The Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is education.

W. E. B. Du Bois

The oppressor, however, raises his voice to the contrary. He teaches the Negro that he has no worth-while past, that his race has done nothing significant since the beginning of time, and that there is no evidence that he will ever achieve anything great.

Carter G. Woodson

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

James 1:24, 25

A Glimpse at Freedom, through the Window of Race in Society and Education: Du Bois’ Mansart Builds a School

By Timothy Vaughn

In this chapter I attempt to show how W.E.B. Du Bois uses the framework of a novel to indicate to the reader that the Negro project is not yet finished, and he provides us a glimpse through the novel that allows us to peer through the window. He wanted to convey through his last project the depth of race, class, gender, spirituality, economics, and political issues that plagued and still plague American society. What is the purpose of a flame? A flame has the ability to destroy, restore, and replenish. Du Bois’s final works include three novels called “The Black Flame Trilogy.” These novels provide a glimpse into the historical counter-curriculum and hidden curriculum of the Negro community. The metaphorical use of the word “flame” signifies the destruction of the peonage of the Negro race, and how its members were able to restore and replenish their community through the use of education as means of social mobility. The path and journey that Du Bois articulates in his trilogy speak to the advancement of the Negro race and society at-large.

In the second novel of his trilogy, Mansart Builds a School, Du Bois utilizes historical occurrences to develop a window into the psyche of the Negro race; he further creates a window to provide the reader with an understanding of the importance of Negro education. Furthermore,
it could be inferred that Du Bois created the character Mansart as a sort of representation of his thoughts and beliefs when it pertained to Negro education in the South. The character Mansart embodies characteristics of Du Bois, and Du Bois superimposed his nature into the character Mansart. Du Bois was a part of the Negro intelligentsia, and so was his fictional character Mansart.

So, what was Du Bois’ flame illuminating? I suggest that Du Bois was fighting for three specific interests for the Negro community: first, he was fighting for the notion of creating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that would supersede historically white institutions of higher education, especially in the South. Second, he was fighting for the advancement of primary and secondary Negro education. And third, he envisioned that the Negro community would have the ability to mobilize its own resources and goods (i.e. through entrepreneurial endeavors) without the dictatorial and paternalistic presence of the white community.

Du Bois tried to express the importance and place of HBCUs within the framework of American society. Specifically, in *Mansart Builds a School*, he focuses on land-grant institutions that were funded under the second Morrill Act of 1890, “…which funded higher education by giving federally controlled land to the states” (Du Bois, 1959, xxv). Du Bois argued that the Negro is just as intelligent as his white counterpart, so it is important to cultivate the intellect of Negro children, women, and men. Moreover, Du Bois clearly points to the important fact that without the assistance of the federal government the establishment of many public HBCUs would not have come to fruition. Additionally, during the 1920s and 1930s it was still difficult for Negroes to attend predominantly white institutions of higher learning, and it was clear that without education the Negro had no place in American society except in performing menial and
domesticated labor. Furthermore, Du Bois recognized that HBCUs exemplified a pathway toward developing the Negro intelligentsia and academicians. Hence, without the development of public land-grant HBCUs an immense amount of Negro children would still fall prey to illiteracy and alienation within American society.

I would argue that Du Bois was concerned with the next generation and the generations to come, and that is why he pushed for the advancement of developing institutions of higher education for the Negro community. If the Negro community does not have a space and place to cultivate the intellect, then the subsequent generations will fall into the same traps and pitfalls of the former generation. So, the significance of formulating a sound primary and secondary educational system for Negro children was an important topic of discussion. Additionally, when it came to prescribing a curriculum that would be taught to all Negro children, the conversation was probably difficult, especially given the damaged view many Negroes had of the white racist states they resided in. Nonetheless, Negro educators developed a way to successfully educate their own children and move them through the ranks of the educational hierarchical system. The development of a Negro curriculum may have been the most controversial issue during the time of Du Bois because many Negroes believed that it was fine for the Negro to continue to work the land and perform menial labor. Du Bois would argue that it is important to develop the psyche and intellect of the Negro community, and not utilize a slave-like mentality when it comes to educating the “best and brightest” within the Negro community. This is where Du Bois and Booker T. Washington differed within their curricular approaches for the Negro race. Du Bois wanted Negroes to move from having a slave-like mentality to having social and economic stability. This movement depended on each person receiving a strong, balanced, liberal education, not one dominated by the manual arts.
Du Bois valued intellectual and/or mental labor over the practical and/or manual labor; he thought that cultivating people’s intellects would move them up the social ladder quicker than working in the field. Du Bois epitomized the term “Black intellectual,” he was by far the greatest mind of the 19th and early 20th century for the Negro, and he was definitely in the hearts and minds of those young Negro scholars who aspired to work in the academy.

