

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5511

W.E.B. Du BOIS

W. E. B. DuBOIS / a recorded autobiography / interview by Moses Asch

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W. E. B. DuBOIS

Side 1

- Band 1** Early College Years, Fisk U.
- Band 2** Harvard U.
- Band 3** Germany
- Band 4** Atlanta U.
- Band 5** N. A. A. C. P.
- Band 6** "The Crisis"

Side 2

- Band 1** WW 1, Pan-African Conference
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- Band 3** Atlanta U.
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DESIGN: BOB McCARRON

FOLKWAYS FH 5511



"For at all the levels of our national life, each man is sometimes called upon to stand for what he believes to be right against the pressures and opinions of friends, fellow workers, constituents or the force of popular attitude. At such a time each individual must look within himself for the resources to pursue his own course. But all the rest of us can contribute to the vitality of our democracy by refusing to join in unreasoning attacks upon those with whom we disagree; and by respecting them for having the strength to wage such a lonely struggle." President John F. Kennedy

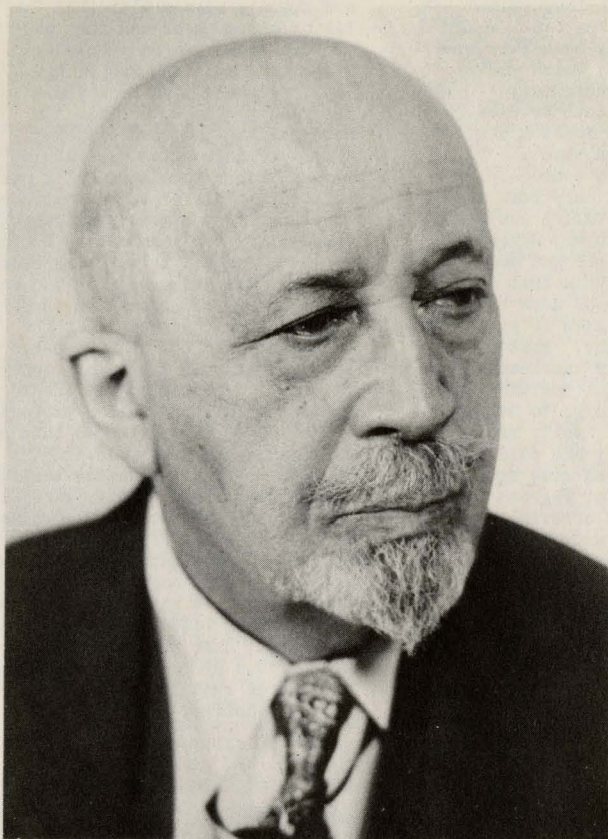


photo by Lotte Jacobi

W. E. B. DuBois --

**a recorded
autobiography**

**interviewed
by Moses Asch**

SIDE I, Band 1:

I went from my home in Massachusetts when I was 17, down to Fisk University in Tennessee. There I stayed three years. Then I came from there to Harvard University in the fall of '85 and stayed there four years--two years in the College and two years in the Graduate Department. Then I went to Berlin and stayed two years.

At Fisk we had an institution for Negroes--taught for the most part by white people who were graduates of Oberlin and of Yale. The College was after the New England tradition. The regular College was Latin and Greek and mathematics and history and so forth. Comparatively small classes because in the whole College Department there were only about 25 very good teachers and the general surroundings (except the white city,) but the general surroundings inside the College were excellent. For instance I think that my long years of life are due perhaps more to one thing that I learned at Fisk and that was to go to bed at 10:00 at night. Then of course, there was what was to me, the new experience of being with my own group of people. In New England I was usually the one colored pupil with surrounding white pupils. It wasn't until I began to get along on the teams that I felt any differences and there the dif-

ferences were comparatively small. And yet as I look back I can see that probably I felt myself rather the exception. Now on the other hand I go down to Fisk University and suddenly I am in a Negro world where all the people except the teachers (and the teachers in their thought and action) belong to this colored world and the world was almost complete. I mean, we acted and thought as people belonging to this group. And I got the idea that my work was in that group. That while I was, in the long run, going to try to break down segregation and separateness, yet for the time I was quite willing to be a Negro and to work within a Negro group. Now I came from there to Harvard and there was a change and yet I met it in a peculiar sort of way. I mean, if I'd gone directly from my high school in Great Barrington to Harvard, I would've thought of myself as a Massachusetts man and my fellows would've been the whites there. But coming back from Fisk I brought with me the feeling of a separate race. I never felt myself a Harvard man as I'd felt myself a Fisk man. I was coming to Harvard for a particular purpose--to try to carry further the education that I'd received at Fisk, but to work by myself, to seek no contact with my fellows. If they wanted to know me they had to make the effort on their part. So that out of my class of 300 I

don't suppose I knew 10 really, intimately at all.

