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Phenomenology is a form of philosophical inquiry using the disclosure of an object or experience to a public audience. A phenomenology of mis-education, therefore, would relate the experience of mis-education in a public and open fashion. In order to describe the elements of mis-education of African people groups, especially African-Americans, in public spaces of education the methodology of phenomenology is employed here to give a view into the sides, aspects, profiles, absences and presences, and identity in manifold of this experiential phenomenon. Mis-education as it is used here comes from the seminal work of Carter G. Woodson entitled *The Mis-education of the Negro*. Utilizing the voice of Carter G. Woodson, the double consciousness of W.E.B. DuBois in *Souls of Black Folk*, the dialectical ascent of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the psycho-affective work of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth*, and the reflective voice and gaze of Malcolm X in his autobiography and published works; this series of five essays is a preliminary look into the experience of the black in mis-education.

LOOKING FOR THE BACKDOOR: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIS-EDUCATION

by

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Approved by

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This work is dedicated to my sons, Erick Gerard Pryor, Jr., and Emmanuel Lee Pryor, in the hope that you will be encouraged in your own scholarship and see this work as a foundation for your own great contributions to the world.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by ERICK G. PRYOR has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## PREFACE

Eighty years is a lengthy amount of time for anything. Just think eighty years ago prohibition of alcohol was in effect in our country. Now alcohol is ubiquitous and can be bought in some of the same places where milk is sold. In eighty years, perceptions change, people change and pass away, and our world usually changes with it. Looking at natural changes, technological changes, and even the changes of some of the global boundaries within eighty years, it is easy to expect change in most if not all areas of life. We would assume a greater amount of change in areas of life that demand the most from us. There are expectations in modern society for individuals to have the capacity to work for example. This work requires that we be trained and prepared to fulfill the roles outlined for us through such training. But, what occurs when this is not happening? What about if the occurrence continued for eighty years and actually appeared worse with time? We might say that such an occurrence was a betrayal of our capacity for innovation, our bend toward productivity, and the pervasive knowledge that sweeps our globe that is only a mouse-click away from our apprehension. Yet, it is a part of a document written in 1933 by a man named Carter G. Woodson about a group of people namely African-Americans.<sup>1</sup>

After eighty years of his text in publication, I was surprised to see the work of Dr. Carter G. Woodson not utilized by professors of education in current publication. I saw

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<sup>1</sup> Woodson uses the archaic term Negroes.

the term mis-education on several books by notable authors like Noam Chomsky<sup>2</sup> and Svi Shapiro<sup>3</sup>. I even saw mis-education utilized in the Hip-Hop genre. Lauryn Hill's *The Mis-Education of Lauryn Hill* comes to mind as a salient example. Yet, in my searching I did not find anyone that commemorated Woodson's contribution to scholarship in presenting his text, nor did I find like in the Journal of Black Studies five years ago, a commemorative mention of eighty years of the text. This is troubling to me as an Africana scholar.

Imagine John Dewey not being commemorated on the anniversary of *Democracy and Education* or Martin Heidegger not being acknowledge for an anniversary of *Being and Time* and possibly you see my lament at such an oversight. We acknowledge the works of a Dewey or a Heidegger as making a significant contribution to the world of scholarship and even more so to how we think about our scholarship and our world. Perhaps we don't see Woodson in the same light. Here, I digress.

Instead of cursing the darkness of oversight in a failure to acknowledge *The Mis-Education of the Negro* I wanted to make a contribution to the field of Africana Studies, phenomenology, and begin a conversation on Woodson that might spark some new interest in his work. For purposes of full disclosure I will say that I am an African-American male who happens to be an Africana scholar. The field of Africana Studies, a field of endeavor said to be partly attributed to Dr. Carter G. Woodson, is concerned with the historical, cultural, and scholastic contribution of people of the African continent and

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<sup>2</sup> Chomsky on Mis-Education

<sup>3</sup> *Losing Heart: The Moral and Spiritual Mis-Education of America's Children*



African Diaspora. This includes American blacks, Caribbean blacks, South American blacks, and Africans throughout the world. Individuals that work within this area of study include scholars of times past like Woodson, DuBois, Fanon, Malcolm X, and present-day scholars like Lewis Gordon, Nigel Gibson, Stuart Hall, Cornel West, and Henry Louis Gates. The purpose of such scholars and their work is to bring relevance to the contributions of Africana peoples and the struggles that have been endured through often overlooked experiences such as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialization of nations populated by Africana peoples that were or still are rich in natural resources.

This was the life-work of Carter G. Woodson and he traveled extensively as an educator seeking this end. Woodson does not stand alone in his take on what occurs in spaces of education. One need only look at the ongoing dialogue between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois to see that the education of a black mind in America was a hot topic of debate. We have for years contended with the problem of blacks underperforming in education and must ask questions about our efforts to reform the dismal trends we see. For instance, have we applied some of Woodson's suggestions? He advocates for blacks taking more initiative in planning out the education of their children and not leaving such responsibilities in the hands of individuals with resources, but possibly not vested interest in the success or failure of African-American children. Have we asked how segregation hurt our education of black children and does it still hurt black children? Or have we developed in our treatment of students in public education to insure equal treatment to individuals that may be of a different color or ethnicity? And ultimately, have we implemented the suggestions of Woodson with all our data and

innovations for educational spaces? Therefore in commemoration of eighty-years of Woodson's text on mis-education I submit my contribution and work in honor of his scholarship.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In a course on *Film and Philosophy* with the University of North Carolina – Greensboro’s Cultural Foundations department I found a “voice” in the work of Frantz Fanon. For years I had in my possession a tattered second-hand copy of *The Wretched of the Earth* in my library that though skimmed and highlighted at interesting points, laid idle upon my bookshelf. For the course I was to choose a “lens”, a voice of philosophy, a tradition in which to view a series of films with and relate them (the films and philosophical body of work) to education. It was the first time I felt like a “philosopher”. I understood Fanon. From his incipient text, *Black Skin White Masks*, I began to understand why I felt at times like a body in space and not a person in certain places. From his incendiary, *The Wretched of the Earth*, I learned the effects of colonization on oppressor and oppressed from the pen of a psychiatrist in the Third World.

But, the story does not end with Fanon, the issue of Fanon and violence began to emerge in many of my papers and talks about his philosophy. In conference proceedings for the National Council of Black Studies (NCBS), I was confronted on Fanonian scholars who disagreed with my appeal to a Fanonian violence that did not include conventional arms. I carried myself well, but began to see the violent emergence of the colonized as a key to decolonization arise again and again in critics of my work. At the

NCBS conference I was also intrigued with the scholarship of Africana studies professors from across the country as they explicated the work of Manning Marable in presenting Malcolm X. I will not endeavor to discuss those arguments and lines of reasoning behind his text here, but will say it included the passion I learned was worthy of any scholar, a title which is seldom associated formally with the likes of Malcolm X.

My history with Malcolm X goes back to the sixth grade when I initially read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Its words lifted off the page for me as I heard about a young Malcolm Little, a middle schooler like me, being told that he could not be what he wanted in life. Two years later I would have a similar situation occur and I felt equipped by the armory of words spoken to me as a twelve year old on my bed by that elder statesman in the guise of Malcolm X.

In viewing a Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon I began to see a story unfolding of race relations that had ties to education and philosophy. A course on phenomenology began to solidify these ties into a body of work that drew from Africana philosophy. From Fanon I was introduced to Lewis Gordon, whose *Introduction to Africana Philosophy* included an appeal to W. E. B. DuBois. In my excitement I reread *Souls of Black Folk* with fresh eyes opened to see that DuBois was leading me and any one that chose to read his work into what a “black soul” looks like. This soul would sing melancholy songs, would mourn, or improvise a jazz tune. This soul also was “gifted” with a second sight, wore a “veil”, and was dually conscious of being black in body, but American in location. Gordon also appeals to Carter G. Woodson as the father of black studies. Many are familiar with his work entitled “*The Mis-education of the Negro*,” yet I was amazed to find little work in

regard to the continued relevance of the text, especially with it being eighty years this along with the voices of Africana studies and phenomenology are the influences of this work.

My intent in writing these phenomenological essays was an attempt to answer, like Hegel, what the “spirit” of the “black” looks like. Hegel became of interest due to Fanon’s distinct use of his *Lord and Slave Dialectic* in his *Black Skin White Masks* text. Intrigued, I endeavored to show a process of how the black experience may emerge in like fashion. Unlike Hegel’s movement from sense to absolute Spirit, for me it was concerned with spirit to experience and thus the subtitle, “Phenomenology of Mis-education.”

This work is a tribute to my sons that they may someday read these essays, like I read the words of Malcolm X. Understanding the sequential, movement of experience of the black mind and body may be of importance to understand why Woodson would detail the “Negro” as being in the process of mis-education in spaces of learning. Therefore, I submit the following work based on the outlined essays below.

This dissertation will consist of a collection of six essays on the question of consciousness in the phenomenon of mis-education.

The first essay in this work is entitled “*Still Mis-Educated: Commemorating 80 Years of Mis-Education of the Negro.*” This section will discuss how after eighty years of Carter G. Woodson's seminal text, "*The Mis-education of the Negro*", African-Americans and many people of African descent appear to still be mis-educated. Woodson's text outlines areas of concern and notably describes the concept of a race concept and a

historical consciousness within his work. The power and strength of acknowledged history and knowledge of the history of a people group will be described here in the context of African-American males.

My second essay, "*Masks, Veils, and Invisible People: A Phenomenology of DuBoisian Double Consciousness*" attempts to describe the veil of DuBois in relation to people of Africana descent. DuBois seminal text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, engages the reader into the dynamic nature of what the soul of Black folks looks like. He begins his description with the disclosure of a posed question, "What does it feel like to be a 'problem'?" From this starting point, DuBois discloses the Black male or female as a *seventh son* behind the diversities of people in the world gifted with a veil, a "second sight". This chapter will describe the historical and folk significance of this veil and also disclose the next theme that emerges in the phenomenon of DuBois's writing in terms of the soulful aspect of the Black, double consciousness. Double consciousness will be described in DuBois's terms and explicated in terms of the experience of African-American males as if they are behind a veil and doubly conscious of their view and viewing from this vantage point.

*Hegelian Dialectic and African-American Education* introduces Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel's philosophy to describe mis-education and constitutes the third essay. Hegel is described as a philosopher of history and points to the element of the historical in his philosophy. One of Hegel's most notable works, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, is a movement from the empirical aspect of the consciousness (that of the senses) to that of the absolute ideal (Absolute spirit). Such movement from the empirical to the ideal

components of our reality was the basis for the philosophy of Karl Marx who stopped well short of the “Absolute Spirit” to highlight the materialist bend of humanity void of an Absolute immaterial, ideal or Spirit. Other significant philosophical concepts such as existentialism (vis-a-vis Kierkegaard, Sartre, Nietzsche) can be attributed to Hegel's philosophical method. However, Hegel has been rarely utilized to describe the educational position of people of Africana-descent in education. This essay describes a dialectic methodology that incorporates a hermeneutic-phenomenological bend to philosophical inquiry. In meeting this end, the essay will briefly describe Hegel's brand of philosophy, disclose how his philosophical method can be used, and give a concrete example utilizing a historical perspective of Blacks in education and how the situation has turned on its head in dialectical fashion.

The fourth essay “Fanon’s Backdoor: The Mis-education of Frantz Fanon” presents a twist in how we view Woodson’s *backdoor*. Frantz Fanon is renowned and often relegated to his chapter *Concerning Violence* in *The Wretched of the Earth*. However, beneath the diatribe of violence is a substantial philosopher with an intense system of thought on how decolonization takes place in the psychoaffective domain. Utilizing Fanon's work in *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, this essay will describe mis-education in terms of Fanon's postcolonial theory and movement towards decolonization. Using postcolonial theory as a framework within the dialectic method, mis-education will be read in terms of Woodson's disclosure of the phenomenon and Fanon's description of what a mis-educative consciousness would look like from a historically constrained perspective.



The fifth essay presents the life and work of Malcolm X in “*That Rock Landed on Us: Race and Mis-education in the Work of Malcolm X.*” This essay will describe a case-in-point of mis-education and a radical conscientious reversal of its derogatory elements. Using Malcolm X as an example, this chapter will look at elements of Woodson's mis-education in the life of Malcolm X and the dialectical mechanisms used to turn the effects of mis-education on its end in order to overcome it.

This series of essays is concluded with a concluding essay that serves as a phenomenological analysis of the previous works in collective fashion. The concluding essay is intended to show the efficacy of the phenomenological inquiry as a method and showcase the relevance toward Africana people groups in education.

### **Why Phenomenology?**

I chose phenomenology as a means to divulge this philosophical inquiry due to the efficacy of phenomenology and its requisite analysis to make the experience of a phenomenon public. Whether this phenomenon is the intentionality towards an object or a concept it reaches its best when bracketing from the natural attitude and allowed to be disclosed through the transcendental ego. There are hidden things in plain view like DuBois’s doubly conscious, veiled African-American. Within this group of essays I endeavored to not mention race in particular in terms of racism, power dynamics, capitalism, gentrification, or any other host of terms to describe race dynamics that have an effect in schools and educational institutions. However, these things are inferred when the reader, in public space, renders a word or words to describe a phenomenon as loaded with racialized meaning. Mis-education as a concept did not appear to me to have such a

weighty connotation in dialogue about the topic. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to engage in a phenomenological reduction to introduce the concept in the public space. Modern scholarship might call this a gap in the literature.

Phenomenology is chosen to intend or experience mis-education, double consciousness, colonization, and personal and collective histories of the black.<sup>4</sup> I am looking for the hidden essence, the eidetic reduction without proposing anything. The proposals are left to the reader, of which I am included. Reflecting upon this work I would like to see my experience, the experience of my sons, and the experience of students of color in light of a Woodson, DuBois, Fanon, Malcolm X, or Hegel. Proposals are nice and often sterile ways of addressing the problems that we see. Yet, realities as they are experienced are messy and marred with our perceptions. Phenomenology may just allow us to perceive the reality as it is, as opposed to how we propose it is in our eyes.

In asking, what is the experience of the black in spaces of education? We might notice that the black in time and space is often relegated to a body. In this work a body is disclosed as being a boundary that is met with a border or a gate to hinder its passage. There are doors that a black body must singularly walk through with its own legs, its own strength, and its own balance. The black body as an object is never disclosed as a subjective entity. Herein we see Hegel's *Master and Slave* at work. Fanon would call such a dynamic as non-existent in the experience of the black. Perhaps the interaction is

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<sup>4</sup> I like to use Fanon's translated term from *Black Skin White Masks*

not one of desire and recognition,<sup>5</sup> but of actually being the other, which is entirely different. What does it mean to be someone else? Is it even possible? It is as if Fanon phenomenological bend in its intention of black and colonized bodies upon an eidetic reduction of this noema views itself from the transcendental ego as an entity that doesn't desire or seek to be recognized as a subject, but rather wants to be identified as something altogether different from what it presents itself to be historically and from the parameters imposed upon it currently.

### **What Does It Mean To Be Phenomenological?**

Phenomenology examines phenomenon from a transcendent gaze. In order to examine what it means to be phenomenological could very easily be relegated to definitions found in classical Husserlian phenomenology. However, in examining why phenomenology was used for this work, a concept of phenomenological might be better suited to examine this system of inquiry through the lens of a Fanon or a DuBois for example. A phenomenon in and of itself is innocuous, yet loaded with meaning. Instead of intending the black body for instance, we might intend the activity of the black body in order to showcase the experience of a black body. A black body is more than just a covering of skin that is darkened by melanin and the sun. We might speak of color, but we would also need to discuss movement, is this not what black bodies, bodies in general, do? I recall Malcolm X, a man of "blackened" body, who enjoyed dancing with other black bodies and also white ones (X, 1992).

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<sup>5</sup> As is the case for Hegel's depiction per Kojeve and Hyppolite

Black bodies are not simply racialized, but relegated to spaces so we often find it hard to see them for what they are in reality. This is a reason for phenomenology and a bend toward being phenomenological. Being phenomenological might inquire, for instance, as to why black bodies are bombarded by borders, boundaries, and ways to be viewed and examined. A history of the black body reveals that the slave paradigm exploited this recurring phenomenon. However, the black body as it was treated in the times of slavery is apparent at times today. Objectification of bodies in sex, sports, and even how we discipline and punish are all points of perusal to examine this phenomenon.

### **Towards a Phenomenology of Mis-Education**

Mis-education as a phenomenon looks at the act of how education takes place. There is an education. We might say that education has learning in it, instruction in subject matter, a building of knowledge, understanding, application, and a level of independence to implement the thing or things learned. Dialectically, the concept of mis-education is perhaps no different from a conceptual practice of mis-education. The difference between the two is possibly a thin line, a distinct border that defines where education and mis-education diverge. Much like the two roads in Robert Frost's poem it is contingent upon the choice of which you will take. Maybe you have to take them both. Perhaps it is not about a choice, but an experience. Could this be the folly of how we engage in our current paradigm of multiple choice testing? The test is not the education, it is the summation of all that should be learned, or so we are told. Perhaps it is because we are told so often and not given the experiences necessary that mis-education occurs. What are mis-educated minds and bodies told that educated bodies and minds are not? Perhaps

we constantly say to the mis-educated, you learned this, when in reality this thing learned does not educate the individual, but places a border that makes it hard to naturalize oneself back across.

I have spent time in places of education both being “educated” and “educating”. Initially I can admit that I had no interest in taking the education back to a particular community from whence I came. As a matter of fact, it was education that allowed me to understand the community I matriculated from. My community had to be learned, experienced, and embraced over time. My understanding of the process of education is now understood to be one of giving back to my community. As a black male I understand that this black body that I reside is relegated to a community of which my race denotes. However, my community is more than a skin color, it is more than my body, and even more than my capacity to reason. In mis-education I embrace that my community is no more than those that look like me. This is as much folly as saying that those with tenor or baritone voices like my own are my community. Or perhaps only my gender is my community. People are more than colors, more than their voices, more than their maleness or femalehood. We are experiences, choices, our instruction, and that of which we are exposed, black bodies exemplify this well as we see not just black bodies, but bodies in general that are exposed to elements of cold or heat, that experience pain, and as Fanon states in *Black Skin White Masks*, it “tenses” (Fanon, 1952/2008).

This mis-education has its basis on the issues and how they are interpreted or how we are taught to interpret them. Education does not teach what we are to think, but better how thinking should occur. Whereas mis-education says think this, regardless of the

parameters, the race of the individual, or even the circumstances affecting how your thinking might be in time and space. Perhaps Woodson's mis-education is along this wise. Potentially, we may all be a little mis-educated. There may be occasions where we want pre-fabricated thinking mechanisms, paradigms without the arduousness of reflection. The tedium of thinking and the requisite practices that thinking involves requires our responsibility to accept the consequences behind thinking that may be considered poor and the humility required for thinking that may be considered "good" or even "great" thinking. A phenomenology of mis-education looks at thinking as the product, without simply relegating such thinking as black or white, but as thinking pure and simple.

**CHAPTER II**

**STILL MIS-EDUCATED?: COMMEMORATING EIGHTY YEARS OF  
CARTER G. WOODSON’S *MIS-EDUCATION OF THE NEGRO***

In commemoration of the eighty years in which *The Mis-education of the Negro* has been in publication it would be interesting to dialogue with Dr. Woodson about today’s educational climate. If granted such an opportunity I would ask, “Are we still mis-educated?” The response to this question could take on many forms and travel down many avenues to disclose the answer of Woodson. We of course do not know what his exact words would be, but can be assured that the answer would most likely be a “yes”. I am of an opinion that if Dr. Woodson were alive today, few, if any, of his suggestions would change save the examples gleaned from different schools across the United States. Woodson would find an educational landscape not much different than the one he evaluated in his 1933 treatise.

In spite of Woodson’s text, which highlighted areas of improvement and focused the gaze of our efforts, we are still in a state of mis-education. From reading Woodson, I believe he would offer no new solutions, but point to what he has already supplied. Sure, he may bring harsh indictment upon the African-American community for our distractions to real issues and our inability to come together for the common good of the people, but his critique would be the same. His critique of “the Negro” was that this great race of people, having been disconnected from its history is no more than a poor imitation

of European culture. Therefore, we see Woodson's work as not just a book, but a call to the collective consciousness of African people.

Perhaps Woodson would have much to say about our current paradigm of standardized testing, *No Child Left Behind* legislation, and general intellectual, legal, and pedagogical changes in light of legislative and ideological changes brought about by the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* and *A Nation at Risk*, for example. Considering the changes that have emerged within the window of time between Woodson's publication and today, how has the status of African people changed for the better? If we were to take one segment of this population, say African-American males, what would our findings indicate about the progress out of mis-education these eighty years later? Ultimately, if we were to reprise the pages of *The Mis-education of the Negro*, beyond semantics and examples, how much of mis-education has changed in eighty years?

In 1933, Dr. Carter G. Woodson noted that, "No people can go forward when the majority of those who should know better have chosen to go backward (p. 123)." Woodson's quote simply states that when presented with these options, most of our African-American students, especially the males in this particular case, make a choice to move backward. Svi Shapiro's (2006) assertion that students are learning the "game" of schooling may fit well in this explanation (p. 11). A true educational experience in which the drop out numbers amongst African-American males are not a reality entail both technical skills to "open doors" and "critical and creative thinking to participate" in "meaningful" work (Delpit, 2006, p. 19). One way in which mis-education continues is,



as Lisa Delpit (2006) states, “to imply that it doesn’t matter how you talk or how you write (p. 39).” Well-meaning movements have stressed a student’s culture without the emphasis of how of dominant culture impacts social interaction. Richard Rorty (1999) writes that “secondary education is a matter of socialization” into the “common sense of the society as it is” (p. 116). If, as Rorty says, primary and secondary education serves as a “familiarizing” agent of our young people into what is seen as “acceptably true” (whether right or wrongly so), what occurs when students do not learn how to effectively combat these assertions? It is for this reason that I present my work in commemoration of this eighty year milestone of Dr. Carter G. Woodson’s text and seek to explore the relevance and pervasive nature of what he called, *The Mis-education of the Negro*.

### **An Overview of *The Mis-education of the Negro***

Quotes from Woodson’s text give a general snapshot of the key points of mis-education. Taken together, Woodson’s words identify to the reader the what, how, and why of the mis-education of the Negro. For the purpose of reviewing this text I have separated the chosen quotes into the *what*, the *how*, and the *why* of mis-education in order to annotate and explain the work of Carter G. Woodson and to define mis-education as Woodson uses it in his text.

### **What is Mis-education?**

The only question which concerns us here is whether these "educated" persons are actually equipped to face the ordeal before them or unconsciously contribute to their own undoing by perpetuating the regime of the oppressor. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. xv)

Woodson begins his prefatory remarks by stating that the information disclosed in his text is based upon firsthand experience with the Negro in American education. From reading *The Mis-education of the Negro*, you get the underlying sense that Woodson has traveled extensively and interacted with individuals to come to the conclusions presented in his book. Here he asks whether or not the “educated” are aware of their immersion in a regime he feels is originated and supported by the “oppressor.” It is interesting to note that the “oppressor’s regime” is apparently the contributor of the “educated members” of which Woodson speaks. Therefore, the first aspect of mis-education is that an “education” is presented to members of a group.

The “education” presented is one in which training to “think what is desired” from another and hereby enslaves the mind. In 1933, when Woodson publishes this text, slavery had been over for quite some time. This presentation is interesting in that it notes a shift from physical enslavement backed by the laws of its time to an acceptable enslavement of mind by both oppressor and the oppressed.

