living and social structure; African marriage customs; the role of women; spirituality and religion; criticism of European culture; call for renewal.

To finish there are the following quotations:

What is Religion? Generally the answer is that which makes a man feel that he is not his own guide, judge, or ultimate authority; that he is bound to a higher and irresistible Power that created him and by whose fiat he will cease to live. He may have no conception of the nature or character of the Power; and leave him to himself without external influence or the aid of books, he will never even try to define to himself what the Power is; he only knows it exists- I AM- and is sufficiently impressed by the reality of its existence, whether looking within at the workings of his own mind, or without at the operations of Nature. He knows that a power not himself is working within and around him, and not to offend the power and to gain its power and to gain its favour, he uses various means which appeal to his untutored imagination to effect this object. All races without the Bible and even with the Bible have their own method of approaching this Being.

The African believes that the great Being can be approached through every object which he has created whether animate or inanimate. he can conceive nothing which is not instinct with the Creator.

In the music of the universe each shall give a different sound, but necessary to the grand symphony. There are several sounds not yet brought out, and the feeblest of all is that hitherto produced by the Negro; but only he can furnish it. And when he does furnish it in its fulness and perfection, it will be welcomed with delight by the world.

Among the Veys, for example, a proverb runs thus, "What belongs to me is destroyable by water and fire; what belongs to us is destroyable by neither water or fire". Again, "what is mine goes, what is ours abides.

Blyden is not widely known but was a major influence on Africana thinking, philosophy and politics.

He is also referred to as the Father of Pan Africanism.

Personal Research

Lee Lawrence

At the age of eleven, Lee witnessed his mother Dorothy 'Cherry' Groce unlawfully shot by the police, an event which triggered the 1985 Brixton uprising. The shooting left Cherry with physical injuries and disabilities which eventually led to her death in 2011. Lee, who had been his mother's carer, dedicated his time to pursuing justice. An inquest into his mother's death began in 2014 and after numerous difficulties Lee received a full public apology from the Metropolitan Police.

Since then with the Cherry Groce Foundation, a charity set up in his mother's name which provides help and support for members of the community who have mobility issues, Lee has been working with organisations, institutions, educational establishments and communities, to pursue justice as an inspirational speaker, restorative justice ambassador, social change advocate and sharing his story in his award winning book '**The Louder I will Sing**'.

Towards the end of the book, Lee says:

I have jobs that are meaningful and that I'm invested in. If you'd told that 11 year old boy back in 1985 where he'd be today, he wouldn't have believed it.

Life is about losing yourself, then finding yourself. For a while, I lost myself in the alter egos that I created...Somehow, I've managed to go full circle. I've learned that I'm strongest when I am in tune with my authentic self.

Now I can engage properly with the police. I can sit on their advisory boards and look at how we can work to improve their practices. I've been able to begin my own healing process and, by learning to mediate and by training in restorative justice, I'm ready to try to inspire and encourage others.

If the police is a force, it should be a force for good. I want to help that happen. This is an area that I'm passionate about. If I can use my experiences to help improve policing, then it feels as though my own personal journey will have been worthwhile."

Sir William Arthur Lewis

Sir William Arthur Lewis was born in St Lucia on 23rd January 1915. He found himself excelling in school at a young age, and completing the curriculum entirely by age 14, allowing him to win a scholarship at the London School of Economics.

He was a pioneer, the first black man to win the Economics Nobel Prize and to be a professor of any university in any field in the UK. He also has a building and a mascot named after him at the University of Manchester, and later became professor emeritus of political economy at Princeton University.

His "two sector" model is taught across the world, and as an economist, he is largely seen as the first major thinker in the field of development economics.

The two sector model is a model in development economics and is commonly known as the Lewis model. It explains the growth of a developing economy in terms of a labour transition between two sectors, the capitalist sector and the subsistence sector.

Many economists have used the Lewis model as a framework for explaining the extraordinary economic development that China has achieved in recent decades.

Peter Blair Henry is an economist whose own research has followed in the footsteps of Lewis's work. He says that Lewis's insight changed our understanding of the ways that poor countries can raise living standards for their citizens.

www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/lse-people/Sir-Arthur-Lewis

www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/economics/about/people/arthur-lewis/

Howard Thurman

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who are alive.

In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen, we can hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness, courage to fear, hope to despair.

Howard Thurman (1899-1981)

Born in Florida in 1899, Howard Thurman was the grandson of slaves but became one of the most celebrated religious figures of the 20th century. He was the co-founder of the first major inter-racial, inter-denominational church in the United States. He practised what is now called 'contemplative spirituality'. He was called a mystic because he believed religious experience was best explored within. In the 1930's after a historic meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, Thurman became one of the early advocates for non-violent resistance. He was a moral anchor for the civil rights movement and a spiritual mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. To those on the front line of the movement, he provided a spiritual perspective that was empowering.

Howard Thurman was an outspoken critic of Christianity for its part in the nation's deep racial divides. In his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*, he offered a

revolutionary new way of understanding the life of Jesus which spoke directly to the oppressed and disinherited. It described what it meant to be involved in such a struggle as a spiritual matter, as a matter of faith and not just the effort to change laws to enhance civil rights. *I would have to find out what was the word that the religion of Jesus had to say to the man with his back against the wall.* Like Jesus, living in a Jewish community under Roman rule, *The African Americans didn't have any rights... But they could choose to ground themselves in their own inherent dignity and worth.*

To Thurman, Jesus was not defined by his historical context and belonged to no age, creed or race. His main concern, just like his teacher Jesus, was the soul of humankind. His focus was true freedom. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God". To Thurman this meant going within and finding one's own inner stillness, the home of integrity, being whole and undivided. The issues raised in this book resonate with my experience living in South Africa during the apartheid years. Although the book was published in 1949, the social issues persist and remain a challenge.

