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Souls not Skin: An Examination of War and Peace Education in the context of W.E.B Dubois' *The Souls of Black Folk*.

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The primary purpose of this paper is *broadly* to discuss the normative foundations of peace education in the context of war and peace. This is an exercise others have engaged in with far greater depth and investment, building on the work of scholars before them. While this is the primary purpose of the paper, I will also centrally utilize the narrative lens of W.E.B DuBois as exhibited in his seminal 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folks* throughout as a contextual framework for the theoretical conversations seen throughout the field of peace education. Snauwaert writes that the peace education is advanced through the development of normative philosophical foundations, yet "philosophical reflection on the normative foundations of peace studies education remains underdeveloped"(Snauwaert, under review). In their 2019 article "Southern Voices in Peace Education: Interrogating Race, Marginalization and Cultural Violence in the Field", Kurian and Kester argue that peace education critically lacks input from the "Global South" – a historically

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marginalized population (Kurian and Kester, 2019). They suggest that the study of peace education lacks the context of the victim – the one who has suffered violence and lived to be victimized again and again. This paper – in summarizing much of the field of peace education through the lens of Dubois' *The Souls of Black Folk* – will argue that it is not that Southern voices have remained silent with regards to peace education, but rather, the vantage points from which these voices view the field of peace education has been ignored, missed, marginalized or perhaps been abstracted away from the historical context they speak from. Peace education is the story of the pursuit of justice – and is perhaps best told by those who longed for justice the most.

In the telling of this story, this paper will first lay out a normative framework for this study, highlighting the importance of respect for individual humanity and the accompanying tilt towards justice in the study of peace education. Next, in walking through the foundational elements of peace education – moral reasoning, concepts of war and violence, and the means to resist such violence – I will lean heavily on excerpts and themes from Dubois to provide an image of the peace he envisioned and the education he thought necessary to accomplish that vision. To conclude, I will engage in a discussion around the three elements of just war theory, once again engaging with Dubois' perspective.

Before establishing the conceptual framework for this discussion, I want to highlight a significant delimitation of this paper – this is intentionally not a comprehensive review of DuBois' role in the peace movement and does not take into account his many later works on the subject such as *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (1945) and *In Battle For Peace* (1952). This is not an oversight, but rather a conscious decision to highlight the raw, unformed emotive expression found in DuBois' early work rather than the more philosophic and focused later pieces. It is worth mentioning, however, that such works exist and highlight the well-formed thoughts of an oft-unrecognized peace scholar. Even just a year after the publication of *Souls,* DuBois described his commitment to peace, writing,

I believe in the Prince of Peace. I believe that War is Murder. I believe that armies and navies are at bottom the tinsel and braggadocio of oppression and wrong, and I believe that the wicked conquest of weaker and darker nations by nations whiter and stronger but foreshadows the death of that strength (Dubois, 1904, p. 787).

He would go onto to write extensively throughout the next 50 years on peace – developing a "quasi-Leninist outlook on the relationship between international

wars, racism and world capitalism" and becoming something of a forefather of the modern peace movement (Marble, 1983).

In his book, *Teaching Peace as a Matter of Justice*, Dale Snauwaert highlights Betty Reardon's three forms of a pedagogy of reflective inquiry: critical/analytic; moral/ethical; and contemplative/ruminative (Snauwaert, under review; Reardon and Snauwaert, 2011; Reardon and Snauwaert, 2015). Snauwaert writes that "Reardon argues that these three forms of reflective inquiry comprise a pedagogical means that develops the human capacities and transformative skills necessary for the actualization of peace and justice" (Snauwaert, under review, p. 5). It is from these three pedagogical forms that I will draw a conceptual framework for this paper. Aided by the critical lens of Dubois' *Souls* and guided by the moral framework of the existing field of peace scholarship, this paper will seek to introduce a contemplative "self-awareness" to the study of peace education. Namely, I argue that Dubois' pedagogical and philosophical views in *The Souls of Black Folks* represents something of a manifestation of Reardon's three forms roughly a century prior to her work in a profound expression of the two definitive tenets of peace education: democracy and justice.