The thought of the immediate reward, shortsightedness, and the lack of vision and courage to struggle and win the fight made them failures to begin with.  
(Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 47)

The enslaved mind or mindset is accomplished in training the thought to focus on “immediate reward, shortsightedness, and lack of vision and courage.” This new form of enslavement bred an unwillingness to struggle and fight for success. In Woodson’s words it also made them “failures” and “beggars” for opportunity.

If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 84)

Woodson's backdoor quote is my personal favorite of the whole text. It actually appears twice within the work (once in the preface and once in the ninth chapter). This quote solidifies what mis-education would look like not just amongst African-Americans, but amongst any group that is taught that they were only good enough for a "backdoor." Though metaphorical we see a type of reality of this backdoor as blacks are forced to used "colored" entrances, bathrooms, fountains and sections prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It was the conscious actions of many African-Americans to not take a "backdoor" mentality, but to be recognized as equal citizens that began the change in American society.

Philosophers have long conceded, however, that every man has two educations: "that which is given to him, and the other that which he gives himself. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 126)<sup>6</sup>

According to Woodson, every man is given an education. Personal responsibility dictates that you give another to yourself. For Woodson you must "work out and conquer" this information or realization for yourself as an individual. The true nourishment comes from what we "teach" ourselves. My reading of Woodson here is that a type of creativity and critical thinking is at work here in this teaching of the self.

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of two educations fits within the paradigm of W.E.B. DuBois's *double consciousness* as he states the concept of the black ever feeling "his two-ness" (p. 5).

According to Woodson, this element is lost if we merely accept the words of others without a critical eye of interpretation and translation creatively to our particular worlds.

The majority of Negro education, according to Woodson, has come from without. Meaning that for Woodson, a Negro in his day was only “half-educated” or in his words inappropriately, insufficiently educated (mis-educated). Such a person has received partial intellectual development. Woodson furthers his argument with stating that such an individual may have developed “negatively”. Without the requisite full education, he submits that there will be lacking mental power due to an “ill-fed brain.”

Instead of cramming the Negro's mind with what others have shown that they can do, we should develop his latent powers that he may perform in society a part of which others are not capable. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 151)

This last quote gives us the understanding that Woodson’s aspirations and expectations for the African-Americans of his day were lofty and obtainable. His expectation was that a properly educated Negro populous would be able to fill a void in our society that only a Negro mind could. It was to the detriment of society that we fail to properly educate the minds of all citizens. For Woodson, we have allowed a vast territory of latent power to lie dormant and untapped in not properly educating the “Negro mind.”

From these quotes we can surmise that Woodson’s definition of mis-education is a partial or negative development by cramming the mind with what others have shown that they can do. The purpose of such mis-education is to bring an infusion of the oppressor’s regime of seeking after immediate reward, shortsightedness, and the lack of vision and courage to struggle and win the fight. In bringing about such a regime of mis-

education it further trains the “educated” to think what is desired of him or her and determines what a person shall think, brings a feeling of inferiority. As we disclose the work of Woodson’s mis-education this should be used as a working definition for what is meant by the term mis-education.

### **How does Mis-education Occur?**

The curriculum presented in Woodson’s day was one of the first components of an answer to the “how” of mis-education. “Holding the Negro down,” is used to describe what occurs when subjects “present a code” for the purpose of “control”. Therefore, the first component of the how of mis-education is this presentation of a “code” for the sole purpose of control.

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions... You do not need to send him to the back door...he will cut one for his special benefit...His education makes it necessary. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. xvii)

As aforementioned, Woodson utilizes the above quote on two occasions in his text. Here, it actually follows the previous sentiment of the presentation of a “code of morals” enacting control. Once this code is established as a framework, the thinking takes over. This thinking is a consequence of the training given and entails that the “proper place” is adhered to. Woodson even adds that creativity in crafting such access to the specified “proper place” is taken in order to keep in step with the status quo.

Many people with good intentions developed schools for African-Americans. Woodson notes that these schools were crafted out of “enthusiasm” as opposed to “knowledge”. It is the sentiment of Woodson that such schools were for the

“transformation” of African-Americans, not “development”. These words are useful in that they disclose a particular mission of imposition in contrast to building for the possibility of contribution. The assumption was that all former slaves needed were the same information and opportunity to learn as their white counterparts and all would be equal and equitable. This of course was not the case. First, blacks were not seen as equals to whites. Second, education alone would not be enough to guarantee opportunity in the marketplace amongst individuals operating in a system during the very years blacks worked as slaves. Third, some of the areas taught were not congruent with the experience of blacks of this time or well into Woodson’s time. Last, the “enthusiastic” philanthropist and progressive thinkers developing schools did not think of the impact of such factors as racism, hard feelings, and lack of respect toward their newfound contemporaries that were once held as property. Failure to think through these problems for the best course of action caused a “regime of oppression” and a unilateral focus in the education of African-Americans resulting in mis-education.

The results of mis-education are further proliferated through what children hear. In this case the phenomenon of a child being told by a parent is used as an example.<sup>7</sup> As an educator I have heard parents declare that they were “never good in math” and can understand why their children are not as well. A critique of these conversations is put forward by Woodson as a learned reaction from “their oppressors”.

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<sup>7</sup> One might also recall the incident of Malcolm X (then Malcolm Little) being told by a teacher that a lawyer was not a suitable occupation for *someone of his skin color* (my words and emphasis) (X, 1993, p. 36).

Histories written elsewhere for the former slave area were discarded, and new treatments of local and national history in conformity with the recrudescing propaganda were produced to give whites and blacks the biased point of view of the development of the nation and the relations of the races. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 85)

Woodson as a scholar has written extensively on the history of African, African-Americans, and people of color in general. His purpose is to bring awareness through his literature and through such events as Negro History Week.<sup>8</sup> There is a stern critique in Woodson's text that one of the key components to mis-education is the lack of culturally specific history. Woodson cites lack of emphasis on African philosophy, African accomplishments, and a general disdain for historical achievements by people of color as points where the "regime of the oppressor" are readily seen. Lack of emphasis on historical contributions is a key "how" in Woodson's mis-education for the simple fact that he based most of his academic career on the study, publishing, and advocacy of these contributions so that young African-Americans might know about them.

### **Why does Mis-Education Happen?**

Individuals that develop education for blacks, though enthusiastic, perhaps fail to consider where the African-Americans would contribute best in society. Instead, African-Americans were given the same type of information, skills, and expectations of other groups already occupying a particular position in American society. The assumption was, as indicated by Woodson, teaching the skills that everyone else has will guarantee a spot for the African-American man or woman to be a "duly qualified" citizen. This of course

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<sup>8</sup> This later became Black History Month.

was not the case and, in Woodson's view, both black and white suffered for this failure of vision.

Negroes have no control over their education and have little voice in their other affairs pertaining thereto... education of the Negroes...is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them and now segregate them. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 22)

In answering, "why mis-education", we could look at Woodson's quote above and see some very key elements to the pervasive nature of mis-education in 1933 and today. The concept of control over curricular materials is a key component. It is the final say so on issues of educational importance that are instrumental to combating the processes of mis-education on African-American minds. In Woodson's day, issues surrounding the education of blacks were made by individuals who were responsible for segregating African-Americans. Today, school boards and governments at varying levels do not segregate children, but often make decisions while well-distanced from the actual problems needing to be addressed.

A component of why mis-education occurs is seen in Woodson's (1933/2004) account of "lack of confidence" (pp.108-109). This lack of confidence leads to a type of inferiority complex mentioned in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*. This confidence, or lack thereof, filters into what an African-American sees within his or herself and has a bearing on potential.<sup>9</sup> This confidence when read more deeply within the text, actually corresponds to how others are viewed. For instance, a black leader may not be seen as competent or impactful as a white leader in the same position. For this

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<sup>9</sup> Woodson says possibilities.



reason, lack of confidence is a component of why mis-education continues eighty years after Woodson published his book. It is important for all people to have a positive viewpoint and sincere confidence in their cultural identity. The contrasting result of not having such confidence is a lack of trust resulting in failed relationships, time, and productivity.

It is an injustice to the Negro, however, to mis-educate him and suffer his manners to be corrupted from infancy unto old age and then blame him for making the mistakes which such guidance necessitates. (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 125)

Woodson speaks to the restriction and condescension of African-Americans and its end in delinquency, uncontrolled passions, and degeneration in various areas. Perhaps Woodson saw something in 1933 that we should have adhered to as a country. Yet, his words apparently fell upon deaf ears over these eighty years. Today we see the effects of such mis-education in our African-American males. Woodson posits that this occurs not because they are inferior, susceptible to beastlike passions, or are genetically predisposed; but because of a system that “mis-educates” by allowing “manners to be corrupted”. It is reminiscent of a proverb which states “poor conversation corrupts good manners.” This has never been truer than in the situation we see today as we are witnessing large-scale incarceration of African-American males and American citizens in general.

The final aspect of “why mis-education” is the component of expecting a reproduction or imitation of what has already been done in society. A true education in teaching of the accomplishments of times past will, in Woodson’s words, “imbibe” youth

with the “spirit” of great men and women. An education must present a call of duty that the “vision and invention” of times past are within reach and accessible to create new things, new realities, and new ways of living together.

### **Effects of Mis-education: Impacts in Education, Employment, Politics, and Service**

Of all demographics currently populating U.S. schools, African-American males seem to fare the worst amongst their peers. African-American males have lower literacy rates, higher drop-out rates, poorer math and reading scores, more likely to be placed in special education classes, and are less likely to attend and graduate from a four-year college or university. These areas should prompt a call for a national epidemic and immediate response to resolve the problem. But, time has only showcased a worsening trend for African-American males in public educational spaces. W.E. B. DuBois stated that the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the problem of the color line. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century now introduces the color line anew in the spheres of education. More access to education has meant more of a need to perform at levels commensurate with the opportunities given. However, African-American males have not adequately stepped into these opportunities and grasped them accordingly.

The education of African-American males can be said to be inadequate as it currently sits. We cannot call such a practice of education as has been handed to African-American males a “proper education.” Carter G. Woodson would appropriate the term mis-education here. Mis-education is when someone is afforded the opportunities distinctive to an educational setting, but fails to receive the benefit of such a setting. For

African-American males educational settings this failure is exhibited in the lack of success in comparison to their counterparts of other races.

Mis-education from a phenomenological perspective is not something that is practiced, learned, or handed down as a legacy from generation to generation, though it would appear that way. It is an experience that over time can evolve into a practice, a system of learning and a legacy of a particular group. African-Americans in education are plagued by a psyche of injustice. The problems of mis-education begin and are precipitated in the psyche. A consciousness emerges that allows for the “back-door” hypothesis to take form in time and space. Woodson’s concept of a man (or woman) being controlled is trumped in his own quote by the acceptance of this metaphorical back-door. This back-door is “crafted” for “one’s own special use” (Woodson, 1933/2004). What are the tools of such crafting and how does someone know how to assemble the “door”? Woodson posits that the “education” deems it so.

Woodson emphatically states again and again that African-Americans (Negroes) are being taught a body of information that in practice becomes no more than material for imitation. African-Americans learn little about their history and contributions to society past and present. The creation of such a history deems the African-American to think their history is non-existent or consistent of a barbaric, unlearned class of people. Seeing no past successes like those of the European, African history is relegated to a whisper of what it truly is in reality. Woodson takes considerable time developing this component of his work, expressing that elevation of other cultures at the expense of one’s own is damaging and has the recipient of such an education looking elsewhere for an identity.

This identity, linked with mis-education is found through individuals not seeking to educate, but rather to control.

Before it appears that this paper simply seeks to demonize current ways of educating without merit let's pause to discuss what has been attempted in the education of African-Americans. We must begin with the accounts of "Negroes" during slavery. Cut off from education, people of African descent and the slave culture that they inhabited for years in the U.S., sought to educate themselves by autodidacticism (self-teaching). This self-teaching consisted of hiding the fact of being educated and displaying a presumed innocence. Some were afforded education by generous masters and abolitionist groups. Yet, education for the most part was a clandestine practice.

Fast forward to the twentieth century, African-Americans endure severe injustices in the forms of lynching, disenfranchisement, and Jim Crow de facto and de jure legislation. However, many African-American populations had begun an extensive program of educating their children. Common schools arose to circumvent the previous lack of access to education. Some even attempted to posture their children amongst whites and were met with opposition. As time elapsed legislation was imposed to insure the distance between African-Americans and whites exclusive. Plessy versus Ferguson is one such case that brought such a separation. By the 1950's Brown versus Board of Education would overturn this legislation using the defense that separate but equal was separate but unequal and the ramifications of such separation was "psychologically damaging."

Even though a decision had been handed down from the United States Supreme Court, the implementation of *Brown vs. Board* was not actualized in its “all deliberate speed” until funding for state programs was of consequence for not desegregating schools. This use of federal funding as a proverbial carrot would be used again and again to provoke implementation of laws affecting education. Our most modern conceptions of this is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the most recent Race to the Top Initiative (RttT). NCLB was meant to assist minorities in education by insuring highly-qualified teachers and standards being met for the teaching and learning of school-aged children. The resultant activity of the act was a disaggregating of school data that showcased the extent of the rift between children of color and their collective counterparts. Today, the RttT initiative has been a means of implementing educational reform without the full responsibility of funding state budgets. States were encouraged to apply for additional funding that was in limited supply. The result of this initiative was a larger allotment of charter schools and significant changes to the paradigm of education, including the implementation of common core standards.

Educational reform models abound in the short time since Woodson’s text. However, few, African-American or otherwise, have looked into the consciousness of the individual that has been mis-educated. The *Brown vs. Board* case before the U.S. Supreme Court appeared to be a start, yet the argument of being “psychologically damaging” appears to be a buzzword for historical buffs. What does it mean to be “psychologically damaged”? How were Thurgood Marshall and his team of NAACP lawyers so assured that this was the case? It is my belief that Woodson was on to the root

of the problem in mis-education. The problem of education or better mis-education is the phenomenon that arises in the consciousness of the individual. The concept of how they see themselves as members of an identifiable culture and society as a whole. This concept in relation to schooling is often linked to a performance based paradigm that begins with scholastic attainment in educational settings.

Linguist John McWhorter (2000) states that “almost forty years after the Civil Rights Act, African-American students on the average are measuring to be the weakest in the United States, at all ages, in all subjects, and regardless of class level” in academic endeavors (p. 82). In order to illustrate his point, McWhorter showcases the realities of the problem through SAT scores, the possible myths of why there are performance disparities, and cultural disconnect between African-American students and their school learning experiences. A study conducted by William G. Bowen and Derek Bok from twenty-eight selective universities between 1981 and 1995 found that three-fourths of white students scored 1200 out of 1600 on the SAT compared to only one-fourth of their African-American counterparts (McWhorter, 2000, p. 85). Showing that the argument for class was insufficient, the mean score for African-Americans in 1995 from families making \$50,000 or more was 849 out of 1600, the mean score for white students from families earning \$10,000 or less (McWhorter, 2000, p. 85).

Examining the validity of the SAT in gauging performance in college and university programs, it has been found that the test does correlate well with college grade point average over four years for blacks and whites (McWhorter, 2000, p. 86). The excuses abound for why such numbers appear in scholarly works. Is it the validity of the

test, bias in questions, or a need for testing multiple intelligences a la Howard Gardner? I raise these numbers in order to look at this phenomenon more intently and perhaps get to the root of this apparent weakness in African-American scholarship.

Regardless of our agreement with the cause of dismal SAT scores amongst disaggregated peer groups and poor academic performance in school overall, we must admit that there is some problem occurring amongst our African-American students. Often this problem is showcased in low expectations, classroom attitudes, and even teasing by individuals within the African-American peer group (Delpit, 2012; McWhorter, 2000). I would like to submit to the reader that this phenomenon fits within the work of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and is what he listed eighty years ago as, “*The Mis-education of the Negro*”.

## **Employment**

Inefficient education has a direct bearing on ones employment opportunities. Further, training for a particular skill-set is deemed useless if it is outdated or inaccessible to the person or people so trained. Woodson makes this case very poignantly in his text. Mis-education as a general definition could mean inappropriately educated or trained. An education should afford someone with skills that span past the rigors of a school. Education should bring about the tools necessary to, in Woodson’s words, “make a living”. The building blocks for “a living” are therefore the educational frameworks established as a consequence of training and learning. However, once again African-Americans appear to be lacking in this vital component of personal and collective economy.

The recent sub-prime mortgage housing bubble disclosed some intense statistics within our country. After the collapse of the markets that brought about the “Great Recession”, the face of unemployment began to emerge amongst all cultures and creeds. Yet, one face seemed to be more prevalent amongst the bunch. African-American males have the highest current unemployment rate in the nation. Currently, African-Americans, per 2010 census data, consist of approximately 13% of the U.S. population. African-American males consist of 6% of the total U.S. population. Of this 6%, it has been estimated that one-third will be somehow entangled in the United States Judicial system negatively in some way. Examples include prison, parole, probation, house arrest, jail and so on. If these facts are correct, the high numbers of unemployment are attributable to many factors that have little to do with training for a job. The extent of the problem is more than reading, writing and arithmetic and spills over into areas of domestic life, choices and most important issues of identity.

Employment in America is often an issue of identity. Introductions often include descriptors of where one works and how long they have worked there. These identifiers often characterize the “living” we speak of in the words “means to make a living”. The expenditures of life are dictated by identity. The question becomes how has this identity been altered or made to believe in a reality in which a “back-door” mentality is a necessity? The simple answer to this query is the “mis-education of the negro”.

In order to look at the parallel of the mis-education of African-Americans and employment, I would like to first look at what education should look like and then make the juxtaposition with mis-education. Education includes a purpose, a curriculum to



fulfill that purpose and people and tools to implement the curriculum. These are the essentials of education, but not education itself. Education is education when the purposes, curriculum, people and tools all coincide to build up an individual. If mis-education is an inappropriate rendering of education I would like to presuppose that mis-education too has a purpose, curriculum, people and tools for implementation. The question in mis-education is not that there are these elements, but how the elements are compounded. In order to answer that aspect of this inquiry, further examination must be made as to what constitutes the purpose, curriculum, people and tools of the practice.

The question of the purposes, curricular structure, people and tools of the practice of mis-education distills into questions of why and who benefits from such activity. Control of thinking, according to Woodson, is the sole motivating purpose of mis-education. In order to control, any curriculum must follow the principles of this controlling paradigm. This control is not a mere establishment of parameters for the mis-educated to sit themselves in, but a systematic stripping of the capacity to think. We are most mis-educated when we fail to think for ourselves. All of us feel that we practice natural, unmitigated, unfettered thought in our identities, but the framework offered by mis-education is similar to that of the tyrant of Plato's *Republic*. The tyrant is at their best when a sense of normalcy can be established. As long as the mis-educated sees their state as a place of normal operation then the reality of Woodson's back-door hypothesis will follow as prescribed. Therefore, the curriculum appears to be a normal one. Complete with reading, mathematics, science, history, English, physical education and foreign language. However, as Woodson would attest, these "normal" categories cover a more

clandestine and shrinking propensity to belittle otherness. African-Americans are not told of contributions of African peoples in mathematics for example. Or the myriad inventions from African and African-American scientists are not discussed even though a significant amount of current technology is based upon or directly invented by people of African descent. The same can be said of cultures other than African-Americans. Contributions and connections of other groups are relegated to asides or special cases in history since the curriculum is based on the dominant culture as defined by an oppressive regime.

This dynamic translates into the people and tools being used to implement the curriculum which fails to acknowledge any that do not look like the perceived culture of dominance. Lisa Delpit would call such a culture of dominance the *culture of power*. This culture of power defines for the other what the norms and mores should be in this reality. The people, who could be teachers, administrators, stakeholders or a peer group, work with the tools of mis-education in order to be agents either knowingly or unknowingly for the alignment to the purposes of dominating or controlling the group in question.

In terms of employment, a nihilistic view of societal structure emerges. What is the purpose of employment? In Woodson's words it would be to make a living. However, if I am unable to secure employment, am I then seen as unfit to live? Many African-Americans would say that suicide is not a realistic response to Africana nihilism in this framework, however, statistics on African-American male suicide rates posit this demographic as a fast growing group. Aside from literal, instantaneous suicide, there is the slow death of debilitating habits. Sigmund Freud would have quite an interesting study of the African-American today due to the various issues of preventable health

maladies such as heart disease, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes, atherosclerosis, obesity, HIV/AIDS, and high levels of stress for example. Add to this list the introduction of crack cocaine and various other drugs into predominantly African-American communities and there is a potential case for nihilism amongst this group. The education afforded the mis-educated has also given this group the wherewithal to endure the death drive embedding an eros which seeks to create in the beautiful façade created by the purposes, people and tools of mis-educative experience. Ultimately, the dilemma of employment today is still a predetermined phenomenon impacting the reality of African-Americans and subsequently their capacity to live.

Perhaps the largest hindrance to employment in African-American communities is the issue of mass incarceration. Recently, Attorney General Eric Holder called for a review of our current system of mandatory sentencing of minor drug offenses. Holder states in an article posted in the Guardian that, "The US accounts for 25% of the world's prison numbers, even though it has only 5% of the world's population. Drug-related offences drive the vast majority of this, and people convicted of conspiring to sell 5kg of cocaine will currently receive a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence." (Roberts, 2013) Holder's comment for blacks in the U.S. is of importance since the highest rate for dropouts in our country is African-American males. About half of our African-American boys who enter high school as freshman do not finish in four years (Noguera, 2003; Alexander, 2012). This means that they are more likely to dropout and are more susceptible to criminal activities leading to incarceration, probation, or parole (Alexander, 2012). Michelle Alexander (2012) states that a Human Rights Watch report

from 2000 reported “African-Americans constitute 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison” (p. 98). I can respect Attorney General Holder’s move to posture the drug problem differently, but in reviewing the problem we see the factors involved are more than a disproportionate amount of African-Americans getting caught, a predilection to drug use, poverty, or a reckless abandon to commit crime in the form of illegal drug sales. Alexander (2012) notes that drug markets here in America, “reflect our nation’s racial and socioeconomic boundaries; whites sell to whites, blacks sell to blacks” (pp. 100-101). The same can be said of other types of crime. The biggest killer of blacks is blacks. We can simply recall the Bureau of Justice Statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice (Harrell, 2007). If these points are the facts in black and white, why are there disproportionate numbers and better still, why have African-Americans not been equipped to overcome them?

The issue in employment may be a type of oppression identified by Woodson eighty years ago. We are hard-pressed not to see negative images of any race, including whites, where derogatory images of how we are or appear to be in society comes to light. However, Woodson’s concern is not that we are exposed to such an “educational process, but that we are not educated otherwise.

Woodson further elucidates the interconnection of mis-education and employment in another quote in the first chapter of his text. He states that upon completion of his or her education the “Negro” is “equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized white man (Woodson, 1993/2004).” The problem with this is that an African-American man or woman is simply not a white man neither can they pretend to

be. Though prepared to work in the same areas of expertise as an Americanized or Europeanized white man, in areas of limited diversity there is also a limited chance of employment. Our current figures on employment, unemployment and underemployment for African-Americans may show this prescient statement of Dr. Woodson to be true indeed. As of August 2, 2013, the Department of Labor Statistics reported that while the 11.5 million unemployed in our country totaled 7.4 percent, African-Americans had an unemployment rate of 12.6 percent. The only other group with a higher unemployment rate in the disaggregated data was teenagers at 23.7 percent.