Chinua Achebe (1930 - 2013)

Chinua Achebe has been dubbed the '*Father of African literature*'.

He was born in Igbo Nigeria and was raised in one of the first centres of Anglican missionary work. His debut fiction novel **When Things Fall Apart** sold millions and details colonialism and Eurocentrism in Africa. He wrote several books and essays about traditional Igbo life, encouraging his readers to examine practices from the past which can co-exist with the modern world. He advocated for the removal of racist texts from the national curriculum and sought to redress the colonial bias that had been ubiquitous in the teaching of literature.

In his autobiography, he describes growing up in colonial Nigeria and memoirs of post 1960 independence. He describes the elementary education experience which was decidedly English in character. He attended boarding school during

the War and graduated from University College, Ibadan after failing to get into Trinity College, Cambridge.

After graduation Achebe worked in broadcasting and sought to balance the media agenda in politics. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) was a statesman involved in the Nigerian Youth Movement and later became Nigeria's first president. Azikiwe founded the Zikist movement, championed political and economic freedom but many authorities banned his newspapers from their institutions. Achebe was accused of '*supporting some useless persons who broke away from the government party and were now challenging it in an electioneering campaign*'. Achebe refers this period as a rough and difficult time which led to the end of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation monopoly. The government set up a regional radio and TV organisation to drive Achebe's station out of Eastern Nigeria. *We were painfully learning the rules of rudimentary democracy. British colonial administration was not any form of democracy, but a fairly naked dictatorship.*

Achebe moved to Lagos and became Director of External Broadcasting but fled the country due to the Biafran War. His novel **A Man of the People**, a political satire about corruption which led to a coup d'état, was released two days before Nigeria's first military coup. *I wanted the novel to be a denunciation of the kind of independence we were experiencing in post-colonial Nigeria and many other countries in the 1960s, and I intended it to scare my countrymen into good behaviour with a frightening cautionary tale.* His writing was regarded as proof of complicity and led him and his family to go into hiding.

In exile he witnessed the two years civil war which cost 2 million lives. He reflected and re-defined his relationship with Nigeria, acknowledging its brilliance but its need for help, critiquing its infancy and addressing future hopes. He was granted amnesty and later served as a diplomat joining the Biafran Ministry of Information to help with fundraising missions.

In his essay, '**Traveling White**' he describes his experience as a Nigerian traveling to segregated east African countries, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Nelson Mandela said Achebe '*brought Africa to the rest of the world.*'

Achebe was paralysed in 1990 following a car accident which caused a move back to America. He lectured internationally through his Senior Research Fellowship at the University of Nigeria and became Professor of African Studies at Brown University. He was a recipient of the Nigerian National Merit Award and won the Man Booker International Prize for Fiction in 2007.

Quotes

Because colonialism was essentially a denial of human worth and dignity, its education programme would not be a model of perfection. And yet the great thing about being human is our ability to face adversity down by refusing to be defined by it, refusing to be no more than its agent or its victim.

Nigeria is a country where nobody can wake up in the morning and ask: what can I do now? There is work for all.

Imaginative literature does not enslave; it liberates the mind of man. Its truth is not like the canons of orthodoxy or the irrationality of prejudice and superstition. It begins as an adventure in self-discovery and ends in wisdom and human conscience.

Achebe received numerous awards and more than 30 honorary doctorates, but among the tributes he may have valued most was Nelson Mandela's quote: '*There was a writer named Chinua Achebe in whose company the prison walls fell down*'

I'm a practised writer now. But when I began, I had no idea what this was going to be. I just knew that there was something inside me that wanted me to tell who I was, and that would have come out even if I didn't want it.

I tell my students,' it's not difficult to identify with somebody like yourself, somebody next door who looks like you. What is more difficult is to identify with someone you don't see, who is very far away, who is a different colour, who eats a different kind of food. When you begin to do that then literature is really performing its wonders.

One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised.

Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.

I have learned that a man who makes trouble for others makes trouble for himself.

There is a moral obligation, I think, not to ally oneself with power against the powerless.

Nobody can teach me who I am. You can describe parts of me, but who I am - and what I need - is something I have to find out myself.

To me, being an intellectual does not mean knowing about intellectual issues; it means taking pleasure in them.

When we are comfortable and inattentive, we run the risk of committing grave injustices absent mindedly.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 - 1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London in 1875 to Alice Hare Martin, an English woman who named her son after the early 19th century English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His father, Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor, who came from Sierra Leone to study medicine in London, had already returned to Africa when he was born. Father and son never met.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was brought up by his mother and maternal grandfather. Coming from a family of numerous musicians, his grandfather began teaching him the violin at young age. Recognising the boy's obvious musical talent, his grandfather also paid for him to have violin lessons. At the age of fifteen, the extended family arranged for him to attend the Royal College of Music where he studied composition under Professor Charles Villiers Stanford. After his degree, Coleridge- Taylor became a professional musician. Soon he was appointed a professor at the Crystal Palace School of Music and was conductor of the orchestra at the Croydon Conservatoire.

Coleridge-Taylor's talent as a composer was recognised by the influential music editor and critic, August Jaeger, who described him as "*a genius*" to Edward Elgar. He in turn invited the young musician to compose an orchestral piece for the Three Choirs Festivals in Worcester in 1898. The work, entitled "**Ballade for Orchestra Op.33**", won immediate public recognition and Elgar described the then 23 year old Coleridge-Taylor as by "*far the cleverest fellow among the young men*".

