BLACK HISTORY AND BLACK IDENTITY

A Call for a New Historiography

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To Georg Iggers,
Mentor and Friend

When you're Black and analyze American history, you start with racism, slavery, racist segregation, denial of human rights, denial of political and civil rights, public humiliation, and individual, mob, and government violence. You do not get democracy out of that. What you get is a *Blackcentric Perspective* on Black history, White history, and American history.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

The subject of Black history in America became an accepted academic discipline in the 1960s, and became one of the most popular fields of study in the 1970s. This popularity continued in the 1980s and on into the 1990s. And this historical scholarship has and continues to throw much light on the history of Blacks in America. But what the historiography over the last few decades has not done has been to clarify who Black people have been and who they presently are in America. Are they Africans, Afro-Americans, African Americans, Blacks, blacks, Black Americans, or black Americans? This question and these many possible identities for Black people in America, all of which are in use, indicate, emphatically, that historical research and writing have not cleared up this matter.

Indeed, Black historiography has added to the disrupted and confused thinking, because all of these identities appear in it, with some individual writings evidencing almost all of these identities. The question is then raised: How should Black history be described? Another question is, What is the identity of Black people in America? This book endeavors to answer these two questions; namely, by arguing, based on historical evidence and sociological analysis, that Black people are to be described as Black, Blacks, and Black Ameri-

cans, and that Black history is to be described as Black history and Black American history when viewed in its broadest scope.

Resolution of the questions of the description of a historiography and the identity of a group of people have become two of the most important cultural tasks facing Black Americans. The importance is not only from the standpoint of legitimate scholarship, or knowledge, or truth. The two questions and the answers they receive also relate directly and profoundly to the social, cultural, economic, political, and historical development of Black people in America. They also relate directly and profoundly to how Blacks in America relate to other black people in the world, particularly in the Western Hemisphere and Africa, and also to the world itself. The cultural tasks have been made more pressing because of the efforts of some Blacks to persuade Black people in America that they are and should refer to themselves as Africans or, more often, as African Americans.

This effort is being led by some Black middle-class people: scholars, politicians, print and electronic journalists, public school teachers, clergypersons, social workers, and professional community organizers. For the past few years such individuals, some in a concerted and cooperative way, but most others by emulating others, have been engaged in an effort to persuade Blacks in America that they are African Americans, and are seeking to oblige Whites and other Americans to accept this identity.

There are Black historians who are part of this political-cultural effort as individuals among the cooperating ones, or as emulators of others, particularly other Black historians, who write about Black history in America as if it were African history or African history in America. Such historians are very concerned to investigate and disclose the extent of the retention of African culture, or "Africanism," in Black life in America (or in American life in general), to help provide legitimacy for the political-cultural project and to validate their own contention that Black people are and should be referred to as African Americans and that Black history should be designated African American history or African American historiography. Historian Joseph Holloway recently asserted in his edited book on African cultural and social retentions in Black America and in America in general that Blacks should refer to themselves as African Americans, and that as far as he was concerned, debate on this subject was closed:

> This debate had come full circle, from African through brown, colored, Afro-American, Negro, and *black* to African, the term originally used by blacks in America to define themselves. The changes in terminology reflect many changes in attitude, from strong African identification to nationalism, in-

> tegration, and attempts at assimilation back to cultural identification. This struggle to reshape and define blackness in both the concrete and abstract also reflects the renewed pride of black people in shaping a future based on the concept of one African people living in the African diaspora.[1]

Holloway was correct to refer to a debate going on among Blacks in America as to who Black people think they are and the name they should go by. But he was wrong in saying that the debate had closed, or that it had come full circle back to the original African identity of Black people. This book represents a continuation of the debate, and some of the points it will make is that Black people, as a people in the United States, *never* had for themselves, originally or throughout their history in America, the name African. Further, as overwhelming historical evidence indicates, Black people as a people in America have never had a *strong* African identity. A series of polls in the 1990s showed that Blacks overwhelmingly rejected an African identity for themselves, and showed a preference to be referred to as *black* or *Black*.[2] One of those polls showed that 66 percent of Whites in America rejected an African identity for Blacks and believed that they should be called Blacks.[3] Historically, white people rarely referred to Black people in America as Africans. Thus, a White rejection of this name and identity is not surprising. But, of course, it is not up to white people to determine the identity of Black people, which was something they did in the past. The identity of Black people has to be determined by Black people, and others in America have to accept that determination.