### **Political Education**

A political education should consist of an understanding of a just society in the organized, structured parameters of our time. A political education in Woodson's rendering of the practice would immerse African-Americans in the activity of politics beyond the rhetoric and schemes often synonymous with campaigns in their attempts to secure the vote. Woodson would argue today that citizens in general and African-Americans in particular are too easily persuaded by non-essential information. The words of Woodson seem to echo in our time that African-Americans should understand the historical and domestic factors that have established our system and how this system has been used for the causes of some at the expense of others. Such understanding moves far beyond speeches and campaign stops and emerges into an understanding of how such structures work and how they should work for and toward the individual.

Woodson makes a pointed effort in *The Mis-education of the Negro* to showcase the ineptitude of some African-Americans to fully grasp the implications of politics. He

points toward a denied proposal to have the U.S. Constitution printed and distributed to students in schools. This denial, he states, comes from a need to not disclose that the power of government is derived exclusively by those governed. Here again Woodson is quoted in terms of the phenomenon of “[controlling] a man’s thinking”. Instead of controlling, Woodson uses the word ‘determine’. The determinism of insufficient political education in Woodson’s scholarship has the ability to turn a free man into a slave and slave to an emancipated contributor to a society. The former has arisen as a consequence of mis-education. It is the product of a structured system of divulging the information one group would like another to know. Woodson makes a strong case throughout his text for the necessity of an individual to create and cultivate for themselves. The result of this creation and cultivation is determinism of a slave to be a free, the reality Woodson hoped to see instead of the observations noted within his 1933 text.

Utilizing Woodson’s view of political education, we see that he believed in the activity of learning, not just the acquisition of facts and figures to call knowledge. The tone of Woodson’s words speaks to the fact that he feels very intently that in order for African-Americans of his day to be citizens they must be active ones. Maxine Greene (1988) speaks of this phenomenon beautifully when she states that freedom [is] “developed by human beings who have acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others...for those willing to take responsibility for themselves and for each other” (p. 56). This is to say that there must be an active participation in the political structure for such a freedom and responsibility to occur. Rereading Greene’s work I came

across another great quote that elucidates the sentiment of Woodson. She states that “in order to find or create an authentic public space, that is, one in which diverse human beings can appear before one another as, to quote Hannah Arendt, “the best they know how to be (Greene, 1988).” The “best they know how to be”, not what they want to be or appear to be, there must be knowledge of this reality. Woodson felt that such knowledge needed, in similitude with Greene, that “authentic public space.” It is interesting to note that Woodson sentiment is not just for the benefit of African-Americans, but for the overall citizenry.

Looking at Woodson’s take on political education we notice that this education has a historical bend to it. It is the ability of the once oppressed “Negro” to look back that is their greatest asset. He states that in terms of history, it has shown that African-Americans easily [learn] to follow the line of least resistance rather than battle against odds for what real history has shown to be the right course (Woodson, 1933/2006). On those rare occasions when African-Americans have chosen the “tough” path great strides were made. One can simply take into account the Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the monumental Brown versus Topeka Board of Education Supreme Court case of 1954. In both pieces of legislation African-Americans played vital parts in their being heard and accepted in the public consciousness. If we are to take Woodson’s words to heart for our day in terms of political education, we must sincerely ask if we have a society where those that are most oppressed and subjugated have a voice in our system of political freedom. An honest assessment of such freedoms would show very emphatically that few are involved in the activity of politics and those coming

behind us to take our places are not in a state of preparation as in Woodson's (1933/2004) words they do not have a clear conception of the "present status of the race or sufficient foresight to plan for the future; and [drift] so far toward compromise that [they] lose moral courage (p. 96)." Therefore, this mis-education becomes a "perfect device for control from without (Woodson, 1933/2004, p. 96)."

### **Service**

Woodson lends significant time to the topic of servanthood in his text on mis-education. This apportioning begs the question of why are the qualities of service so important to overcoming mis-education? Again to unveil the phenomenon as Woodson disclosed it, it is necessary to uncover his words on the topic. One first point of exploration appears in Woodson's chapter on the need for service rather than leadership. In examining this chapter I would like to answer why he saw a need for service rather than leadership, what this need entails for overcoming mis-education, and what preventative measures may have been suggested to avoid falling short in this area in the future.

### **Why Service Over Leadership**

Woodson's chapter on service rather than leadership can be summed up in the word impact. He would like to see more of an impact made in serving the people that leadership represents. Service to a group does not require the position of leadership, simply willingness to attend to the needs of another. Woodson points out position filled by African-Americans that only serves as an "earmarked...Jim Crow job" that is "set aside for...a [worker] of a campaign". This service to a campaign lends itself to a new



position of “leadership”, but yields no new horizons for the people that the campaign had said it would represent. Woodson simply states that there is a need here for an individual to serve as opposed to merely filling a position of leadership without the exclusive responsibility of those you are leading.

### **Overcoming Mis-education With Service**

Service to a community can take on a myriad of forms, but for the most part service entails meeting many of the immediate needs of a community. This meeting of needs is necessary in overcoming the obstacles that prevent the access of the group to be served. This is not a mere handing of resources, but a shared cultivation. One of the words used by Woodson in this part of his text is *exploitation*. Since the service implies a shared cultivation of the desired outcomes of a community and its people, exploitation isn’t a product of the server and served. Mis-education can be overcome in this type of interchange since there is a vested interest in the outcomes of a served community.

### **Preventing Mis-education With Service**

According to Woodson, “the race needs workers, not leaders.” He sees the preventative agent as the service itself. The question of work to Woodson should be a guide concerning if someone is to be trusted in the speeches he or she presents. Woodson states that we should “inquire” what the person speaking “is doing” has “done for humanity”<sup>10</sup>. With this in view we can prevent mis-education since service is a means by

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<sup>10</sup> Woodson, 1933/2004

which we “may prove sufficient...the task of self-development and contribute...to modern culture.”<sup>11</sup>

Harsh critiques of the NAACP, African-American intellectuals, African-American leaders and activist, and even historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s) fell under the scrutiny of lacking impact.<sup>12</sup> Funny as it may sound, Woodson actually spoke of this in his comments on service, or its lack, to African-American communities by African-Americans in particular.

Reiterating that Woodson believed that education in schools of his day “equipped [African-Americans] to begin life as an Americanized and Europeanized man”, we might say that such an education also taught a disdain for serving the community in some way. Woodson (1933/2004) has a harsh indictment for the intellectual and states such things as, “men who have the doctorate...lose touch with the common people,” and that what they are “being taught does not bring their minds into harmony with life as they must face it” (p. 35). Lack of service to community is the key reason for why Woodson would think such things to be true in 1933, however, hasn’t such a situation changed in light of programs like service-learning?

Service learning has been incorporate by at least one-third of all public schools (National Center of Education Statistics, 2013). The practice of service learning is seen as important since it provides opportunities for students to learn important academic skills and supports the civic mission of schools (Billig, 2002). In a study of the efficacy of service learning, Shelley Billig (2000) notes that service learning can increase students’

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> I recall one of my colleagues, an educator and historian, stating how the Civil Rights Movement was averted by offering many of the activists’ tenured positions at universities or coffers of money for speaking.

ability to learn complex subject matter, decrease their involvement in risky behaviors, and encourage them to form bonds with adult role models other than teachers and parents (p. xx). In a summary report by Alan Melchior (1999), service learning showed many positive benefits including improved grades in particular subjects, greater sense of cultural diversity, and awareness of community needs (p. xx). With the positive feedback, what could be the problem with a service learning curriculum?

Answering the question of what could be wrong with a service learning curriculum will be accomplished here to address the concept of Woodson's service in contrast with what is being offered by schools instead. First, I would like to submit that the concept of service learning is a requirement of schools not a voluntary action of the student. It would be interesting to see if the involuntary portion of this program were taken away how many students would continue to go across cultures or even into their own communities to offer their "service". Second, this forced framework mirrors a type of community service where a certain number of hours must be secured before a requirement is met (Mitchell, 2008). This causes many, not all, service learning programs to lose the impact of altruism, cross-cultural connectivity, and awareness seen in some of the earlier literature presented. Third, though effective in engaging students actively in service, the learning portion is often lost due to no critical reflection on the activities and how the activities served the community (Mitchell, 2008). It would be interesting to see how many students continue to serve or create outlets where community needs can be met as a consequence of their experience with addressing a community need. Such

service is most likely not what Dr. Woodson had in mind when he critiqued education in his day. I believe that Woodson would still see some need for work in this area today.

### **Conclusion**

Carter G. Woodson died in 1950, leaving a rich legacy of scholarship in Africana studies. This essay is not only a credit to his text and life, but an examination to honor this great forefather of Africana scholarship. We show true honor and respect of an individual in their absence. It would be very easy to attend a conference or panel discussion focusing on Woodson with him as the keynote speaker. Yet, such a conference or panel will not occur as we are only left with his text to decipher how he would like to contribute in our time. Mis-education embellishes forever the historical consciousness of African-Americans that when you control or determine the thinking of an individual you don't have to worry about their actions. Woodson speaks clearly today in every arena in which the conscious activity of African-Americans is compromised by consumption of frivolous pursuits and lack of vision. His words are a strong indictment against our lack of service to our society at large and to one another in particular. As in Woodson's time, it also is now. Our capacity to serve one another coupled with a sincere drive to secure a consciousness grounded and based in the fundamental understanding of who we are as a people is essential. The contribution of Woodson sought to reconnect African-Americans to the elements of our reality that imparted the most strength, our collective consciousness of the ability to overcome together in community. It is the responsibility of all who value the legacy of Dr. Carter G. Woodson to follow through with the suggestions of his text.

Therefore, in response to the question of how does Africana theory, philosophy and pedagogy address the challenges posed by Woodson text? I would say that Africana scholarship has done a significant job in disclosing and opening dialogue consistent in addressing the areas of concern in Woodson's text (history of African-Americans, the collective consciousness of African-American, and the contribution throughout time of African-Americans). More work must be done in a spirit of service, but the emphasis of Africana studies is a beginning to fully addressing the "mis-education of the Negro".

In response to how is it that Dr. Woodson's text is still relevant in the education and general experiences of African-American today? The relevance of Woodson is showcased in our dismal graduation rates for African-American males and higher than average admittance of African-American males into special education programs. This study does not focus on the phenomenon of diagnoses that may impact educational performance such as attention-deficit disorder or attention-deficit, hyperactive disorder, which often require medication that can potentially hinder mood and academic performance. I, therefore, posit this point as a place for further study.

For the questions concerning the endurance of Woodson's "back-door" in the education of African-Americans and African-American males in particular and the solution to the issue of Woodson's back-door hypothesis, I will say that the arena that has not been explored deeply is the consciousness of African-Americans in relation to this phenomenon. We study cases of addiction noting brain activity; we can pinpoint areas of development for infants and children, but have not fully explored the effects of the consciousness in poor school performance. I ascribe fully to Woodson's suggestion that a

child that comes to school ill-prepared should be a focus of study and not reprimanded. For clarification, that does not mean that we not hold students accountable, but that we treat in Woodson's (1933/2004) words the "disease and not the symptom(s)" (p. 145).

**CHAPTER III**

**MASKS, VEILS, AND INVISIBLE PEOPLE: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF  
DUBOISIAN DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS**

If a poor self-concept is all that there is to mis-education then all a child would need is some intensive therapy and mental exercises to free themselves from the plight. The concept of the individual for African-American consciousness is perhaps more than just a Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*. In Africana philosophy, for example, the *cogito* is met with a *where*, a location. Not just that I think and I am, but I am positioned somewhere. Herein is the differentiation of Continental and Africana philosophy. Africana philosophy is concerned with the positionality of the *I* and therefore has an added dimension to its scope. The Africana tradition links this back to African philosophy, but more familiarly attributed to the person of W. E. B. DuBois, a contemporary of Woodson.

W. E. B. DuBois was educated at Harvard University in philosophy under American pragmatist William James. In pragmatic fashion, James advised DuBois to use his “tools” where they would best help people of African descent. DuBois’s works is thus a conglomerate of sociological, theoretical, anthropological and philosophical scope. His book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, best explains the phenomenon of an African-American consciousness in regards to the Africana conception of time and space. *The Souls of*

*Black Folk* is a movement through the consciousness of DuBois individually and collectively through the consciousness of “Black folk”. This movement spans the spaces of history, jazz, the blues, grief and racism. Fulfilling the spaces defined by African-American experience is determined in DuBois’s words by a “second sight”. The veiled existence defined by DuBois is a construction meant to define the exigencies of African-American consciousness. The definitive need to be coupled with the reality of a presumed existence brings the ontological construction of a double consciousness. DuBois’s double consciousness bridges the gap between Woodson’s race concept and the experiential aspect of mis-education. Double consciousness entails a dual identity, a double self. The individual is a subject, an *I* as well as an object, a body. The body is always seen, but the subject the *I* often is left unnoticed. Therefore the struggle for expression as an *I* in the body of objectivity ensues. As such a struggle occurs in the development of such consciousness, information that does not validate and secure identity formation becomes damaging as the *I* seeks to form into the information it sees as relevant. If no such information is provided the gaps in ones reality is fused together with the fantasy of another, that is what an “objective” presupposes another’s being to mean. This is Woodson’s mis-education and the double consciousness of DuBois. The effects in this paradigm on education become monumental and “damaging” in their scope.

DuBois describes that the African-American in his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk* off-sets this damage through a process of veiling. His work is reminiscent of my youth in which if given the choice of a superpower, I would always choose the power to be invisible. I always think of this when reading the first few pages of DuBois’s work



and wanted to explore it further. Why would I, an African-American male, want to be invisible? Better yet, why would DuBois describe a whole group of people in a social, interactive world as have a veil?

This essay explores the phenomenon of a veil or mask as described in DuBois's work. Using veil and mask or making interchangeably, I seek to disclose the concept of the phenomenon of DuBois's double consciousness and the inborn veil of the African-American as described in his work, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

### **Introducing DuBois**

I have sought here to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive...I have strived to show what Emancipation meant to them, and what was its aftermath...I have pointed out the slow rise of personal leadership, and criticized candidly the leader who bears the chief burden of his race to-day...I have sketched in swift outline the two worlds within and without the Veil, and thus have come to the central problem of training men for life...I have...studied the struggles of the massed millions of the black peasantry, and...sought to make clear the present relation of sons of master and man. (DuBois, 1995, p. 41)

DuBois writes after his prefatory comments on the text *The Souls of Black Folk* that he has “stepped within the Veil” and raised it that we the readers of his work may “view faintly its deeper recesses.” He discloses these recesses to be religion, passion of human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls (DuBois, 1995). The intriguing aspect of his words is that he concludes this forethought with the statement that these elements he reveals are a “tale twice told, but seldom written” (DuBois, 1995). What does DuBois mean by this statement? How are we to define this Veil and its semiotic nature in the lives of Black folk?

In order to answer these questions I would like to engage in a philosophical inquiry to examine the meaning of W.E.B. DuBois's depiction of the Veil and, more specifically, double consciousness. This examination will link DuBois with a philosophical tradition from his training under William James and find its voice fully in the enduring words of DuBois through the modern Africana philosophical tradition. This study will engage the philosophical inquiry with pragmatic and post-colonial frameworks and a phenomenological methodology. The research questions for this study are what is the DuBoisian Veil of his work, *The Souls of Black Folk*? How do African-Americans come to wear this Veil in American society? How can an individual be doubly conscious at a particular moment? How do we define double consciousness in the experience of modern-day African-Americans?

This study will conclude with an answer to the existence and necessity for double consciousness today in American society and how such a phenomenon may play out in our institutions of education, in politics, and interactions with others. For the sake of this study the terms used by DuBois (colored, Negro, black) and African-American will be used interchangeably in order to stay true to the words within his text where necessary.

### **Sketching the Spiritual World of African-Americans**

DuBois begins his work with stating his vague attempt to sketch the spiritual world of "ten thousand thousands of Americans" (DuBois, 1995, p. 41). This statement declares to us a couple of things. First, that DuBois understands that there is a complexity in the spiritual life of individuals in particular. Second, that he is only focusing his attention on a small, albeit substantial, portion of African-American spirituality.

Engaging this aspect of African-American experience DuBois introduces us to the concept of the Veil. The Veil from the Bible often speaks of Moses, an Old Testament prophet and lawgiver to Israel, and his nearness to God requiring him to wear a Veil to hide the glory (evidence of his experiences with God on a regular basis) that shown from his face.<sup>13</sup> This Veil was a type of mask that made him relevant and able to relate, yet shielded him from the eyes of others. It is the Veil that is seen by others, but it is the person behind it that is expressed to others. The Veil therefore creates a duality that the wearer must live with in order to relate, but in so wearing it, masks the reality of who they are truly. DuBois chooses this as a starting point and prefaces his comments with the quote on the spiritual world of African-Americans.

DuBois (1995) states that “the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world” (p. 45). This one sentence is loaded with meaning about the role or presence of African-Americans in DuBois’s time. For sake of the topic at hand my focus will be here on the Veil of DuBois’s statement. For DuBois, the Negro, the seventh son out of the cultures of the Earth at the time of his writing, is born with a veil. This veil grants the person it covers with “second-sight” in the “American world” that DuBois is apparently writing within. By second-sight DuBois is not speaking of double vision, because the tenor of his words denotes a clarity of sight not a hindrance to it. The DuBoisian veil is not mere skin color, since the veil appears to cover the senses, in particular the sense of sight. This sight is relegated by DuBois’s terminology to the American world. At the time of DuBois writing the American world

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<sup>13</sup> Recall Biblical references in Exodus and 1 Corinthians pertaining to the veil of Moses.

had included a Declaration of Independence, a constitution, a Bill of Rights (though limited for a few Americans), and a historical and traditional identity steeped in a distinct and concentrated mis-treatment of African-Americans. So what does the veil look like upon its wearer? We understand that this veil is a metaphorical one, yet the wearer is cognizant that his or her full self remains unactualized behind it. Based upon DuBois's forethought concerning a "sketch" of the "spiritual world" of African Americans, we understand this veil to consist within the inner life of the wearer.

This inner life for the sake of this paper will be the *I* concept or the self in its perception of its identity of how it estimates itself to be in time and space and how it is viewed in time and space. A veil covers the self since to be both an American and a person of African descent you must be a distinct and separate entity from the two groups while still encompassing both. The veiled existence is a problematic one since in DuBois (1995) words a veiled existence "yields...no true self-consciousness" (p. 45). The lack of self-consciousness therefore makes for a view of the world which splits the consciousness between what it believes it is and what others view it to be. This is DuBois's double consciousness.

### **Double Consciousness: Two Worlds Within and Without the Veil**

According to DuBois, there are two worlds, one within and one without the view.

DuBois writes,

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. (Dubois, 1995, p. 45)

He calls double consciousness “a peculiar sensation” and a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (DuBois, 1995). He further adds that it is the measuring of one’s soul by another’s tape. It is this metric of another which makes the double consciousness unique. While holding the view, the measure and the rationalization of another, what one feels they should be and the potential to fit betwixt the two, the individual of veiled, double consciousness. The problem of this gauge of someone else that further muddles this viewpoint is that this perception is not in praise and admiration of the individual, but one of “amused contempt and pity” (DuBois, 1995, p. 45).

### **Defining Veilness**

On the campus of Tuskegee University there is a statue. The statue depicts the founder, Booker T. Washington, with left hand extended, holding a cloth over or apparently pulling a cloth or sheet from a partially veiled male with a large book in his hands. The statuesque Washington is fully clothed with a three-piece suit and shoes standing over the male figure with features of what can be characterized as “black”. The man, who is seated, has a book open and clutched toward his half-clothed body as if in the process of reading with his other hand on the veil. It is questionable whether this man is seeking to remove his covering or place it back where it once was. It is also a question that we might ask Washington about this veil. Whether veiling or unveiling the significance of this statue as it is experienced is where the phenomenon of our experience with it may occur. “Lifting the Veil”, a statue by artist Charles Keck, is erected in the heart of a predominantly African-American university in the South. Its focus can be said

to represent the education offered by its founder and might give some clue to the significance or common practice(s) of veiling and its link to education. This work seeks to explore the intentional presentation of a veil in the practice of education.

### **The Presentation of a Veil**

The statue at Tuskegee University is interpreted in the work of Ralph Ellison as he explores an experience at an institution of learning through the eyes of his protagonist in *Invisible Man*. Ellison's main character discloses the following about the erected monument:

Then in my mind's eye I see the bronze statue of the college Founder, the cold Father symbol, his hands outstretched in *the breathtaking gesture of lifting a veil that flutters in hard, metallic folds above the face of a kneeling slave*; and I am standing puzzled, *unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place*; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding. (Ellison, 1990, p. 36, *emphasis mine*)

Ellison's character provides us with a question of the presentation of a veil. The background of an institution of higher learning might bring to mind images of students walking to class, talking on various subjects, the worry of one's studies, thoughts of future successes or potential failure, or even the non-curricular elements of college and university life. Few, if any, probably look at this statue for inspiration or to the visage of the memorialized founder for fresh insight from the past. Whether students pass by or pay homage to the statue and its symbolism, the renown of Washington to not only found a school specifically for the cause of African-Americans, but to "unveil" them to the world as already in possession of some capacity of knowledge can possibly be represented by this monument. The veiled/unveiled man has in his possession a book and sits upon an

anvil and plow. He is under a cover, seated, and in possession all at once. Why then is there a need for a veil to be removed? Is this (un)veiling a natural part of the man's existence? We might also consider that Washington is extending his hand as if offering a distant or present object or experience of which only the man and Washington has in view.

### **Lifting the Veil**

In terms of the veil as a fixture in African-American experience, we have a description of its reality from W. E. B. DuBois. DuBois (1989) describes the African-American as being "born with a veil" (p. 5). The DuBoisian veil is seen as a gift and a form of seeing. Here we might say that lifting such a veil would be a removal of such a gift and a blinding to one's ability to see in this way in which you were born to view the world. We would see being born with a veil or cover upon our capacity to see as blindness or a cataract. Naturally, we who see in a certain way, especially if in the majority, would possibly be tempted and deem it necessary to remove such a hindrance to seeing in "normal" fashion. But, DuBois might say veiled seeing is normal for African-Americans because being born in this demographic deems its reality.

If Washington is lifting the veil, could he be damaging the "sight" of the unveiled recipient? Usually we think of blinded people being given some type of corrective surgery or lens to work with the ability of the eyes to see. Washington adds nothing in unveiling, but strips the inborn mechanism to see clearly the reality the man has grown accustomed to viewing. Isn't it more damaging to strip someone of something they are born with? How would someone know if they are talking to a veiled individual in the first

place? What does a DuBoisian veil or the veil lifted by Washington look like on a flesh and blood person? In order to answer this question I would like to lower the veil this time and examine how it is intended upon the wearer and potentially myself or others who might conclude that they have unveiled at some time in their lives or still might be under one.

### **A Veil in the Experience of Muslim Women**

In seeking to understand a veil I have looked at masks, a child under a blanket, and even the veiling of some Muslim women. The veiling of Muslim women is interesting in that the women are covered, but still seen. Physically veiling is not an act of hiding or invisibility; it is an act of presentation. No one hides under a veil. Much like a blanketed child you know that they are there. They have a form, a personality, an intellect, a way of being in the world, and are presented before you. The physical veil limits what you as an observer experience. You see one aspect of the woman in a veil. Your imagination tries to fill in the blanks of what you deem invisible. Fanon expressed this in his text on the Algerian haik. French men fantasized about the potential beauty possessed behind the veil (haik) of Algerian women. This fantasy gave way to a mixed veiling and unveiling of Algerian women in a dual expression of personal pride and commitment to a cause, religion, familial tie, and/or independence.