Two months after the accolades won in Worcester, Coleridge-Taylor's reputation as a composer was sealed by the first Cantata of his trilogy, based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem. Sir Arthur Sullivan attended the premiere of **Hiawatha's Wedding Feast**, the first cantata, and commented: *Much impressed by the lad's genius. He is a composer not a music maker, the music is fresh and original - he has melody and harmony in abundance and his scoring is brilliant and full of colour, at times luscious, rich and sensual. The work was very well done.*

'**Hiawatha**' won accolades at home and abroad. Coleridge-Taylor achieved such success that he was referred to by white New York musicians as the '*African Mahler*' when he had three tours of the United States in the early 1900s. To African- Americans who were almost totally excluded from all aspects of American and cultural life, Coleridge-Taylor became a symbol of cultural fulfilment and pride in their race. African- American music was lampooned, but

Coleridge-Taylor showed that 'coloured' people could hold their own in composition and performance of serious music. The overture to the '**Wedding Feast**' was especially appealing to African-Americans because Coleridge-Taylor based the composition on the spiritual, '*Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen*'. Coleridge-Taylor had become deeply interested in Spiritual Songs of the African-Americans since hearing The Fisk University Jubilee singers who were on tour in England in 1899. To the delight of African-Americans, he started incorporating these lyrics into his compositions.

A strong bond of friendship was formed between the composer and African-Americans.

It became clear to a small group of African-Americans in Washington that the presence of Coleridge-Taylor in their country would inspire local musicians. An organisation was formed which later assumed the name '*The Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society*'. The society raised funds and arranged for Coleridge-Taylor's first visit to America in 1904. As a celebrated black artist, he was also invited to the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Coleridge-Taylor became involved with African networks. In 1897 he wrote a poem celebrating fifty years of Liberian independence from colonial rule which was published in the African Times. Later, Coleridge-Taylor was made a Knight Official of African Redemption, the highest decoration which the Liberian Government can bestow. This honour is verified by documents held in the Royal College of Music Museum.

It is known that in 1897 Coleridge-Taylor sought out Paul Lawrence Dunbar, a young African-American poet, who was in London in search of a publisher. The musician and poet worked together to produce two works. Paul Dunbar's poetry and his meeting with the Fisk Jubilee Singers influenced the composition of '**Twenty Four Negro Melodies**'. Coleridge-Taylor wrote of this composition: *What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk music, Dvorak for the Bohemian and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for these Negro melodies.* Booker T

Washington, a leading African-American educationalist, wrote the preface for this work. The following is an extract: *African music is essentially spontaneous. In Africa it sprang to life at war dances, at funerals, and at marriage festivals. Upon the African foundation the plantation songs of the South were built. His work, moreover, possesses not only charm but distinction, the individual note. The genuineness, the depth and intensity of his feeling, coupled with his mastery of technique, spontaneity, and ability to think in his own way, explain the force of the appeal his compositions make.*

What has been presented here is simply a strand out of the life of a talented Anglo-African composer; and the use he made of his talent in the service of the African race, both in Africa and America. He worked within the framework of his classical training to promote African music.

This was his contribution to the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement. His life indicates that he embraced both his African and English heritage fully and served both generously. The first version of his piece, '**Violin Concerto**' was on its way to its US premiere when it went down with the Titanic. The central movement was based on a spiritual entitled, '*Keep me from Sinking Down!*' This proved to be his last commission. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was just thirty-seven when he died of pneumonia in London in 1912.

African Proverbs

Proverbs are a genre of wisdom literature found in most cultures. In keeping with our research programme, we looked at African proverbs.

The truth does not spoil friendship

A good man also sins.

The area covered by your life is not as important as what you build on it:

Anger is cured by silence.

It is better to build bridges than walls.

Endurance is the charm of success.

When you give light to a friend, let it not be in blinding flashes.

The strength of the crocodile is in the water.

When a person stays too long in the dark, he begins to see shapes.

The moon is God's compensation for the darkness of the night.

Knowledge is like a lion; it cannot be gently embraced.

You can't eat 'almost'.

In the West they have watches but we have time.

If God were not forgiving heaven would be empty.

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.

The cattle is as good as the pasture on which it grazes.

A person is a person through persons. umuntu ngamuntu ngabantu"

It takes a village to raise a child.

Knowledge without wisdom is like water in sand.

Until the lion has its own story teller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.

Minds are like parachutes; they only function when they are open.

If a child washes his hands, he can eat with kings.

Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.

When the heart overflows, it comes out of the mouth.

When you shoot the arrow of truth, make sure that you dip the tip in honey.

Only a fool tests the water with both feet.

The owl is the wisest of birds because the more it sees the less it talks.

He who does not cultivate his field will die of hunger.

If you kill time you will bury opportunity.

The poorest person in the world is not the one without money but the one without vision.

A good leader was once a good follower.

He who swims in the direction the stream flows makes the crocodile laugh.

For a community to prosper, every member must do their part.

A roaring lion kills no one.

(You cannot achieve or gain anything by merely sitting around and just talking about it.)

Knowledge is like a garden: If it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested.

A boat cannot go forward if each rows his own way.

The chameleon looks in all directions before moving.

A brave man dies once, a coward a thousand times.

Haste and hurry can only bear children with many regrets along the way.

Even the Niger River must flow around an island.

A little rain each day will fill the rivers to overflowing.

He is a fool whose sheep runs away twice.

Even the best dancer on the stage must retire sometime.

Gold should be sold to the one who knows the value of it.

He who runs after good fortune runs away from peace.

Rising early makes the road short.

What you help a child to love can be more important than
what you help them to learn.”