In *The Souls of Black Folks*, Dubois does not engage with the modern principle of democracy – indeed his work predates most of the foundational works of progressive thinkers who have defined the modern study of democracy. However, a careful reader of Dubois is drawn into a powerful imagery of a new democratic world – one in which Dubois found himself and his fellow Black citizens inextricably engaged with. Of this elevation of the human condition, Dubois writes that:

> The nineteenth was the first century of human sympathy, - the age when half wonderingly we began to descry in other that transfigured spark of divinity which we call Myself; when clodhoppers and peasants, and tramps and thieves, and millionaires and – sometimes – Negroes, became throbbings souls whose warm pulsing life touched us so nearly that we half gasped with surprise, crying, "Thou too! Hast Thou seen Sorrow and the dull waters of Hopelessness? Hast Thou known Life (Dubois, 1903, pp. 134-135)?

This "warm pulsing life" being experienced the former slave community – this freedom of will - was in many ways the first time these souls had felt fully human. This was a new thing – this democratic experience. While it is difficult to compare this raw conception of democracy with the refined normative theories of men such

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as Rawls (1971) and Dahl (2000), there was a kindred spirit at play.[1] Within the heart of Dubois and his fellow freemen was a new chance – a wind of change as it were. Somehow the playing field had been levelled, even though society and its structures would not get that message for decades or even centuries.

The second definitive element of peace education is justice. While Rawls (1971) and most of his disciples define justice as "fairness", Dubois again has a far more visceral understanding of justice – perhaps from living in its void for so long. In many ways, the central story of *The Soul of Black Folk* – which is in a sense the story of all Black folk in America - is of a hope for justice, a hope for peace. Dubois brilliantly frames each chapter in *Souls* in the context of a Negro spiritual – a Sorrow Song. For Dubois, these soulful mournings are the purest manifestation of a truly American art form (Dubois, 1903, p. 156). In his conclusion, he notes that "through all the Sorrow Songs there brings a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things" (Dubois, 1903, p. 162). This faith in justice is a different kind of justice than Rawls' complex normative construction. It is a deeply felt spiritual deprivation that steals humanity away from those who are denied it. Dubios continues, describing this faith in the unseen savior Justice,

> Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins (Dubois, 1903, p. 162).

While his beautiful language defines this concept with a flourish, it seems that Dubois views justice similarly to Dr. Martin Luther King who famously declared on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (King, 1963). The essence is the same: justice cannot be skin deep. Each man is accountable to a sense of justice that is far bigger than himself and has far more to do with his soul than his skin. Such soulful writing, while is does not come close to the normative depth of the writings of philosophers such as Plato or Rawls, reveals a different side of justice that is critical to the teaching of peace education. While Snauwaert encourages the positive definition of peace as "the presence of justice" (Snauwaert, under review, p. 2), Dubois' raw emotional longing for that which lacks is an equally powerful reminder of the power

[1] Dubois almost certainly espoused a more "Platonic" moral philosophy (compare with Snauwaert, 3-4), although the spirit of his work is consistent with much of the modern peace movement scholarship.

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of injustice to disturb the human peace and perhaps a stronger reminder of the need for an education that promotes such a justice.

Lopez describes peace studies as an "interdisciplinary…exploration of conceptual frameworks of peace, threats to and violations of peace, and processes of peace building" (Lopez, 2008, p. ?). In many ways, peace studies and peace education center on the concepts of war and peace. Traditionally, peace has been defined as "the absence of war; the absence of direct organized violence between states" (Galtung, 1969, p. 167). As mentioned above, however, this negative concept of peace falls short for many reasons. First, as Snauwaert notes, defining peace "only in terms of an absence of violence…allow[s] violence to be the operative concept", rather the justice as discussed above (Snauwaert, under review, p. 2). Secondly, this negative concept of peace falls short based on the context of the post-war South that Dubois engaged with daily. While there was no war – no direct conflict between states that is – there certainly was no peace. Snauwaert frames this idea of the "sphere of peace", referring "to the space where peace exists and seeks to answer the question of the scope or range of peace: local, national, international, and global…In general, the sphere of peace is a socio-political state of affairs that manifests within and between societies" (Snauwaert, under review, p. 31; see also Matsuo, 2007). In the context of the post war South, this is a much better way to approach the discussion of war and peace. While there was not an active conflict between military states, there was certainly ongoing societal *violence*. This violence, whether physical or societal, represented the restriction of the humanity of individuals at the hands of others. This is an opportune time to reintroduce the positive conception of peace as the presence of justice, as mentioned above. If peace is the presence of justice, then the lack of justice means the lack of peace.