SIDE I, Band 2:

Now of course in Boston there were colored people. There were some colored students in other institutions, there were a few colored students at Harvard, only one or two besides myself during my whole term there. But there were colored people in Massachusetts and I had a very pleasant social life with them so I was not lonely at all and I enjoyed the life there. Then too Harvard was in an exceptional state of being at that time. I don't think that from 1885 to this day, there's been quite an aggregation of teachers and preachers and lecturers as there were then. My closest friend for instance, as a teacher, was William James, the great sociologist; the brother of Henry James. I knew him well. I was invited to his house and we talked together. Then there was George Santyanna who died at a ripe old age not very long ago. He and I read the "critique d'Rieinen Farnumff" together alone up in an attic room. There was Channing, the historian and a great many of the greater names in history were connected more or less with the institution. Moreover the situation was going through a change. It had been up until that time, dis-

tinctly a New England institution with Puritan ancestry and rather provincial. But the men who had come in the last few years wanted it to be more of a national institution and they therefore offered scholarships to people in the Middle West, and in the South. Now it happened that I had always thought as a boy, that I was going to Harvard because it was the largest institution and it was in my own state. But I had, as a matter of fact, no money to go there and so a scholarship was offered me at Fisk and I went to Fisk with the idea that sometime I was going to Harvard. When, therefore, these scholarships were offered I applied and I got a scholarship which would pay my expenses and something more and therefore, went to Harvard at this time. Now that landed me at Harvard at the time of a great intellectual activity and of a new freedom of thought and action. William James was beginning his pragmatism. There was wide study of art under Charles Elliot Norton. There was the new methods in history under Channing and under Albert Bushness Hart. Hart later became my special teacher. When I went there I had made up my mind I was going to study philosophy. That is, I wanted to study the thought of what the meaning of the whole universe was. But after I got there and had studied one or two years under James, we had a frank talk and James said "no" if you've got to study philosophy you will but if you can get out of it you'd better because it's difficult to make a living, at philosophy. So I gave up philosophy and went into history under Albert Bushnell Hart. I began, I had some assignments in Negro history and was very much interested in the work that I was doing and it was work also that he particularly wanted done. So that eventually I took several courses for my broader education; courses in chemistry and in mathematics and in geology, and then finally began to concentrate on history and especially the history of the Negro in the United States and later in Africa. I got my Bachelor's Degree with distinction in 1890 and was one of the six Commencement speakers out of my class of 300. Characteristically, I took as my subject, Jefferson Davis. Jefferson Davis as a representative of civilization and tried to be very fair and frank in saying that the kind of civilization that he represented-- the might of the white race oppressing the rest of the world--as the thing that we didn't need and wouldn't want in the next century. It proved a rather popular subject and there was a good deal of talk about it. Then I applied for a fellowship and got a fellowship for a year. In the midst of that year, I was at a party and somebody called my attention to what Rutherford B. Hayes, ex-President of the U.S. had been saying down at Johns Hopkins. Now what he talked about brought up a rather peculiar incident, or rather the incident was the reason of this talk. I've said at Harvard they were trying to keep the New England aristocrats from running the whole thing and in my class was a black man from St. Louis who was one of the best speakers, one of the best users of English that I ever

knew: Turrent Morgan. And when it came to the election of class officers, always the class officers had been Lowells and Cabots and Saltonstalls and so forth and the class revolted and elected Morgan as the class orator which was unprecedented. They talked about it all over the U.S. Well, Rutherford Hayes as that time head of the Slater Fund, which was money left by a Connecticut millionaire to educate Negroes. So he went down to Johns Hopkins University and said that the Fund was willing to educate Negroes but they'd only been able to find orators. Well I got mad at that and I wrote Mr. Hayes and told him that I could get some professors to tell him that I was doing pretty good work there and that I should like to go and study in Germany. That was the time when every American who wanted to get a real position in a University had to go to Germany to get his degree. Well, Mr. Hayes wrote back politely and said that the Fund had offered some money for scholarships for Negroes but that they were not offering any then. And then I wrote him a pretty impudent letter and said that he owed somebody an apology. He had no business to go down to a Southern University and speak about a scholarship being offered and not being able to find anybody because as a matter of fact I had never heard of any such scholarships being offered and I couldn't find out from anyone else that they had heard. Well, he wrote a very apologetic letter and he said he was sorry and that he would take up the matter the very next year if I wished. So the next year I started on him again and I got everybody from the President of Harvard on down and he was simply overwhelmed with recommendations and so I got a fellowship. Meantime I had gotten a renewal on my fellowship so that I was two years in the Harvard Graduate School. Then I got this fellowship to go to Germany. It was \$750 and half of it was a gift and half was to be paid back after I'd finished my education. I eventually paid it back with interest at 6%.

SIDE I, Band 3:

I went to Germany and there of course I had the tremendous new experience. For the first time in my life I was just a human being and not a particular kind of human being. I remember getting on the boat at Rotterdam to make the Rhine-reise (the journey up the Rhine) and there was a Dutch lady and three daughters; two grown and one about twelve, on the boat. So I followed out the custom that I wouldn't be in America. I got in the part of the boat where they were not. I mean if they got toward the bow, I went toward the other end. Until finally the little girl walked straight over to me and asked what language I spoke and I told her that I spoke English and a little German. And then the mother came over and we became just a little

group of travelers, we were the only ones on the small boat, and we had a beautiful trip up the Rhine from Rotterdam to Cologne. It was a new experience of course for me and a very inspiring one. Then I went to Eisenaph in the Rhinefall and spent a summer with this family of a professor and they had two daughters and some boarders; French and English, and we had a lovely summer. And from there in the fall I went to Berlin. In Berlin I had the chance to get into a seminar which was rather unusual for a foreigner but I was allowed in this seminar on economics under two of the most prominent professors and for 3 semesters I studied there. I wanted to take the examination but the rule was that you could not come up for an examination until you had been 3 semesters at the university and I'd only been two and that's (because) I only had money for that. They tried to make an exception but the English professor had a lot of candidates so that no difference could be made. I brought to their attention the fact that I had already had 2 years at Harvard but they didn't recognize Harvard as being of the same rank as Berlin. So that I had to come back without my degree. On the other hand it's rather interesting to know that last year, when I was in Berlin, that the University brought out my records and gave me the degree that I didn't get some 70 years before.

SIDE I, Band 4:

Well, I came back from Berlin in 1892. And then there was the question as to where and what I was going to work in the U. S. There wasn't of course, the slightest chance of my getting any position in a white University, in spite of the fact that I had had a better education than most white students had had. First I tried to see if I could get into a colored school, either a college or even a public school. One public school down in Tennessee considered me for a while but thought I had rather too much education for them. Then I got an offer from Wilburforce. Now I knew something about Wilburforce. Wilburforce at first was known as Tawawa Springs out in Southern Ohio, where a good many Southerners used to come up for their vacations. Then it became a place where they sent their colored children for an education. And finally it was bought by a Negro church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and they established a college there. And I was offered the position there which I accepted immediately, \$800 a year. Just after I had accepted that, I got an offer from Tuskegee from Booker Washington. If I'd got that offer first I'd have taken it but I'd already promised to go to Wilburforce so that I didn't. Then I got another offer from Missouri at \$1500 a year but money didn't mean anything to me then. I'd offered to go to Wilburforce, I didn't know anything about this Missouri institution and still I went to Wilburforce. There I stayed

2 years, rather difficult years. The institution was of course rather low-grade but with a great deal of devotion and enthusiasm and I had ideas of turning it into a great German institution of learning. I ran against the religious difficulties, well, in other ways; for instance, I wore my cane and gloves always because in Germany if you didn't wear cane and gloves you were practically naked. I had never been a person with a very great sense of religion, I was fairly orthodox but certainly not fundamental and so I walked with my cane and gloves into a prayer meeting and sat down at the back and then the student who was carrying on the prayer meeting says, "We will be led in prayer by Professor DuBois." I said, "No you wont!" And I came near to losing my job there because the bishops were outraged. Everybody led in prayer there and they had revivals. Well that made initial difficulties and I knew that in the end they would get rid of me because I wasn't orthodox enough. Still I had a nice 2 years there and I had some very good students and we did some excellent work. The only difficulty was that I was teaching Latin and Greek when my specialty was sociology and they didn't have any sociology and they didn't want me to teach it. Then I got my chance. I was asked to come to the University of Pennsylvania to make a study of the Negro population of the 7th Ward of Philadelphia. The people of Philadelphia were quite certain that the bad political actions of these Negroes caused all the bad government in Philadelphia. They knew that was true but they wanted it proved in an academic way. Of course I couldn't be an instructor, I couldn't be a scholar because I already had my PhD from Harvard so they made me an assistant-instructor. Which meant that I didn't do any instruction but that I did make this study and I made it on my own plan. I didn't ask the Department what to do. I laid before them a plan of study and they accepted it and in a year and a half's work I made this study of the Philadelphia Negro which even today is recognized as a good sort of social study and its been very widely used. That was my 2nd book. My first book was my thesis at Harvard which became the 1st number of the Harvard Historical Series. Then after I finished this study at the University of Pennsylvania, or before I finished it, the question with me was how this kind of study could be carried on and applied to the whole Negro problem in the U.S. because as I said and increasingly believed, the Negro problem was a matter of knowledge. That we were talking about it but we didn't know anything about it. Because a man was born a Negro didn't mean that he knew what all the other millions were doing. What we needed was an academic study of the American Negro. I wanted the Universities of Pennsylvania and Harvard and Yale and so forth to go into a sort of partnership by which this kind of study could be forwarded. But they of course didn't do anything at all. But Atlanta University, which was a Negro institution down in Atlanta, Georgia asked me to come down there and teach and take charge

of some such study. So that in 1897 I went to Atlanta University and stayed there 13 years, making a systematic study of the American Negro which wasn't well done because we didn't have money enough or personnel to carry it out. But nevertheless, it's fair to say that for the next 25 years there wasn't a book published on the Negro problem that didn't have to depend on what we were doing at Atlanta University. It was the first study of its sort. Ours was the first institution in the U.S., white or black that had any course on the history of the American Negro or on Negro history in general. So that it was a good beginning, but while I was there my faith in knowledge as a solution of the Negro problem was shaken. Lynching was common. Before I went away from there, there was an average of one lynching every week for some years and it was a terrible sort of thing. There was one case very near Atlanta in which I knew from my studies, just what had happened. It was the case of a Negro peasant not receiving his wages at the end of the season. He got into a fight with his hirer and killed him, and ran away. And then when they couldn't find him they raised the altogether new issue that he had raped the man's wife which was evidently just dragged in. Well I had a letter which I had to deliver to Joel Chandler Harris, the author of the "Uncle Remus" tales. He was then on the Atlanta Constitution. So I took that letter and started downtown to deliver it to him and to talk to him about this situation. On the way down I found that this Negro, Sam Hose, had been caught and lynched and that in the meat market which was on the way, I had to pass, his fingers and toes were being exhibited. Well I didn't deliver the letter, I went back to Atlanta University and then I made up my mind that knowledge wasn't enough. That even if people were ignorant of essential matters which they had to know, they wouldn't correct their actions without more realization of just what the difficulties were. They had not only to know but they had to act.