But the question is, What collective or group identity will Black people decide upon? As the polls indicated, Blacks have already made that determination: that they are Blacks and Black Americans and not Africans or African Americans. In the 1960s and 1970s, and even in the 1980s, Black people proudly and publicly proclaimed that they were Black, and even talked about black (race and color) and Black (meaning ethnicity) being "beautiful." But it was in the 1980s, especially, that some Black historians and other Black scholars, and other educated and professional Black people, began to stress that Black people were Afro-Americans. The emphasis then shifted to Blacks being African Americans, where an emphasis presently lies with such people.

There are Black historians whom I call Second-Wave Black historians, who not only accept the African American identity of Black people, but who seek to uncover historical or cultural evidence to prove it; namely, the "Africanisms" evidenced in Black cultural and social life. These historians contrast sharply with older generations of Black historians, whom I call precursor Black historians and

First-Wave Black historians, who commonly referred to Blacks as Negroes or Colored People, or as Negro Americans or Colored Americans, and indicated at the same time that such people were not Africans, but people of *black African descent* in America. Chapters 2 and 3 are about the three successive groupings of Black historians in America and their approach to writing Black history, including the names they used to describe Black people in their historical writings.

Closely associated with the various names of Black people in America, and reflected in the writings of Black historians over generations of historians and schools of historiography, is the spelling of these names and identities. The spelling of words in language study is called orthography. Black historical writing, from the nineteenth century to the present day, reflect how the names and identities of Black people are mired in orthographic problems. But Black writing of almost any kind, historically or presently—fiction writing, poetry writing, literary criticism, or journalistic writing—reflects the orthographic problems and encumbrances to clarifying who Black people have been and are in America. It has not only been "what name" or "What is in a Name" in Black history and Black life in America, as Black literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has recently indicated.[4] It has also been a matter of how a name and identity, or names and identities, were spelled.

The spelling of words not only reflects grammatical rules and protocol, it also refers to social values or certain forms of social behavior. Malcolm X understood this matter rather well. A complaint he used to have of white critics (adversaries) when he was a member of Elijah Mohammad's Muslim group was the way they referred to the group as the "Black Muslims" and not the "black Muslims." The first description, as Malcolm X saw it, was not just a nominative description, but was used by critics and enemies of his religious group to suggest that they were not really authentic Muslims, but rather some peculiar kind of Muslim religious group, isolated from and not part of the worldwide, authentic Muslim or Islamic religion. That association and authenticity, Malcolm X felt, would have been expressed by the description of "black Muslims," because this would have been a reference to Muslims who happened to be black racially, as opposed to other Muslims in America, or in the world, who were white, brown, or yellow racially. Nominative and adjectival spellings of words or names, as Malcolm X saw, could have social and political implications or uses. Unfortunately, Malcolm X did not develop his criticism of orthographic practices in America, and there was no one who sought to take up the matter as a histori-

cal or linguistic problem that has affected the history and lives of Blacks in America, as well as the writing of Black history.

A large truth that Malcolm X had focused on with his very small discussion was that language and even the spelling of words (i.e., orthography, which was not a formal term that he used) could be used as instruments of domination, control, and exploitation, and that, indeed, white people had used such devices as weapons to promote such objectives in their historical relationship with Black people in America. The various spellings and uses of the word *black* (as well as the spellings and uses of other names and identities of Black people in America, such as Negro and Colored) have sown and continue to sow confusion among a number of Blacks, especially educated and professional Blacks, about an authentic (i.e., Black) identity in America, and has them seeking to promote the false Afro-American and African American identities among Black people. Thus, the orthographic problems surrounding efforts to establish a *Black* identity in America have to be discussed and will be in Chapter 4.