A central reason for the lack of justice in a society is the presence of oppression. Oppression can be understood as the "structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group", by definition creating injustice (Young, 1988). Young (1988) further expounds on this, laying out oppression as a condition of social groups, a set of relations within or between societies. She describes at least five types of oppression: Exploitation, Marginalization, Powerlessness, Cultural Imperialism, and Violence. The story of Dubois and the African slave in America is one definitionally of oppression as described by Young. Consider first the tribes of Africa, plundered by their neighbors and Europeans alike, sold into exploitative slavery for centuries. Once finally freed from the legal bonds of slavery, they found themselves marginalized from proper society, even in areas that had long rejected

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the institution of slavery. This social marginalization along with political disenfranchisement led to almost a century of powerlessness in the Black community. For much of the first half of the 20th century, the Black community was the victim of cultural imperialism as white consumers happily engaged with Black performers, musicians, athletes, and chefs, while still denying them basic human rights such as voting, equal pay, and shared public services. And of course, a common trend throughout the history of Black communities in America is the direct manifestation of violence against persons and property. From the beating of slaves in the 1700s to the lynching of young Black men in the 1950s, it is an unavoidable truth that lies heavy over Black history in the US. If oppression is the story of injustice, then the story of the Black man in America is one of injustice as well. The correction of this injustice (in pursuit of peace) was the aim of DuBois and continues to be the aim of many peace educators today.

The second foundational element in the study of peace education is the connection between moral reasoning and pedagogy. Snauwaert succinctly describes the correlation between moral education and peace, writing "engaged, informed citizens are necessary participants in the pursuit of peace and justice, and those citizens need to be capable of exercising moral reasoning and judgment regarding principles of justice and a complex array of basic questions of justice" (Snauwaert, under review, p. 4). In many ways, the development of this democratic-citizen oriented pedagogy is the story of DuBois and other Black educators in the post-war South. Afterall, the question of what must citizens know started the entire Black community in the face in the wake of slavery's demise. As Booker T. Washington laid out in his own 1901 autobiography, the Black citizen was essentially a blank slate following centuries of servitude in a paternalistic chattel slavery system. Washington noted that

> Within a few hours [of being granted freedom] the great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these [former slaves] to be solved. These were the questions of a home, a living, the rearing of children, education, citizenship, and the establishment and support of churches (Washington, 1901, p. 11.

These questions at their core reflect the question – what did these men and women need to learn to live in a democracy? Unlike the somewhat sterile academic setting within which students now engage with these questions, however, the Black community was forced to learn under constant threat to life and property. In the face of this question, Dubois points to a certain form of education needed to develop a democratic citizenry. He writes that "the training of the schools we need to-day

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more than ever, - the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts" (Dubios, 1903, pp. 6-7). This illusion to the broad impact of a liberal arts education foreshadows key elements of peace education – citizens capable of moral reasoning - mentioned by Snauwaert at the beginning of the paragraph.

Dubois further expounds on the pedagogical means needed for this form of education in Chapter VI in *Souls,* entitled "Of the Training of Black Men". In this brief essay, he writes practically of the need to "seek the social regeneration of the Negro" (Dubios, 1903, p. 66). In this endeavor, he also speaks broadly of "the one panacea of Education [that] leaps to the lips of all: - such human training as will best use the labor of all men without enslaving or brutalizing…to stamp out those that in sheer barbarity deafen us to the wail of prisoned souls within the Veil" (Dubios, 1903, p. 57). He goes on to critique the mere knowledge learning of industrial education and to promote again a deeper knowledge – a need for more than the mere meat of life. This education is the same as that needed for peace in a democracy – one that teaches the mind to engage against the forces that oppress, exploit, and commit injustice.