The veil shrouding the subject of Booker T. Washington's statue might in this instance be seen in a certain way and being made invisible by Washington's insistence on the direction he is pointing. If a veil identifies aspects, could this project (the statue) be one of identification? Washington may not want to unveil his subject, but in agreement



with DuBois wants the natural gift he is born with to emerge. If this is a lowering of the veil, then who lifted the veil in the first place? In lifting this veil there may be a possibility that the man has had his “birthright” taken. The lowering of the veil might just be a restoration of the original inborn reality of the man in his world.

### **Lowering a Veil**

If a world is unfamiliar it is common to bring something into it that which is understood or familiar. This object then orientates us, positions us in something that we know and of which we are comfortable. This known object need not be physical, just familiar. We look for intersections of thought for example, a stream of conscious activity relative (in the same familial context) as our own thinking. Sara Ahmed does this beautifully in her disclosure of the table of Husserl (Ahmed, 2006). We have possibly overlooked such an element in which so much academic activity is carried out. Husserl wrote extensively in a time in history void of computers and word processing. The table became a means for his work and thought to progress. It would also seem that the table became a familiar object that he could go to and be comfortable in the practice of writing phenomenology. Why didn't Husserl continue writing in mathematics I always wonder? Sure, the cube is geometrical and can properly disclose mathematical principles if needed, but we note the objects and their proximity, not the thought in the world of Husserl when disclosing his phenomenology. In Husserl's table, we see his thought based on what he disclosed from this familiar place. Husserl's thought seems as if it is orientated to look straight ahead and not focus on the rigorous world outside of his own. It is also as if Husserl doesn't see the different ways of being in his own house (child's

play as their work, view of his wife or the nanny's work, a view of his work from these perspectives). We might also consider that DuBoisian veil in which an African-American is said to be born with is not considered as a familiar object. The veil has been highlighted in politics due to its presence on Muslim women. This focus is usually to point out a need for unveiling such women. The case of Fanon's Algeria is one example, the French law to not permit the veil under Nikolai Sarkozy, and the unveiling of women and sexual assault in the aftermath of Arab Spring all come to mind. It is as if the veil is problematic when realized. We could say that it makes a familiar way of interacting (face to face) unfamiliar to a culture orientated a particular way. It may be also said of a veiling in the context DuBois speaks of in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

*The Souls of Black Folk* describes African-Americans as a "seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with a second sight in this American world" (DuBois, 1989). The veil as an object would look odd on a newborn child. Just as it is unfamiliar to see blemishes or covering on a child extracted from the womb of a mother, it would be equally unfamiliar to see a distinct covering over the face of such a child. When exactly does DuBois propose that this seventh son is born? He describes cultural groups in his work that the reader of his day might be familiar with, but specifically comes back to the familiarity of the world in which he has his origins, the "American world" (DuBois, 1989). "This American world" constitutes an orientation toward a familiar way of being. We might recall saying the Pledge of Allegiance, learning the fifty states and their capitals, and singing "My Country Tis of Thee" as school-aged children. We are

orientated to the patriotism of the American world in this way. DuBois interjects that this world is seen in a “doubled” vision for the person with the veil.

A physically veiled individual (such as a woman with an Algerian haik) is orientated to an Islamic world where the Qu’ran, Sharia law, and Arabic are central figures. Because of this she might have the propensity to embrace the veil as part of her world. We view the veil in our “American world” as if it is a cumbersome sign of exploitation. Our women are free to wear what they want; even if that means that they might be exploiting themselves in the process at times. But that is our “American world”. It becomes an unfamiliar one when we, representatives of the “American world” and its objects interact with the unfamiliar of the Islamic world. We might reach for what is familiar to use in such a state of unfamiliarity, usually our ideas. Ahmed (2006) states that “objects move in and out of view such that they do have an existence that is more than how they present or reveal themselves” (p. 38). The physical veil is apparently always there, but the DuBoisian veil moves in and out of view in the familiar and unfamiliar experience by the wearer and viewer of its existence. Such is the case in Fanon’s (1952/2004) disclosure of the young girl in *Black Skin White Masks* exclaiming, “Look, a Negro!” (p.112). Fanon understands that the disclosure is not just one of his race, but also of the historicity of his race, a conception there before his birth. We could say that he is born with this race concept that others view and address him by.

Lifting and lowering are both familiar practices. The objects that we lift in our world are what make the experiences familiar. A veil lifted off of a woman who is wearing it for the purpose of her cultural tradition might take a certain level of thought

and resolve. But the unfamiliarity of the veil described by DuBois discloses an object which may be unfamiliar to our “American world” if we are not born with it. Perhaps you must have this unfamiliar object lifted or lowered in order to appreciate its existence. We might say that we must be orientated to know that it is affixed to us in the first place.

Ahmed in her text *Queer Phenomenology* focuses on the concept of orientation of the body in her work. Little is said of the face or vision of the orientated individual, just that their bodies are thus and so. Washington’s mentee beneath the veil at Tuskegee is oriented in a geographical location in the heart of the campus of a university. His body is situated beneath the veil and beside Washington, but his gaze is apparently on something within the mind of the sculptor. We might say that the posture of the bodies of Washington and his potential pupil showcase a familiar relationship between teacher and student (teacher standing, pupil seated). But, the gaze of both remains the same. It could be said that Washington in veiling or unveiling is revealing or shielding his pupil from the things that he sees. If veiling, in Platonic fashion he may be shielding the gaze of his student from the vision he must look at. If unveiling, he might be seeking to offer the opportunity that comes from removing that which is familiar.

DuBois’s veil is said to be born fixture of the “seventh son”, the “Black”. Perhaps this being born is the history of the race in the conception or eyes of others. We might say that upon his or her realization of how they are perceived, a person under such circumstances looks at life differently. Herein is the veil, the third character of Keck’s sculpture and a readily hidden device plainly seen in the art, but overlooked because it is

unfamiliar. We could say that this phenomenon of the veil is to be presented right in the view of people and yet never be truly seen.

### **Looking at Invisible People**

Hunters and soldiers when engaged with an objective of battle or the hunt seek to hide using something called camouflage. Camouflage may be worn for the purpose of blending into an environment. It might be an adornment that allows the differences of the environment in comparison to the person to go unnoticed. People that wear camouflage may embrace it as a second skin or an extension of their existence in the time and space they occupy. The importance of this second skin is not that it is seen, but renders the wearer to be covered by what is familiar.

What would a camouflaged individual look like outside of the theatre of battle or the hunt? Looking at hunters that have their requisite dress on it might be said that such a man or woman is identified by what they do (hunting) or more specifically by what they appear to be (a hunter or huntress). Camouflage in a grocery store for example would offer no regard for the background of the hunter or soldier only their occupation or preoccupation with hunting or battle perhaps. But, is this preoccupation or occupation an imposition of our own thinking of the uniform of the hunter or soldier?

What about when the camouflage is not physical, but mental and cultural in nature? Does such camouflage still take on the same patterns and lines as physically represented camouflage? Is such camouflage bought or issued? What happens if you “wear” your camouflage into a store? What does the camouflage look like?

Camouflage can be said to *mask* its wearer in the effects of an environment. If in a wooded area a good camouflage would address the contours and lines of shrubs, trees and leaves. If in the desert, camouflage would mimic aspects of the desert's sand. It is as if the camouflage masks the wearer from the environment. A mask is fitted to the wearer. Affixed by something we may take for granted like a piece of elastic cord, string, or a button. The object connecting the mask to the wearer is artificial and possibly fragile. Cords and strings may overstretch and break, buttons fall off, and masks that may have once concealed the wearer may be a point for their exposure. Perhaps this is the case with the camouflage worn in a grocery store. It appears out of place not because the hunter or soldier imposes an environment in the store, but because they are no longer hidden.

Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1968) poem on wearing a mask speaks of a mask's "grinning and lying (p. 355)." Dunbar speaks of how the mask hides expression, shades the view (eyes), and conceals feeling (bleeding hearts, tears, sighs). We might say that the mask conceals or dulls the external signs of humanity in environments outside of comfortable expression. It is as if we are behind a mask outside of a masquerade ball or costume party. We might see such masking as odd, an occasion for potential robbery, or simply surmise that someone is on their way to a party. A mask when presented as worn may challenge the familiar. Here the familiar is an environment. An environment that Dunbar thinks that the world deems we are seen as happy most if not all the time.

Dunbar's work is intended from the perspective of an African-American. Though parallels can be cited within other groups, his emphasis and perspective show a familiar way of being under the mask for African-Americans. He speaks of "torn and bleeding

hearts”, “tears”, and “torture” for example that are the forefront of the experience of the individual wearing the mask. The mask it seems is in the background of the wearer though in front of him or her. All the feelings mentioned take place right before the wearer. It is this background that I would like to explore. This work explores the background of how a veil masks or camouflages the central elements of its wearer.

### **A Phenomenology of a Veil**

A mask is defined in terms of covering all or part of the face. When we use the term mask as an activity we can say that the act of masking is to veil the face. The veil is not a new phenomenon in the act of masking people. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) would veil themselves in white sheets in order to conceal their identities and play into the outward expressions and ideas of fear within populations of African descent. The purpose was to present and cover at the same time. These “veiled” men could have been recognizable within the communities their activities took place. Their masquerade may have been for the purpose of expressing who they really were behind their physical act of masking. It is as if their act of masking created an effect of maskness throughout the communities in which they masqueraded. What might this masquerade look like? Why is it that no one saw the necessity of unmasking themselves to one another?

The veil of the KKK and the veiling of the African-American community were both familiar and unfamiliar with the veil. We might imagine a recognizable figure behind a veil speaking through a sheet and the familiar tone and voice of the speaker coming to the forefront of the veil. This seems as if it would violate what such a veil is to stand for. We wear masks of different types so that we are not recognized as ourselves.

We might wish to be mistaken for another person, disregarded, or just simply be heard yet unknown. It is as if there was a responsibility behind being known. What if the masked person is identified? “Mr. Smith, I recognize your voice anywhere.” How might we respond if we are seeking to hide and are found out? If our place of refuge as a background, a camouflaged object is discovered. An element of our maskness is that it appears before others, but is only seen as a background.

Ahmed writes on the background of the white page of paper. It is a necessary convenience to read the writing in black, but the black text still seems to go unnoticed. We might say that this essay is written on a white sheet of paper. As I type the text on my computer I see it as black text, but what if I make it another color, *what then am I trying to do?* In coloring my text I emphasize the words more and distinguish them from the background. My colored text no longer hides in the mundane like an extended background, but is unveiled, unmasked, unobscured from the background of the white paper and blended black text.

We could say that the veil found in writing is the text itself. Text in particular subjects can be described as having to “look” a certain way. The work of e.e. cummings provides an example of a veil in the writing of the classical poem. Writing in all lowercase letters is unfamiliar and creates a foreground for the work in question because the intentionality of its appearance. If cummings merely had grammatical errors in his work, we might experience in reading his work that he made many mistakes. But, it is as if cummings invites us to the foreground of his work explicitly. He doesn’t blend his words upon the white sheet, he exposes them there.



The thought of exposure comes with the experience of the veil and the act of being invisible. In one of my works on veiling I discussed my two-year old under a blanket. His experience under the blanket was very different from my own. The blanket was familiar to me. It was given by an elderly church member at my first son's birth and was emblazoned with a familiar character, namely Winnie the Pooh. The blanket had a history all of its own, but it was not the focus of my experience. The blanket made my son familiar and unfamiliar to me at the same time. I knew he was under the blanket, but I was left with how to interpret who he wanted me to see him as under the blanket. It was as if the blanket was his mask. It was like attending his masquerade ball, left to imagine not only the character under the blanket mask, but the representation of the mask as he wore it. The blanket was a background item to the experience.

### **The Intention of a Veil**

Robert Sokolowski, Max van Manen, and Sara Ahmed all agree that consciousness is a directed activity. We can call this direction intentionality. In terms of a veil or veiling, how does intentionality present itself to the consciousness of both wearer and observer? We might say that both wearer and observer engage in a spectacle of presences and absences. What is present to the wearer? What does he or she fail to see under a veil? How does an observer behold maskness? These aspects highlight the intention of a veil. We might consider someone wearing an outfit to an event like a suit. A suit could be worn out of the familiarity of the event or occasion such as a "black-tie affair". The suit would then be of necessity because it identifies you as familiar and being familiar with the environment you have gone into. However, if you wore camouflage to

the same event there may be an occasion to suspect that you are unfamiliar with such an event, are disrespectful, or possibly both. It is as if the wearer of a vestment, mask, or particular style of dress wishes the worn element to be a background item. Making it a focal point may be an unfamiliar representation of the item worn.

The intention is to present the item, not to highlight that it is there. Frantz Fanon discusses the phenomenon of a veil using Algerian women. Some women of Islamic faith wear a haik or veil which covers a differing spectrum of the head and/or body. The haik in particular concealed all parts of the Algerian women. The Algerian women were not hidden from view, much like a two year old under a blanket, but were not seen like the women from France or other non-Algerian countries. The haik, a background item, made the familiar expression of women unfamiliar to a country that had grown accustomed to seeing the faces and bodies of women. It was as if Algerian women became more like colored print in the midst of black and white text. Not from what the French men could see, but from what they could not see.

### **The Aspects and Profile of a Veil**

If we imagine a veil, we might say that it is just a piece of thin cloth covering the face in a masklike fashion. A view of a veil or mask from the side may reveal its faceness. There is a face all its own for the veil. The mask of Dunbar could be interpreted as such a veil. The difference in a Dunbarian mask is that we do not see it as one, we see the camouflage the “fitness” of it in a conventional society. It is so common in the experience of viewer and viewee that we disregard that it even exists before us. We are ignorant of such a mask, because it is custom made to the face of the wearer or what the

wearer has deemed his or her face. Faces are familiar, masks are not. Yet, perhaps Dunbar's mask is a familiar face. What is it that makes such a covering so different from the blatant masquerade before us? Dunbar might say the grins, the lies, and the myriad subtleties. It is the veil as a mask that lies to us or that we possibly allow to lie to us as to what lies behind it. Perhaps this is how someone can reside there behind it, not hiding, but camouflaged from the viewer as who they might really be before you and I.

### **The Twisting of a Veil**

The twist of a veil is simply our knowledge of what is behind it. DuBois (1995) says the "Black" is born with a veil (p. 7). Before the knowledge of the world is imparted, there is a veil. We could say that such a person is never unmasked to the world and would attend a masquerade as "themselves" as we know them. It is as if we never truly know the individual in possession of the veil, we know the veilness or maskness of such a person. Who is such a person trying to be and why are they masquerading in plain view? What is the occasion of their "masking"? Perhaps if they took off their mask it would be like the *Phantom of the Opera*, a marred visage that makes the masked wearer seem more relevant, more normal though different, more familiar, and more acceptable to view. Or we might say that the mask is a background item that is worn so often that it is a given to view one on such a person. Much like clothes worn each day. It is expected to look "normal" in a civilized Western society or in DuBois's "American world".

What would it be like to see someone without a veil or mask? Fanon answers this question in his *A Dying Colonialism* in discussing the unveiling of the Algerian women by the French government. The Frenchmen expecting a hidden beauty behind the veil and

are “disappointed” at the “plainness” of the women when revealed. Their expectation was for some exotic, hidden, jewel or beauty to be exposed once the veil was lifted. The background of the veil was one of beauty, mystery, and a geography or locale worth visiting. It was as if the veil was Maybelline or Cover Girl enhancing the appearance like a cosmetic. We might say that the veil is a tool of fantasy that appears before us as real and actual in order to make our perception of individuals validly familiar to our culture. Perhaps, this is the case of the Algerian veil.

If we look at the mask of Dunbar, the veil of the DuBois, and the concept of invisibility seen in Ralph Ellison’s work, we could say that the apparent under the veil, mask or cultural camouflage has a similar cultural effect. We don’t recognize the veil because we are assimilated to fantasize otherwise. It is as if the veil were like the *Emperor’s New Clothes*. So apparent a child can see, but ignored in order to appear familiar. In the story weren’t the clothes so “lightweight” that you couldn’t feel them and its appearance only realized by the “unfoolish”. Here we could say that we have been indoctrinated not to wear masks for foreground, familiar, everyday interaction, but viewers and viewees alike have been assimilated not to view them although they are affixed to the face and readily seen, much like a man or woman in the middle of Wal-Mart wearing camouflaged hunting gear.

## **Conclusion**

When we read a Dunbar, an Ellison, a DuBois, a Fanon or any other host of writers, philosophers, and scholars of Africana descent, what are they unveiling in their words? Dunbar reveals to us his mask that grins and lies. Ellison discloses his realization

that he has tried to “uncover” himself only to be rendered invisible by those viewing him. DuBois concludes that at birth he and those like him are born with this covering, this veil that renders his view of the world different, a second sight. Meanwhile, Fanon speaks of the skin that he is in being unable to “mask” the history his black skin represents.

Paul Laurence Dunbar would say that we all wear the mask. Masks and veils are not idiosyncratic to people of African descent, but, perhaps we can say that there is a mask of certain type that each wears. What would a mask of someone contending with mental illness look like? What would a Hispanic mask look like? What does each group try to mask or render itself invisible from? In looking for a foundation for masking, we can simply look at the act of covering or masking an object. We do not try to hide an object in masking or veiling them, we are simply rendering them as “negligible” objects. The child behind the blanket, the masked man or woman in ceremonial garb, the KKK member, and even African-Americans writing poems, books and essays are not trying to hide, but to be rendered *negligible*. Here we might say that Ellison introduction to the prologue of *Invisible Man* fits within our understanding of negligibility:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids — and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. (Ellison, 1990, p. 3)

One might recall that the word negligible is an adjective that can mean insignificant, trivial, unimportant, or so small as to not be considered. We might say that the individual is not masking themselves, but masking an aspect of themselves. For example, we might

use race as such an aspect. It is as if the moments provided in the history of African people groups, the profiles, have become the identifying aspects. Sokolowski (2000) states that, "Identity belongs to what is given in experience, and [recognition] of identity belongs to the intentional structure of experience" (p.21). This identity is a public display; the display of the masked or veiled individual just chooses to be one of fantasy to be filled in by the viewer with the intent to look familiar, concrete and camouflaged. Perhaps, the essence of maskness, the ability to camouflage and be rendered invisible is nothing more than making the readily apparent *faceness* no more than negligible features under a sheet.

We might say, contrary to H.G. Wells and Ralph Ellison, that there are no invisible people, only those rendered invisible through the mask they wear or the veils they are born with. An invisible person may be better rendered as a negligible person to another, but not a total sum of nothing. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel might say such an individual is in the act of becoming (Hegel, 1977). This becoming might be the historical consciousness in the revelation of an on-born veil or facing the reality of an occupation. Just as a revelation of "I like hunting" or the National Guard's creed of "I am an American soldier" brings the necessity of wearing camouflage to fit into certain environments. Perhaps the revelation of raciality and the skewed race relations of the "American world" DuBois describes bring about the need for a veil or a realization that this veil was there all the time for our use. It is as if the invisible people, those behind the veil, "unreveal" themselves to familiar environments. We might say the veil is two-fold. It is a cover for the one viewed and a blinder for others who view it. Veilness could be

said to be a rendering of *invisibility*, not, as Ellison states, that we are a Poe-like spook, but because we refuse to see the person as a familiar *face*. Perhaps the issue of veiness is not about the veil, mask, cover or camouflage at all. Maybe the reality of Dunbar's revelation of our wearing a mask is in the environment. Our faces and bodies covered by a veil or mask are no more than a consequence of familiarity within the unfamiliar. So, perhaps as Paul Laurence Dunbar states, "we all wear the mask" to camouflage who we really are, what we really feel and the pain and "myriad subtleties" we wish to conceal. Perhaps, we are all *invisible* people.

## CHAPTER IV

### HEGELIAN DIALECTIC AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATION

In TIME magazine's 2013 edition of "100 Ideas that Changed the World", number fifty-seven on the list is ascribed to the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel is pervasive in philosophy. His most notable influence, however, is the reading of his philosophy by Karl Marx. Marxism takes the methodology of Hegel out of the "realm of pure thought" to the material world and its impact on the "means of production" (TIME, 2013). Hegel and his philosophy in general are deeply historical and difficult to comprehend at times. But, his historicity and complexity are disclosed in a process of how thought works, making him an attractive thinker for philosophers to model.

Hegel's ideas are said to be complex and obfuscating (Sperber, 2013; Spencer and Krauze, 2006; Singer, 2001). This has not deterred various readers, philosophers, theologians, and revolutionaries from gleaning from his work. He begins his work with a criticism and expansion of the ideas of Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Spencer and Krauze, 2006; Popper, 1940). His critique is explained later in this essay so the contents of it will not be disclosed here. Yet, what can be said in brief is that Hegel's philosophical turn looks at history as an important tenet. For Hegel, history is not random, but a "comprehensible process" that is directed by "laws" and discerned by "looking at history as a whole" (Brewer, 1984, p. 2). Hegel's view of history notes that



such a history is the “story of the development of ‘reason’ or ‘spirit’” (Brewer, 1984, p. 2). For this reason, Hegel made the ‘idea’ primary and the real world secondary (Brewer, 1984, p. 185). Marx is credited as an excellent reader of Hegel for his turning the dialectic right side up as it was “standing on its head” (Marx, 1979 ). For this cause, Marx is seen as “Hegelian” in style (Brewer, 1984, p. 21).

For the purpose of this essay, I would like to exploit Hegel’s style of dialectic to reveal Africana thought in education. I engage in this exploration due to a distinct absence in the literature for this topic and the significance put on the work of Hegel in identifying the stages of consciousness in the acquisition of knowledge. In order to explicate the thought of Hegel and the world of the African, African-American, and what are identified as people groups of the African Diaspora (the Caribbean for example) I would like to use Frantz Fanon as a complimentary voice. This essay will include his two chief works, *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* to meet this criterion. The content of the essay will go along this wise, a short biography of Hegel and Fanon, a short explanation of Hegel’s philosophy and methodology, a short explanation of Fanon’s philosophy and its gleanings from Hegel, a working through of Hegel’s method to Africana thought in education, and concluding remarks. The aim of this essay is to answer the question of “How does an Africana consciousness reveal itself in a Hegelian fashion?”

### **Hegel: An Introduction**

G.W.F. Hegel was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1770; the same year as both Beethoven and Henry Wordsworth (Lavine, 1984). As a student he is noted by

biographers to have made full analyses of books he read, even copying long passages in diary-like fashion (Durant, 1961, p. 221). He seems to be an avid student of Greek literature as he uses many appeals to Greek culture and literature to make some of his points (Durant, 1961; Lavine, 1984). Initially a seminary student, Hegel sought to be a Lutheran pastor before his deep love for Greek literature and philosophy led him otherwise. Adopting the life of a philosopher, Hegel tutored, edited a newspaper, and later taught at a University in a town called Jena. At Jena, Hegel would witness, by his account, Napoleon conquering the Prussian army. It was at this climactic moment that some say Hegel finished his seminal work, *The Phenomenology Spirit*.

Romanticism aside, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, completed in 1906 was part of Hegel's compendium of work that would "attempt to teach philosophy to speak in German" (Durant, 1961, p. 223). Hegel's work is intertwined with his brand of "dialectical movement" (Durant, 1961, p. 223). Dialectical movement in Hegel's depiction of it means that the "condition of thought" or how we think about things "leads to its opposite" before uniting with it to "form a higher or more complex whole" (Durant, 1961, p. 223). This is the premise of the methodological process of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which will be examined in brief within this essay.

