

Old-School

Season 1, Episode 4

“I Sit with Shakespeare”

Chi: Full disclosure: this whole podcast exists because of a problem I keep encountering when I teach W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*. I get to the end of chapter six when Du Bois writes, “I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not.” And almost all of my students seem to think it’s a throw-away line! Or that Du Bois just put that in to impress some white people, but he didn’t actually mean what he said about the classics mattering. They’re like, *how could he possibly mean that?*

Chi: Here’s the rest of that passage, so you can get more of a sense of it:

[“Jumping Out the Gym!” by DJ DENZ The Rooster]

“I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they all come graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America? Is this the life you long to change into the dull red hideousness of Georgia? Are you so afraid lest peering from this high Pisgah, between Philistine and Amalekite, we sight the Promised Land?”

[source: *Souls*, 75.]

Chi: I have yet to figure out how to persuade my students to take Du Bois’s claim about the liberatory potential of the classics seriously. And it’s humbling! And there’s so much else to cover in the book, so I usually give this one set of points short shrift.

Chi: Two summers ago, I learned I was not alone in this. I polled some of my colleagues who teach this book, and several of them shared *virtually identical experiences* with their own students and this particular passage.

[intro song: “Who Dat” by Amber Spill]

Chad: You know how, after an argument’s over, especially if you lost it, later on, you think of the best comeback? This episode is like that. It’s a whole show nerding out about this one passage by Du Bois and why it matters. It’s full of all the stuff we

teachers wish we said in class, but didn't think of, or didn't have time to say. And we're dedicating it in advance to anyone who has ever been misunderstood when they tried to say something unexpected. You know who you are! [both laugh] This episode's for you. It's also for everyone who loves this book (or thinks you *might* love this book if you understood it better).

Chi: The episode is in two parts. Part One is called **Between Philistine and Amalekite**, and we take imaginary time machine journeys in it. Part Two is called **The Probation of Races**. It's Black + Classics, Old-School style. With me, Chiyuma Elliott.

Chad: And me, Chad Hegelmeyer. And W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Chi: We're sitting with Du Bois and Shakespeare, folks! And we're not wincing! Stay tuned.

Chi: Hey Chad, before we go any further, will you share a few reasons why people should care about what W. E. B. Du Bois says about the classics in this book? Why should we care about this?

Chad: With pleasure!

Chad: So, my first reason is kind of an *eat your vegetables they're good for you* reason: Du Bois is a really smart guy and this is a really important topic, so we should be curious about what he thinks. You know, it's pretty straightforward.

Chad: Here's a *make the world a better place* type of reason: I think Du Bois can help us think through what education is *for*. In some ways, the education controversy that Du Bois is responding to is really similar to the ones we're living through right now: where people are writing off the humanities or classical education, or underfunding state schools and community colleges, or offering really narrow visions of college life.

Chi: And Du Bois can help us with this because he talks so cogently about reading old books to solve real-world problems?

Chad: Exactly! Which connects to one more big reason I think people should care about Du Bois in general and this book specifically: Du Bois makes the point that when we're arguing about education, we're never *just* arguing about education. He writes in chapter 6: "In the midst, then, of the larger problem of Negro education sprang up the more practical question of *work*, the inevitable economic quandary that faces a people in the transition from slavery to freedom, and especially those who make that change amid

hate and prejudice, lawlessness and ruthless competition.” So this isn’t just about higher ed.

Chi: This is about work, labor, capitalism, how people are integrated into or excluded from the economy and economic benefits, *and* racism.

Chad: And talking about education is also, according to Du Bois, one way of talking about the whole organization of our society: what we think it looks like or should look like, and how we want to prepare people to be part of it.

Chi: So this week, I watched this cartoon about a dog with a time machine.

Chad: [laughing] Wait, what?

Chi: About a dog with this time machine. He built it so he could take his preschool son back in time to learn all about history...

Chad: This has something to do with Du Bois, right?

Chi: Yes! Because I think we should do a Time Machine Challenge. If you had a time machine and could take someone anywhere in time and space to help make that W. E. B. Du Bois quote about sitting with Shakespeare more legible, where would you go, and why?

Chad: I’ll answer that, but only if you go first!

Chi: Well played, Chad! Well, yes, since I’m the one who thought of the question, I *do* already kind of have an answer in mind. I’d go to St. Helena island, in South Carolina, during the Civil War, when volunteers from the North were starting the first Black agricultural school in the country.

Chad: I remember you telling me something about this. It’s called the Penn School, right? When the Union army confiscates all the land owned by enslavers, and then they redistribute it to a bunch of newly emancipated residents on the island...