What you learn is what you die with.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868 – 1963)

O, I wonder what I am, I wonder what the world is, I wonder if life is worth the striving. I do not know. Perhaps I shall never know. But this I do know. Be the truth what it may, I shall seek it on the pure assumption it is worth seeking, and heaven nor hell, God nor devil shall turn me from my purpose till I die (W.E.B. Du Bois aged 25 while a student in Berlin)

Du Bois activities and intellectual work over several decades covering numerous subjects was prolific. He was born in 1868 in Massachusetts, United States. He attended the local integrated public school where teachers recognized his ability and encouraged his intellectual pursuits. When he decided to attend Fisk University, a historically black college, the congregation of his childhood church raised the money for his tuition. Like other Fisk students, he relied on teaching during the summer months to support his university studies. While travelling and residing in the South to teach, he first experienced Southern racism, the Jim Crow laws, bigotry, suppression of black voting and lynchings.

Following his Bachelor's Degree from Fisk, Du Bois attended Harvard where he was awarded his second Bachelor's Degree in History. He received a scholarship to attend the Sociology Graduate School at Harvard and a fellowship to attend the University of Berlin for graduate work. There, he studied with some of the nation's most prominent social scientists. He wrote about his time in Germany: *I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in. With me were white folk,*

students, acquaintances, teachers, who viewed the scene with me. They did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of the somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came.

After returning from Europe where he had travelled extensively, Du Bois completed his graduate studies and in 1895 he was the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University. He became a Professor of History, Sociology and Economics at Atlanta University. He wrote many books and was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. (NAACP in 1909)

In an attempt to portray the genius and humanity of the black race, in 1903 Du Bois published **The Souls of Black Folk**, a collection of fourteen essays. To demonstrate intellectual and cultural parity between black and white cultures, each chapter begins with two epigraphs - one from a white poet and one from a black spiritual. The introduction addresses the division of race: *the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour line*. In other words, colour was made the basis of denying non-white people the right of sharing the opportunities of modern civilisation.

Du Bois writes with honesty and feeling whilst remaining objective. Although describing the life of descendants of enslaved people in America at the time, the book has a timeless quality and explores wider themes of humanity.

The journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect.

In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself, darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another.

A major theme in the book is what Du Bois calls “*double consciousness*”, the challenge of being both American and black – two thoughts, souls, unreconciled; always looking at oneself from the perspective of another that is critical and demeaning.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

A trained Economist and Sociologist, Du Bois clearly explains how economic injustice is the root problem. The very strong prejudice among the Americans, especially in the South, facilitated its justification. This was the situation that Du Bois spent his lifetime trying to correct. His writing shows such understanding of human nature that one can recognize the same elements of ignorance and misunderstanding happening in many areas of the world today.

Du Bois' main argument was the importance of education. In this he differed from his popular contemporary, Booker T. Washington, who argued for economic support and education of the black people in exchange for the commitment that the education should be for practical, manual labour, and the black people be

ruled by the white people. In Du Bois' view, since the Africans, originating in Africa, were transported and enslaved in America several generations previously, they now were Americans. Their future was in America and they too, like all men, had much to offer. Du Bois argued on the basis of common humanity. While he recognised that for many, this approach would be most serviceable, there existed among black people - as among all peoples *the talented tenth* capable and well suited to higher education and leadership.

And the final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man. And to make men we must have ideals, broad, pure, and inspiring ends of living, - not sordid money-getting, not apples of gold. The worker must work for the glory of his handiwork, not simply for pay; the thinker must think for truth, not for fame. And all this is gained only by human striving and longing, by ceaseless training and education, by founding Right on righteousness and Truth on the unhampered search for Truth.

The riddle of existence is the college curriculum that was laid before the Pharaohs, that was taught in the groves by Plato, that formed the trivium and quadrivium, and is today laid before the freedmen's sons by Atlanta University. And this course of study will not change; its content richer by toil of scholar and sight of seer; but the true college will ever have one goal, - not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of life that meat nourishes.

Not at Oxford or at Leipsic, not at Yale or Columbia, is there an air of higher resolve or more unfettered striving; the determination to realise for men, both black and white, the broadest possibilities of life, to seek the better and the best, to spend with their own hands the Gospel (Referring to Atlanta)

Du Bois writes passionately about his own love of learning and the freedom made available through study.

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the colour line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas... I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil.

Some of the essays take the reader on a personal exploration, where Du Bois travels and visits settlements of black people in different parts of America, including the Black Belt. In all cases his observation is objective and enlightening. Two of the essays, **Of Alexander Crummell** and **Of the coming of John**, recount the stories of men who have benefitted from an education only to experience not just frustration but sadness and despair at the exclusion and rejection of what they have to offer.

Out of the temptation of Hate, and burned by the fire of Despair, triumphant over Doubt, and steeled by Sacrifice against Humiliation, he turned at last home across the waters, humble and strong, gentle and determined. He bent to all the gibes and prejudices, to all hatred and discrimination, with that rare courtesy which is the armour of pure souls. He fought among his own, the low, the grasping, and the wicked, with that unbending righteousness which is the sword of the just. He never faltered, he seldom complained; he simply worked, inspiring the young, rebuking the old, helping the weak, guiding the strong.” (Of Alexander Crummell)

The book concludes with an essay on the purity of African Music which despite transformations over the years, nonetheless, embodies something of the pure African nature; its profundity of feeling and understanding.

And so by fateful chance the Negro folk song, - the rhythmic cry of the slave - stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still

remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.(The Sorrow Songs)

Du Bois stands as a bridge across cultures. He spent his life trying to promote principles that would go some way to solving the unnatural distress that he witnessed because of 'The Colour Line' and 'The Veil' (a phrase he used to describe the feeling of being different and of not being seen for who you truly are).