### **Hegel's Dialectic: A Three-Fold Cord**

*...a threefold cord is not easily broken.*  
*Ecclesiastes 4:12*

In Plato's dialogues the appeal for truth often leads to a discussion of mathematics. Mathematics gives a concrete understanding of a concept where an abstract,

loose argument would lead to more questioning or worse a fallen argument. In geometry, the first time a shape is made is when there are three sides. Greek literary scholar Ann Carson gives the understanding of a triangle in terms of a letter between lovers (Carson, 1998). A writer presents the conception of the love between author and reader and the letter itself bridges the empty space between lovers.

Dialectic is triadic like a triangle in that the author or abstraction meets interpretation or negation to bring about a conception of what is shared between author and reader. This method will bring abstraction and negation together in order to form a concept to view just what mis-education is in contemporary, K-12 public education.

The method of dialectic used for the philosophical inquiry has been identified as that which was utilized by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel's dialectic hinges on the historical precedent of philosophy and the impact of the French Revolution. German idealism strongly influences the philosophical bend in Hegel's method. Our question here is, "What does a Hegelian methodology entail and what exactly does it look like?"

### **The Look of Hegelian Dialectic**

A dictionary definition of dialectic states that the term is derived from the Greek term *dialectikē*, meaning roughly the art of conversation or discussion or more literally, reasoning by splitting into two. Bhaskar (1993) cites the first generally applied context of a philosophical nature was attributed to a Socratic mode of argument, or *elenchus*, which was a differentiation from the Sophistic, *eristic*, that is the technique of disputation for the sake of rhetorical success, by the orientation of the Socratic dialogue towards the disinterested pursuit of truth (p. 14). Because of this link to Socratic dialogue, some link

the origin of dialectic to the dialogues of Plato. Plato in disclosing the thought of Socrates utilizes a dialectical method in presenting information. This methodology is more than a back and forth bantering (eristic), but more like midwifery, a “talking cure”. Two are in conversation about a subject and effort is made to allow the “thing in itself” to speak. The thing in itself speaks through analogy, metaphor, and an illustration distinct to a historical or present phenomenon (recall the azure sky and the law of chromatics) privy to the conversation in a contemporary setting. Ultimately, the dialectic, its subject, and its examples to elucidate its meaning must be a correlate, a distinct product of its times. Relevance to a contemporary age is not necessary, but is a welcomed consequence of a dialectical subject and the cyclical circumstances surrounding lived existence. Dialectical tradition, as it will be defined for the purpose of this study, falls into a basic principle of expression to exemplify the methodology (Ball, 1979).

### **Expression of a Dialectic Methodology**

Plato’s ideological analysis of concepts is exemplified in his *Allegory of the Cave*. The understanding is that the phenomenon we see is the shadow of external forms (Ball, 1979). Think here of the images on the cave wall as temporal pictures of a more exhaustive “portrait” of existence. Aristotle extended this view with his use of categories. In the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, recall that Socrates is overpowered by the Sophist’s idealism because of the inability of his dialectic to categorize what the material, concrete world was in time and in particular space as the examples (ideals) were not presented or limited by these constraints (Austin, 2007). The dialectic in this phenomenal world is therefore contextual in nature. This is to say for the dialectician, consciousness is a

consciousness of something (the object or thought) (Dove, 1971). For Hegel this means that it is historical (emerging in time and space) (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 41; Plant, 1999, p. 23).

Aristotelian logic “expresses” context by delineating analytical classes and reordering them into a system much like a master builder would form a brick wall one brick at a time (Ball, 1979). Hegel’s teaching of logic showcases this expression in new and novel ways for education. Believing students needed schema to build upon, he taught logic by building up to it through emphasis initially upon law, morality, and religion (Tubbs, 1996). In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he notes his appeal this way:

...science dare only organize itself by the life of the Notion itself.  
(Hegel, 1977, p. 31)

This is to say that we cannot teach grammar (as Hegel outlines) without first appealing to the structure of language. Such language would infuse the culture and mores that would naturally emerge into the structural realities of grammar and its presentation. Here we see the links to the historical (Aristotelian logic) and Hegel’s take on philosophy and his dialectic.

Building and extending on this tradition is G.W.F. Hegel. Hegel looks at the thing in itself, that is, how the process actually plays out in practice. In response, Hegel would say instead of putting our forms in the proper place like a wall (or grammar into language), we place the forms in abstractions based on the labels we have imposed upon them. Here abstractions can be the thoughts as they are presented to the student (or consciousness to use Hegel-specific terms). The problem with abstractions is the

tendency to view the whole as a product of constituent, idiosyncratic parts. Hegel resolves the abstraction problem by stressing that the abstractions are not effects of specific causes, but expressions of an empirical whole. Therefore, the principle of expression stresses holism. This holism, according to Hegel, must be mediated by thinking.

In summary, expression positions dialectical method outside of correspondence theory gives possibilities for further development and “usefulness” in applications of philosophical inquiry by utilization of a holistic, systematic approach. Ball (1979) states that “consciousness has [affinity] for the natural world [since] it is part of it” (p. 791). Hegel develops expression through “human interaction within a sociohistorical context” (Ball, 1979, p. 791). Therefore, the principle of expression is based in logic of relationships. This logic of relationships becomes both a strength and a recurring element of a dialectic method.

### **The Triadic Form of Dialectic**

Dialectic holds the position that human thought develops in a triadic fashion. Much like the triad of Carson, this triad can be expressed in terms of being, nothing, and becoming; thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; or abstraction, negation, and the concrete. Popper (1940) defines a thesis (a proposal or initial viewpoint) as the posited idea, theory, or given moment. The Merriam-Webster dictionary of the English (American) Language defines thesis as the first and least adequate stage of dialectic; a position advanced and maintained by argument; and a proposition to be proved (thesis; m-w.com, 2013). It is interesting to note that Hegel does not use the terms thesis, antithesis, and synthesis

(Singer 2010). These terms will be used here, however, for the purpose of clarity and definition.

Tubbs (1996) notes that Hegel applied to teaching would be to mediate (form a beginning for thinking) and go on to a second thing characterized by negating or “contradistinguishing” it (p. 190). Hegel advocates as one seeking for a critical attitude concerning thoughts that are presented to us. Popper (1940), in like fashion, states that “our critical attitude produces the antithesis (p. 406). Therefore, an effective triadic dialectic in the format of Hegel would be a critical look at the presentation of a structure (whether ideological or material) within the world. It was Hegel’s view the “philosophy exhibits the appearance of a circle” (Hegel, 1975, p. 23; Tubbs, 1996, p. 192). This is to say that it does not have a principal beginning in who presents the information. The beginning of philosophy for Hegel and his dialectical method was thought itself (Hegel, 1977; Tubbs, 1996). Here we also see the limits of Hegel’s methodology. Popper describes dialectic and the dialectic triad as certain developments or historical processes that occur in a certain, typical way (p. 411). A critique of dialectic by philosophers is the vagueness of this method (Popper, 1940). It is easy to force a dialectic interpretation on all sorts of developments and on different sorts of things (Popper, 1940, p. 412). Because of this tendency it is best to merge the dialectical method with a theoretical and philosophical framework. Thus, we have the success and pervasiveness of Hegel’s monumental work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and one of the motivations for the essay at hand.

## **Hegelian Dialectic**

Just as Hegel looks to the historical for clarification, we must look to the history of Hegel's method and its emergence to glean an understanding of its occurrence. The posturing of Hegelian dialectic comes as a result of the struggle (debate) between Continental philosophy (Cartesianism or rationalism) and the mainly British empiricism. Cartesianism, the school of Rene Descartes, was characterized by its "[recommendations] of its reasonableness" (Popper, 1940, p. 413). This idea states that we can construct the body of science without reference to experience; rationalism informs us that reason coupled with propositions must be "true descriptors" of the facts. In contrast, empiricism states that only experience enables us to decide the truth or falsity of a theory. Pure reason cannot help us find the truth in empiricism according to this view. This is the essence of the scientific method taught in primary and secondary school science classes today and is the basis for the idealism of Immanuel Kant as he presents it in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In order to understand Hegel and his brand of dialectic, Kant's contribution will be briefly outlined as a theoretical root for Hegel's philosophy.

Kant initiates his empiricism with the fact that science exists. Explanation of the existence of science is the progression of reason. From the premise of "how is science possible?", Kant poses the epistemological problem of how the human mind has the capacity of "grasping the world". This line of reasoning follows that the mind 'grasps' those things that are not utterly different from the mind's structure. Popper (1940) describes it as the world not being utterly different from our mind, because the world is



“mind-like” (p. 414). The world enters into our mind by the senses. Therefore, Kant’s proposal of reason is a dichotomy of realism and idealism.

Hegel extended Kant’s view by focusing on the concept of “How can our mind grasp the world?”. The theory, echoing Kant, was that the grasp of the world is based on the fact that the world is like the mind. In opposition to Kant, however, Hegel did not stop at the concept of the mind formulating the world, he boldly declares, “our mind is the world” (Hegel, 1977). Hegel’s philosophy can be disclosed in terms of the statement, “...that which is real is reasonable” (Hegel, 1977; Popper, 1940, p. 415). It was the dialectic of Hegel that allowed rationalism to construct a theory of reality out of pure reason and, in so doing, argue against and refute Kant’s arguments metaphysics.

It is worthy of note that the dialectic of Hegel is inspired by Kant. Kant’s argument was that knowledge is “limited to [possible] experience” (Kant, 2004; Popper, 1940, p. 416). Apart from possible experience, Kant would posit that any pure reasoning beyond this parameter is not justified (Kant, 2004). The argument of possible experience was explained using the components of thesis and antithesis (Hegel’s Abstraction (Being) and Negation (Nothing)). A theory of knowledge could be proposed which was unbound by possible experience and be adequately defended. However, using the same method, a contrasting antithesis could be proposed that “carries a similar force of conviction” (Popper, 1940, p. 416). Kant’s conclusion was that reason is [susceptible] to arguing against its own proposals and to contradict itself if used to go beyond possible experience (Kant, 2004). Experience becomes the help in avoiding ambiguity and indicates what theories should be eliminated. Hegel’s work would be to address this challenge and

overcome the Kantian refutation of rationalism (Popper, 1940). He met this challenge by saying “contradictions do not matter” (Popper, 1940, p. 416; Hegel, 1977). As long as a contradiction emerges in the development of thought and reason, it fits within the paradigm of rationalism. A contradiction shows the insufficiency of a theory to account for thought, reason, and reality as an unfixed, developing entity (note Kuhn’s anomaly and crisis here in the sciences). Hegel would attest that the world as mind-like framework gives the indication that both are aspects of evolution (Hegel, 1977). Further, Hegel would state that Kant’s refutation is better suited for metaphysics, not dialectic, since a metaphysical system would be defined free of development, contradiction, and instability. It is because of this correlation with reason and development that the direct relationship of mind and the world occur. The mind’s thought and the world becomes dialectic developments. Thus, the mind (rationalism) and the world (empiricism) are defined in terms of the dialectic triad.

For Hegel, philosophy is the highest expression of reason (Hegel, 1977). The application of the dialectic triad is most successful when applied to philosophy (thinking through in a systematic fashion) (Popper, 1940). Hegel (1977) believed that dialectic was our “purposive activity”, an actual procedure when reasoning or thinking (p. 12). The activities of movement, life, and the world at large showcased dialectic at work. An argument is made that dialectic, since it overlooks the law of contradiction, is an invalid reasoning mechanism for scientific pursuits. The argument here is that the dialectic is based in these pursuits, but is best suited to map out how we reason. The problem is the tendency to differentiate from logic and fall into dogmatism (Popper, 1940, p. 418).

Hegel describes his method as “the only true method of scholarly and scientific exposition (Hegel, 1977; Singer, 2004, p. 99). It is a method with a ‘simple rhythm; to dance to it takes no great skill (Hegel, 1977; Singer, 2004, p. 100). The start of Hegel’s dialectic triad is his Abstract or Being. This abstraction shows itself to be inadequate or contradictory. Recalling the questioning of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues, the revealing of inadequate ideals was often a principle aim of his encounters. Negation, the inadequacy or contradiction, explains the second stage of the triad. For example, freedom is an inadequate term to fully describe a base for a whole society. What contradicts freedom as an absolute is the terror associated with the freedom of masses left to themselves without law. A balance or full disclosure of the abstract concept of freedom and harmony is found in a ‘synthesis’ of the terms. Fusing harmony and freedom would be a terminal effect of a dialectic dealing with the dynamics of a developing “free” society. This example is used since Hegel places immense weight on the necessity of progress. The onward movement of history is “the secret to the immense influence of Hegel on radical and revolutionary thinkers” (Singer, 2004, pp. 101-102).

In the spirit of Hegel we will focus on the concept of “How does the mind grasp the mis-educated world of schooling?” Using Hegel and Fanon to disclose both the racialized and mis-educated mind, we must first categorize this mind in the same spaces presented by Hegel for clarity. Hegel categorizes his phenomenology into three overarching categories. These categories are consciousness, reason, and Spirit (Hegel, 1977; Spencer and Krauze, 2006). The phenomenology of Spirit further organizes these areas into fourteen more categories. For brevity and focus this essay will focus on the

first category present by Hegel (consciousness) and the four subheadings of sense-certainty, perception, understanding, and certainty of self (self-consciousness) (Hegel, 1977).

Dialectic is by no means new to education. John Dewey was said to have “cut his philosophical teeth” on Hegel’s philosophy. Most Marxists understand their Hegelian roots. Recall Marx in his afterword to *Capital* stating that he turned Hegel’s method “on its head” (Marx, 1979). Marxism will not be the focus here, but there is no doubt that the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx’s philosophy has made its presence known in educational spaces with such identifiers as “socioeconomic status” in our labels placed on the children we teach.

### **Fanon: An Introduction**

For this study the Hegelian bend in dialectic will be expounded upon through the philosophical lens of Frantz Fanon in order to address two areas of concern seldom, if ever, mentioned apart or together by Hegel or Hegelian scholarship. These areas are the issues of race and education. Fanon was a Frenchman from Martinique that worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria. As a result of his work in Algeria with both French and Algerian soldiers and civilians, Fanon became an Algerian freedom fighter and advocate for the imperial decolonization of African people.

Fanon’s link to Hegel is through the philosophy of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty, in turn, was a protégé of Alexandre Kojève, a formidable reader of Hegel’s work (Kojève, 1980). Due to these links and the obvious reference to Hegel in his work *Black Skin White Masks*, these philosophers will be included to fully

disclose the challenges within this inquiry. Fanon's philosophy is based on his two principal works, the aforementioned *Black Skin White Masks* published in 1952, and his seminal work, published posthumously in 1963 entitled *The Wretched of the Earth*. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon discloses the objectivity of blacks (Africans in Fanon's context) in relation to their European counterparts. For the European, the black, according to Fanon has no subjectivity and is only seen in terms of an objective, an end (producer of some type of work) and is therefore disconnected from a subjective gaze of humanity (they are seen as animals or beastlike). This disconnect between subject-object leads to what Fanon describes as an inferiority complex. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon discloses a rallying cry to the revolutionaries of Algeria. *The Wretched of the Earth* is most notable by lay readers and scholars alike as a call to violent realization and has even been interpreted as no more than a diatribe advocating violence and terrorism. Fanon explicitly states that to get to decolonization you violently take back your subjectivity. For this essay using Hegel and Fanon to address the problem of education and race I will look at dialectic as a means to interpret the phenomenon of mis-education.

Mis-education as is a term coined by Carter G. Woodson in his seminal text, *The Mis-education of the Negro*. Woodson looks at African-Americans (Negroes) in his 1933 text that have matriculated through institutions of education. His drive is to disclose the apparent ineffectiveness of African-Americans that are considered to have been "educated". This "education", which he terms mis-education, is described as not just failing in its effectiveness of teaching individuals that happen to be black, but for teaching lessons void of relevance to the cultural experiences and realities of those it

should educate. For Woodson, the problem is not one of a lack of educational exposure, but a lack of pertinence in the experiential life of the black.

### **Mis-education as a Dialectical Concept**

In linking Hegel to Fanon and then correlating their contributions to the concept of mis-education it is important to first pose the problem of mis-education in dialectical terms. In order to accomplish this I would like to first present the work of Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn in his text entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* states that “paradigms” in science changed through a process of anomaly, crisis, and paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1996). Since Hegel has a keen eye for the concept of science in his work (the word science appears at least once on every page of the Preface and Introduction in *Phenomenology of Spirit*), I would like to use Kuhn briefly to illustrate a reading of Hegel into the problematic of race and education in public spaces. First, it must be noted that for Kuhn an anomaly is the basis for addressing a change. This change may have always been apparent, but was not an issue since science dictated for a time the acceptability of a concept. For the sake of this example, we can view such a concept as race in terms of its acceptability as a concept. Hegel, as well as Kuhn, would agree that the anomaly to a concept is only an anomaly as far as it strays from the historical understanding it has been given. Kuhn uses an example of the scientific reality of the past, the geocentricity (Earth-centered) of our solar system which is challenged by information that contradicts this initial premise (certain constellations disappear during particular seasons within the year). This anomaly or contradictory point brings about a crisis to the scientific community that cannot be ignored. Failure to resolve a crisis results in a shift of the paradigm. Now of

course we understand that the solar system is heliocentric (Sun-centered) because a paradigm shifted due to a crisis with previous thought. Like Kuhn sees the scientific world, Hegel sees his philosophical world in a process of three-fold disclosure. However, Hegel sees an abstraction (world presented), a negation (world as it is interpreted), and a resolving sublimation (a concrete conception) of the two. Hegel often uses the terms Being, Nothing and Becoming to explain these three movements. For the purpose of this essay I use the terms interchangeably.

Utilization of Hegel entails that we understand his philosophy. Understanding his philosophy puts us in a posture of understanding his general history, especially since history is a key component of his philosophy. Hegel as a scholar was fluent in Greek and Latin with a thorough grounding in the classics, Greek tragedies being a favorite (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 8). He recorded everything he studied in diary-like fashion, and his often cryptic style of writing emerges as a consequence of his desire to absorb everything of an intellectual nature (he quotes from memory). Initially, Hegel trained to be a Lutheran pastor and has a theological bend in his writing necessitating for him that “poetry could heal the rift between religion and reason” (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 13). Reading Hegel we see that a chief influence on his intellectual life was Johann Goethe. Victor Lange notes that, “Goethe’s perception, his thinking, his speech, his writing, is attached to images (Lange, 1968, p. 83)”. Hegel in like fashion uses images or has one in mind when writing (from memory) about the philosophical conceptions he seeks to portray. Hartner (1968) in his text *Goethe and the Natural Sciences* states:

The highest would be: to understand that everything real is theory in itself. The azure color of the sky reveals to us the basic law of chromatics. Do not try to go behind the phenomena; they themselves are the doctrine. (p. 145)

From this quote we understand that Hegel depicts his philosophical world in concert with the thought of Goethe. I will use more examples later to showcase this parallel. Hegel states that "...we can only know the world as it appears to us, and is experienced by us – not as it is 'in itself'" (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 31). He further states that we "comprehend...only as filtered through the categories...[constitutive] of our subjectivity" (recall here Fanon's use of the subjective-objective in his work) (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 31).

Reflecting the example of Kuhn, we must understand that the paradigm Hegel utilizes is that all truth is historical (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 41; Plant, 1999, p. 23). Hegel begins to work toward his magnum opus with the initiation of a multi-volume system of science. The key text of philosophy attributed to Hegel emerges at this time, namely *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is Hegel's "guide to the science of Absolute Knowledge" (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 56). Understanding basic modes of human experience is the prerequisite in his philosophy for "reaching Absolute Knowledge" (Plant, 1999, p. 25). From this work we see Hegel's system at work in disclosing the operation of the consciousness. For Hegel, subjectivity (read self-consciousness) is immediately a consciousness of a lack of something, which is a lack of an object. Therefore, to be subject begins with having a desire for something (for Hegel this is freedom). Exemplifying the subject-object dynamic is Hegel's master and slave metaphor. In this metaphor the slave works and learns to produce thus seeing selfhood



through the work of the hands, while the master remains dependent upon the slave for recognition, personhood. The dynamic becomes one of independence versus dependence. This metaphor is noted here due to its pervasiveness in existentialism and also Negritude (the fledgling movement of which Fanon is noted to have initially taken interest) and more recently, the Black Consciousness Movement (Spencer and Krauze, 2006, p. 61). Having described a little of Hegel and his influences, I would now like to give an overview of his method, dialectic.

### **Hegelian Dialectic, Fanon, and Mis-education**

One of the earliest memories I have in school in reading and hearing the words of our constitution, “We the people...”. The significance of these words from the United States Constitution and my educational past intersected upon writing this section due to the simple word, “WE”. “We”, as it were, seems insignificant, but a significant portion of Hegelian scholarship has focused on this term and its impact may be one of the keys to really understanding Hegel’s methodology in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. In saying that, “I remember the phrase ‘We the people’”, I linked a current educational experience with my past. I presented a thought that you (the reader) and I (the author) can engage in a similar thought. This thought may have been that you too remember learning the words of the Constitution of the United States or have never read the document for whatever reason, but whatever it may be there is a “we” between us. This “we” links us to a similar line of thought. The thought makes us conscious of something (he is writing about the Constitution or I am thinking about the Constitution). Thought at its height might contradistinguished this initial presentation in some way (those words were not just in the

Constitution; that wasn't in the school curriculum at all). Regardless of the content of our contradistinction, true thought may emerge when we move from an initial presentation to a point of more ardent observation. Hegel (1977) states that consciousness "...distinguishes from itself something to which it at the same time relates itself" (p. 70). This is to say, using the example, knowledge in itself may be relational, but not necessarily true. The question of truth is not a direct concern here, but in phenomenological terms is "bracketed" (Dove, 1970, p. 617). Herein, we see the movements, the process of Hegelian dialectic in disclosing the content of the consciousness to the observer of phenomenon. First, we must note some description of "knowledge as it appears" (Hegel, 1977, p. 66; Dove, 1971, p. 618). Second, is the Concept, this is the object as it sits within the "temporal process of the consciousness" (Dove, 1970, p. 618). This Concept makes me of an opinion that Hegel (as well as Fanon) postures himself as a product of his times (Hegel, 1977; Fanon, 1952/2004). He sees his viewpoint from the limited perspective of consciousness that see a limited picture of what is behind and as the Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "...through a glass darkly" towards the future. Hegel's third movement is the "observation that consciousness selects its own standard and comparison to knowledge" (Dove, 1970, p. 620). In Hegel's words, this means that consciousness is "consciousness of the object", "of its self", "what to it is true", and "its knowledge of this truth" (Hegel, 1977, p. 72; Dove, 1970, p. 622). Dove (1970) states that the experience of consciousness is therefore a "[description] of dialectical process" (p. 622). This process arises out the course of

experience that is described. Experience is dialectical to the degree that it produces new objects (knowledge) for itself (Dove, 1970, p. 622).

Hegelian dialectic and experience is contingent upon the function of appearance. Appearance then becomes a component of phenomenal experience as it is described by the consciousness. For Hegel, “genuine experience is a self-revealing process” and philosophy is a “description of this process” (Dove, 1970, p. 623). For the sake of this essay we will define experience as the described activity of language and work. This definition is gleaned from Hegel’s take on experience that “it is an act”, and that “it can be said of it, what it is” (Hegel, 1977, p. 236). Therefore, learning the Constitution’s preamble was an experience for me. It was an activity (learning) that involved reading and reciting parts of its contents. However, this experience was idiosyncratic. Hegel’s definition of experience involves that there is an act. For me this is a reality, but for you the reader, it may not be so. I have simply imposed my experience on you and gave you parameters to accept its validity. Here is where the concept of *we* comes in. Instead of focusing on my past learning experiences, how can I make such an expression beneficial to the current reader’s experience or students learning the preamble? This is the effort undertaken by Hegel in his phenomenology.