SIDE I, Band 5:

And so I changed from studying the Negro problem to propaganda--to letting people know just what the Negro problem meant in what the colored people were suffering and what they were kept from doing. I was practically compelled to make this change because the people who were supporting Atlanta University were a little uneasy about the way in which I talked about the Negro problem and pressure began to be put upon the University to do without my services. I had begun to criticize Booker Washington saying it wasn't enough to teach Negroes trades--the Negroes had to have some voice in their government, they had to have protection in the courts, they had to have trained men to lead them. Well all this together put such pressure on Atlanta University that at last I resigned. I mean, they would've had to've dropped me if they wanted to keep the philanthropic gifts coming from the rich

people of the North. So that I accepted an invitation to come to New York in 1910 and help the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I had attended their conference in 1909. I became one of the incorporators and founders of the Association. I came up in 1910 and was slated to be the Secretary of the Organization. But I didn't want to be secretary because secretary raises money I couldn't raise money. What I wanted to do was to write and to talk.

SIDE I, Band 6:

So I came up and after some difficulty, persuaded them to let me found the Crisis Magazine, a little monthly magazine which would discuss the Negro problem and which would tell white people and colored people just what the N.A.A.C.P. was and what it proposed to do. Well, the magazine was founded in November, 1910 and I edited for 23 years and in that time I think I made the people of the U.S. especially the colored people realize just what the Negro problem was and what they have got to do to solve it. I was pretty radical in some things I said. I made a good many enemies. But on the other hand, the magazine became self-supporting, it didn't cost the Association anything. The magazine paid my salary and the expenses of publication so that for 20 years, publicity was no expense to the N.A.A.C.P. And on the other hand I had very wide freedom in saying just what I wanted to say. I was looking over some copies the other day and came across an incident where a prominent man who was trustee at Harvard college wrote to cancel his subscription. That was in 1925. He said that to his horror, when he was in London in 1924, he found that we were picketing the Strang with placards concerning lynching in the U.S. and he thought that was a very bad way washing dirty linen of our own country in a foreign land. And I read with great amusement the reply that I had made. I was going to wash that linen anywhere that I got soap and water and while I was sorry to lose his support; nevertheless, that's the sort of thing we were going to do and that was the kind of talk I was going to indulge in. Well of course that was smart but nevertheless it didn't help the N.A.A.C.P. with a certain class of people in the U.S.

SIDE II, Band 1:

We first met all sorts of problems; for instance, one of the first came with the First World War. There was the question of the draft, they passed laws by which colored soldiers were to go into separate camps, couldn't be trained with the white soldiers, and then there were no colored officers. We fought for that and finally we got a camp of colored officers from which eventually 700 officers; mostly 1st and 2nd lieutenants but a few majors and one or two captains; they went to the front in France, but for the most



Mary Sylvina Burghardt DuBois, shown with her baby Willie, died in 1884, shortly after her son had graduated from high school.



Graduating class, Fisk University - 1888
W.E.B. DuBois seated, left.



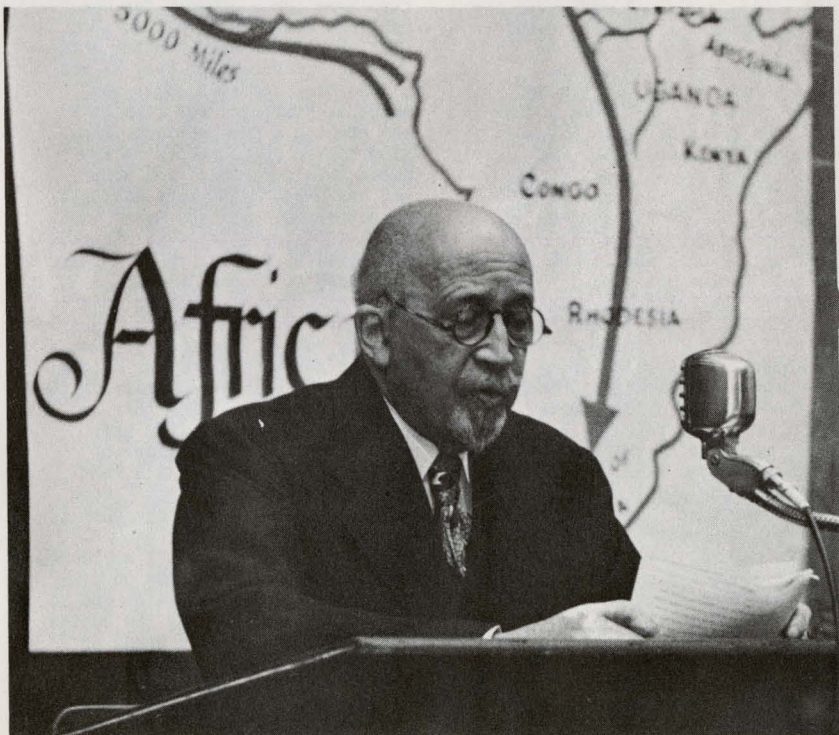
The Niagara Movement was inaugurated at a meeting held at Buffalo, N.Y., July 11-13, 1905. The delegates, including DuBois, 2nd from l., posed for photo above. The next year the movement met at Harpers Ferry, Va., on ground hallowed by the martyrdom of John Brown. DuBois delivered an historic address from which the following is taken: "We shall not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans." The Niagara Movement was the forerunner of NAACP.