Historical Context of the 1960s

The 1960s was a time of racial, social, and political unrest in the U.S. It was a decade of struggle and victory, unity and division, death and life. With the world watching, the U.S. would have to live up to these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” Many individuals fought for Civil liberties for the Negro and others who were also disenfranchised. It took a unified mindset to destroy racial barriers that stood before those Freedom Fighters. Negroes and white folks joined together to try and dismantle the oppressive and violent force of “racism.” Their attempt to end racial segregation resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Civil Rights Act of 1968. However, even with the passage of these monumental laws, racial tension, oppression, and violence still resided in the U.S. and still does today, at least four decades later.

It is safe to argue that American society may never come to grips with the infectious epidemic called “racism.” Thomas Jefferson, one of the “founding fathers” of the United States of America, was a white supremacist who believed in Black inferiority. Jefferson “…asserted Blacks were mentally inferior, were ashamed of their color and wanted to be white, and that Black women preferred orangutans as sexual partners” (Anderson & Kharem, 2009, p. 17). The white race did not consider the Negro as a human being let alone a citizen of the U.S. White Americans used literature to bolster their ideological stance on the inferiority of the Black race.
Keeping this in mind, the Negro psyche began to corrode, and racial violence began to accelerate within the country. As Woodson (1933) states:

There can be no reasonable objection to the Negro’s doing what the white man tells him to do, if the white man tells him to do what is right... The present system under the control of the whites trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or the impossibility of his becoming white. (p. 23)

Undoubtedly, the Negro’s mind and soul were enslaved by the white race, therefore creating this “double consciousness.” Du Bois declared that “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” (Du Bois, 2005, p. 14). The notion of double-consciousness created a psychological dualism, for the Negro, meaning Negroes struggled with their identities. Moreover, the Negro community battled with their “two souls, two thoughts, and two unreconciled strivings” (p. 14). However, they yearned for a way to merge their double selves. Eventually the Negro community challenged the treacherous claims presented by the white race; they joined together as community to explore their purpose and destiny. This is what Du Bois noticed about the Negro; he identified their resilient and unrelenting spirit to transcend the racially charged society they lived in.

Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois’s mission was aimed at trying to disintegrate the pathological nature of the color line in American society. Furthermore, Du Bois attempted to shift the paradigm in the Negro community by bolstering arguments geared toward the advancement of educational access for those talented Negro scholars. Additionally, he recognized the significance of education, and his foresight created opportunities for Negro students to experience education through a different lens. At any rate, Du Bois was a visionary and a strategist; he understood the importance of creating spaces for Negroes and/or nonwhites. He was a revolutionary thinker and
In the late 1950s, Du Bois at the advanced age of 89, began to write a series of novels, which he called *The Black Flame* trilogy. These novels “…demonstrated in full Du Bois’s ideas of the relations among the three forces: experience, history, and truth. *The Black Flame* mixes historical fact and fiction in the story of one man’s life” (Taiwo, 2004, p.60). He wrote the first book, *The Ordeal of Mansart*, in 1957; he wrote the third book, *Worlds of Color*, in 1961. He also wrote a second book and it was published in 1959 right at the turn of the decade, and it was entitled *Mansart Builds a School*.