Work in describing Hegel’s method, includes a critique of The *Phenomenology of Spirit*’s use of the term “we” within its contents (Dove, 1970; Hyppolite, 1974). For Dove (1970) “we” seems to merely describing the active experience of consciousness in its presentation of phenomenological description, yet our observation is also an act (p. 628). He concludes his argument concerning the use of “we” as a dialogue that itself is

“consciousness’s voyage to the discovery of Spirit” (Dove, 1970, p. 640). The emphasis of this study (first three parts of the Phenomenology) is a dialogue between consciousness and the “we”; “we” of course being a participant (Dove, 1970, p. 640). In like fashion I would like to enter a similar dialogue using the gaze of Hegel, the words of Fanon, and, in Fanon’s terms, the “experience of the black”.

### **Fanon’s Experience of the Black**

The identity of black’s in Africana scholarship often takes on the gaze of a passive observer. A key interpretation of this fact is W. E. B. DuBois’s description of double consciousness. Fitting well into Hegel’s depiction of “we” there is a schism between the face seen and the face that is presented to the world. Charles Mills in *Blackness Visible* describes the dilemma of Ellison’s narrator in *Invisible Man*. His dilemma is “invisibility” from whites due to “construction of the inner eyes” (Mills, 1998, pp. 8-9; Ellison, 1995). The result is to create a persona that others can see. Fanon (1952/2008) states that the “former slave wants to have himself recognized” (p. 191). Here, Fanon actually quotes Hegel verbatim in a previous paragraph leading to this comment. He pulls the quote revealing that “self-consciousness exists in and for itself “to be acknowledged or recognized” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 192; Hegel, 1977, pp. 114-115). Therefore, we see in the work of Fanon, Mills, DuBois, and Ellison there is an issue of acknowledgement and recognition in the experience of the Black.

Hegel states that one-sided action is “useless” since activity is only brought about by “mutually recognizing each other” (Hegel, 1977, p. 230-231). This activity constitutes that we have a need to be for someone. With the need for recognition comes a desire to

be so recognized and acknowledged. Looking at the experience of black students in educational spaces, we often find this need for recognition and acknowledgement play out. Following Fanon's reading of Hegel, we find black self-consciousness becomes a dependent and interactive phenomenon (Fanon, 1952/2008; Hegel, 1977; Jackson, 1997). Ronald Jackson (1997) in his work detailing black masculinity states that these quotations from Hegel's work "philosophically assert that persons are dialectically juxtaposed and serve as mirrors validating the presence of the other" (p. 736). Using this analogy of the mirror I would like to take an example and move through the moments of Hegel's method in the voice of Fanon.

The first point of Hegel's method involves an experience that must be mediated through the discretion of the consciousness. For this example let's use a phenomenon affected students of color in the United States that has already been resolved and problematize it. A monumental movement in the relation between race and education occurred with the 1954 *Brown versus Board of Education Topeka, KS Supreme Court decision (Brown vs. Board)*. Recalling Hegel's sentiment that we do not begin by simply teaching logic (or grammar), but with accessible components that "build the wall" in brick by brick fashion in an Aristotelian fashion. We must identify an experience correlating with the decision. For sake of argument, a result of *Brown vs. Board* was desegregation of schools. A start for the consciousness might be what a desegregated school experience looks like for the black. Theoretically, we could say that a desegregated school has students of color (blacks, Hispanics, and so on) being educated beside their white counterparts. This sounds good, but is not Hegelian dialectic. First, the

thought is imposed and given its parameters. Second, it has not been mediated through the vehicle of “we”, there is no dialogue to bring about a contradiction and lead to the appearance of and in it as it relates to the presentation to the consciousness. Third and last, “we” have failed to consider the source of our inquiry and the point of our need for dialectic, the experience of the black. Re-examining this phenomenon we will simply start with the historical perspective. Recall, Plessy versus Ferguson was to insure that schools of the past were considered separate but equal for the different races within them. We now know that this was untrue because students of color (blacks) often received the damaged, outdated books of their white peers. Following this syllogism, if the books were not equal, it showcases that the education would have difficulty being shown to be equal due to inadequate sources of information. The final movement of this process of thought was that something outside of the legislation outlined in Plessy versus Ferguson was required to insure equality amongst black and white students.

Introducing Fanon would infuse the deeper issue of race relations into the conception of education. Why were students given inadequate materials and what does this say of the public perception of white students in comparison to black students? Further, if a “civil” society saw fit to bring a case to the highest court within such a society, is this the extent to which an individual of color is required to prove his or her ability to be acknowledged? The appeal to the Supreme Court showcases the lack of recognition of the black and the resilience of the black to prove they exist. Fanon states that “it is because the [black] belongs to an ‘inferior’ race that he tries to resemble the superior race” (Fanon, 1952/2008, 190). Fanon, even in his statement, details that the

conception in the experience of the black is that through subjugation, the experience of the white (their recognition and acknowledgement in society) showcases their place in comparison to blacks in the same society. Fanon's sentiment that "there is nothing ontological about segregation", gives us understanding that a person or group with no ontology has such a concept of being imposed upon them (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 163). Segregation seeks to note difference, but stifle acknowledgement; create a division, yet fail to recognize. We see that the decision to desegregate schools was more than equality in schooling; it was a scholarly, litigious attempt to be recognized and acknowledged by the status quo.

Fanon gives the following critique of the impact of Eurocentric culture on schools that are attended by the black:

The white family is the guardian of a certain structure. Society is the sum of all families. The family is an institution, precursor of a much wider institution: i.e., the social group or nation. The main lines of reference remain the same. The white family is the educating and training ground for entry into society. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 127)

The feeling of inferiority is based on the different structures that one culture proposes as the norm in lieu of another. The black experience then is one of noticing the differences of his or her culture in contrast to that of their white counterparts. Underlying the decision of *Brown vs. Board* is the phenomenon of comparison. The litigants, judges, and onlookers of the case had to admit that the cultural structure for one group of children reflected in the schools that they attended was not a reflexive reality for another group. None asked that all schools be made better, just that schools be made equal. The

movement in Hegel's dialectic would entail a new underlying yet always apparent crisis within race and education, we are unconscious of the experience in our schools, just looking at the past, that one set of people are seen as a group to not only be acknowledged and recognized by, but also to become if we are "experientially black".

### **Conclusion**

Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) states that:

We said rather too quickly that the black man feels inferior. The truth is that he is made to feel inferior (p. 127).

Looking at our current literature about students of color in schools, namely, African-Americans, we see that many are not performing well in comparison to their white counterparts. This dialectical inquiry brings us an understanding that perhaps our method of comparison is the problem. The historical background of blacks in education is that they are already seen as inferior by whites and oftentimes their own people. Inquiries such as this one may showcase to our own thinking that many of our presuppositions are wrong. There is literature that showcases an inferiority of black students by notable scholars such as Arthur Jensen in his appeals to race-based differences in intelligence or Harvard researchers Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their *Bell Curve* text. Some even purport a bend amongst African-Americans for anti-intellectualism (McWhorter, 2001). My point here is not to condemn these scholars or their points on their validity and rigor, but to point to an obvious and often overlooked aspect of our scholarship concerning African people. The point of this inquiry and its query of "how does the black mind grasp the world" are answered simply as being in a position inferior



to whites. This inferiority is characterized by a desire for recognition and acknowledgement of fitness to be just like those deemed superior. The phenomenon takes many forms, but its sum is that there are two systems of reference (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 90). The experience of the black is that he is black on one front and also, black in relation to the white (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 90). This is to say that the experience of the black is one of comparison. Our society, even some of my work, notes the distinct contradistinctions between the experience of white men and women to the experience of black men and women. Phenomenal experiences of these two groups are different and adversely so because of the inferiority imposed by a historical point of reference. For Fanon, the “misfortune of the [person] of color is having been enslaved” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 205). It is because of this enslavement that such a person “has no culture, no civilization, and no ‘long historical past’” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 17). The encouragement of future blacks that will experience the world in black skins underneath a mask of an imposed culture is this, the “present serves to build the future” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. xvi). A man of his time (1925-1963), Fanon left the reader of his work with his “reason for living”; that the “future must be a construction supported by [people] in the present” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. xvii). It is my hope that this work of scholarship would be a brick to begin the process of building such a future.

## CHAPTER V

### FANON'S BACKDOOR: THE MIS-EDUCATION OF FRANTZ FANON

Carter G. Woodson (1933/2006) describes the backdoor as a “demanded” or “cut” structure (p. xiii). In considering a door I am curious as to what it is a backdoor to. Apparently, this location is behind or in addition to some other door. A backdoor might have a knob or handle. Perhaps there are no hinges or frame at all. Maybe it is just an opening. As Woodson speaks of a backdoor, there is no opening this door and entering into something. But, isn't this the purpose of a door? Doesn't a backdoor lead into the same area as a front door?

The Jim Crow era of de facto and de jure segregation had “backdoors”. Much like Woodson's mis-education, this backdoor was often sought out. While Woodson says that the backdoor is a consequence of “when you control a man's thinking”, is this necessarily negative in nature? What if crafting such a door helps us realize whatever is behind the “front door”? This essay will examine this phenomenon of entering through the means of a backdoor by using the work of Fanon and phenomenologically intending Woodson's backdoor.

#### **Fanon the Doctor**

Foucault's (1973) quote in *Madness and Civilization* about “the prisoner of the passage” speaks reminiscent of the slave experience (p. 11-12). Stripped from their

homeland, never to return, the once free African now sails on the freest of mediums only to travel and arrive in chains. How does a man or woman once free react to the bondage of chains and the gentle rocking of the vast, open ocean? The sea in Foucault's depiction of the prisoner is a crossroad. Free, yet bound fast, the land in which such a prisoner disembarks into is the unknown, much like the current or the wind which drives him or her on the journey to a land unknown. What if the "land" in which someone disembarks upon is not a destination at all, but a concept? Like Melville's Captain Ahab, some board the ship to chase a phantom that can lead them to the specter of infamy. For Ahab it was a great whale, for Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* it is to be an authentic, subjective individual, recognized and substantiated as more than an object, but as a man. Is this not madness to desire a reality far from the reach of where you dwell, to set adrift to a land unknown by a colonial mind? Apparently not, as Fanon travels the routes of Negritude, psychoanalysis, experience, authorship, and analysis to come to the conclusion of a "man who reasons" (Fanon, 1952/2004).

For Foucault (1973), the "language of psychiatry...is a monologue of reason about madness..." (p. xi). Fanon is trained and experienced to understand and speak this language as evidenced by his work in *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. If we relegate Fanon to a "prophet of violence", we may forget that he was educated and practiced as a doctor of psychiatry. Fanon worked with the realities of madness during the Algerian war. He may have been privy to this "monologue about madness", but, unlike Foucault, Fanon is not merely interested in the history of madness as it emerges in the European psyche and life, but in the mind of the Black. More

specifically, the colonized man or woman of color is of interest to Fanon. Whether this color is the Black of his native Martinique or the Arab of his adopted Algeria, Fanon finds the parallels of the individual set adrift with no ship, no destination to a land that is not recognized as one's own. This is colonization, a madness that seems to set the individual in its grasp adrift in their own homeland and within their own mind.

It can be argued that the state of mind in Algeria for colonizer and colonized alike was one of madness. Foucault (1973) speaks of madness in the writing of Shakespeare and Cervantes that it "occupies an extreme place, in that it is beyond an appeal" (p. 31). This is best realized in Fanon's appeal to violence in *The Wretched of the Earth*. What does Fanon see that incites such passion? The first chapter of the text entitled "Concerning Violence" speaks of armed violence against oppression and also speaks of taking up arms in its concluding chapter. What about madness, colonial madness, causes Fanon to write in a flurry of words his opus though cancer racked his body? Is this colonial madness to be considered a sickness worse than death?

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon gives several case studies from his work in Algeria. One of the more gripping depictions for me was one particular case of Algerian teens that had murdered a European friend. When asked why they killed the boy, one of the teens states simply, "[Because] they want to kill us" (Fanon, 1963/2004, p. 200). Is this an aspect of colonial madness? Possibly so. But, intentionality of colonial madness could be looked at as a two-sided coin. We could say one side of this coin consists of the colonized individual (Fanon's Algerian for example) and the other the colonizer (such as the French). If we say there is one, there has to be the other at some close proximity. As a

novice numismatist, I notice that you identify a coin by the “face” side and the other side becomes the “back” of the coin. We don’t usually define coins by what is on its “backside”, but regardless of definition the one coin whether “face-side” or “back-side” up still has the same value. Perhaps colonial madness is to devalue the valuable by disregarding that it has a “face”. Backs of coins often are composed of symbols as opposed to faces. These objects often have underlying meaning. With like value and the same consistency of metal as its front side, the back side of a coin is not seen as the subject of the coin until it is flipped on its end.

We might say that a colonizer and those that they colonize are two sides of the same coin. They are two worlds in one territory filled with two languages, two cultures, two countries, and two histories. A constant dichotomy loaded with Manichean twoness. What happens when two occupy the space of one? Usually, we simply change language with adjectives or prefixes. A bicycle, for example, has two tires that work in tandem with one another and has been accepted as a normal configuration compared to its cousin the unicycle, which few, if any are seen operating. A bilingual individual has two languages occupying their mind. In a more transient, fluid society this also becomes a regular fixture. Dual citizenship means an individual is a citizen of more than one country. Therefore, the boundaries of the two countries do not exist as barriers between one another, but doors.

Colonizers and the colonized are different from these examples of twoness. The colony may never see itself as a “normal” fixture of the colonizing country, but quite possibly an economic respite or destination for a vacation. Two languages exist, but they

may still occupy two kinds of minds: The mind of the inhabitants and the mind of the colonist. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the colony is the boundary without entrance that may exist. A colony may not have permeable boundary. We might even say that a boundary has not been clearly defined. Let's say an Algerian of Fanon's day is taught to speak French, use francs (French currency) for purchases, eats French cuisine, and dances to French music on weekends. School is in French, radio broadcasts are in French, and the home, though Algerian, seems to look like a French one. There is no twoness here, it actually sounds like an extension of France until the boundary between the French and Algerian are defined. What does such a boundary look like? What marker marks its dimensions? Why is it so difficult to navigate and locate for those that are blocked by it?

One might say that this boundary is like a heavily guarded establishment surrounded by a gate. As a child of a military parent, I recall living on an Air Force Base in Spain. A base is and was the point where the American military could "extend" itself into another country in order to operate. I remember the base had a fence all around it with few places of entry. The places of entry were called gates. Entry into the gate required a pass or special permission before entry was granted. I am sure Spain had people that could speak English fluently, ate hamburgers, wore Levi's and Nikes, and drove a Ford or Chevy. This did not grant them access to the base and actually held no bearing or consideration in their moving to the other side of the gate. It showcased that the gate was a boundary they could not cross and identified a point of departure they would not "extend" into. Maybe being colonized is like that, having a boundary right in

front of your face whether seen or unseen, but upon attempt to cross its gate, you find that you cannot.

### **Defining Boundaries**

How are boundaries defined? If a boundary is wrapped up in a person's twoness such as being French and Algerian, then there might be a definitive point where Algerian ends and French begins. For the Algerian believing he or she is French, this end may be met when in the "face" of someone that is a gatekeeper for the definition of Frenchness. The gatekeeper checks the credentials of Frenchness at the boundary between being Algerian and French defining the boundary of what is and is not French.

A gatekeeper may define Frenchness based upon how he or she identifies it. For Fanon, such a "keeper" was identified by the language of a child. The emphatic, "Look a Negro!", is a significant point in Fanon's treatise on Black embodiment. "Look a Negro", may assume in the mind or experience of the child different things. One might say that Negroes are rare in the world of the child. Or perhaps Negroes are not seen in the fashion as Fanon is seen when viewed. For the purpose of this essay, we could imagine that somehow Fanon made it across a boundary into the space occupied by a child that found him familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. We could say that this is the child's first experience of a Negro visually. It is almost as if the child is saying, "He looks exactly how you told me one of *them* would look." Perhaps the significance of boundaries is separation. In our American nomenclature we call such boundaries which separate, borders. This may be saying that we are not establishing lines of distinction like on a political map, but areas of exclusion. The exclusion of Fanon in the eyes and experience

of the child in his *Black Skin White Masks* text is one of race and colonization, but could it also be a fear of the unfamiliar?

### **Xenophobia**

Xenophobia is the fear of strangers. A stranger is a person who is considered strange in comparison to or foreign in relation to us. Xenophobia can manifest itself in many ways involving the relations and perceptions of an ingroup towards an outgroup, including a fear of losing identity, suspicion of its activities, aggression, and desire to eliminate its presence to secure a presumed purity. Xenophobia can also be exhibited in the form of an "uncritical exaltation of another culture" in which a culture is ascribed "an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality". We see this us and them paradigm play out in such statements as "taking back the country" or the blatant racism of Jim Crow de facto and de jure segregation in its attempts to avoid miscegenation. In my reading of Fanon I see the perspective of the ostracized foreigner or stranger in his or her own country. It is a means by which a self-fear and inferiority complex occurs because the black in Fanon's words is unable to be an "other" to his black counterparts. Therefore, the black becomes a stranger in his or her own skin: A stranger to be feared due to being unknown.

If xenophobia is an experience of our fear of unknown people, what then is the experience of xenophobia? Fanon would cite the child's emphatic exclaim. The child appears to identify that which is foreign. Language is used to identify a category, a location for Fanon to be as he is presented to the child. The child linguistically identifies that the definition of "a Negro" fits on the presented individual in their view. How does the child know about this foreign experience to identify it? Why does Fanon seem to take



time to repeat this experience? Gordon in his text on Africana Philosophy notes that for Africana philosophers, the knowledge is located or situated somewhere. The knowledge of what Fanon details as Black skin is a located or situated one. We might say based on the child's words that this location is situated out of the everyday experience of her world. Where then did Fanon have to come from in order to be a foreigner to someone he felt he had a common culture?

As an African-American male student I have experienced the feeling of being located or situated in certain spaces. In each case in which I have been "located" within my race there is an appeal to rationale behind my "being" in a particular place. It is similar to the experience of walking into a building or room for the first time. You know that you are supposed to be there, but knowledge isn't what you need to make you comfortable, your connections make you comfortable. Someone experiencing a person foreign to them does not seek comfort with the individual, but with ideas. If such ideas are fearful ones, it may be comfortable to not connect with these individuals, but to ostracize them further.

Xenophobia makes the uncomfortable comfortable. "Look a Negro", is a comfort for the child. It validates a history, utilizes a language, and establishes a border or boundary. For Fanon, the boundary separating what it means to be French and the mind of the child, which may represent the mind of his proposed fellow citizens of France, is a closed door. Where Fanon's black skin is a "barrier" to his realization of Frenchhood, his white mask becomes a door to connect and possibly gain entry. Reminiscent of DuBois veil, Fanon presents the illusion of a black body with a familiar white mask. I attempted

to establish in a previous essay that the veil was a camouflage rendering the wearer a type of invisibility. The point of such a veil, as with Fanon, is not to be seen, but to be unseen. We make statements in the English language like “it remains to be seen” or “seen and not heard” or even the Biblical reference that states that “eyes have not seen”. Seeing is a vital component of experiencing. “Look” exclaims the child that sees Fanon, while not seeing Fanon. I recall Biblical prophets being told by God in passages, “what do you see?” What do we see when we look at people different from us? If it is a phobia like xenophobia, Fanon (1952/2008) might say, the anxiety associated with the object of our “fear or a situation” (p. 132). The situated body, the object is a problem for the mind that has been conditioned to see it as one. In such situations we may block access to the doors where “contact [may] arouse anxiety” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 134). This is where the necessity of backdoors may begin.

### **Woodson’s Backdoor**

A door is a point at which you enter. Doors are usually made to suit entrants individually. We especially see this with houses. The solitary door at the front of a house is made for the single entrant. Entry is an individual experience unless you are holding a child of course. A person entering a house may be carrying groceries or luggage. But physically there is no carrying individuals on a regular basis when we travel through a door. Sure, there are the occasions of marriage or injury, but for the most part entering a door is an individual practice.

“Foreign” doors require that strangers made some type of identifiable sound. A “knock” at the door is usually followed by the inquiry of “who is it?”. If I don’t know

you, a reply of an unfamiliar name is either unanswered by the inquirer or allows the one questioned to go from who they are, to what they do. Oftentimes who we are and what we do intersect. When I am locked out from my house and I knock, my answer to the inquiry, “Who is it?”, is loaded with meaning. No one asks, “Why are you on that side of the door?” or “Where is your key?” at a door because of the simple fact that I belong there and should have access. If you have already been in the house and are a “familiar face” there, your name opens the door. If you are stranger, what you do may crack the door open slightly and require further information as to why you stand at the door in the first place. This is different from a stranger calling on the phone, since the door is a vehicle for the whole body to travel through the door and enter. You can’t just “hang up” a door. Doors are “hung” so you can open and close them. Most front doors open towards the inside. We embrace what has already made inroads towards us. Those people in which we are familiar have a history with us. These are those that enter through the front door. So why might a backdoor be different?

There seems to be a common theme with backdoors. Such doors are often unused or when they are used it is for specific purposes like exiting quickly. Those with the luxury of a front door entrance do not need back doors to enter and often disregard them as being entrances at all. Backdoors in the Jim Crow era were such disregarded portals by whites. Backdoors led to the same venue, but in places that distanced black bodies from white ones. The question of “who is it?”, is answered in the door that you are unable to even stand in front of to knock on; the door inaccessible to the body. The backdoor was a location for a body, a black body to enter. Perhaps this is what Woodson means when he

speaks of backdoors; a point where the active body locates itself at the expense of an inactive mind.

According to Woodson, a backdoor is crafted based on mental control of an individual and conditioning for its use. But, when does a door become a necessity? While I am writing this essay I am actually sitting beside a “backdoor” to my home. It has a frame, hinges, locks, a knob, and actually might be the same size as the “front door”. I would have no problem going into my home from this door except for the fact that it is more convenient to enter in through the front. My backdoor actually gets forgotten most of the time. The backdoor remains locked and unaccessed most of the time in my home, even though it leads into the same area of the house as the frontdoor. You might say doors are more than just entrances and exits. Doors can be legitimate portals into a building or residence. Someone entering or exiting a building from a window may be committing a robbery for example. Or perhaps there is an emergency warranting an escape from a window or entry through one. Doors are sturdy barriers. They are boundaries between the wide open areas beyond its frame. Front doors are by no means exclusive entrances. I have seen residences where the front door is inaccessible and warrants a side or back door to be used. Is this the controlled behavior Woodson speaks about? I don’t believe so. Woodson’s door is a constructed device of someone’s education. It involves creativity and instruction to cultivate. Contrary to a side or back door being used in lieu of a front one, it is a necessity to build it, because no other entryway seems to exist. When boundaries separate individuals from the privileges behind gates and doors people go unseen or seen in a limited way. A backdoor craftsman

might be saying that this phenomenon is a purposeful, forced act. If it is forced, calculated, and crafted, then maybe we should examine what such a door would look like in Fanon's world.