Of course, resolving orthographic problems cannot resolve the question of Black people's identity in America. This matter also cannot be decided by a simple choice; that is, Black people deciding to call themselves Black, as opposed to some other name. In short, the decision cannot be based simply on ideology or rhetoric. All identities are historically formed, and thus it is fundamental to history that people turn to see who they have been and who they presently are. The argument of this book is that history had indicated that Black people are Black people, and not Africans, Afro-Americans, or African Americans, and that this is the identity that Black people have to settle upon, that is to say, choose (as opposed to some other identity for themselves, which would also be based on history, because the latter invalidates or jettisons other identities). The Black people of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Poll (1990), the ABC News-*Washington Post* poll (1991) and mid-1990s polls reported in *Jet* magazine were reflecting their historical sense and feeling of being *black* and *Black,* and were expressing adherence to and acceptance of these historical identities.

Second-Wave Black historians, those historians who emerged in the 1960s and thereafter, strongly contribute to the orthographic problems surrounding a Black identity, and, in a strong manner, to the general disrupted and confused thinking about the identity of Black people in America. This is actually ironic, because it is primarily Second-Wave Black historians who insist that Black people

are Afro-Americans or African Americans, and have pressured other Black historians to accept these identities. But Second-Wave Black historians, just as often or even more often in their historical writings, refer to Black people as Black people, using various kinds of descriptions to do so, such as "black," "Black," "blacks," and "Blacks." Orthographic problems are clearly present in Second-Wave historical writings. These problems, and not being clear as to whether Black people are Africans, Afro-Americans, or African Americans, makes Second-Wave Black historian guidance out of the difficulties regarding a Black identity in America rather dubious.

A number of Second-Wave Black historians are Black nationalists by their own disclosure, or are dubbed so by others. But oddly enough, such historians rarely refer to themselves as "Afro-American nationalists," or "African American nationalists." They also rarely talk about Afro-American or African American nationalism in Black history in America. References to or discussions of nationalism are usually about Black nationalism. But if Black people, as Second-Wave Black historians assert, are Afro-Americans or African Americans, should not their historical discussions be about Afro-American nationalism or African American nationalism? And, indeed, since these identities are not the same, should there not be some clarification as to which of these nationalisms has been a part of Black history? Thus, does Black history in America reflect two different kinds of nationalism? Or three: Afro-American nationalism, African American nationalism, and Black nationalism?

Confusion marks not just Second-Wave Black Historiography regarding the forms of nationalism in Black history; it is true of First-Wave Black historians as well. They also employ the concept of nationalism itself in a confused manner in their writings. Nationalism is a reference to a nation-state or country, with nationalism itself as the ideology that rationalizes or seeks to legitimate the existence or guide the construction of a nation-state or country. First-and Second-Wave Black historiography sometimes reflects this kind of understanding of nationalism, and the role this kind of nationalism has played in Black history. But as a rule, First-and Second-Wave Black historians misemploy the concept of nationalism, as they usually equate it with such historical and social realities as ethnicity or community, thus equating Black ethnicity; the Black community, its existence, and functioning; or any kind of Black separate cultural or social reality or activity (existing or occurring apart from white people or other Americans) with nationalism or nationalistic happenings, when they are nothing more than ethnic or community realities or happenings.

Discussions of Afro-American nationalism, African American nationalism, Afrikan nationalism, or Black nationalism in First-and Second-Wave Black historical writings are invariably distortions of Black history and Black life in America. Another critical observation to be made is that a number of Black historians, especially Black nationalist Second-Wave Black historians, substitute Black nationalist ideology or rhetoric—or Afro-American or African American nationalist ideology or rhetoric, as it might be referred to—for historical evidence and historical fact, which either suppresses Black historical and social realities or distorts them. The nationalist issue and its problematic relationship to Black history, Black identity, and Black historical writing in America will be taken up in a full manner in Chapter 7, which will critique the works of two Black nationalist Second-Wave Black historians, Sterling Stuckey and V.P.Franklin, and their works, *Slave Culture* and *Black Self-Determination,* respectively.[5] Both authors show the deleterious effect that ideology or rhetoric can have on historical scholarship.