Du Bois’s *Mansart Builds a School* is an important text in that he articulates the historical malfeasance of the South’s white supremacist society and educational system. Du Bois may not hold the position of a conventional curricularist; however, he does provide insight and foresight to those scholars studying the plight of Negro education in the U.S. Du Bois’ window provides a glimpse into how the problems of the Negro race that seem unsolvable. Nevertheless, he attempts to illuminate the unwavering and relentless nature of the Negro race toward progress and improvement in American society. In *Mansart Builds a School*, Du Bois connects his personal struggles with the historical struggles of the Negro race in the early twentieth century through the creation of his fictional character, Manuel Mansart. Du Bois places his nature into the character he created (e.g. Manuel Mansart). He provides a window into his world and life experiences.
through the creation of Mansart. Below I provide an elucidation of the five salient themes that resonate for me throughout *Mansart Builds a School*: race; the Negro community; social mobility; education; and curriculum. Furthermore, I attempt to provide pertinent information about Du Bois’ main character, Manuel Mansart. Hence, these five salient themes and Mansart provide window for scholars interested in the plight of “The Negro Race” during the progressive era and beyond.

*Overview of Mansart Builds a School*

The novel *Mansart Builds a School* is about the struggle towards advancing Negro education in the South, and more specifically in the state of Georgia. Mansart was a well-educated Negro who had been educated at Atlanta University. Mansart was a teacher at a country school in Atlanta, and he had plans to move to the state of Indiana, but the current Superintendent (John James) of the Atlanta colored schools died, and he was asked to step into that position. Mansart was the father of four children, and he was married to a beautiful woman who was his schoolmate at Atlanta University. Mansart was nothing like the former Superintendent who was docile in his approach when it came to interacting with white folks. Instead, Mansart gave his demands and told the white superintendent that he wanted respect and financial assistance to develop his school system. There were over 40,000 Negro children crammed into five schools, and all of the buildings were old, and all Negro schools had double sessions meaning that the children did not go to school all day.

Obviously, teachers’ salaries and working conditions were detestable and inhumane in these schools. But, when Mansart became the Superintendent of the Atlanta colored schools, things began to drastically change for the Negro teachers and students. Mansart demanded that
those white leaders provide the proper resources and materials for the Negro school system in Atlanta. Furthermore, Mansart declared that whites could no longer ignore the social and economic inequities that plague the Negro community, and it was time for the white community to support the advancement of the Negro as a race and community. Mansart believed in the idea of solidarity between the Negro and the white communities, but he also believed that it was best for Negroes to educate their own.

Mansart was an exceptional Superintendent and there was talk by the white leaders of making him the first Negro President of a State run college. Moreover, “Mansart is a ‘new type of Negro administrator,’ part of the first generation capable enough, and given enough autonomy from white oversight, to attempt to reform the black educational system in the South from within” (Du Bois, 1959, xxv). In 1920, “…Mansart became the president of the Georgia State Colored Agricultural and Mechanical College at Macon” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 72). He was president for twenty-six years, and his dream was to develop the Negro intelligentsia and labor force. The issues that Mansart faced seemed insurmountable because the majority of Negro colleges were under the control of white northern philanthropists. There were a few Negro private colleges that were funded by Negro churches, but those colleges were insignificant.

Because most of the Negro College Presidents had no power during this period in history, Mansart’s reign was atypical. Mansart’s life-work consisted of developing Georgia State Colored A&M College into a beacon of economic, social, and spiritual progress for the Negro community. Additionally, Mansart argued that Negroes were capable enough to handle a curriculum that challenged them through the study of philosophy and the use of the scientific methods; he challenged the status quo that stated that the Negro should tend to menial and domesticated labor. Mansart understood that there was more for the Negro to gain by being
educated than for the Negro race to continue with the model that was present during slavery and post-slavery (i.e., merely sharecropping and doing housework for whites). It was crucial that the Negro race shift the paradigm from just manual and/or menial labor to a more mental and intellectual type of labor. Hence, Mansart continually tried to develop and strengthen the minds of his race, but he also struggled with the fact that it would take both Negroes and whites to come together and make meaning out of their existence.