This ties in closely with a third element of peace education: the duty to resist injustice. Once again, this concept is tied closely to Dubois and his legacy in the Civil Rights movement. Peace advocate and Civil Rights legend Dr. Martin Luther King wrote the following powerful statement while himself jailed in Birmingham

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly (King, 1963).

This idea of the interrelatedness of justice across communities is especially powerful in the context of the Civil Rights movement. Dr. King and men like DuBois recognized that injustice would not stop in one community. Victory in one area or region would be temporary and limited. Injustice to one is an injustice to all. Snauwaert echoes this sentiment in his discussion of resisting injustice, noting that "the duty to resist injustice is also grounded in and animated by a belief in the possibility of justice. The belief that justice is possible, even in the face of profound injustice" (Snauwaert, under review). This possibility of a complete justice is the same dream as DuBois – a justice again based on the soul and not the skin.

The final elements of peace education are found in the discussion of the morality of the use of force in varying levels in response to injustice. The first claim is of that the position of nonviolence, which aims to fight injustice without the use of any physical force whatsoever. In Chapter 10 of *Teaching Peace as a Matter of Justice*, Snauwaert lays out seven "basic elements of non-violence": understanding and awakening the conscience, critique and dissent, disruption and negotiation, consensual power and withdrawal of consent, unconditional respect and goodwill, self-purification and inner peace, and the power of suffering. The Nashville Student Sit-In Movement provides a perfect practical example of these elements in action in a context that beautifully ties into the world of Dubois' *Souls*.[2] These seven elements of non-violence and their application in this setting are worth diving into as a manifestation of a Duboisian approach to peace education.[3] Firstly, the Nashville students highlighted the importance of creating awareness in the dominant culture and the impact that movement has on awakening the culture's conscience. By highlighting the importance of individual respect and dignity, the protestors appealed to the dominant white culture's own virtues and held them to standards that already existed within the culture. The symbolism of quiet strength in the face of adversity would not have been lost of the predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Nashville majority. Secondly, the movement embodies the spirit of critique and dissent by its unwillingness to settle for less than the ideal. When the students heard that a government committee was suggesting a compromise resolution that would allow blacks to sit at the lunch counters, but remain segregated, they critiqued the idea and rejected it for its willful violation of the ideal they laid out - full desegregation (Clark and Coy, 2015). Accordingly, they continued their peaceful dissent, continuing to highlight their critiques of the existing system. Thirdly, the element of disruption and negotiation is clearly laid out in the movement of the story and in the stages of Curle's Conflict Progression theory (Clark and Coy, 2015). The nonviolent action of sitting at the lunch counters significantly affected downtown Nashville's economic viability, which drove much

[2] The history of this event is discussed in detail by Clark and Coy in their 2015 article "Civil Rights, Social Movements, and Domestic Policy: The 1960 Nashville Student Sit-In Movement".

[3] Manning Marable has a more holistic overview of DuBois' impact on the peace movement in the context of the Civil Rights movement in his article "Peace and Black Liberation: The Contributions of W.E.B. Du Bois." As mentioned in the delimitations section, this paper is focusing on Dubois' peace philosophy as seen in *The Souls of Black Folk* – even though these principles are further developed in his later works.