### **Fanon's Backdoor**

Perhaps the Fanonian door begins where the door of Woodson ends. Active bodies moving at the expense of inactive minds are reminiscent of Fanon's description of the black body. Fanon exclaims at the end of *Black Skin White Masks*, "O my body, make of me always a man who questions (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 206)!" This statement shows the active body leading the mind to question. It is a contrast to what may happen at the backdoor of Woodson, but for Fanon the body was a means of getting to active questioning. How does the body make someone question? How would a question-inducing body look like behind a door? "O my body!," appears like he may have been in dialogue for some time. We hear of expressions like "body language" where our bodies have a way of "speaking" to others, but what does "body language" sound like. Fanon seems to have a good dialogical relationship with his body in order to close a formal writing with an appeal to his body. Others may be more skilled at expressing the body. Interpretive dancers tell a story through their bodies. Maybe we all tell a story with the body we reside in. If our story is one of having to frequent backdoors, what would it look like?

Fanon's door appears to be an entryway wherein the body communicates with the mind in some way. This fits Fanon's work in which he notes that the "body is not [opposed] to the soul" for the "backward" [black] (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 106). In another

sentence he writes of “his speaking hands” that “tear at the throat of the world (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 106)”. As Fanon begins to describe the black body in space and what the black body might say, the active body appears to mirror the mind in its expression. Something as simple as reaching for cigarettes produces movement that is done, not out of “habit”, but “implicit knowledge”, as he slowly “constructs” of himself as a “body” in space and time (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 91). It is the activity of the body, a black body, that Fanon feels establishes a “dialectic between his body and the world (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 91).” The “dialectic” or opposition between the “body and the world” may be a backdoor in and of itself. If a door is a point of entry, then the opposition between body and world could act as a gate for Fanon’s black body to engage the entryway to the world.

For Fanon the black man is a *comparaison* (a Creole term), that is there is a preoccupation with “self-assertion and the ego ideal” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 186). The mind is engaged in the presence of another as to its worth and merit. His or her personal value is dependent on the value imparted to it by another (recall the coin). The valuation of the black body is met at the door.

### **Fanonian Violence as a Door**

We must recall that Fanon is addressing a colonized Algerian populous that has no organized system of government save that which has been introduced by the French. All that they have learned of “government” and “rule of law” has come at the hands of oppressors that daily immerse them in the “wayfaring” conquests of Western culture. Domination by violence has been the language of their madness. If, as Foucault states,

the language of psychiatry is a monologue concerning madness, then Fanon's soliloquy on violence in the *Wretched of the Earth* is a therapeutic method to ameliorate the madness of colonization.

But, how do we define violence exactly? Is it the use of a weapon? Is it using the fist to engage in fighting? Or is it something more than physical contact with an extension of the body? A violent clash, a violent death, and an occurrence of someone being domestically violent all assume a physical body being use as an implementer of physical force. But, what other ways can something be violent. We simply need to look at some of the uses of the word "violent" in everyday conversation. Someone might have a "violent strain of the flu". In chemistry there might be a "violent reaction". Perhaps violence does not need a body, but a result. What does this result look like and why is it considered violent? In an essay on school violence I defined violence as an act of force intended to inflict harm on another (Pryor, 2013). We might say here that the point of *violence* is injury. As a doctor of psychiatry, I can see Fanon having an understanding of physical, emotional, and mental injury. No one would deny the experience of physical injury having an impact on the mind. Consider stubbing your toe. When I stub my toe it is as if all resources go to the new source of pain. Perhaps that is the worst part of injury, the pain.

Hannah Arendt, a critic of Fanon, disagrees with the use of purposefully inflicting injury to another. Lewis R. Gordon (1995) calls Arendt a harsh critic of Fanon, but one of the few that defend his inflammatory text, *The Wretched of the Earth* (p. 68). Part of the demarcation in thought is Arendt's take on violence as a political occurrence, while

Fanon sees it as an individual experience emerging and ending in significance through conscious action to pose an identity apart from a preconceived model of being colonized (Arendt, 1969). If I were to humor Arendt and say that violence was a political occurrence, what might this violence look like? Something being political might look like it is taking a side. Fanon would probably say the side he experienced most often as a therapist was violence against Algerians (Fanon, 1963/2004). If violence or injury against another is taking sides, is injury on the side of the group inflicting harm, or on the side of the individual doing it? If we recall that this is Fanon's door and a door is made for one person at a time to go through we see that violence or injury is an individualized act. One individual inflicts a personalized injury not a group. We may later attribute the violence to a group, but an individual inflicts the harm. Perhaps this is what Fanon saw, an individual being born through a private experience of force upon a subject.

### **Fanon's Last Days**

Further explanation of Fanon's appeal to violence is possibly realized upon reflection of his last year. Alice Cherki (2006) speaks of Fanon's "wish to die in the *maquis* not being granted" and his desire to "write a book" (p. 159). The *maquis* was the term used for French resistance fighters, usually in guerilla warfare. We could say that this was a "front-line" of fighters that engaged in unconventional or "backward" tactics of war. Fanon's appeal was to engage his death in this manner as opposed to the rigors of leukemia that had taxed his body. Unable to fight in this manner, his violence became realized through the work we have come to know as *The Wretched of the Earth*.



Ania Loomba (1998) discusses Fanon's "reworking" of the "Lacanian schema of the 'mirror stage'" in order to form the object into a "subject" (p. 144). Lacan's mirror stage is a contemplation of the image it sees. It is a recognition of a subjectiveness that constructs itself in the "imitation" of as well as "opposition to the image" (Loomba, 1998, p. 144). The experience of a mirror is similar to that of a backdoor. It is a reversal of what is presented, but looks like the original. A mirror image is given "back" to the original image. Fanon's mirror, his backdoor, to the Algerians in *The Wretched of the Earth* might be said to be violent realization. What is the experience of this violence? For an Algerian during the Algerian war it was armed violence. Force begets force as the backdoor, the mirror, is a reversal, an imitation of what originally appears before the forming subject.

The violence or force for a youth in a classroom chair might be said to be a similar imitation. We expect a youth to imitate the dictates of a teacher or an institution, when the reality of the youth is the mirror of imitation they will choose. Fanon (1952/2008) writes in *Black Skin White Masks* that "historical and economic realities come into the picture" (p. 161). Stuart Hall (1996) notes that "black subject and black experience[s]" are "constructed historically, culturally, and politically" (p. 446-447). Perhaps these experiences and realities make for the necessity of a backdoor, a way across boundaries, and a means to access a world behind the gated, often closed realities of conventional front doors of their world.

## **Conclusion**

It takes an individual to come through a door. For a backdoor that has not been crafted, someone must realize their individuality as well as the necessity to enter into

some type of dwelling or venue. Carter G. Woodson does not address what is on the other side of the backdoor, nor does he discuss what the front door is in reality. The reader is left to assume that there is a front door and that it leads somewhere. In this essay I phenomenologically intend that this door is a segue to a larger venue that both front and backdoor entrants come into. The door, though metaphorical, is the *noema* of this essay. It is phenomenologically intended in terms of its manifold profiles. The door can be open, it can be closed, and it can be ajar or cracked open. The degree of our being recognized as an individual or group renders the door more open to us. As we are considered more unique or different from a system of normality, the door is rendered as closed. A literal door has two sides of concern. Here only one is discussed since we often rarely think of the inside of a door after we gain initial entrance that is unless we “live” behind the door. Woodson gives no indication of a “lived” experience beyond the door, just a need for entrance. I write this essay with the purpose of establishing that perhaps our conventional “doors” and entrances into the realms of education have established a system of “backdoor” entrants. We can look at this as negative, but nevertheless they come and will enter into the venue or home of our educational comfort regardless of our preparedness for their coming through the door.

As an example I pose Malcolm X. Malcolm X ceased to have the “front door” of education at the eighth grade; engaged in various activities of the “underground economy”; served time in prison; and was as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam. Yet, he entered into the halls of UC Berkeley, Oxford, and Harvard, not as a student, but to

impart and debate. So does it really matter which door we enter as long as we get into the building?

**CHAPTER VI**  
**THAT ROCK LANDED ON US: CONCEPTS OF RACE AND MIS-EDUCATION IN**  
**THE WORK OF MALCOLM X**

Times have changed,  
And we've often rewind the clock,  
Since the Puritans got a shock,  
When they landed on Plymouth Rock.  
If today,  
Any shock they should try to stem,  
'Stead of landing on Plymouth Rock,  
Plymouth Rock would land on them.  
Cole Porter "Anything Goes"

We're not Americans, we're Africans who happen to be in America. We were kidnapped and brought here against our will from Africa. We didn't land on Plymouth Rock—that rock was landed on us.”  
Malcolm X

By act of chance or serendipity I came across the above Cole Porter lyrics while reading about Malcolm X. Some seem to think that Malcolm X in his speech presented to his newfound Organization of African-American Unity, used poetic license and lifted the line concerning the difference between *landing on Plymouth Rock* and *being landed on by Plymouth Rock*. Plymouth Rock's use is significant in that it not only is a literal object occupying space, but it also is a historical landmark noting a shift in the dynamics of the world. Malcolm X not occupying the same time as the disembarking upon Plymouth Rock must extend into his imagination to make this statement, whether lifted or not. At

any time today he could step upon the actual rock in Massachusetts memorialized as Plymouth Rock, but it appears this is not what he is talking about. Malcolm X is conscious about something concerning Plymouth Rock that I feel may be worthy of investigation. I deem it worthy because his is a story that culminates in this statement. He is speaking to individuals (African-Americans) that during the time of his speech are privy to the same inequalities as he, yet this statement resonates with them in a phenomenological tone. Someone landing on Plymouth Rock may feel the very rock beneath their feet. There may be a sense of accomplishment of making it across treacherous seas on a boat to what you perceive to be a new life. You would smell the saltwater ocean in your nostrils and hear the crashing waves upon a bay or inlet. This is the feeling of being above a rock that you land on. But, what of the rock landing on you? In Malcolm X's words, "...that rock landed on us." If it landed where did it journey from? How did it descend to hit you or I? Were we bruised or wounded in the process of it landing? This essay will look at the processes of landing and being landed upon in order to disclose concepts of race and mis-education in the life and published work of Malcolm X.

### **Landing**

I recall having a tour of a ship. It was a huge vessel, an aircraft carrier, which was much like a floating city. We never embarked anywhere on that massive ship, but I still remember the feeling of boarding and exiting the ship. My exit require going through the dimensions of the vessels by means of a portal. This portal opened to what was outside of the ship. I can imagine this opening being somewhere new like Spain, Italy, or

Madagascar. For me it may be an intensely sunny day or extremely windy day so that I can feel the season upon my face. There was a ramp on our exit. This ramp connected the ship to the mainland. Connection between the ship, the vessel of your journey and past location, should be to a distinct point of departure. That ramp was a present experience when I walked across it. Standing in the middle I can envision the time I had on the ship and the new day or portion of the day that would begin at the end of the ramp. When I reach the land I am atop any rocks or sediment, trash, and stand at the end of my journey. I might be unashamed if all went well while traveling. I may be tired and fatigued from the day's events. But, I stand. This was what I felt about landing that day.

Is this the landing of Malcolm X's words? My landing was a historical event for me because of its occurrence in my personal past. The landing of Malcolm X's quote was a historical event of a collective past. The collective past he mentions and refers to is a probe into the founding of what he would know to be America and American. If the historical consciousness of the American mind is to land, then in Malcolm X's words, "...that rock landed on us."

What is Malcolm X's depiction of American history? Malcolm X's history appears to be an embedded amalgamation of race, culture (were Africans that were brought to America), and oppression (we were kidnapped and brought against our will). The life of Malcolm X is an intersection of these three factors, but he appears to not be conscious of it until he enters the doors of formal public education. His work as a minister in the Nation of Islam and later as a Sunni Muslim reflect a "mis-education" since he did not go through what was considered proper and appropriate means to be

educated. Malcolm X's "mis-education" would be gleaned from facets of the "underground economy", prison, the Nation of Islam, and the Middle East and Africa. All built him into a speaker worthy to present and debate at such institutions as Harvard and Oxford, yet he had not sat in a desk of school since the eighth grade.

### **Being Landed On**

I also remember my bus rides to school in the fourth grade. The bustling, suburban climate of Aurora, Colorado, would welcome the clanging of snow tires up and down the roads. As the bus opened its doors, there sat Terry, a long-haired brunette with glasses that greeted me by name. My seat, towards the right and to the back, was always unoccupied as I sat in it until two stops later when B.J. would sit next to me. B.J. was okay at first. Speaking of sports, trading cards, and certain cartoons, but later in the day, on the way home he would want to wrestle. I am not a fighter by nature and B.J. would usually have me cornered by the window and would sit on me. Today, I still imagine the weight of B.J., my equal in age but larger, sitting on me at nine years old. I recall the claustrophobia as I thought my last breath was imminent. With whatever breath I had I would fight, however, being taught (educated) not to strike my peers lest a harsher punishment be imposed upon me, I pretty much took the smothering B.J. imposed. Until one day I determined not to take it anymore. As his smothering began I pushed with more vigor and when pushing would not suffice I struck B.J. in the stomach and screamed, "Get off of me!" B.J. never sat by me again, we never spoke, and today, writing this piece, was actually the first time I thought about in a while. This personal history of an

imposing weight is what I think about when I hear Malcolm X's lament of "...that rock landed on us."

The collective history spoken of by Malcolm X describes a group of people conscious of the realities before them of what it means to be an American. Those that land on Plymouth Rock came for opportunity and freedoms not allotted to them in the country from which they came. Making a landing says that my embarking is for the liberties that this space will afford me. Impressed upon the mind of a hearer of the statement is that "we" did not land on Plymouth Rock. "We" is such a simple pronoun, but possesses such weight and presence that it appears in our constitution's preamble. "We the people" signifies all that the Plymouth settlers were at the time of their disembarking, yet missing in this "we" are the individuals Malcolm X's is speaking to and himself. Malcolm X's identifies the "we" as those that came as a consequence, not of freedom, liberty, and opportunity, but the occasion of their oppression.

Synonyms for oppression run the gamut. Oppression can be domination, tyranny, coercion, cruelty, subjugation, or persecution. Malcolm X presses all of these into the simple act of being landed upon. It is interesting to note what Malcolm X at the time of his speech had experienced and what he phenomenologically intended about the course of his life in order to make such a statement. Racial hatred took a young Malcolm Little's father and mother through death and insanity. Racial prejudice took a young Malcolm Little's dream of becoming a lawyer and replaced it with carpentry. Ultimately, the canvas of race was an inevitable place for such a mind to focus its thinking. If a rock were to land upon an individual it is a purposeful event. A rock that arbitrarily falls may



hit an unfortunate person or more but for someone to say “we” means that the landing is structured to a certain group of people that are connected in some way. As evidenced in his speeches and life, Malcolm X directed his efforts towards removing the crushing weight that the rock might impose.

### **An Appeal to History**

Malcolm X makes an appeal to American history that discloses the double consciousness of DuBois. Recall that DuBois said that the African-American ever feels his “two-ness”. This doubled concept of reality is identified in Dubois’s work as “two souls”, “two thoughts”, “two unreconciled strivings”, and “two warring ideals” at work in one body. The rhetoric of Malcolm X’s words is an appeal to the history in the context of an African-American. This history is not one in which the body is allowed to extend to new territories, lands, and coasts, but is imposed upon by the symbols of the territories, lands, and coasts, like the silent rocks. Malcolm X describes the same rock, but based on the history of the individual, its function changes.

The potential folly of education is that it may teach a sterilized depiction of Plymouth Rock. History may be romanticized to speak of the “courage” and “bravery” of a group of men and women who endure the vastness of seas to arrive at a point representative of their freedom. However, this same history does not discuss the economic motivations of disembarking on Plymouth Rock (Loewen, 1995, p. 36). Nor does this romanticized history discuss the diseases contracted by the Pilgrims such as typhus, syphilis, and influenza (Loewen, 1995, p. 72). Nor are we introduced to such information as the first settlers we know as Pilgrims were only a third of the total number

on board the Mayflower (Loewen, 1995, p. 81). But, embedded in the consciousness of the average American that has been educated in the history of his or her nation is that a group of people called Pilgrims “landed on Plymouth Rock” to achieve religious freedoms (I know I did).

Harsh realities of yesteryear act as an antithesis to our history. Malcolm X exposes this history in his rhetoric and causes the listener to think. In 1959, a pivotal year for both Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax presented an expose entitled “The Hate That Hate Produced”. Wallace presents to the viewers of 1959 a group whose incendiary rhetoric indicts the Nation of Islam as a hateful, racist group. As time would pass, Malcolm X would find his folly in romanticizing not only a history of a group, but a current reality. In his own words just like many see an American *dream*, he sees an American *nightmare*. Ever a dualist in his words Malcolm X intersects the worlds of the black and white race. His rationale for this view is that he “sees America through the eyes of a victim.”

### **An American Nightmare: The Eyes of a Victim**

I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.(X, 1965, p. 26)

Malcolm X's speech, *The Ballot or the Bullet*, explicitly describes his sentiment about his place in America in 1964. He does not see himself as a recipient of what America has to offer, but as a victim of “Americanism”. The ism of *Americanism* makes for a description of a “negative practice, system, or philosophy” (ism, [www.oxforddictionaries.com/us](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us) , 2013). What is the experience of an American practice,

system, or philosophy? Malcolm X would say this experience is one of victimization. His viewpoint, by his own admission, is that he has seen “America through the eyes of a victim” (X, 1965, p. 26). For Malcolm X, Americanism was a practice, system, philosophy of democracy in the “disguise” of “hypocrisy” (X, 1965, p. 26).

Just as DuBois depicts African-Americans (black folk) as being “behind a veil”, Malcolm X describes American democracy as a “disguise” of “hypocrisy”. Disguises are used to present something or someone different than they are in reality. It is a false or faked presentation to the world in order to become something different in appearance. Of interest within Malcolm X’s quote is the use of disguise and hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is a Greek word derived from *hupocrisis* and *hupokrinesthai* (ism, [www.oxforddictionaries.com/us](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us), 2013). The meaning of these terms is to play a theatrical part while under a mask and in so doing to purposefully pretend to be something other than yourself. The terms are the experience of actors in ancient Greece who entertained members within amphitheaters. The theatre was a place to be viewed, to be experienced by the senses. We might say that the victim of Malcolm X’s speech is not privy to the theatrical part that they are forced to play and is unaware of the masks worn that disguise and cover a practice, system, or philosophy. Perhaps this is the definition of Malcolm X’s victim, an actor without script forced to play a part in a production he describes as a “nightmare”.

Malcolm X describes the “victims” as waking up (X, 1965, p. 26). Cone in his text on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X points out the description of Malcolm X’s early childhood as a “nightmare” (Cone, 1999, p. 42; X, 1992, p. 3). Malcolm X’s first

chapter of his autobiography is amply titled “nightmare” in commemoration of his first memory, the burning of his home in Omaha, Nebraska at the hands of two white men (X, 1992, p. 3). As we read the pages of Malcolm X’s autobiography and read his speeches, we begin to see a distinct story emerge. This story if viewed as a play or movie would be tragic in its presentation. Perhaps we begin to understand the victimization, the appeal to victimhood for Malcolm X’s “22 million” people of African ancestry (X, 1956, p. 26). If this viewpoint holds true, perhaps it is the rationale for some of the tragedy we continue to see today. We might say the parts played in the drama of purported American democracy are but a composition of continued Americanism.

Americanism in Malcolm X’s *Ballot or the Bullet* appears to be a historical event. If we couple this Americanism coincides with the *being landed on* of Plymouth Rock, we might call this a type of colonialism. Coinciding with the work of Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*, this Americanism could be called a “colonial world”. For Fanon (1964/2004), the “colonial world is a Manichean world” (p. 41). In order to break from such a world requires a “historical process”, which discerns its “historical form and content” (Fanon, 1964/2004, p. 36). This is the break from the nightmare for Malcolm X and the break from the drama of Americanism. We might say that it is a discerning of the script behind the hypocrisy or a peak behind the disguise. It is an appeal against ignorance.

### **Not Just an American Problem**

One of the clearest correlations between colonialism (the practice, system, and philosophy of colonizing) and the practices of Americanism can be found in one of

Malcolm X's last speeches. In a speech in Rochester, New York, Malcolm X describes "four spheres of influence in the Western Hemisphere where black people are concerned": Spain, Great Britain, France, and the United States (X, 2010, p. 164).

Malcolm X positions the acts of colonization of countries settled by the Spanish, French, and British squarely with the activity of the United States. Here we see a broadening understanding of the concept of "Plymouth Rock landing on us".

If the influence upon black people in the United States is one of colonialism, what is the experience of this colonialism? Here, I appeal to Frantz Fanon, an acquaintance and direct observer of colonialism in his native Martinique and adopted nation of Algeria. Fanon (1964/2004) states that "the colonial world is a compartmentalized world" (p. 3). The world divides in two. It divides to reveal inhabitants of different sort. The division of the colonial world is what "species, what race one belongs to" (Fanon, 1964/2004, p. 5). A divided world can be said to work best when the participants play their parts correctly. The colonist "makes" the "history", "knows it", and leaves the colonized to believe the story (Fanon, 1964/2004, pp. 14-15). The belief in the story, the drama disguised as a life of Manicheanism, is a persuasion that "colonialism has never existed" (Fanon, 1964/2004, p. 17). Perhaps Malcolm X might remark here that this is what it means to see an "American dream" (X, 1965, p. 26).

### **The American Dream in Education**

What is the experience of the "American dream" in education? If we approach this question in terms of Fanon's statement that a persuasion that "colonialism never existed" and that "history marches on", then what end result emerges from such dreaming

(Fanon, 1964/2004, p. 17)? Here Woodson (1933/2000) might suggest his conception of mis-education in which there is a disregard of history through ignorance characterized by “little or no thought” of his “perplexing status” (p. 134). This “dream” for Woodson (1933/2000) is described by a quote from Fredrika Bremer reflecting on her 1850 trip to America in which she stated, “The romance of your history is the fate of the Negro” (p. 139). Perhaps this American “romancing” of history is a cultural amnesia described as a “dream” by Malcolm X. The nightmare of Malcolm X is the moment of “awakening” in the historical memory of the victim (recall the chapter entitled “Nightmare” in the Autobiography of Malcolm X) (X, 1965, p. 26).

### **Awakening**

The experience of waking up can be described as the twilight between unconsciousness and consciousness. If like Malcolm X describes I awaken out of a dream that happens to be a nightmare, my consciousness might still feel the effects of what happened during my time asleep. The tragic images of the night terror follow me. They are no longer just a past event, but a current part of reality. If such a nightmare was part of my reality and the same images from a past event follow me, how might I respond? Malcolm X says that millions of blacks were “waking up” (X, 1965, p. 26). What does that look like? What awakens them? A circadian rhythm? An alarm? For Malcolm X to make such a statement there must be an understanding of something occurring. If a group of people wake up at the same time, perhaps they are gathered at the same place. Maybe there is an outside event of which they are all a part of a collective experience. For Malcolm X the convergence of history and understanding converged. Bremer’s

“romance” no longer applied to Malcolm X as he realized a duality, a Manicheanism, a mental colonialism, or in his words a “disguised hypocrisy”. Malcolm X is thirty-nine when he makes his American nightmare statement. Thirty-nine years is a long time to be asleep, but perhaps a necessary amount of slumber in order to realize the tragedy. The dual function of the Mayflower and a slave ship converge at this awakening. He realizes a difference in his life in comparison to others. He realizes the four-fold influence of European and American colonialism on the black psyche. He awakens to a world.