Dr. DuBois, center, marches down New York's Fifth Avenue, in the 1917 Silent Parade Against Lynching.



Dr. Maude Slye, director of Cancer Research, University of Chicago; Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, research director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and Dr. A. Eustace Haydon, leader, Chicago Ethical Society, reflect the enthusiasm of thousands of Chicagoans gathered at the Crisis Rally, demanding that the U.N. handle aid to Greece and Turkey, held at the Coliseum, April 13, 1947.



Dr. DuBois lecturing on Africa in 1956



Fisk Commencement, 1958
70th Anniversary of graduation.

part the Negroes were used as stevedores rather than fighters. And of course it was the material that we furnished Europe in this war that was of the greatest importance. The fighting of Americans in the First World War was of no particular importance. The treatment of the colored soldiers over there was so bad that the N.A.A.C.P. sent me over just after the Armistice to look into it. And I got the idea that here was the chance to do something for Africa. I wrote to President Wilson and told him that at the Peace Conference in Versailles they ought to take up the matter of the German colonies and since the Allies were now in charge, that they ought to set those colonies up as free independent states and put them under an International Committee on which Africans should be members. Mr. Wilson didn't answer that letter but the American Committee over there considered it and out of that really came the mandate's commission. On the other hand, when I got to Paris, I tried to organize a pan-African Congress. There had been a pan-African Conference in 1900 which I'd attended and wrote the resolutions. But that'd died. When I tried to organize this pan-African Congress I was told that Paris was under martial law and that we couldn't have anything of that sort. The Americans discouraged it. But I went to the black man who was instrumental in bringing something like 100,000 black soldiers from Africa to help in the First World War and really turned back the Germans. And D'Anou went to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister said that I could have the Congress. But of course America and Great Britain wouldn't allow anybody to have passports to get over there so the Congress was rather small, we had 57 delegates, people--Negroes who happened to be in Paris at the time, a few Africans, a few Negro-Americans and some whites. We had this first pan-African Congress in 1919 at the Grand Hotel and then after the World War, in 1921 we held a much larger Congress with some 2 or 3 hundred people and a good many from Africa. And that aroused the colonial powers. They got very much excited because they thought I was trying to start a revolution in Africa which I wasn't at all. What I was trying to do was to get educated Africans in various parts of the world together to know each other and to talk with each other and to see what kind of program could be laid down for the future emancipation of the Africans in their own country. There was held several pan-African Congresses after that, there were none that were as great and comprehensive as the second in 1921 but there was one in 1923 in which a leading Englishman took part. That took place in London and Paris and in 1924 I think in Lisbon where we got members of the Portuguese Parliament and some of the colonial officials.

SIDE II, Band 2:

Then from there I went to Africa because I'd never been there and

while I was there the President of the U.S., Coolidge, appointed me Minister-plenipotentiary and Envoy-extraordinary to attend the inauguration of the President-King. The real reason of that was that Liberia hadn't gotten any of the money that the U.S. was throwing about the world during the first World War, they were a little late in applying. And when they did apply congress wouldn't give it to them. So Coolidge wanted to allay any bad feeling and gave me this appointment. That made me Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Monrovia and I had a very important role to play. I tried to assure Liberia of the friendship of the U.S. Then I came back to the U.S. and the next thing of importance was our anti-lynching campaign. We marched down Fifth Avenue--a silent march with placards--we spent some \$20,000 in running advertisements in the great papers of the U.S. We took a whole page in the New York Times. And we had a meeting here in N.Y.C. with a number of the leading citizens of the country and really did something toward stopping the shame of lynching. Then I became interested in Russia. I had heard about the Revolution of 1917 and tried to follow but there wasn't very good news coverage in the U.S. and when a delegation of Soviet citizens came over here to try to induce Roosevelt to recognize the new government, they came to me thinking perhaps I had some political influence so as to get recognition. I tried to assure them that I didn't have any political influence with Mr. Roosevelt or anybody else. And that I couldn't say much about Russia because I didn't know much, the news was so contradictory. Well, they asked me if I wouldn't like to go to Russia and I said I would provide I could go without any strings attached, and they said I could. And in 1926, I made my first trip to Russia. I traveled rather widely in Leningrad, in Moscow, in Gorky which used to be called Niesnenograd, in the Ukraine and down to Russia in 1936 when I went across the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Moscow to Manchuria. And again in 1949 when I spoke to the Russian Peace Congress and in 1958 the last time. So my interest in Russia became very great and my belief in her work and future tremendous. On the other hand in the U.S. after the World War and after the beginning of the rather feverish prosperity, I began to realize that something was going wrong with our economic organization because the income of the Crisis began to fall off and I began to see that Negroes were losing their jobs, the opposition to them in the trade union ranks was still strong, and it was clear that the Crisis, as the depression went on, was not going to pay for itself--it was not going to be self-supporting. Now that brought an inevitable change. So long as the Crisis was self-supporting, I could be practically independent within certain wide limits of what I was saying to the public. But if the National Association had to support the Crisis, then of course the National Association had a right to have the last word as to what was to be said and it