There must come a loftier respect for the sovereign human soul that seeks to know itself and the world about it; that seeks a freedom for expansion and self-development.

C. L. R. James (1901-1989) - A Brief Biography

C.L.R James, born in Trinidad, generally described as a historian, journalist, Trotskyist activist and Marxist, was a man of many talents. These were evident at an early age, pointing to a career in academia or a prestigious government post, or politics. However, he chose literature and a life moving in literary circles.

His eclectic taste in music described as, from samba to Mozart served as a paradigm for the range of interests in other areas of his life. One area not to be omitted was his love of cricket. He co-authored a book on the subject, in addition to his own work, **Beyond the Boundary**.

His talents were officially recognised by the University of Hull in 1983, who bestowed an honorary degree on him. The graduation ceremony was held on the day that marked the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire and it was conducted by the Chancellor who was descendent of William Wilberforce.

His seminal work was a history of the Haitian Slave Revolution published in 1938:

The Black Jacobins

The leading figure in the revolution which took place between 1791-1804 was Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Toussaint alone among the black leaders, with freedom for all in mind, was in the early months of 1792 organising out of the thousands of ignorant and untrained blacks an army capable of fighting European troops.

The Black Jacobins begins with the European conquest of the New World and the occupation of the island that would become Haiti. Having annexed the island and renamed it Hispaniola, the Spaniards rapidly decimated the native population through exploitation and inhumane treatment. To make up for the loss of labour it was deemed necessary to import enslaved people from Africa to work the plantations. Spain, England, and France battled over control of Hispaniola for a number of years until finally in 1679, the island was divided between Spain and France. Spain retained control of the eastern side of the island and called it San Domingo. The French won control of the western half and named it San Domingue. The French turned San Domingue into, "*the most profitable colony the world had ever known*". According to James, by 1789, its plantations produced half the world's coffee, 40 percent of its sugar and a host of lesser commodities like indigo. Over two-thirds of France's trade flowed in and out of San Domingue and the colony became the envy of all the other imperial powers.

James writes that San Domingue became a vast killing field where life was sacrificed for profit. The enslaved people resisted their exploitation. Many fled to the mountains to form what became known as *maroon bands*. The rebellion began among those who laboured on San Domingue's plantations. They worked in large labour gangs in the fields and sugar factories. Commanders were appointed from among the enslaved people to oversee the work and it was this layer of commanders who organised the revolt and provided military leadership.

The advent of the French Revolution ignited the hope for freedom among the enslaved people of San Domingue. James writes, that they *had heard of the revolution and had construed it in their own image: the white slaves in France had*

risen, and killed their masters, and were now enjoying the fruits of the earth. It was gravely inaccurate in fact, but they had caught the spirit of thing. Liberty. Equality. Fraternity.

One French abolitionist, Abbe Raynal, wrote:

Already there are established two colonies of fugitive Negroes, whom treaties and power protect from assault. Those lightnings announce the thunder. A courageous chief only is wanted. Where is he, that great man whom Nature owes to her vexed, oppressed and tormented children? Where is he? He will appear, doubt it not; he will come forth and raise the sacred standard of liberty. This venerable goal will gather around him the companions of his misfortune. More impetuous than the torrents, they will everywhere leave the indelible traces of their just resentment. Everywhere people will bless the name of the hero who shall have re-established the rights of the human race; everywhere will they raise trophies in his honour.

This passage was read over and over again by Toussaint, a literate freed slave and overseer on the Breda Plantation who had acquired at least one plantation and slaves of his own. At first, Toussaint watched the uprising from a distance, protecting the plantation and its mistress from harm. Finally he decided to join the ever-expanding slave army and eventually came to an unalterable decision from which he never wavered and for which he died:

Complete liberty for all, to be attained and held by their own strength.

Toussaint trained a professional army of his own, utterly loyal to him and fired by an unshakable commitment to liberation. He acquired training and guns and waited for the French National Assembly to decide where it stood on slavery. He discarded his old slave last name, Breda for his new one, L'Ouverture—meaning the opening to liberty: *Brothers and friends. I am Toussaint L'Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and*

Equality to reign in San Domingo. I work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause.

In 1794 France granted freedom and citizenship to all Africans in its Empire.

Toussaint became a Black Jacobin, committed to the French Revolution and the abolition of slavery. His army grew to immense size, its ranks drawn from emancipated slaves and *maroon bands* that rallied to the French after the decree of emancipation. Toussaint gathered around himself the ex-slave generals who would in due course determine the future of the island. They were unstoppable in their assault on the British and Spanish. *All the French Blacks, from the labourers at Port-de-Paix demanding equality to the officers in the army were filled with immense pride at being citizens of the French Republic 'one and indivisible' which had brought liberty and equality to the world.* Their determination and allegiance was so firm that, James declares; *The British and Spaniards could not defeat it. All they could offer was money, and there are periods in human history when money is not enough.*

Spain was quickly defeated and granted its half of the island to France. By 1795 Laveaux, the French general, Governor of Saint-Domingue from 1793 to 1796 during the French Revolution and Toussaint were in control of San Domingue. Faced with the challenge of rebuilding the society ravaged by four years of warfare, Toussaint attempted to maintain the plantation system by using the former slaves as wage labourers paid in money and a percentage of produce. Acknowledging their education and previous experience, Toussaint appointed whites to government posts and even allowed "*big whites*" to retain ownership of their great estates. He also tried to prevent the freed slaves from breaking up the plantations.