### **The *Urdoxa* of Manicheanism**

*Urdoxa* is the belief that there is a world (Sokolowski, 2008, p.45). This world is not privy to the egocentric predicament that views the world as always coming toward you. The world is experienced by individuals. For Malcolm X, the rock at Plymouth, though absent, is experienced as “landing on” him. The absence of Plymouth Rock from his current experience informs the presence of racism in his time of the 1960’s. How does this knowledge inform education? What absences of the past are potentially intended by black students? I use Malcolm X’s experience to point out that the body of Malcolm X, though chronologically distant from the arrival at Plymouth Rock still feels the effects of the bifurcation of Manicheanism. Malcolm X as a phenomenologist of black education might suggest a “point of departure” like “what is the experience of blacks in education?” What might he use in his analysis? What *sides*, *aspects*, and *profiles* might emerge? What are the *parts* and *wholes*, *pieces*, and *moments* would he use? What are the *presences* and *absences* of black education? What *concretum* and *abstracta* arise? What *identity in*

*manifold* is revealed? I would like to conclude by examining these questions through the lens of Malcolm X to establish a potential phenomenology of black education.

### **Malcolm X as Phenomenologist of Black Education**

Malcolm X could begin a phenomenology of black education at his stint in prison to explain the experience of education. If we begin in a Husserlian manner of phenomenology we could envision such a study as a six-sided cube. Just as a cube has sides, a shape, and parts that are seen and not seen at certain angles, so it is with the education of Malcolm X. In the case of Malcolm X, if we begin with the end product of his education, we see an individual with the ability to articulate effectively upon the pulpits of the Nation of Islam, the lecterns of prestigious colleges and universities, and in the face of aggressive interviewers. This is but a side of Malcolm X's education. We might say that this side is the individual that is seen. For Malcolm X this individual just happens to be able to articulate well. The *presence* of his articulation does not show us his history, his history is *absent* until he shows us that history. This history for Malcolm X is a desired history. When the history to Malcolm X, both his personal and collective history that is shared with other blacks, he is informed by such texts as Carter G. Woodson's *Negro History*, W. E. B. DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk*, or the works of J. A. Rogers. This *aspect* is hidden since it is a history, a past event, yet it is revealed as a profile, a momentary view of the individual. Malcolm X's history is given in a *manifold* of *profiles*. Therefore, a side of black education is history.

History may also be characterized as a *piece* of the individual if it is shared collectively. A collective history can become a whole, an independent entity within itself.



A personal history would be a moment, a part which cannot be a whole. Malcolm X speaking about his father, mother, and siblings is an example of this. Recall that apart from his autobiography, Malcolm X does not relay this information often. His speeches with most impact use allusions connected to a collective history, either of a distinct culture such as the Greeks, the antebellum South, or blacks in general worldwide. There must be a larger whole for which moments coincide. This is to say just because something happens to one person that happens to be black, this is not true for them all. Using the example of a cube, let's say the cube is a dice. Just because one dice has landed or is observed from the perspective of a two, does not mean all dice are also on the same number. The experience of "landing" dictates the result of each of the die respectively.

History though shared collectively is but an *abstracta*, it cannot exist without the individual. Sokolowski (2008) uses the concept of vision as an example of *abstracta* (p. 24). We see (have vision of something) as a consequence of the eye. History does not arise without individuals. For example, the moment or side of history detailed by Malcolm X comes from an individual discussing a collective experience in history that is not seen, but realized mentally. The experience is not solipsistic in nature since it is a public history for which a relation can be made by others with the same history embedded in a collective past.

Another *side* to the cube of Malcolm X would be the body. The physical or corporeal element is a material, substantial element that can be experienced in time and space. At the time Malcolm X is recalling his experience in a literal, physical prison, he is in an apartment of his transcriber, Alex Haley in Harlem. In both circumstances the body

takes on a *presence* (the apartment) and an absence (in the prison) in its intentionality. Currently, the body of Malcolm X is absent to me so I have to *co-intend* its presence in an *empty intention*. The physical body is a concretum, “something that can exist and present itself and be experienced” (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 24). The body can be presented in an identity of manifolds. Often the manifolds of identity are based on the language used to identify it. The body can be identified in terms of its function (labor for example), its shape, or its cultural identifiers whether politically or socially correct, the identity can take on a variety of meanings to an individual or group. The body may be “racially profiled”. Phenomenologically, the concept of racial “*profiling*” would be a “momentary view” of the “*aspect*” or how a *side* (the body) is given (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 19). For a child in school or Malcolm X this is not only a side of how they are in the experience of others, but potentially a common element within the experience of the collective individuals with similar bodies.

The last side I will present is that of the mind. Whether in prison, on the streets of Harlem, in an eighth grade classroom, or in the presence of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X had a mind. For Sokolowski (2008), the mind is a *moment* to the world (p. 25). The mind is an *abstracta* since it is similar to the language we speak. Until language is spoken, it is not experienced. In order to be a concrete entity it must be experienced and exist. The mind exists in moments to the person perceiving it, but is not always expressed. The mind is often fragmented into pieces that are perceived, such as actions, language, books, and conversation. All of these are presented as profiles of the mind. Take each piece as a literal piece. I recall my son had to get a picture of his head with a

certain technology. A scanner scanned and uploaded a profile or piece of his head until the pictures overlapped and a full picture of the head emerged in an area of perception, a computer screen. In the same way a mind is *profiled* in the same way by a person perceiving it.

A phenomenology of black education in the voice of Malcolm X might include these areas. The point of this writing is not that these areas are distinct to African-Americans, but are relevant for children in general. The issue is, what are the filled or empty intentions of our phenomenological inquiries when confronted with black bodies? If our phenomenal experience of black students or any student for that matter never leaves the intentionality of the body, we will never intend the mind or history of the individual and their personal and collective stories.

### **Conclusion**

A review of the life and work of Malcolm X discloses his constant inquiry into the experience of the black in the spirit of Frantz Fanon and W. E. B. DuBois. Part of the strength of Malcolm X's speeches and written works is his ability to reach past a solipsistic view of experience of the black into a collective consciousness. He manages this accomplishment with an appeal to history, politics, and global of the black. Malcolm X's nightmare is the American dream by his own admission (X, 1965, p. 26). This duality is found in his work with the Nation of Islam and his own Muslim Mosque, Inc. He prides himself on the ability to relay this dual history, dual mind, and dual experience of the black affected by Americanism and colonialism. Malcolm X understood the influences of the American psyche as a collective experience affecting black and white

alike (X, 2010, p. 164). The concept of collective experience and histories were the strength of the connection Malcolm X had with his audiences whether white or black.

I included a phenomenology of Malcolm X since in much of his work he speaks of education in relation to an appeal to history, global understanding, and becoming (X, 1970; 1992). For Malcolm X, education links you to something substantial. The substance of education may be a collective history, a group of people, or an understanding of who you are or what you may become. Perhaps the phenomenological turn is the essence of Malcolm X's work in general. Like a Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, or Fanon, he describes the experience of blacks in America and abroad.

Malcolm X did not relegate his work to the phenomena of his perception but extends his work to the informing of his own consciousness and therefore grows in its perceptions and understanding of not only blacks, but humanity in general. This is exemplified in his hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca in Saudi Arabia and his revelatory experiences of blacks and whites together. This was a *landing* into a potential reality of races living together. Perhaps this is his claim in his quote of landing upon Plymouth Rock and being landed on by Plymouth Rock. That life, as well as education might just be the realization of a collective, unromanticized past that unites us all.

## CHAPTER VII

### TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The pivot of Africana philosophy and Africana studies in general is where the body is located. For the purpose of this study the underlying question could have been, “What is the experience of this body of the black?” Historically, black bodies have been vehicles for war, shipped across the Atlantic Ocean, bought, sold, idolized, demonized, raped, whipped, emancipated, segregated, integrated, and studied. Blacks are located somewhere in the *world*. These essays were an attempt to locate the black body anew in educational spaces. This inquiry co-intended several artifacts to engage a potential profile of black experience. Doors, masks, and coins are described phenomenologically within these essays. It is as if the essays were an attempt to identify where the body might end and the self begins. This is where a Fanonian philosophy might fit within this series of essays. Fanon speaks of the body extending into spaces and being identified. A child’s exclaim of “Look! A Negro,” provokes a historical bend for Fanon, as he feels obligated to represent his race and ancestors. Thus a break in the body schema occurs which may be explained as history embedded upon the body. The appeal to history brings in Hegel and his movement toward becoming. Beginning with sense, a realization naturally emerges that presents the ‘thing-in-itself’. This thing, the black body, tenses against what

has been realized as opposed to its existence. The ability to exist and relate this existence is a disclosure of the soul. W. E. B. DuBois in his seminal text, *Souls of Black Folk*, answers the query of, “What does the soul (the black soul) look like? DuBois answers this while answering another question of interest: “What is the experience of the soul of black folk?” For DuBois, the black soul is immersed in the Negro spiritual, jazz; it mourns, and declares that it [the soul] was a self. Establishing a self requires the body to act in concert with such a realization. Malcolm X speaks of the black body and mind in relation to white bodies and mind [sets]. He appeals to the arts, politics, philosophy, spirituality, and history. In closing this group of essays I would like to perform a phenomenological analysis of the presented objects so far. Each will engage conversation with the philosophers that are of focus in each respective phenomenology.

### **Phenomenology of a Backdoor (Woodson)**

[The] Negro’s mind has been brought under the control of the oppressor...When you control a man’s thinking...You do not need to send him to the back door...if there is [none], he will cut one for his special benefit. (Woodson, 1933/2000, p. xix)

The natural attitude of the view of a backdoor is how a door appears in time and space. I actually started the co-intention of the door by describing the process of knocking on a door. My default perspective of knocking on an unfamiliar door is a public experience. Of course you can ring a doorbell, but the fact remains, strangers announce themselves with a sound of some type. The backdoor is different in that we often do not go to a backdoor as a stranger. Backdoors are usually hidden from view and have distinct purposes for their use. For instance a cookout in the “backyard” may require you to use

the backdoor to transport food from inside to outside and vice versa. The natural attitude begins to dissipate when the discussion of the door turns toward the use of backdoors during the time of Jim Crow.

### **Sides, Aspects, Profiles**

The intention of a door in general was of two sides; being outside the door or on the inside. Aspects of the door were different levels of the door being ajar. I believe at one point I co-intend the door to be “cracked”. These aspects are profiles since they are momentary views of how the door may be presented. The key to a phenomenology of a backdoor is the front door being both shut and inaccessible as a means of entering a home or building.

### **Parts and Wholes, Identity in Manifold, Presence and Absence**

The doors in and of themselves are no more than parts of a bigger building or home. They are pieces, independent parts from the whole. The fact that the whole is not of immediate importance makes this functional. Moments in this phenomenology are the presentations of the door as “cracked” or “ajar”. This is simply due to the fact that cracked or ajar do not occur unless there is first a door to carry out the degree of opening desired.

The ways in which the door is possibly presented may be explained in terms of an identity in manifold or a range of ways in which a door can be presented. Again, we note that this is the activity of the front door. It was noted that the front door is open to the individual outside to the degree that they are known by the door opener. A door unopened

is also an identity presented and should be taken into account since it is relevant to the concepts discussed within this group of essays.

Presence and absence is an essential part to this inquiry since I am not speaking about a physical door, but co-intending an imaginary one to understand the phenomenon. This empty intention targets the door that is not there (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 33). In my intention of a backdoor, I notice that there is no intentionality towards how the door may swing on a hinge, a doorknob, or even a frame. It is as if the doorway is empty of any obstruction. I believe this was done purposefully to make a point.

### **Phenomenological Attitude**

For Woodson, the back door is crafted. Entrance into the phenomenological attitude begins here. It answers the question of the doorness of a backdoor. In the essay entitled “Fanon’s Backdoor”, doors are described in terms of boundaries, the thin veneer of a coin’s front and back, and even violence. Doors are individualized experiences not just points of entry and exit. Keeping with the spirit of *urdoxa*, that there is a world and I am in the world, the activity at the door is nothing supernatural or extraordinary (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 45). These phenomenological reductions produce such things as backdoor users (Woodson calls them *crafters*) having valueless value and the door that exists is the demarcation between the body and the world. This of course is keeping somewhat with the spirit of Fanon in his work in *Black Skin White Masks*.

In order to enter the phenomenological attitude there is a need to *bracket*. Bracketing is similar to using brackets or parentheses in order to separate a portion of text in a sentence. A common method of bracketing that I use to break from the natural



attitude and begin a reduction into the phenomenological attitude is questioning. For instance I question the door and the phenomenon throughout these essays in terms of the question of, “What is the experience of...?” This neutralizes my natural intention enough to attempt to look at the phenomenon from more of an initial gaze. These questions act as an epoche, “a neutralization of natural intentions” (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 49). For a discussion of Woodson and the backdoor of his work, it helps to build a case for a backdoor of Fanon, which I discuss as violence, a regular theme of his work and an apparent method of realization for the oppressed of the Third World and other groups worldwide.

The relation to education is that a “backdoor” mentality as described by Woodson may also be one with the need for violent realization. Perhaps this explains some of our disproportionate rates for African-American males in public schools. More examination would be required of course. But the process of explaining, “What is the experience at the door?” begins a discussion of where the individual may potentially locate themselves. The challenge for the educator is to help them move from a place where they are seen as strangers, to a place where they can learn effectively. This begins by answering the query at the door of, “Who is it?”

### **Phenomenology of a Veil (W. E. B. DuBois)**

[The] Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. 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. (DuBois, 1989, p. 45)

The DuBoisian veil is admittedly one of my favorite essays in this work because it helped me personally to further see the brilliance of his work. A DuBoisian veil takes on many forms in this essay. The natural attitude begins with a veil on a literal statue, that of Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee University. I actually looked at a picture of this particular statue from the different *sides* that it was *presented* online while writing the essay. You can view the statue from the front, the sides, the back or a bird's eye view from the top if there are no trees blocking your line of sight. From these sides different aspects of the statue occur that produce a profile that sparks to question of whether Washington is lifting or lowering the veil.

### **Presence and Absence**

The veil and the Tuskegee presentation of its existence showcase a distinct profile of how the veil is given. Veils are meant for the viewer. This claim is physically represented in the veil of Algerian women from Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*. The presence of a veil at the exclusion and absence of a face brings us to an empty intention of what the face might look like. Reflection upon the veil, what lies beneath it, and what it means to unveil something brought about a type of absolute absence, invisibility.

### **Invisibility and the Phenomenological Attitude**

Ralph Ellison is used to discuss the link between the veil and invisibility since both are used in his text entitled *Invisible Man*. There is a veiled/unveiled statue and his protagonist that exclaims his *invisibility* due to others wishing not to see him (Ellison,

1995). The phenomenological reduction occurs when bracketing the natural attitude in terms of a veil and conventional definitions of invisibility to discuss how invisible people might appear in spite of their invisibility. Here an ontological way to reduction was partially used (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 52). This way to reduction is an appeal to human desire to be truly and fully scientific (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 52). In the likeness of a sociologist or anthropologist I conclude my analysis of the veil in terms of hunters and soldiers who “wear camouflage”. Comparing the two groups of individuals in a setting outside of a theatre of battle or the hunt I attempt to “uncover” the veil.

### **Links to Education**

From an educational standpoint there are some in spaces of learning that attempt to be “invisible”. DuBois (1989) notes that the Negro is born with the veil (p. 45). However, being born with does not denote understanding. The birth with a veil speaks to a history as opposed to an individualized phenomenon. An Algerian woman may be said to be “born with a veil” due to her culture. Perhaps this is to say that the veil is embedded on her person only to be realized later as a physical manifestation of what it means to be both Algerian and a woman all at the same time. The veil serves this purpose as well. We are cognizant of a veil when there is knowledge available to comprehend. Here we can discuss the “experience of the veil”. Worn on the occasion of knowledge of the self as being someone of *two-ness*, it is a splitting of who we believe we are to accommodate the fact of being and becoming when confronted with others.

The significance of the veil in education is our capacity to recognize the contribution of a group of people being worth noting. We could say here in Ellison’s

terms that Black History is a for instance of being invisible, not because it is not there, but because there is a lack of acknowledgment towards the contribution globally and locally for Africana people groups. As Woodson points out, what contributions of the Bantus, people of the Caribbean and even within our own continent are we missing. This is my reason for the quote at the end of the DuBois essay that states, “Perhaps we are all just invisible people.”

### **Phenomenology of Brown vs. Board (Georg Wilhelm Hegel)**

The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and we might say that the former is refuted by the latter; in the same way when the fruit comes, the blossom may be explained to be a false form of the plant's existence, for the fruit appears as its true nature in place of the blossom. The ceaseless activity of their own inherent nature makes these stages moments of an organic unity, where they not merely do not contradict one another, but where one is as necessary as the other; and constitutes thereby the life of the whole. (Hegel, 1977, p. 2)

The phenomenological attitude of a Brown vs. Board reduction occurs through the examination of the experience of the legislation in dialectical terms. In order to engage in a phenomenology where a Hegelian dialectic occurs, we must begin without presuppositions. The issue here is that in the engagement of such a concept as racial equality, presuppositions of racial ineptitude and superiority are present before any examination of ontology, negation, or becoming can emerge. However, a transcendental ego discloses that even in seeking racial equality in education a paradigm occurs. In seeking to “become” equal we admit we are not equal whether this equality is based on neglect or not.

For this examination I looked at race itself as a noema, an object to be perceived. Race, the noema, is showcased by the noesis of perception and imagination. Bracketing race, our perceptions of it, our experience of it in the natural attitude, and the misconception that are conveyed in the perception and imagination we begin to see that race is not so much about a differentiated color as it is about a fear of the unknown. What will happen if black and white children adhere together in environs of education? This, along with the evidence inherent in paradigms, is disclosed in an examination of the experience of the black in the “spirit” of Hegel.

### **Phenomenology of the Black Body (Frantz Fanon)**

O my body, make me always a man who questions! (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 206)

Fanon’s noema in all of his work generally consists of either the colonized body or the colonized mind. As opposed to just race, Fanon examines how the racialized body experiences different spaces. He uses imagination, psychiatric evidence and tradition, history, and his own personal experience. This bend toward the body describes his discussion of sexuality and miscegenation in *Black Skin White Masks* and his chagrin at the little girl calling out his unavoidable plight of being a “Negro”. The “black” body in education is a noema more often than the “black” mind. Bracketing the term black in racialized contexts we begin to see a trend of negativity inherent in Fanon’s work in *Black Skin White Masks*. The black is not white. Therefore, if white is A, then black is always not A. We might say this syllogism is constantly refreshed when black bodies

enter spaces populated predominantly by bodies that happen to be white. Perhaps like DuBois, a student that is within a black body ever feels his two-ness.

The body as a noema causes it to be under constant observation in order to disclose both its blackness and its “bodyness”. In terms of “bodyness” there is comparison in terms of the presences (similarities) and absences (differences) between black bodies and white bodies. What is the identity of the body that happens to be black? If it is different from that of the white body, perhaps it is to be feared. Could this explain why school-aged children in black bodies are being expelled from school and recommended for special education in disproportionate rates in comparison to their white-bodied counterparts? Perhaps Fanon’s Manicheanism isn’t in folly, but insightful when applied in its proper context of psychological significance. Maybe it isn’t a race issue at all, but a *lebenswelt*, a life-world we have created that just happens to have its instructions tattooed upon the flesh of black skin.

### **Phenomenology of Racialized History (Malcolm X)**

But people are always speculating—why am I as I am? To understand that of any person, his whole life, from birth must be reviewed. All of our experiences fuse into our personality. Everything that ever happened to us is an ingredient...(X, 1992, p. 150)

Malcolm X relates experience with ingredients. Using history as a noema in the essay, “That Rock Landed on Us”, we find that the object of our introspection possibly has not been fully disclosed in modern society. This is evidenced in a bend in my state of North Carolina to decrease more and more of the material covered within U.S. History courses. Generally, we see information detailing the plight of Africana peoples and

immigrants usually is the first to be discarded. So we might say that there is a phenomenological “absence” in our history curriculum. A transcendental ego might see this neglect is like romanticism in the work of a Shakespeare or Ovid. The Malcolm X essay might be read to say, why do we romanticize our history? What is so bad about our history in terms of race that we discard or hide pages of it? Perhaps because of the embarrassment or shame in knowing after the revelation of our perceptions and immaturity of the past, we see our folly, but refuse to accept it.

### **Towards a Phenomenology of Mis-Education**

Carter G. Woodson began my dialogue about the phenomenon of racialized space in education. Woodson’s backdoor to me was a phenomenological door. It emerge not because of a literal hinge, knob, or piece of sturdy wood being hung in space, but because something was and is shut to this particular group of people. This group just happens to be a population of which I belong. My concern is that we will allow eighty more, fifty more, or even ten more years to pass without any changes to the current issues of Africana peoples in education. Again, I use the Africana paradigm as a beginning due to the disproportionate numbers located within this group and the potential to help others with the insight gleaned from the hardships or self-imposed setbacks of this substantially impacted group. I feel phenomenological inquiry may be a means to begin examining some of those things that currently hinder this group.

It is interesting to note how much in Africana studies has a phenomenological turn to its realization. We see a lot of problematic thinking and emphasis in this scholarship. Perhaps it is the time of slavery or the distrust earned from the periods after

slavery, post-Civil Rights Act, and into now in our post-modern age that discriminates in an often covert manner. For all of these phenomena experienced by people in public space, phenomenology may serve as a means of disclosure and clarity.

As I conclude this piece on phenomenology I do so with the understanding that this work and those like it are just a beginning. This series of essays is just a start to a conversation, a dialogue in which a concept like mis-education is now moved into the public. With the close of this work I still feel as if there are some inadequacies in explanation that perhaps a reader of this work may challenge or contend with in order to further clarify the verity of these phenomenological essays. But, this is a start to this line of philosophical inquiry.

From this phenomenological examination of mis-education, I would like to explore areas outside of the classroom and within a broader conversation within the lived world of the black or even other representative groups. Examination of areas explored by the philosophers mentioned in this work may be explored, such as those that operate within the “underground economy”, those that have succumbed to the effects of the criminal justice system through incarceration, members of gangs, and even members of academia or the church that have experienced success, yet still feel the “horrors” of life within a relegated way of being in the world. These areas again are chosen in order to continue to realize an answer to the original question asked in my phenomenological query of, “what is the experience of the black in mis-education?”

I have gleaned from this work a perspective of my theme of mis-education through the lenses of the respective philosophers used. However, what haunts me about



these essays is the reality of what would the individuals studied within this work have to say about my development of their seminal texts. Most notably to me would be Fanon and Malcolm X who might be said to mirror one another in some ways. As an avid reader within the genre of horror I could see their work as an extension of the tragic genre. What does it mean to be in horror in real life? Perhaps it is the veracity of horrible circumstances that make it so. But, even more in horror and the requisite genre is the everyday, “normal” manifestations of life that puts the reader or purveyor right in the midst of the activity that horrifies the encapsulated characters. We are not horrified by a genre that cannot relate to our “everydayness”. Fanon and Malcolm X, along with other Africana philosophers, women, and ethnic and racialized scholars, explain the “normal” in their work which makes it so poignant and impactful to the reader. Yet, the summation of horror is that at its resolution is at least a glimmer, an inkling of hope.

For the horror of an “everyday” life that may possibly “normalize” inequalities, tragedy, and an existence that might be interpreted as painful, there is hope if we could just reflect on the core principle of phenomenology, that of *urdoxa*, Husserl’s *lebenswelt*, a life-world, a world in which we, you and I, live. Because there is hope we can be hopeful for the potential of change to occur. Again this work is just a start along the route of that process of being in the world.

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