In the end, Mansart felt lost and dejected and he did not see the Negro and white race coming together (Pinar, 2012). Ultimately, “he was in a world apart — a worthy world, a world which must and would survive and yet, if it ever was to become a part of the white world, these worlds must understand each other increasingly. And they did not…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 261). So, it was Mansart’s life-work to try and bridge that gap between the Negro and white communities. Furthermore, it was through spirituality that the Negro community was able to make meaning of their existence and place in society. Spirituality embodies a deep connection with ritual, songs, religious expressions, culture, family, education, and the effect of history within the Negro community. Though it is known that Du Bois did not adhere to organized religion because of his political beliefs (as a result of his commitment to communism); he still recognized the role and impact of spirituality in the Negro community. A connection to a divine deity does not necessarily mean that it is attached to a religious sect, but in most cases that is the norm. The Judeo-Christian faith and/or religious sect was offered to the Negro race during slavery, and through that process the Negro people gained strength, faith, perseverance, and tenacity to escape from their demise. Additionally, without their faith and trust in God, the Negro race would probably have ceased to exist in this country because it was the intent of many white folks to exterminate it. Spirituality is a window that allows the white and Negro race to open
together to heal and be healed from ancestral atrocities. With spirituality comes hope, and hope gets illuminated by the window. Mansart recognized the importance of elevating his people through education, but he did not dismiss the fact that spirituality could open a window to observing issues of race, class, labor, and politics. Mansart understood that race and racism constituted for the makeup of American society and culture, but he strategically utilized his intellect to fight against the oppressive forces of racism.

*Mansart’s window to a conversation about race*

Manuel Mansart’s father was lynched on the night he was conceived. How might someone react to this catastrophic event? Mansart did not succumb to the violent and dehumanizing presence of racism even as it took shape in brutal terms impacting his own life from the very beginning. He kept his eye on the prize and accomplished great feats during his lifetime that would forever transform the Negro community. Manuel Mansart was an astonishingly well-educated Negro, who had brains and ideas. He was educated at Atlanta University, and he even completed some graduate studies there, too. Mansart was hired as the Superintendent of the colored schools in Atlanta when his predecessor (John James) died. At the time, Mansart was in his late thirties and understood the struggles of the Negro, so his mission was to transform the lives of the Negro community utilizing education as a tool for social mobility. Mansart recognized the importance of being educated; he thought that being educated would produce a more equitable and just society. Furthermore, Mansart was later offered the position to become the first President of the Georgia State Colored Agricultural and Mechanical College at Macon (Du Bois, 1959, p. 8, 72). Additionally, he cultivated the intellect of the Negro community and he strived to change and challenge the “Jim Crow” South during his academic
and life work. Moreover, Manuel could never escape the racially charged hostile environment of the South. He understood the importance of race during his time, but he did not allow his race or the ubiquitous spirit of racism to deter him from his mission. Unfortunately, the idea of race was so engrained in American culture that it saturated every facet of American life. Consequently, the Negro was constantly reminded that he/she was inferior to the white race, and that the Negro would never be on the same level as the white race. Hence, Du Bois strategically engrafts the historical atrocities of the early twentieth century to display the malicious, overtly racist actions of the white race on the Black race.

**Race**

Undoubtedly, it is evident that Mansart recognizes racial segregation within the state of Georgia and the South at-large. Moreover, the pervasive mantra of separate-but-equal still resounded clearly in the heart of the South. In Mansart’s world, racism was a repulsive creature that gnawed incessantly at the oppressed and the oppressor; it gained strength from those cruel and violent acts that left human beings lifeless and devoid of spirit. Du Bois (1959) declares that “in the world of Manuel Mansart of that time there were separate churches and schools” (p.72). Although, Mansart did try and cultivate interracial relationships, his efforts did not have an immediate impact in the state of Georgia. Mansart realized that “he was in a world apart — a worthy world, a world which must and would survive and yet, if it ever was to become a part of the white world, these worlds must understand each other increasingly. And they did not” (Du Bois, 1959, p.261). Furthermore, Negroes constituted one-third of the population of the state of Georgia during this time period, and Mansart knew that issues that revolved around race would have to be dealt with in the state. The psychological violence of racism left the Negro as nothing
more than a docile body, ready and willing to perform those tasks that were set forth by the oppressor. Carter G. Woodson (1933) states,