For almost a decade Toussaint faced counterrevolution both at home and abroad. Free men of colour, who saw rulership as their right and "*big whites*" who sought the re-imposition of slavery had to be repressed. At one point the governor was kidnapped. He was liberated by Toussaint. James writes that Laveaux, *to the*

astonishment of all and the unbounded joy of the Blacks ... proclaimed Toussaint Assistant to the Governor and swore that he would never do anything without consulting him. He called him the saviour of constituted authority, the Black Spartacus, the Negro predicted by Raynal who would avenge the outrages done to his race. Toussaint's appointment was confirmed by France.

Under Napoleon's leadership however, France plotted Toussaint's demise in order to reintroduce slavery on the island. Toussaint on the other hand, in faithful service to France, carried on a campaign against the British whose forces he destroyed. He also saw the need to unite the entire island under his leadership. In a letter declaring his allegiance to France but also his willingness to defend the colony from slavery he hoped that *France will not revoke her principles... But if, to re-establish slavery in San Domingue, this was done, then I declare to you it would be to attempt the impossible: we have known how to face dangers to obtain our liberty; we shall know how to brave death to maintain it.*

After suppressing various rebellions, Toussaint commanded the entire colony. Napoleon confirmed Toussaint as governor and commander-in-chief of San Domingue. But convinced that Napoleon aimed to restore slavery, Toussaint prepared the island for military defence and launched an enormous reconstruction plan to prove that it could be just as productive a colony under a free labour regime as it had been under slavery.

Caught between his commitment to the French Revolution and his commitment to liberty Toussaint hesitated to openly declare resistance to France and fight for independence. When a vast French fleet landed Toussaint could not raise the masses and instead had to rely solely on his military forces. The black generals led a furious guerrilla war against the French troops, outsmarting them, wiping out thousands. Eventually Toussaint was lured into a meeting, captured with his entire family, placed in chains, and sent aboard a ship for imprisonment in France. On boarding the ship, Toussaint said, *In overthrowing me, you have cut down in San Domingo only the trunk of the tree of liberty. It will spring up again by the roots for they are numerous and deep.*

Napoleon jailed Toussaint high up in the cold French mountains. He died alone on April 7, 1803, killed by *ill-treatment, cold, and starvation*, betrayed by France—the country to which he had remained loyal, upholding its standard of liberty and equality. The fight for independence to preserve liberty then fell to the generals Toussaint had trained. The French waged a war that aimed to kill off the existing workers who resisted and replace them with docile new slaves. Fired with their new goal of independence to preserve liberty, the Black army and labourers decimated the French. Independence was declared a year later in 1804 and the island was renamed “Haiti”.

But what men these Blacks are! How they fight and how they die! One has to make war against them to know their reckless courage in braving danger when they can no longer have recourse to stratagem. I have seen a solid column, torn by grape-shot from four pieces of cannon, advance without making a retrograde step. The more they fell, the greater seemed to be the courage of the rest. They advance singing, for the Negro sings everywhere, makes songs on everything. Their song was a song of brave men (Delafosse's memoirs)

We should not forget that the freedom you and I enjoy today; that the freedom that eight hundred thousand coloured people enjoy in the British West Indies; the freedom that has come to coloured race the world over, is largely due to the brave stand taken by the Black sons of Haiti.... When they struck for freedom... they struck for the freedom of every Black man in the world. (Frederick Douglass)

Toussaint L'Ouverure

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men!

Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough

Within thy hearing, or thy head be now

Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—

*O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind That will forget thee;
thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.*

(Written by William Wordsworth 1770-1850 shortly before Toussaint's death in prison).

It is said that the Haitian Revolution was the first and only successful slave revolution in human history. The struggle produced heroic leaders, especially Toussaint L'Ouverture who together with his revolutionary army of self-emancipated slaves defeated the three great empires of the eighteenth century—Spain, England, and France. The struggle cost many lives including Toussaint's but independence was finally won in 1804 and the way was paved for the abolition of slavery. However the reparations demanded by France were enormous and crippled the Haitian economy for decades to come.

CHRONOLOGY of **The Black Jacobins**

1592 Christopher Columbus

1659 Colonisation of SD (San Domingo)

1695 Treaty of Ryswick establishes French in West of SD

1734 Coffee cultivation started

1789 French Revolution

March: Decree retains status of black and mulattoes 1792 – [out of the fire of impassioned revolution and heated, ill-informed and inconclusive debate in the French Assembly, the slaves emerged with little gained except destruction and TL's small, trained and disciplined army of guerrillas.]

September – Commissioners arrive from France.

1793 Jan 21st – Execution of King of France.

August 29th – Sonthonax declares abolition of slavery.

Sept 9th – British expedition to take control.

1794 Jan: French Assembly declares abolition without debate. p121

May: TL assumes command of forces in SD

1795.6 TL gaining confidence of labourers etc. p131

1795 – Most disgraceful year in history of British military.

1796 – Mar 20th Laveaux attacked by Mulattoes – Mulatto uprising defeated by French; TL confirmed as commander of chief. Sonthonax in charge.

Republic regretting decree of 1794

1797 Dissention among French; M's and Blacks in full insurrection massacred scores of whites. French planters destabilising S.

TL letter to Assembly: p 167

1798 Oct: British ultimately expelled.

TL seizes power

1800 TL victorious.

1801 Bonaparte prepares to destroy TL.

Oct. 1st – Preliminaries of peace with France signed

Dec 1st – 20k French troops embark for SD.

TL losing touch with the masses by not explaining himself.

1802 – French force arrives.

TL tries for peace. Desallines kills whites.

TL submission

Leclerk's army wasting away.