But in making these remarks, I do not want to leave the residual impression that I think ideology or rhetoric are necessarily detrimental to historical scholarship, or that political thinking or political motivation, which are essentially the same thing, are necessarily detrimental to it. Purists among historians (or historical Platonists) have always argued so. But purist historians have rarely understood their own romanticism and strong subjectivism, even while spouting views from what they regard as an objective canonical posture. Historical writing in America itself since the nineteenth century has shown how political thinking and political motivation have identified areas for historical research and writing, have opened up or expanded areas for research and writing, or have helped to augment historical interpretation, knowledge, and truth.

The political thinking and political motivation of a number of Black and white historians in the 1960s and 1970s led to new and vigorous research into Black history, and to a greater and more truthful telling of that story. One could make the same observation about the way political thinking and political motivation—ideology and rhetoric—have expanded research, knowledge, and truth about the history of women in America. The legitimate question has always been not whether political thinking or politics relate to historical research and writing, but how they relate. Do they augment historical research, knowledge, truth, and understanding, or do they obstruct achieving these objectives? History has recorded both realities.

As said at the outset of this chapter, an evaluation of how Black people and their history should be described in America would be determined not only by historical evidence, but also by sociological analysis. A critical historical writing or evaluation requires a critical sociology. History, after all, as subject matter or reality, as opposed to the academic discipline designed to investigate and explain this subject matter or reality, is human behavior in time and over time. This automatically brings sociology directly to historical research, writing, and explanation. Some historians have understood this matter, and the sociology of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Antonio Gramsci, C.Wright Mills, and Talcott Parsons has appeared in historical works. But none of these sociologies would be adequate to help explain American history or American society, because none has the necessary critical capacity to do so. Namely, none exhibit a racist analysis or a racial analysis, or the employment of these forms of analyses along with a class and gender analysis. And what they also lack as a prerequisite for a critical analysis of American history and society is the hierarchical racist-inundated White over Black social structure and social system, the centerpiece of American history and society and the broad analytical framework in which all other forms of analysis of American history and life take place. Determinism and indeterminism existed in this structure and system, and both were also capable of change and development.

W.E.B.Du Bois devised the White over Black hierarchical structure and system and broad critical analytical framework without ever providing it with a label, which I have done for him. Du Bois was the progenitor of scientific sociology in the United States, developing it between the 1890s and World War I, putting him in the company of Émile Durkheim in France and Max Weber, who were also putting science into sociology in Europe. Du Bois made a racist analysis and the racist-inundated hierarchical social structure and social system the centerpieces of his historical and sociological analyses.

He inaugurated his interest in the study of social life, and thus his early interest in investigating sociology, when he was a teenage journalist in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He wrote articles about Black life in his village for New York Black newspapers.[6] These articles reveal his perception of a basic White over Black social relationship in Great Barrington that helped to determine the culture and social life of the village, which both Whites and Blacks participated in in an unequal manner. As a student at Fisk University, and thus living in the South, Du Bois saw the great division between Whites and Blacks, and Black life and White life,

not only in Nashville, Tennessee, and surrounding areas, but, on the basis of his reading and studying, all over the South.

In that region, Du Bois saw the stark reality of the White over Black hierarchical social relationship that stood at the center of Southern life, that was characterized by racism and race, and that directly and profoundly affected that life in all of its major cultural and social dimensions. He also saw how Blacks were excluded from much of the culture and social life of the South, and how they were subordinated or suppressed when they participated in them. He further saw the distinctive White and Black social worlds of the South, with the White social world dominating the Black social world. Du Bois described the racist-racial social realities of the South in an unpublished article written in 1887, entitled, "An Open Letter to the Southern People":

> For twenty-five years you have more than intimated that there is little in common between White and Black in the South…. The Negro has at last come to consider that whatever is for the benefit of the White man is for his detriment. Nor is it strange he should jump at such a conclusion; a blind prejudice has too often heaped injustice of the grossest kind upon him: the rights dearest to a freeman, trial by peers, a free ballot, a free entrance into the various callings of life, have been ruthlessly wrestled from him in multitude of cases. Arguing him into an inferior being you have forced him into the gallery, the hovel, and the "Jim Crow" car; arguing his ignorance have rendered nearly seven millions of people practically voiceless in politics; in the face of this you have refused his children equal educational advantage with yours.[7]