The American Negro has taken over an abundance of information which others have made accessible to the oppressed, but he has not yet learned to think and plan for himself as others do for themselves. Well might this race be referred to as the most docile and tractable people on earth. This merely means that when the oppressors once start the large majority of the race in the direction of serving the purposes of their traducers, the task becomes so easy in the years following that they have little trouble with the masses thus controlled. (p. 193)

It seems as if the Negro psyche is atrophied with false hopes of a utopian society built upon morals and virtuous tenets. The Negro believed that the white community would support them in their endeavors to better themselves through providing them with educational opportunities. Moreover, Du Bois was cognizant of the racial violence that surrounded Mansart and himself. Du Bois (1968) proclaimed that “murder, killing, and maiming Negroes, raping Negro women — in the 80’s and in the southern South, this was not even news…” (p. 122); he goes on further to say that lynching “was a continuing and recurrent horror during my college days: from 1885 through 1894, 1,700 Negroes were lynched… and from 1910 to 1920, 52 to 99 Negroes were murdered by white mobs each year; a total of 807 persons” (Dubois, 1968, p.122; Dubois, 1959, p.30).

In Mansart Builds a School, Dr. Baldwin, a white professor from Atlanta, describes the racial and oppressive nature of the U.S; he proclaims, “We right here sought Liberty and established Slavery. We preached Brotherhood and built the Color bar. We taught our children that Negro Slavery was right and Negroes stupid, inferior and nasty…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 17). Moreover, Dr. Baldwin went further to say that the South “was developing a real black criminal. That it was investing in crime and making millions out of leasing convicts...” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 19). Dr. Baldwin declares that this is why southern jails are full of Negroes, and why Negroes are hanged and imprisoned for life. There was evidence that revealed that at least a fourth of the
Negro workers in the South were slaves of the state and they “were likely to become hardened criminals for life” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 19). However, the Negro countered the inevitability of Jim Crow enslavement by building his/her own utopian society separated from exploitation, oppression, and violence. But, how realistically, could the Negro create a utopian society separated from racial tensions and violence? It seemed that the Negro community gained its strength through its connection to the metaphysical realm. Hence, the Negro community understood that the American South was a cruel place, but its members also realized that their power and strength resided in a unified community built upon an unwavering faith in God.

Negroes knew that they did not wield the power to completely separate themselves from exploitation, oppression, and violence; however, they did create spaces that edified their communal strengths. Through spirituality and faith in God the Negro community transcended the chaotic and destructive nature of American society. Du Bois appreciated the spiritual fervor of his community, and he knew that their faith inspired them to press toward the mark of solidarity and peace. The Negro community recognized the importance of the metaphysical aspects of life, and they placed their lives in the hands of God. Furthermore, their connection to God animated their inner-man, which gave them the strength to impart their wisdom and gifts to the next generation.

Du Bois realized that the Black church was a beacon of hope, peace, and love. The American Negro needed a place to cultivate its gifts and talents, and the church served that purpose. The Negro community was obliged to stay segregated from the white community in certain components of their daily lives. Hence, Mansart articulates the importance of the Negro community and the benefits of having a community isolated from mainstream society (e.g. the white community).
Negro Community

Mansart had an optimistic impression of the Negro community; he perceived the colored world to “be a larger and more complete unified body” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 73). Du Bois (1968) proclaimed that his community was sort of a new world, due to isolation; he said, “There was among us but a half-awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth or wedding; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land and low wages…” (p.120). Mansart had an awareness of the unified spirit of his community. Also, he acknowledged the lively and ambitious drive of the Negro community to take responsibility for its own affairs. The Negro community “…organized itself for various local purposes like adorning the streets and fixing playgrounds and visiting the schools. There were united protests to the authorities about clearing the streets and garbage removal…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 73). The Negro had the ability to create his/her own reality separated from the white man’s. In Mansart’s spirit, he believed that the American Negro was a chosen people, “a group dedicated to the emancipation of the dark and tortured people of the world” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 111).