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of the progress in negotiation. The disruption caused by the violent white anti-protestors caused significant decreases in customers to affected areas, which led to much of the business community being far more "amenable" than they would have been had business continued as normal (Clark and Coy, 2015). Fourth, the Black community's withdrawal from the existing power structure highlights the impact of a peace withdrawal from a system of complacent consent. By refusing to tacitly participate in the segregated system any longer, the student's emphasized their desire for a better system - and refused to participate in any other system. With the support of the larger Nashville community, they were able to effect permanent change. Fifth, the commitment of the Black students to dressing in their Sunday best and refraining from any violent responses epitomizes the idea of unconditional respect. By portraying themselves as they were - well-respected members of a well-educated community - these young students gave the business owners a respect that would not be reciprocated by their white counterparts. This unconditional respect would be critical in gaining the support of the larger white community. Sixth, and related to the fifth, the training that went into a non-violent protest of this kind demanded a strict commitment to self-control and improvement. The story of Joe Goldthreate and the character growth that occurred as he trained in non-violent tactics is representative of the kind of personal leadership development that these youth had to embody as they stepped out in faith. Finally, the power of suffering is crucial to the nonviolence movement. Clark and Coy capture it powerfully, writing, "the spectacle of Nashville jail cells filled with educated, respectful, well-dressed young black students...was a public relations nightmare" (Clark and Coy, 2015, p. 12). The willingness of the protestors to sit in jail for the sake of a simple civil right like eating a sandwich was extremely powerful and was the spark for many other comparable protests around the South (Clark and Coy, 2015). In many ways, this was the legacy of DuBois and his work as laid out in *The Souls of Black Folk*. This cry for justice – for equal treatment based on the content of the soul and not the color of the skin – was another Sorrow Song sung from a newly freed community learning what it meant to be a democratic citizen.

While nonviolence is one element of responding to injustice, Just War Theory discusses the justification needed to engage with injustice forcefully, how to engage forcefully with justice, and how to end a conflict justly. The context of *The Souls of Black Folk* does not contribute much to a discussion of Just War Theory in general, except for one chapter in which Dubois details the actions of the Freedman's Bureau during the early days of Reconstruction. Understanding the violence of the institution of slavery as a metaphor for war, the actions of Reconstruction in many ways represent a question of Jus Post-Bellum – that is the

element of Just War Theory devoted to the just actions following the conclusion of a war. In Chapter II, "Of the Dawn of Freedom, Dubois discusses the actions of the Freedman's Bureau as attempts of the US government to right the wrongs of the past and restore justice to the communities devastated by slavery. Clifford lays out several elements of a post-war return to a state of justice, broadly under four headings: establishing the respect for persons, the establishment of justice, the need to exercise ecological responsibility, and finally engage broad support and commitment from the larger community (Clifford, 2012). In this Chapter, Dubois lays in great detail some of the restorative success of the bureau in exactly the areas. First, he references the establishment of the respect for persons in the establishment of schools and the introduction of "practicable systems of compensated labor" for the former slaves (Clifford, 2012). Secondly, he reflects on the attempt to establish of justice in the restoration of the legal system. Although he bemoans the incomplete nature of this effort by the bureau, he also recognizes the complex social nature of this attempt and the need for time to heal some of these wounds before such a structural change could be effective (Clifford, 2012). Thirdly, he notes the attempts of the Bureau to restore the "abandoned lands of the South" through various efforts such as the infamous "40 acres and a mule" (Clifford, 2012, p. 15). This need to prudently but fairly redistribute the shattered wealth of the South was underway during the efforts of the Bureau, but was an effort that likely would have lasted a generation or more. Which leads to the fourth and final element of Clifford and DuBois' discussion on the restorative needs of the post-slavery Black communities – a long-term commitment. Throughout the chapter, Dubois notes the early successes of the Bureau and decries the lack of commitment from the government and influencers in power to see through the goals of the institution. This lack of follow through shows the frailty of post-war peace – early successes can be quickly wiped out, especially when injustice is the status quo. Unfortunately, this would be the reality that Dubois and his community experienced.

In conclusion, the story of Dubois is the story of peace education – the education of citizens to participate in a just community. A comparative study of the foundational elements of peace education the themes of Dubois' *Souls* point to a common vision of a well-educated, community of philosophically-engaged learners committed to resisting injustice. Practically, Dubois shows the challenges of building an educational system committed to peace education and it's foundational elements. It requires a long-term commitment to sacrificial pedagogy and a willingness to resist tyranny at every turn. Nevertheless, this sacrifice was one Dubois and many of his peers made consistently throughout the 20th century.

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Martin Luther King, Jr. perhaps best encapsulated Dubios' vision for peace, when he firmly claimed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial:

> Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children (King, 1963).

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