would become an organ. And organs are never read because they're not interesting, they have to say whatever the Board of Trustee vote. So I made up my mind that probably my job in propoganda was over.

SIDE II, Band 3:

I was getting to be an old man and I had a very attractive offer from my friend John Hope down in Atlanta University where I'd taught before. John Hope had been made the President of the new University, which consisted of the old Atlanta University and of two or three other colored institutions, which were given a sufficient sum of money by the General Education Board, to begin a new lease of life. And Hope was one of my closest friends and he came several times to New York to ask me to come down there and help him start a real University. Now it seemed to me that this was the time. My independence on the Crisis had to be given up and here was the time for me to return to my ivory tower and go to work in study and writing. So that in 1933 I resigned. The N.A.A.C.P. gave me some very fine applause and did not want me to leave but I thought it was the best thing to do. I went down to Atlanta University and stayed there 10 years. Unfortunately Hope died the year after I'd gone there--worked himself to death. There succeeded a young man whom I'd joined in recommending but who as a matter of fact didn't know what a University should be and had no idea of the plans that Hope and I had. Then too one of the institutions that'd gone into the making of this new University, Spellman College, a school for girls, also had at its head a woman who had worked for a long time for the Rockefellers, (The Rockefellers had furnished the endowment for Spellman) and she held back. So that with this death and with the holding back of President Reed it was a long time before I could get anything started. But finally I got started a new quarterly magazine called Phylon which is the Greek word for race. And then I got the Negro land-grant Colleges to cooperate. Now the Negro land-grant Colleges which were colleges supported by Federal funds. There were some 20 colored and 20 or 30 white. And as a matter of fact the white institutions got nearly all the money. The colored institutions got scraps and for a long time were really second-rate imitations of colleges. But they had begun to get more because they were getting a better class of presidents and in the 30's what they needed was a program. Some of them were headed by men whom I had taught and heads of others knew about me. So that I succeeded in getting those colleges to come together in an organization and to make Atlanta University the center of a new comprehensive study of the Negro problem. In fact if I could've carried through that scheme it would've been the largest sociological study that the world knew. There was bound to be quite enough money for it because if the Negro colleges got their legal share

of Federal appropriations they would have 3 or 4 times as much money as they were getting. So that this looked like our great chance. We got the leading sociologists on our side. Southern sociologists like Odum of North Carolina, like the head of the Sociological Department in the University of Louisiana, a large number of Northern sociologists. We held one preliminary conference down in Atlanta, then held a second one where the thing really got going and then the President of Atlanta University retired me for age. So that suddenly all of the new plan just flopped because these institutions have naturally a good deal of jealousy against Atlanta University and schools of that sort and they were only willing to unite if I was at the head of it. It wasn't that I could do it any better than a good many others but they knew me, they didn't know other people. So that the whole thing flopped, I simply had to give it up.

SIDE II, Band 4:

For a while I didn't know what I was going to do. The problem even of self-support loomed up. I had a wife and daughter. The daughter was self-supporting but I'd built a new home in Baltimore to be near where there daughter was teaching. And I had several offers of temporary work--lecturing at Fisk and Durham and so forth, but an unexpected offer came from the N.A.A.C.P. They wanted me to come back to the N.A.A.C.P. and to do anything I pleased at a salary equal to that that anyone was getting. I'd be perfectly free to end my life as I wished. Well I hesitated because the head of the N.A.A.C.P. was Walter White and I didn't like Walter White. He was a hard worker, he had built up the organization since I'd left until it was a wide organization but he was a phenomenally selfish man and I laid down certain conditions. I told them I didn't want to interfere with the regular work of the N.A.A.C.P. at all. I didn't want to come back and try to resume my position as member of the Board but there were certain things, particularly connected with Africa and its development, which I would like to take up and I wanted two offices, one for myself and one for my secretary and library. That was all agreed to and I came back. And immediately I ran into the difficulties I was afraid of. I didn't get an office at all, they didn't seem to be able to find one, or Walter didn't. And I couldn't get a clear program and I began to realize that what Walter had in mind was that I should write speeches and reports and represent him. Which was not what I had in mind of course at all. I finally did get a pan-African Congress or rather the trade unionists in Africa got one and invited me to Manchester, England in 1945 and there I met some of the great present leaders of Africa--Nkrumah of Ghana and Johnson of Liberia and Tenyata of Kenya, and began to see the new spirit that was starting in Africa. But when I came back it was proposed that we appeal to