Many Negroes were blessed to have God-given gifts that were utilized to unite the world. First, American Negroes had a spiritual connection to music; Mansart explains that “music united all human beings, especially the Negro folk songs…Among Americans Mansart was aware of a new impulse, of a distinct emergence of an American Negro literature and art” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 100). In addition, Negro music engulfed the U.S. Du Bois (1959) proclaims that “it came as slave songs in work and religion; it hummed in lullabies and dirges. It became Negro ballad and folk song…” (p. 50). There was a surge of Negro musicians and poets such as Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, and many more, who aided in
strengthening the persona of the Negro race. The American Negro achieved greatness and a sense of identity and self-expression through aesthetic genius. Moreover, the Negro community continued developing and transforming; the community went so far as developing Black Nationalist movements (i.e. Pan-Africanism, UNIA-ACL, etc.).

The Negro was trying to create a sense of identity and community, and at best wipe the stain of slavery from their souls. During the early 1930s, the Nation of Islam was a seen as a positive religious sect for the Negro community because the tenets of the Nation of Islam empowered men and women to develop their own community separate from whites. Ultimately, we must ask ourselves along with Du Bois, what manner of man is the American Negro? Du Bois thought the Negro was a peculiar being capable of accomplishing insurmountable feats. And, this is what Mansart believed; he believed that the Negro needed to rise above the racially stratified system, to build and protect a strong spiritual core in each citizen, and to develop a way to draw capital into their (Negro) community. Mansart knew the importance of building an economic infrastructure within his community; he knew that this infrastructure would create social mobility for his community.

As President of the Georgia State Colored College, Mansart stressed the importance of creating jobs for his community. He wanted his students to have the best training in not only cooking, sewing, and agriculture, but he wanted them to be trained in cotton spinning, weaving, embroidery, metal work, automobile repairs, and a plethora of other things, too (Du Bois, 1959, p. 96). Mansart’s aspirations did not go unmet because he had two major challenges: the cost of machinery and opposition from white trade unions. It was obvious that the white trade unions would voice their opposition toward training Negroes in the areas of carpentry, bricklaying, and plumbing. Furthermore, these white trade union workers did not want state money to be used for
training Negroes (Du Bois, 1959, p.96). Nevertheless, Mansart’s students were allowed to help with the construction of various buildings around the campus. It was said that “eventually, the Trustees decreed that Negro skilled labor must be used where competent and available. The white unions did not dare fight this; but they admitted as few Negroes as possible…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 109). Mansart wanted to create industry within his own community, but the Negro did not quite fully see Mansart’s vision. On the contrary, Woodson (1933) argued that Negroes did not support each other; in fact they believed that Negro businesses would fail.

_Social Mobility_

Woodson describes this concept as the mis-education of the Negro. Social mobility can only come with the establishment of community-based businesses, but the Negro did not understand the importance of building an economically independent community. Many believed that Negroes could not run their own businesses, and Woodson (1933) refuted that statement by saying,

> Negro business men have made mistakes, and they are still making them; but the weak link in the chain is that they are not properly supported and do not always grow strong enough to pass through a crisis. The Negro business man, then, has not failed so much as he has failed to get support of Negroes who should be mentally developed sufficiently to see the wisdom of supporting such enterprises. (p. 42)

Woodson and Mansart had this incredible vision of what the Negro community could become, and they realized that if the community was divided it could not stand against the perils of society. Woodson identified the problem in the Negro community, and Du Bois, through Mansart, was trying to bring about a solution to that problem. They both valued education, and they knew that Negroes needed a proper education to maneuver through American society. The question is what kind of education should they receive?
Education