1803 – April 7th Death of TL – Declaration of Independence being drafted.

1805 – whites massacred by Dessalines.

UBUNTU

In our meeting on Ubuntu we had a guest speaker, Mangcobo, a student in the School in Kwazulu-Natal. She gave examples from her life of how Ubuntu works in practice.

From our study and our meeting and conversations these written responses followed:

Ubuntu, the term may be much over-used and abused in modern times but it contains a timeless wisdom. The Zulu description is - umuntu ngamuntu ngabantu which translates variously as:

"A person is a person through persons."

"Persons depend upon persons to be persons"

"I am because you are, you are because we are."

It expresses the view that "No man is an island" – it is our inter-relationships and inter-dependence that make us who we are.

However, Ubuntu is lived experience not philosophical discourse or government policy. It is not a theory, but an attitude to life. An essential meaning is simply 'welcome'.

We don't come fully formed into the world. We learn how to think, how to walk, how to speak, how to behave, indeed how to be human, from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human. We are made for togetherness, we are made for family, for fellowship, to exist in a tender network of interdependence. (Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

The Archbishop is not alone in describing the parent / child relationship as epitomising the spirit of Ubuntu. The South African ethicist, Augustine Schutte uses the same example but then describes the teacher / student, guru / disciple relationship in the same terms – the teacher knows what the student can become and the role is to help the student realise his or her potential. Each needs the other: the teacher cannot teach without the willingness to learn; the student cannot learn without the experience of the teacher.

Of course, in both these examples there is a stronger and a weaker party. But Ubuntu is presaged on an effective equality so the third example that Schutte gives is the relationship of friendship. As he puts it, *Genuine self-love turns out to be love of precisely that in myself that I most deeply share with others, our humanity. This is the attitude of Ubuntu.*

This respect for personhood through persons makes community, not individuality, the natural organising principle of Ubuntu. As Edward Blyden put it: *We and not I, is the law of African life.*

Extract from a forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to his granddaughter Mungi Ngomane's book- **Everyday Ubuntu**

Ubuntu is a concept that in my community is one of the most fundamental aspects of living lives of courage, compassion and connection. It is one that I cannot remember not knowing about. I understood from an early age on

in my life that being known as a person with Ubuntu was one of the highest accolades one could ever receive.

Almost daily we are encouraged to show it in our relations with family, friends and strangers alike. I have often said that the idea and practice of Ubuntu is one of Africa's greatest gifts to the world. A gift which not many in the world are familiar with. The lesson of Ubuntu is best described in a proverb that is found in almost every African language, whose translation is, 'A person is a person through other persons'. The fundamental meaning of the proverb is that everything we learn and experience in the world is through our relationship with other people. We are, therefore, called to examine our actions and thoughts, not just for what they will achieve for us, but how they impact on others with whom we are in contact. At its most simple, the teaching of the proverb and of Ubuntu is similar to the Golden Rule found in most faith teachings. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. But one who has Ubuntu goes a step beyond that; it is not only our actions we are called to keep track of, but our very being in the world. How we live, talk and walk in the world is as much a statement of our character as our actions. One with Ubuntu is careful to walk in the world as one who recognises the infinite worth of everyone with whom he or she comes into contact. So it is not simply a way of behaving, it is indeed a way of being.

In an interview Nelson Mandela gave the following answer to a question of his understanding of Ubuntu, *"In the old days when we were young, a traveller through our country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not address themselves. The question, therefore, is, what are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you and to enable it to improve. These are important things in life, and if one can do that, you have done something very important which will be appreciated."*

Charles Ignatius Sancho (c. 1729 - December 1780)

For our research into the life of Charles Ignatius Sancho, we read **The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho** by Paterson Joseph and **The Letters of the late Charles Ignatius Sancho**, published by the Library of Alexandria.

The following article was posted on SPES Blog:

Charles Ignatius Sancho is perhaps best described in his own words, *"jolly African, who wishes health and peace to every religion and country throughout the ample range of God's creation"* (Letter 128) and *"The first part of my life was rather unlucky, as I was placed in a family who judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience. A little reading and writing I got by unwearied application. The latter part of my life has been – through God's blessing, truly fortunate, having spent it in the service of the best families in the kingdom. My chief pleasure has been books. Philosophy I adore."* (Letter 36)

Charles Ignatius Sancho was born on a slave ship in 1729, traveling from Guinea to the Spanish West Indies. His mother died soon after and his father committed suicide. The orphan was baptised and aged two, was taken to England by his owner and given to three unmarried sisters living in Greenwich.

They gave him the surname Sancho and he was their servant for eighteen years. The Duke of Montagu, who was a frequent visitor at the house, became impressed by Sancho's intellect and character and encouraged him to learn to read.

Eventually Sancho worked as a butler for the Montagu family and had the opportunity to study music, literature and writing. In due course he was able to purchase and run a grocery shop in Westminster and was happily married with several children. Being fond of reading, music and acting, he

entertained many famous figures of the literary and artistic world in London. It was a rare privilege for a man of African descent, as well as having his portrait painted by Thomas Gainsborough. He was also the first known African to vote in a British election, the first to have an obituary published in the national newspapers and was the first published Black British composer. He wrote a large number of letters which were collected and published two years after his death in 1782. To the eighteenth century opponents of the slave trade Sancho was a symbol of '*the humanity of Africans*'.

The following extracts taken from various letters help to give an insight into his nature.