the United Nations--I had been a consultant at the U.N. for the N.A.A.C.P. when it was formed in 1945--that we should appeal to them and ask them to take up the matter of the treatment of Negroes in the United States. I edited a report of that sort which I got other well-equipped people to help me writing different chapters and Walter made difficulty about that. He wanted to write a preface which wasn't needed because my work in that was the preface and that made more difficulty. And then Walter wanted me to make reports and so forth about what the U.N. should do and I didn't see that it was necessary at the time, there wasn't anything going to be done until somebody in the U.N. took up this matter and nobody was going to do it against the U.S. Then some inkling of this got out into the press. I didn't send it to the press but I told the Board of Directors afterwards that if the press had asked me I would've told them because there wasn't anything secret about it. But I was preemptorily dismissed in '48 after I'd been there 4 years.

SIDE II, Band 5:

Then I took up work as Assistant-Chairman of the Council on African Affairs of which Paul Robeson was Chairman and which I had been interested in although I had not been connected with it. But that was an unpaid job and the witch-hunt had begun in the U.S. so that colored people were afraid to join this membership-organization and its income fell off.

It was proposed however that before I withdrew from it that they should unite in celebrating my 83rd birthday. And I consented and we arranged a dinner of that sort, it was going to be up in that hotel on Central Park South, and then there came an extraordinary development. I had attended the great Congress of Arts and Sciences here at the Waldorf-Astoria where a large number of Russians came. And we had a fine meeting except that it was ruined by an extraordinary attack through nearly all the leading papers of the U.S., One of the worst things that has happened in the U.S. This was a meeting for peace and it had some of the great leaders of the world although certain leaders like Picasso, Bernault and others were not given passports. But at any rate we did have a good meeting and then the same year, '49, I went to Paris to attend the great Paris Peace Congress which was I think on the whole, the greatest meeting of human beings I'd ever attended. It was a magnificent meeting. I took part and especially talked about colonies and emancipating colonies. Paul Robeson flew from Prague and took part and said that he didn't believe that the colored man would ever join in any war against Russia, the Chinese were not allowed to come but they telephoned the fall of Nanking from Prague to Paris--I remember the night that the news came and the

roar went up--and then I was asked to come to Russia to a peace meeting. 25 Americans were asked to come with their expenses paid; to this Russian peace meeting. I was the only one that went. I don't know why the others didn't go but they probably were warned and perhaps they didn't think it was necessary to warn me. I went there and tried to tell the Russians that the majority of Americans wanted peace, that they didn't want war and so forth. I made a long talk on that and published it carefully so that it wouldn't be misinterpreted. Then on my way back I got a telegram from Marcantonio saying that he was running for Congress and that he wanted me to join the ticket and run for Senator of New York and McMallus was to run for Governor and I laughed at the thing, I told him in the first place, my age; in the second place, I knew nothing about politics and then they plead over the phone and I said all right. And I came over and made the campaign and got I think it was 270,000 votes to my great surprise! 'Course that meant nothing in 3,000,000 votes, but I did get a chance to speak plainly on certain ideas that I had of clean politics. Well then came this proposed dinner on my 83rd birthday and in addition to that we had formed after this Paris meeting a year later, a Peace Information Bureau. All we were doing was to publish what we called Peace-grams once a month to tell the people of the U.S. what other nations were doing for peace. And when I got back here I was notified that I would have to go down to Washington and register as a representative of a foreign government. And I wrote back and told them that was nonsense I wasn't representing a foreign government, I was representing peace. But they wouldn't listen to anything and first thing I knew I was indicated and threatened with 5 years in prison and a fine of \$5,000. And I suddenly realized that this was a serious matter. It was going to cost a large sum of money and I had no money but my wife and I started out and made 2 or 3 trips across the country passing the hat in which I talked about socialism and Russia just as I had been talking and she asked for contributions. She said I used to make it pretty hard for her to get the contributions but ----. The trial cost us \$30,000 and that didn't count Marcantonio's fee, he wouldn't charge anything otherwise it would've cost \$50,000. And of course it was thrown out of court. But even after that we were punished, I mean we couldn't get passports and even up to this day we're suspicious persons.

SIDE II, Band 6:

Lately I've been encouraged by the fact that the young people--the students have resumed leadership which I was afraid that they had given up during the McCarthy era. I spoke at several institutions--I spoke at Princeton, Chicago and I think the University of Illinois--quite a number but the students didn't respond, they seemed to me awfully dull and I just made up my mind that this was an age where we were not