Historically, Negroes were being educated in the U.S. even during the times of slavery. Anderson & Kharem (2009) explain that “as early as 1787, Prince Hall, a Black Revolutionary War veteran, advocated for Black public schools and petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to educate Black children” (p. 167). For instance, African Free Schools were created by the New York Manumission Society in 1787. The Manumission Society “…set out to accomplish their ideology through the African Free Schools by indoctrinating the children with Anglo-Protestant ideas and demeaning their African culture” (Anderson & Kharem, 2009, p. 10). The Society developed these schools to show whites that Negroes could be educated if only given the opportunity. Whites thought Negroes were ignorant and lacked morals and values; therefore, the Society sought to prepare a Negro elite/middle class “that would shun their allegedly inferior Africanness and slave culture…” (Anderson & Kharem, 2009, p. 10). However, Negroes used the African Free Schools as “the vehicle for upward economic mobility for their children” (Anderson & Kharem, 2009, p. 11). Whites were fearful of the Negro community, and they believed the Negro would try to rebel against the system. Whites did not want competition in the labor force nor did they want Negroes succeeding economically. Woodson (1933) declares that “…the thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies” (p. 2). Nevertheless, there was a great push for the advancement of Negro education especially by whites, according to Anderson (1995), who would use “education” (or manual training) as a means for further subjugating freed Blacks. Understandably, Negroes believed that it was their responsibility to shape their own education.
William Channing Gannett said, “…they have a natural praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands” (Anderson, 1988, p. 5). John W. Alvord, the national superintendent of schools for Freedmen’s Bureau, declared that Negroes had “native schools” in the South, and these schools were similar to “common schools.” With the move toward “native schools,” Negroes began to develop a self-sustaining system for improving their lives (Anderson, 1988, p. 7). Moreover, the Negro desired help from the white community, but they did not want them to control their educational endeavors (Anderson, 1988, p. 5). Self-help and self-determination were two values that the Negro hoisted in their community and educational system. This is why Mansart fought against white supremacist ideology and fear tactics because he envisioned the creation of the Black intelligentsia. Mansart realized that educating the Negro was his God-given responsibility and that if the Negro received an education it would make them an unstoppable force. White southerners refused to believe that Negroes could build their own systems of education.

White southerners began to direct the path of Negro education in the South. Additionally, white southerners assumed the burden of building the Negro school system, and stated that “…white education must take precedence over Negro in time and cost” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 64). So, obviously Negroes had poor and wretchedly inadequate schools. A white southern philosophy was that “…the whites should have the better schools because they pay most of the taxes and have better brains; Negroes should have schools, but schools suited to their needs…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 65). White southerners thought it was necessary to train Negroes for specific menial tasks and then use that training to continue to exploit them. Tuskegee and Hampton were models for this type of educational movement; these two colleges trained Negro students to work for Big Businesses during the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, white southerners continued
to forge ahead of the Negro in education and industry. Southern whites wanted the Negro to know his place and stay in it; they did not want the Negro to elevate in social status. They did want the Negro to have some educational opportunities, and they thought educating the Negro would serve a greater purpose for the U.S. Du Bois (1959) so eloquently presents Mayor John Baldwin’s thoughts about educating the Negro; he said, “what we want to do is outstrip them, keep the white race so far ahead that they will be breathless from trying to pursue us” (p. 13). Also, Baldwin argued that white schools should be superior to Negro schools. These notions of white superiority spilled over into the curriculum.

**Curriculum**

During Mansart’s lifetime it was commonplace to see Negroes performing menial tasks (i.e. cooking, cleaning, sewing, etc.). Unfortunately, Negroes were told they would never reach higher levels of achievement, but that their achievement was in knowing their place in society. These notions were spewed out in the formulation of curricula based in white supremacist ideology. Woodson (1933) states,

…a white instructor gave a course on the Negro, using for his text a work which teaches that whites are superior to the blacks…Even schools for Negroes, then, are places where they must be convinced of their inferiority. The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies. (p.2)