Chi: It’s an amazing situation because the military doesn’t really know how to help these folks transition to life off the plantations. And also, they’ve got a war to fight! They haven’t won the war yet. Crops have been destroyed, there are crazy supply chain challenges, and issues getting just about everything that people need for day-to-day life.

So the military asks for civilian volunteers to come set up a school and help get these freedpeople on their feet in this new post-slavery America they're fighting for.

["Samaria" by Lukas Got Lucky]

Chad: The whole first part of *The Souls of Black Folk* is explicitly about the aftermath of slavery, and the nation's failure to provide adequate support for newly freed African Americans. So I get how taking the time machine to the Sea Islands of South Carolina circa 1862 relates to major themes in Du Bois's book. But I don't get what it has to do with the classics...

Chi: I'd go there because of something that happened early on in the Penn School's history, when the students and the teachers disagreed about the curriculum and some of the school rules. These newly-freed students wanted to study the classics, not just vocational subjects and basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Because of their image of what freedom meant: freedom meant being part of this long and august tradition of arts and letters. And they also objected initially to this rule about wearing work overalls to school. They didn't want to dress for manual work (even though agriculture was part of the curriculum). Freedom that looked and felt similar to their lives during slavery was not what they had in mind! They wanted their day-to-day lives to be different.

Chad: And part of that was wanting formal professional clothes? And the chance to learn the same things that generations of the world's elite learned and valued?

Chi: Exactly! A teacher's diary entry from 1862 talks about all this. Miss Ellen Murray wrote about what her students experienced before the war, and what they wanted to get away from:

"The huts of two rooms had the earth for a floor. An iron pot, a pail, a gourd for a dipper was the furniture, and in these huts, as many people as could well be crowded, slept, wrapped in a blanket for bed and bedclothing. A suit of homespun was furnished once a year to all above ten years of age, and younger ones went unclothed through the summer."

[Source: Murray diary, quoted in Rossa Cooley, *School Acres*, 12.]

Murray wrote that "algebras and Latin seemed as stepping-stones" to a truly different kind of life.

Chad: So back then, the classics are a symbol of emancipation? And social mobility?

Chi: For Black people, yes! Totally. And they're also seen as the practical tool that will help get us to a different way of life.

[“Take It One Day at a Time” by Sarah, The Instrumentalist]

That's the thing that I can't make real to my students today. So if I had a time machine, I'd take them back with me to the day in 1862 when the Penn School students went on strike.

Chad: Wait, what?!

Chi: Yeah. I know! It's the middle of the Civil War, they're on this newly-liberated island, and doing manual work at school. And the students are *not having it*. So this one class goes to school and is assigned to dig a trench.

Chad: They're digging a trench?

Chi: Okay, some context will make that fact make more sense. There's no schoolhouse for Black students on the island; they're meeting in a church. And they're literally building a schoolhouse from the ground up. And everybody's pitching in. But still.

Chi: This one class gets assigned to dig this trench, and they're not pleased. So they go on a half-day strike to protest the work and the clothing they have to wear to class. Here's what Ellen Murray wrote about that day in her diary:

“When they received their direction for the day's work, they rested on their shovels and began to discuss it among themselves. Told they must take the education as given at Hampton if they wanted to stay, they all sat down by the side of the road, their new educational tools beside them, a rueful crowd in the blue overalls that seemed so out of keeping as uniforms for scholars.”

[Source: Cooley, *School Acres*, 22.]

Chi: Clothing and book learning were two of the ways newly-emancipated students demarcated their lives before and after slavery. And digging the trench in those blue overalls looked and felt like more of the same! But they weren't slaves anymore, and they had a meaningful choice about what to do. So they went on strike. And they negotiated a change in the curriculum (though they couldn't get the teachers to budge on the uniforms issue). It was still based on the Hampton model, but it included more of Hampton's advanced coursework, including studying the classics.

Chad: Okay, I totally get the connection now! *The Souls of Black Folk* tackles head-on what Du Bois considers to be the core problem of the twentieth century: the problem of the color line. He writes about racism, and its economic, social, and emotional impacts. And he writes about how hard it was for the first generations coming out of slavery in America to recover from what that terrible institution had taken from them. So when he writes that passage about sitting with Shakespeare, it's not *just* that he's talking about finding companionship and finding solace from racism in great books from the past. He's saying that this kind of reading is dangerous because it helps Black people imagine what true and full emancipation looks like. So he's like the striking Penn School students who refuse to dig a trench because they want some liberal arts education along with their agricultural training. What they knew about the classics helped them imagine a better and freer life.