going to have the inspiration of the young. And now suddenly without any encouragement on my part and little encouragement on the part of others, come these sit-downs. The students have put their finger on a very important point. The Negro problem is of course the problem of mob violence and disenfranchisement, and of the injustice in the courts, and of difficulties in getting decent jobs, it's all that. But in addition to that, the Negro problem is a series of little meanesses which are really unimportant, that help nobody and yet which all of the Negroes have to meet and which most of them simply meet and say nothing. I mean the fact that you go downtown shopping and you can't get a sandwich or a cup of coffee. There are towns down there where you can't sit in the park, you can't go to the movies or if you do go you have to go to a very unpleasant place way at the top, all sorts of things of that kind which have been going on and which in my day we simply said "Well gracious we've got to stop people from being murdered, the fact that you can't get a cup of coffee--that's a little thing. But the students put their finger on that and they fought and it was hard fighting. I went down to North Carolina and saw some of them and heard the story of what they've been doing. And they've kept it up and it's really a part of the world-wide movement of students. The students in Turkey who made it impossible for Mr. Mendares to give his welcoming speech to NATO, the tremendous revolution in South Korea where they got rid of a scoundrel and of other student movements; and then of course, of the great awakening of Africa. Well that gives me a degree of satisfaction. Evidently the older people like myself are not needed just now, there are younger people who are going on and doing their own thinking and I congratulate them upon it, they don't need any advice from me. Perhaps I need some from them.

SIDE II, Band 7:

We E. B. DuBois:

In the earlier days, in the latter part of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century, the Negroes in America considered themselves Africans. They called their organizations African. There were African clubs, there was the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Dion Church and so forth. Then there arose a movement among the white to help them return to Africa and the Negroes suddenly realized that what they were doing was to get rid of the free Negroes and of the more intelligent Africans so that they could have only Negro slaves here. So there came a tremendous revulsion of feeling and from the middle of the 19th Century on there was one thing that the American Negroes were determined not to do and that was to return to Africa. Anyone who talked about

a return to Africa was not in good order. Then there came the efforts in Liberia and so forth which were pretty difficult and Sierra Leone and Bishop Turner, Bishop of the African Church tried to encourage some migration to Africa but didn't succeed. And then with my pan-African Congress movement there came the idea that American Negroes, having a better chance at education and so forth could help the African but that was bitterly opposed by the colonial powers. They didn't want any American Negroes stirring up trouble and the Negroes in America were not particularly enthusiastic; for instance, the N.A.A.C.P. supported the first two pan-African Congresses but not the others because as some of the Trustees said, "We've got enough problems in the U.S. without going to Africa to look up others. So that there wasn't much American Negro support for the pan-African movement. Now on the other hand, there comes through the African trade unions, a renewal of thought and ambition among a new generation of Africans. When the African members of trade unions met in Paris with the trade unionists of the world, they found to their surprise and they fought it, that the English trade unions wanted to speak for the African trade unions. Well the African trade unions said they were there and they were perfectly able to talk for themselves and they won. And that was the reason for the split that came in the trade union movement. Meantime the Africans there asked for a 5th pan-African Congress and that's the reason that the 5th pan-African Congress began. Now they were the people that went back to Africa and began this new movement and today the leadership of the Negro race is going to come from Africa and not from America or the West Indies. In fact they are going to inspire work here that we haven't been doing. And for that reason you have this tremendous beginning of independence and autonomy and freedom from white rule in Africa. Now on the other hand, the American Negroes have become very much American, and a good many of the American Negroes see now a chance in Africa to make money. And of course, the whites have always seen that chance. So that you have here in New York City today some 4 organizations which are African organizations and which believe themselves or pretend to believe that they are helping the African movement. As a matter of fact most of them are trying to help American investors get in on the ground floor in Africa. And that I've tried to set myself against. Africa needs capital but what I've said--I broadcasted from China last year--you need capital and you must save your own capital just as much as possible. You must avoid getting capital from the U.S. which is going to tie you down so that you'll be unable to be really free if you are part of the investment system. That if you can get capital from the Soviet Union at 2% you ought to get it, if you can get it from China--help of that sort, the point is to get capital but to get it as cheaply as possible, save it for yourself and not tie yourself

up by spending a whole lot for consumers' goods that you have gotten on without for a long time--gotten on for a long time without refrigerators or automobiles in Africa, you can get on a little further than that. And for that reason, I'm not a member of any of these African organizations and haven't been asked to be a member. And I have warned the Africans as I have said--I was asked to go to Ghana when the country first became independent and I couldn't get a passport. Now again Ghana is going to become a republic and I'm going to be invited there and I've applied for a passport. I probably won't get it but if I do get I'm going there and tell 'em the same thing with emphasis! A good many of the Americans, and the American Negroes particularly are naive about that; for instance, there is a firm down on Wall Street of Colored investors, who are telling the Negro people, "Now you ought to invest in bonds and get some of this income." But what I'm saying to them, "There's no use your going into that gambling organization and think you're going to get anything out of it! That's simply throwing away your money!" But a number of American Negroes don't understand this. A man came the other day here; I think personally he was honest, with a whole lot of my books which he wanted me to autograph. Well, I thought here's a friend of mine who's collecting books and I'd autograph 'em and I sat down there and wrote my name in these books for about an hour. Then as I was writing, it suddenly occurred to me, well this is a little queer and I find out he's acting as agent for a Madison Avenue Organization which was collecting my books! And I (laughter) so when he came with another batch I told him he could take them back I wasn't autographing any more. Well now I don't think he was personally dishonest, but that's his idea of American business. It's too bad because I don't think that the Africans are going to fall for it, I think they're going to be rather careful and build up a new independent organization for the benefit of the mass of the people instead of for the making of millionaires who are going to cooperate with the millionaires in England and in America.