In his published doctoral dissertation of 1895, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States,* Du Bois only adumbrated the view that white people initially established a White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system in early American history as foundational or ontological structures of the history through which American history and social life were produced and reproduced.[8] In *The Philadelphia Negro* and a plethora of other sociological, historical, and political writings between the 1890s and the time of his death in 1963, Du Bois, without conceptualization, described and discussed what he regarded as the general social structure and social system in American history and American society, using them as the basic framework to analyze that history and society, and particularly relations between white people and Black people in those contexts.[9]

Du Bois's historical and sociological argument was that white people, owing to their racist beliefs and attitudes and other moti-

vations—connected to those beliefs and attitudes, and even often stimulated by them—initially divided America, broadly and hierarchically, between two races, the white race and the black race, with the white race at the top of the hierarchy and the black race at the bottom. This established the basic or fundamental social relationship in America, initially during British colonial history in North America and then throughout the length of American history. The hierarchical interaction between the white and black races occurred within American culture and social institutions, from the colonial period throughout American history, creating the general racist-inundated hierarchical social structure and social system that the white race continuously participated in in a superordinate and dominating and controlling manner (that is to say, from the top down), and that the black race continuously participated in in a dominated, subordinated, and suppressed manner (that is to say, from the bottom up).

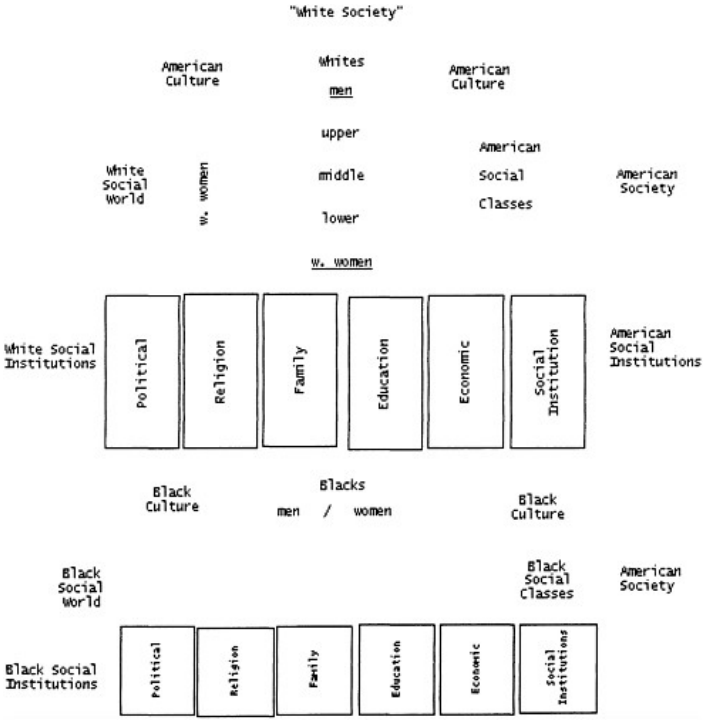
In interacting with the black race in the American hierarchical racist-saturated social structure and social system, the white race adhered to two sets of racist beliefs: *white supremacy* and *ebonicism*. The first body of beliefs referred to the alleged innate superiority of white people, and the other to the alleged innate inferiority of the black race. These beliefs went beyond race and established "race," something that did not exist and was a fanciful abstract construction, but that the white racist believed did exist and had embodiment. White supremacist racist beliefs established a white "race" that amounted to a "race" of "godly" or "godlike" "entities," believed to be real, with concrete embodiment, and a black "race" of "nonhumans" or "subhumans," believed to be such material or biological entities. The two forms of racism were always expressed simultaneously (i.e., *white supremacy/ebonicism*), even if one of the forms was not explicitly stated or readily detectable. To engage in ebonicistic racism already implied white supremacist racist thinking, beliefs, and motivations. Ebonicism was applied to black people (race) and Black people (ethnic group), declaring both to be nonhuman or subhuman. Ebonicism is not to be mistaken for "ebonics," which is a description of the dialect spoken by many Blacks in this country. There are, in fact, numerous forms of racism, such as maleism (that alleges the innate superiority of men) and *sexism* (that alleges the natural inferiority of women), which function in a combined manner as maleism/sexism. There is also *anti-Jewism* (which is more accurate than anti-Semitism), *redicism* (alleging the innate inferiority of American and Western Hemispheric Indians), and *xanthicism* (alleging the natural inferiority of yellow or Asian people). All these forms of racism have and continue to function in