For my part, I love liberty in every sense, whilst connected with honesty and truth. (Letter 129)

Ever let your actions be such as your own heart can approve - always think before you speak, and pause before you act... To think justly, is the way to do rightly - and by that means you will ever be at peace within. (Letter 13)

I trust, where a good man dwells, there peace makes its sweet abode.(Letter 33)

I have often observed - there is more value in the manner of doing the thing - than in the thing itself. (Letter 37)

Souls ..., who delight in giving pleasure, enjoy a heaven on earth; for I am convinced that the disposition of the mind in a great measure forms either the heaven or hell in both worlds (Letter 92)

I am clear every good affection, every good sensibility, every heart-felt joy - humanity, politeness, charity - all, all are streams from that sacred spring; so that to say you are good-tempered, honest, social... is only in fact saying, you live according to your Divine Master's rules. (Letter1)

We know good from evil; and in serious truth, we have powers sufficient to withstand vice, if we will choose to exert ourselves. In the field, if we know the strength and situation of the enemy, we place out-posts and sentinels - and take every prudent method to avoid surprize. In common life, we must do the same; - and trust me, my honest friend, a victory gained over passion, immorality, and pride, deserves Te Deums, better than those gained in the fields of ambition and blood (Letter 8)

There is something so amazingly grand - so stupendously affecting - in the contemplating the works of the Divine Architect - in the moral or the intellectual world, that I think one may rightly call it the cordial of the soul - it is the physic of the mind - and the best antidote against weak pride - and the supercilious murmurings of discontentment. – Smoking my morning pipe, the friendly warmth of that glorious planet the sun - the leniency of the air - the cheerful glow of the atmosphere-made me involuntarily cry, "Lord, what is man, that thou in thy mercy art so mindful of him!

The tender mercies of the Almighty are not less to many of his creatures- but their hearts ... are cold, and untouched with the sweet ray of gratitude. ...Amongst, and at the very head of our riches, I reckon the power of reflection: it is that breath of life which the Sacred Architect breathed into the nostrils of the first man - image of his gracious Maker.(Letter 45)

Sancho was full of praise for his wife

- the only intrinsic nett worth, in my possession, is Mrs Sancho - whom I can compare to nothing so properly as to a diamond in the dirt - but, my friend, that is Fortune's fault, not mine - for had I power, I would case her in gold.

Nature never formed a tenderer heart-take her for all in all - the mother – wife – friend - she does credit to her sex - she has the rare felicity of possessing true virtue without arrogance - softness without weakness - and dignity without pride And to my inexpressible happiness, she is my wife, and truly best part, without a single tinge of my defects. (Letters 22, 54 & 87)

Having himself experienced enduring friendships, Sancho felt able to counsel his many younger correspondents.

Real friendships are not hastily made - friendship is a plant of slow growth, and, like our English oak, spreads - is more majestically beautiful, and increases in shade, strength, and riches, as it increases in years."

"Friendship founded upon right judgement takes the good and the bad with the indulgence of blind love; - nor is it wrong - for as weakness and error is the lot of humanity - real friendship must oft kindly overlook the undesigning frailties of undisguised nature. (Letters 2; 10)

Sancho sometimes reflected on the passage of time, on life and death.

"Time keeps pacing on, and we delude ourselves with the hope of reaching first this stage, and then the next; till that ravenous rogue Death puts a final end to our folly."

There were times when despite his sunny disposition, Sancho felt despondent.

"- in spite of my philosophy - the cares and anxieties attendant on a large family and small finances sometimes overcloud the natural cheerfulness of yours truly."

Sancho prided himself for never knowingly misleading any young person among his correspondents.

May riches visit you, coupled with honour and honesty! - and then sweet peace of mind shall yield you a dignity - which kings have not power to confer:- then will you experience that the self-ennobled are the only true noble.

Although grateful for his many blessings, Sancho was very outspoken about slavery and colonisation.

"I am sorry to observe that the practice of your country (which as a

resident I love - and for its freedom, and for the many blessings I enjoy in it, shall ever have my warmest wishes – prayers - and blessings ;) I say, it is with reluctance that I must observe your country's conduct has been uniformly wicked in the East – West Indies - and even on the coast of Guinea. The grand object of English navigators - indeed of all Christian navigators - is money – money – money – for which I do not pretend to blame them. Commerce was meant, by the goodness of the Deity, to diffuse the various goods of the earth into every part - to unite mankind in the blessed chains of brotherly love – society - and mutual dependence. ...In some of your letters you speak (with honest indignation) of the treachery and chicanery of the natives. - (Letter 68)

As a conscientious citizen and eligible to vote, Sancho was very much interested in national politics.

“We want, alas! - only a few honest men of sound principles and good plain understandings - to unite us - to animate with one mind! One heart! - one aim! - and to direct the rouzed courage of a brave people – then we might hope for golden times.” (Letter 111)

Although in great physical discomfort towards the end of his life, Sancho was nonetheless full of faith and hope. His sense of gratitude and love for his fellow men shone on.

“Excuse my scrawling hand - in truth my eyes fail me; I feel myself since last winter an old man all at once - the failure of eyes - the loss of teeth – the thickness of hearing - are all messengers sent in mercy and love, to turn our thoughts to the important journey which kings and great men seldom think about: - it is for such as you to meditate on time and eternity with true pleasure - looking back, you have very much to comfort you; - looking forward, you have all to hope.” (Letter 141)

Examples of Sancho's music can be found on You Tube.

Reflections

We had one session on Yoruba culture before the group concluded. Our final meeting was one of deep appreciation.

We have spent time in the company of noble hearts and minds, whose words were a source of inspiration, delight and enthusiasm. They stood for and in the 'force of the good', seeking to unite not divide. They made a plea to be included in the human race as equals.

We hope the reader also found their words inspiring.

The African Research and Study Group

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