Chi: Du Bois was really tapped into this different set of Black political hopes and priorities. In 1862, and in 1903, when he writes this landmark book, for so many people, Black liberation looked like a Black farm kid in overalls, reading Aristotle. That kind of learning had value. And that's why he was willing to fight with fellow educators like Booker T. Washington who weren't publicly and loudly championing liberal educational for Black students.

Chad: Chi, I'd totally go on that Time Machine Field Trip with you.

Chi: Thank you! But where would you take people?

Chad: Can I go to two places?

Chi: Of course!

Chad: Okay, the first place is Wilberforce University back in 1892, when Du Bois has just started his first academic job as a teacher of classical languages.

Chi: Oh snap! Good choice...

[“Meshaqelit” by Yonas Kidane]

Chad: So here he is in this small town in Ohio. He's twenty-three years old. And he gets to campus expecting to teach Latin and Greek. They're not his specialty, but he's read both languages pretty seriously for over a decade. And he's expecting to teach alongside William Sanders Scarborough, the most famous Black classicist of that era. So he'll have expert guidance. In an autobiography, he wrote:

“I had assumed that I was to assist Professor William Scarborough.... To my amazement I found that I was to replace him, since in a quarrel between him and the President, he had been ousted.”

[Source: W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (1968; New York: International Publishers, 1991), 186. [Quoted in Withun, Intro]]

Chi: No!

Chad: Yeah. So Du Bois has to up his teaching game. Even though he knows he has impossibly big shoes to fill. He loves the ideas in classical works; that’s what he’s good at. So the Time Machine would take us back to when he has his first-year Greek students read Sophocles’s *Antigone*, and he’s trying to get them excited about it.

Chi: Did it work?

Chad: Yes! He totally succeeds! His students think the play is relatable and relevant, and they pay really close attention. As David Withun points out in his new book on Du Bois and classical thought, many years later, when asked about the class, Du Bois’s former students still remember learning about that specific play. They talk about how it reminded them of African American life at the turn of the century. Specifically, they remembered how they and their classmates connected with the way *Antigone* juxtaposes human and divine law.

Chi: Okay, your first Time Machine stop is pretty amazing. How are you going to top that? Where’s stop number two?

Chad: We’re going to the Mount Pisgah mentioned in the Bible!

Chi: No way!

Chad: [laughing] Way. Because Du Bois references it.

[“Shining Armor” by Guustavv]

Chad: It matters because its summit is the place where the prophet Moses first sees the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness with the Israelites, who he’s helped escape from slavery in Egypt. Pisgah is in present-day Jordan, and you can see the West Bank from its summit.

Chi: The Biblical story of Moses is so important in Black culture! Du Bois’s younger contemporary, Zora Neale Hurston, wrote a whole novel called *Moses, Man of the Mountain* that’s a retelling of it. Some of Hurston’s characters use African American slang, and one of the things they emphasize is how hard it is to get used to being free if you’ve been enslaved for a long time. People say stuff like, “I wish to God we had died whilst we was back in Egypt! There we was sitting down every day to a big pot of meat and bread. If this God you done got us mixed up with had to kill us, we sure wish He had of killed us down in Egypt on a full stomach.” [Hurston, *Moses*, 194].

Chad: In Du Bois’s “I sit with Shakespeare” quote, he’s likening “the dull red hideousness” of Jim Crow era Georgia to ancient Egypt: the place the Israelites had to flee to become emancipated. In his passage, the classics are what help you visualize a free and beautiful future. They’re what get you to the top of Mount Pisgah. And he accuses racist white people of keeping the classics away from African Americans as a way to try to keep Black people oppressed.

Chi: So the people withholding Aristotle and Aurelius—and also Balzac and Dumas—are like Pharoah?

Chad: Exactly. They are the Man. And, according to Du Bois’s analogy, God is not on their side.

The Probation of Races

Chi: We’ve now arrived at Part 2 of this Old-School podcast. We call this part **The Probation of Races**. Why will become apparent in a minute. For now, let’s put the showcase passage from *The Souls of Black Folk* in the air again, as a reminder of where we’re focusing our energies:

Chad: [reads passage]

“I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they all come graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America? Is this the life you long to change into the dull red hideousness of

Georgia? Are you so afraid lest peering from this high Pisgah, between Philistine and Amalekite, we sight the Promised Land?"

[Source: *Souls*, 75.]

["Thousand Days" by Amaroo]

Chi: I want us to get really literal for a minute and talk about wincing.

Chad: Good idea! Because a non-trivial number of white people winced around Du Bois because he was Black, and he wrote about some of those experiences in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Chi: That's one of the things I always talk about with my students when we read this book: the fact that, even though racial segregation was so commonplace and ubiquitous back then, Black kids didn't magically enter the world knowing about racism. They had to learn that the wider society viewed them as different and problematic.