America, but the primary racist expression has and continues to be white supremacy/ebonicism, which will be the focus in this study. I refer readers to my book, *Racism Matters,* for a discussion of the different forms of racism in American history and life.[10]

Figure 1.1 is a diagram of Du Bois's unlabeled but sociologically conceived and discussed White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system, which functioned nationally, regionally, and locally, wherever Whites and Blacks lived and interacted with each other.

As Du Bois asserted in his sociological and historical (and even his political) writings, and as seen in Figure 1.1, the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system involved

Figure 1.1
Du Bis's Hierarchical Social System



people, culture, and social institutions. White people were at the top of the structure and system as a race and large group of people, subdivided into genders, social classes, and individuals, who participated in a culture and social institutions. At the bottom of the hierarchical social structure and social system were Black people as a race and smaller group of people, subdivided into genders, social classes (not fully developed or crystallized), and individuals. Du Bois asserted that Blacks were made the bottom of the racist-filled hierarchical social structure and social system legally, as legally established slaves, but also by racist thinking and racist political and social practices. He also argued that American history, American society, and American civilization were constantly mobilized against Black people to maintain them as a subordinate people in the country and as the structural bottom of American history and society.

Du Bois contended that the White social classes in the racist-stained hierarchical social structure and social system were actually *American* social classes, that White social institutions were actually *American* social institutions, and that White culture was actually *American* culture. But white people, acting as racists, enslavers, and segregationists, usurped *American* culture, social classes, and social institutions and made them "White" culture, "White" social classes, and "White" social institutions. They also made *American* society "White society," and *American* civilization "White civilization." It was usurpation, as Du Bois saw it, because he argued that Black people had helped, in an important manner, to construct American culture, American social classes, American social institutions, American society, and American civilization, but white people had absorbed and appropriated their contributions and then had excluded them from the constructions and the rewards that they had provided, or at least had primarily excluded them from the constructions and rewards that they had helped to produce and to which they had been fully entitled, based on their contributions.

The White over Black hierarchical social structure functioned as a social system; that is, evidenced motion, moving parts, and dynamism when Whites and Blacks interacted with each other. The interaction, as said before, occurred from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Whites interacted with Blacks from an ascendant and dominant position, and thus from top to bottom in the social structure and social system. Generally speaking, this was the White social world interacting with the Black social world, which was the macro social interaction that made the White over Black hierarchical social structure function as a social system. But it also func-

tioned as a social system when Whites functioned in their specific manifestations as a large racial group, and in their genders, social classes, and as individuals, and interacted with Blacks on these bases. This interaction occurred through culture and social institutions, and whenever Whites interacted with Blacks, as a race, in genders, in social classes, or as individuals, it was primarily and strongly done in a racist manner. This was so because the top part of the White over Black social structure and social system were inundated with White racist beliefs, values, and attitudes, which were strongly imparted to Whites and which the top part of the structure and system, as well as the general social structure and social system, reinforced in them throughout their lives. As Du Bois saw it, the racist socialization of white people, carried out by the White over Black social structure and social system as a partial entity or as a whole entity, was a lifelong activity.

The White over Black hierarchical social structure functioned as a social system when Blacks interacted with Whites and the top of the hierarchical structure from the bottom up. They did this on the basis of their broad social world, but also as a race, in their genders, their social classes, and as individuals. The social structure functioned as a social system in its most dynamic manner, from bottom to top, when Blacks, functioning through some of their social institutions and (more or less) as a people, related to Whites in a direct, physical manner or in American culture and in American social institutions, which Whites claimed for themselves and for their exclusive use. When Blacks interacted with Whites and the top part of the racist-inundated hierarchical social structure and social system from the bottom up, it was for the purpose of mitigating the racist character and the oppression of the structure and system; or, as another motivation, to free themselves from White domination, control, and exploitation, and to be able to integrate, as individuals, genders, and a group of people, and as equal individuals, genders, and a group of people, in what they regarded as *American* culture, *American* social classes, *American* social institutions, *American* society, and *American* civilization.