Woodson strategically noted the ways in which the white race shaped curricula that demoralized and alienated the Negro community. Woodson (1933) explained that traditional curricula of the times did not include the Negro except to condemn or pity him (p. 17). Woodson explains the white supremacist ideological framework within curriculum development; he states that in geography, sciences, the study of language, literature, fine arts, medical schools, and history the Negro was eliminated or was depicted as inferior to the white race (pp. 17-21). Furthermore,
Woodson (1933) argued that Negroes had no control over their education, and Negro teachers were powerless (p. 22). So, Woodson claimed that Negro educators who were educated by white folk would go back and indoctrinate the community with white supremacist ideals. If a Negro was educated by a white instructor, then the Negro’s mind was enslaved and not able to escape the agenda of the white race (Woodson, 1933, p. 23). However, Mansart perceived the Negro as an intelligent being who had gifts and talents to share with the world. Mansart recognized that the Negro community was ignorant. Negroes did not have an understanding of Negro history, so Mansart implemented Negro history within the curriculum as Superintendent of the Colored Schools in Atlanta (Du Bois, 1959, p. 40). Moreover, when Mansart became the President of the Negro college, he had to implement curricula that suited the needs of the Negro community and society. The white race formulated curricula that demoralized the Negro’s psyche, cultural traditions, and spiritual connection to nature and the metaphysical realm. Mansart knew the white southerners' tactics and he did not concede or accept their stance on education.

Mansart valued liberal education and vocational training, but he would not tolerate the stereotypical notions of Negro labor in society (i.e., cooking, cleaning, sewing, etc.). Instead, he advanced the idea that Negroes could become masons, carpenters, mechanics, and metal/textile workers. Mansart understood the importance of reading and writing for the development of the Negro. When a Negro learns how to read and write, then he is prepared to function properly in society. With knowledge comes understanding, and the Negro needed understanding to excel in the South. The Negro needed the opportunity to receive an education and a higher education to advance the community. Mansart envisioned curricula that included history, physics, sociology, and philosophy. He wanted the Negro to have the opportunity to become a doctor, lawyer, minister, and teacher. However, there were difficulties with the Negro industrial schools; for
instance, the Negro teachers who taught industry were not well-mannered individuals. Mansart “wanted a well-bred and well-mannered person who knew the world and its amenities, and who talked good English easily…” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 97). His reasoning for developing a curriculum that stressed manners and culture was that the white world was always criticizing the Negro world (Du Bois, 1959, p. 97). It was important for Mansart to reimagine the curricula for the Negro, and his ingenuity and intellect created a space for the Negro to advance in the academy. Mansart’s curriculum development methods were strategic and purposeful for the Negro community in the South. Mansart tried to build a legacy for his community; a rich legacy though was tarnished by the institution of slavery. His foresight afforded him the responsibility and privilege to communicate to the Negroes and the white world.

Mansart was constantly trying to simultaneously open the window of hope and build a bridge across troubled waters; he was trying to merge the two worlds together. The flame is that glimpse of hope through the window, and that flame also illuminates the path across that bridge towards coming together as a united community of brothers and sisters in America. Mansart felt torn in his spirit, it was as though “he was in a world apart—a worthy world, a world which must and would survive and yet, if it ever was to become a part of the white world, these worlds must understand each other increasingly” (Du Bois, 1959, p. 261). The Negro and white race could not advance unless they advanced together. All in all, Mansart wanted deeply to cultivate and humanize relationships within the white and Negro communities. This was Du Bois’s vision of America, a country were citizens would not be judged by the color of their skin but by their character.

Du Bois wanted white citizens to respect and value the Negro. The curriculum movement of the 1960s produced major changes and advancements in education. However, it
was evident that the Negro still did not have a voice or place in the conversation. There were some Negro curricularists during the 1960s, but their research was not a part of the mainstream curriculum development movement. According to Pinar, curriculum development died in 1969, and *curriculum understanding* was born (Pinar, 2004, p. 6). Even though Du Bois was not considered a traditional curricularist, his work is a curriculum in and of itself. The *Black Flame Trilogy* is a culmination of Du Bois’s life experiences as embodied by his character Manuel Mansart. If the souls of Black folk could really talk, they would proclaim that America is a bastion of white supremacist ideals. However, those ancestral souls still see an America that may one day place their ideals of race to the side and recognize the importance of humanity.

**References**