Chad: And that learning about those societal dividing lines sometimes was really traumatic! It hurt Du Bois personally when he was little. Then, as he got older, it offended his sense of patriotism because he thought it violated American ideals and our national dignity.

Chi: And it violated his beliefs about human nature because maintaining this artificial caste privilege caused people to work against the true, the beautiful, and the good.

Chad: It's literally true that books don't wince when you hold them. A volume of Shakespeare's plays doesn't wince! It's not going to wound you or offend you in that way. And that's a big deal to Du Bois.

Chi: One day, I was walking back from class with one of my students who was incarcerated before coming to UC Berkeley. So we're walking, and he's pointing out all these little ways that people around us are moving away from us, or clutching their bags or purses extra tight when they see us, or cutting in front of us really close, or jostling us. He explained it this way: in prison, you learn to pay really close attention to body language. Because you have to, right?. And that he couldn't just turn that awareness off now that he's free again. The upshot: when he sees people doing the equivalent of wincing in predominantly white contexts, like our campus, he second guesses whether it's happening because of racism.

Chi: “I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not.” It’s a respite from the day-to-day racist interactions that wound Du Bois out in the world.

Chad: Shakespeare doesn’t wince. Unlike the time when Du Bois’s white elementary school classmate refused the card he tried to give her (but accepted cards from everyone else). Or the uncomfortable experience he had sitting in a theater beside white people who didn’t want him there.

Chi: Or having to get up and move to the segregated Jim Crow Car in the back of the train when he crossed the Mason Dixon line because southern customs demand Black and white people be separated in public accommodations. Du Bois wrote about all of this in *Souls*.

Chad: The image of wincing or recoiling from someone or something is so powerful in this book! Maybe more so because Du Bois himself isn’t immune to some version of this physical response. Remember when he writes about his son’s birth?

Chi: Totally. And admits that he’s traumatized by seeing that the baby has blond hair (because it’s a reminder of this terrible history of sexual violence against enslaved women)?

Chad: Yeah, he winces at his own son at first. Until his wife teaches him how to connect with the baby. And maybe he shares this story about his own visceral response because he wants us to know how deep racial trauma can cut, and how hard it is to repair.

Chi: In the first part of the book, Du Bois is being really literal and statistical and historical when he’s talking about the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Freedmen’s Bank, and how they didn’t succeed in repairing much of the damage of slavery in the first decade after the Civil War. Right? And then he tells more personal stories like the one about his baby. Which is horribly sad! But it’s also about how Black people can help each other heal—through wisdom and love and generosity of spirit.

Chad: And in the “I sit with Shakespeare” passage, he talks about the classics as offering yet another kind of repair. The repair of intellectual fellowship.

[“Lexington” by Typa]

Chad: There’s a second Shakespeare reference in *Souls*...in the Sorrow Songs chapter near the end of the book that I think we should talk about. It comes right after a passage where Du Bois talks about African American spirituals and asserts that they express a

core faith in “the ultimate justice of things,” either in this life or after. Meaning that, “sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins.”

Chi: I agree! Because that passage connects to the earlier Shakespeare reference. And it helps explain more about what the classics offer Black people in Du Bois’s view, beyond the non-trivial comforts of acceptance and intellectual fellowship.

Chad: Here’s what Du Bois wrote:

[“ESTATE” by Blue Steel]

“The silently growing assumption of this age is that the probation of races is past, and that the backward races of to-day are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of peoples irreverent toward Time and ignorant of the deeds of men. A thousand years ago such an assumption, easily possible, would have made it difficult for the Teuton to prove his right to life. Two thousand years ago such dogmatism...would have scouted the idea of blond races ever leading civilization....[T]he meaning of progress, the meaning of ‘swift’ and ‘slow’ in human doing, and the limits of human perfectibility, are veiled, unanswered sphinxes on the shores of science. Why should Aeschylus have sung two thousand years before Shakespeare was born?”

[source: *Souls*, 178]

Chi: “the probation of races” is such an amazing phrase!

Chad: The big point here is that the classics help us put human achievement into temporal perspective, and not write people off too soon.

Chi: Now I’m thinking back to those Philistine and Amalekite references in the “I sit with Shakespeare passage...”

Chad: Yeah, he’s like, *Hey white people—imagine if someone judged you back in the day the same way you’re judging Black people! They’d write you off.*

Chi: Yeah, he’s making it utterly explicit, in case we missed his more subtle discussion about human potential earlier in the book.