Thus, Blacks and Whites sought to make the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system function in different ways. Whites sought to maintain the structure and system to make them function to reproduce White racism and White racist power and the White domination and control of America, as well as the domination, control, and exploitation of Black people. Blacks, on the other hand, functioning from a dominated, suppressed, and exploited position and from the bottom of American society, sought to mitigate the oppressive functioning of the hierarchical social

structure and social system to be able to progress and develop as a people. Or they sought to get rid of the structure and system so that they could be fully included in America, and fully free in it.

The previous lengthy discussion now needs a modification. The White over Black structure and system originally began as a racist-inundated racial hierarchical structure and system, with the white race over the black race. Du Bois never deviated from this view. I find it necessary to modify it, as an extension of Du Bois's position. In time, black people, the original black Africans, became an ethnic group in America, Black people. This made them one among many ethnic groups to be found among the black race that existed from Africa to the Western Hemisphere. The white race in America at the time exhibited many ethnic groups: Anglo Saxon, German, French, and, later in the nineteenth century, Irish, Greek, and numerous others. These were "white ethnics," meaning ethnic groups of the white race. But the white ethnic groups also formed a large White ethnic group, as denoted by such phrases as "White culture," "White America," or "White society." Any ethnic group has a racial dimension as well as cultural and social features. The Black ethnic group is a manifestation of the black race, and the White ethnic group is a manifestation of the white race.

In using the term White over Black structure and system, as done over the previous pages and as will be done throughout the book, the focus will be on the White and Black ethnic groups. But since white people function as a race and ethnic group in this country, and relate to Black people as both, it is possible to refer to white people in racial and ethnic terms, as "white" and as "White." White people, in fact, relate to Black people more as members of the white race than as members of the White ethnic group, and thus, the word "white" or the phrase "white people," or similar lower-case usages, will be frequently employed in this book. This explains why white is most often spelled in the lower case in this book, because white people mainly relate to black or Black people out of their racial orientation.

White historians invariably, or primarily, write American history as if only white people have made that history and as if Black people have not done so, or not in any substantial manner, and as if Black people have not affected the way white people have made history in the country. In short, white historians, as a rule, write American history focusing on the top part of the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system and ignoring or excluding, or only meagerly including, the bottom part of the structure and system. But even Black historians, generally, are not significantly aware of the White over Black hierarchical social struc-

ture and social system of American history and American society, although they would have no difficulty knowing that Black and white people have made history in America, and that Black people have made a large contribution to the historical, cultural, and social development of the country. Some of these historians even indicate how Black people have impacted and contributed to the way Whites have made history in the country. Black historians who insist that Black people have always thought of themselves as Africans and have historically had a strong African identity in America and presently retain it—regarding themselves as African Americans—show an acute lack of knowledge of the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system. That structure and system has historically ridiculed and even denigrated the name and identity of African as well as Africa itself, which usually resulted in the Blacks who were aware of the name African or of the African continent ignoring both or deprecating both and avoiding close association with both.

The White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system has functioned strongly in American history and society to compel Whites not to accord Blacks an identity that would convey dignity and status on them or equality with Whites. It compelled Whites to think of Blacks as being "nonhuman" or "subhuman," or as an identity based on their race and, namely, the color of their skin, both of which were publicly deprecated. Blacks have historically been pressured in America by the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system to accept a public, group, and personal identity of "nonhuman" or "subhuman," or the view that their identity was not a matter of history or culture, but simply of biology; that is, race and color, and particularly the latter.

These kinds of pressures alone have historically stood as roadblocks to Blacks thinking of themselves as Africans and having an African identity, or even wanting one. Then there were the other names and identities for Black people that the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system strongly insisted upon historically—Negro, Colored, nigger, and black—that made an African identity for Black people unreal, unthinkable, unreachable, unwanted, and nothing more than just a romantic or fanciful identity if chosen. The White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system functioned in America to distort and confuse the thinking of Black people, including Black historians and other Black scholars or intellectuals, about who Black people have been and are in America.

For exposition convenience, the White over Black hierarchical social structure and social system will hereafter be referred to as