Chi: In Sonia Sanchez’s amazing spoken-word poem from the ‘60s about student activism, called “Listen to Big Black at SF State” she begins with the assertion, “There

are many tribes in our nation...” Do you think Du Bois is saying (or implying) the opposite here: that there *aren't* a lot of different tribes in the African American mix? That all Black people are one tribe?

Chad: And that white American people are a separate Teutonic tribe?

Chi: A tribe that needs to think about how posterity will regard it if their peeps don't start acting better?

Chad: Yeah, because they might be remembered like the Amalekites!

Chi: The terrible, horrible, no good, very bad tribe? The one whose famous progenitor, Esau, traded his birthright for some stew?

Chad: Or like the Philistines, whose name has become a synonym for petty and narrow-minded.

Chi: Poor Philistines! They kind of get a bad rap...I feel like Du Bois is throwing down in this second passage that mentions Shakespeare!

Chad: Yeah, it's pretty meta.

Chi: He's not *just* offering a caution about posterity and how it might remember us. He's like, *the classics can help us learn about freedom. But we also need those works to help us 20th century people understand what's wrong with the new ways we're thinking about knowledge itself.*

Chad: So—what's wrong with the modern approach to knowledge, according to his book?

Chi: Du Bois name checks sociology specifically. He's saying: here's the big shortcoming of the discipline I'm helping to build. And it's a doozy: if you use these tools and approaches, it won't give you perspective on what's possible in human life, or a sense of what particular groups are likely to achieve.

Chad: Because the timeframe of sociology—and of modern scientific inquiry more generally—is way too short?

Chi: Exactly! Sociology sees just an eye-blink of what a people have in them. What Du Bois is saying here is that it takes millennia to get a true measure of what specific

groups of people might contribute. That's why we need the classics, too. So we don't lose perspective.

Chad: It's easy for this point about disciplinary limits to get lost given the really dramatic fight that Du Bois was picking with Booker T. Washington about African American education...

Chi: Yeah, it's totally overshadowed by the vocational vs liberal arts education debate! The story of that fight is a huge part of *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Chad: There was a lot to that argument. But here's how I understand its relationship to the classics: Du Bois was saying it was essential to educate Black people for full citizenship (including wise political participation), which requires liberal arts education. And Washington was saying that, instead of breaking the color barrier in many professions and modes of life, African Americans should keep doing the manual and skilled trades work that most of them did during their hundreds of years of enslavement.

Chi: But that we should learn about and do them better, and get paid fairly for that work, and build separate and strong Black communities and institutions. And buy land, and build wealth, and gradually move toward formal political enfranchisement. That was Washington's vision. But economic security came first for him.

Chad: And Du Bois believed there was no true economic security without full, free, and overt political participation. I think the political scientist Desmond Jagmohan summarizes the difference in their positions really well. He wrote:

'Washington sought, instead, to build a black politics unseen—in the teeth of formidable Jim Crow brutalities and injustice—that would endure because it would be solidly anchored in autonomous institutions.'

[source: Desmond Jagmohan, *Making Bricks Without Straw: Booker T. Washington and the Politics of the Disenfranchised* (2015 dissertation), 8-9. <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/39321>]

Chi: I agree with Jagmohan about a lot of things. Including the fact that Washington's uplift philosophy gets ignored—or caricatured and unfairly denigrated—a lot nowadays. And I think that's part of why I fail when I try to convince my students that their hero, W. E. B. Du Bois, really *did* value the classics. Because Booker T. Washington was publicly so conservative, my students seem to think that means he was the one who's pro-classics. When, in fact, Washington downplayed the classical part of Tuskegee's

curriculum so it would seem like he wasn't teaching anything subversive down at that Black college in Alabama!

Chad: It's ironic, right? Also, it's kind of ironic that Du Bois is critiquing the field of sociology so intensely given that he's one of the people who is literally helping to establish that field of study! And with this exact book...

Chi: Which suggests to me that he takes that co-founder responsibility really seriously! He's talking about sociology and its possibilities *and* its limits. But Where Du Bois ultimately goes with his thoughts about education and human potential is much broader.

Chad: I agree. I think Du Bois is designating *all* of the modern, scientific approaches to knowledge that discount or ignore the classics. Because the deep past is what gives us some inkling of what's possible in human achievement.

Chi: And without that perspective, we're just kind of wandering around in the intellectual wilderness. That's what his imagery suggests...

[“7even” by Aiolus Rue]

Chad: We're almost at the end of this episode of Old-School. How should we close this Du Bois podcast out?

Chi: Carrie Cowherd has what I think is a really useful taxonomy of classical references in Du Bois's work. That's a good “summing up” kind of thing! Cowherd divides them up into three categories. First are the casual and incidental references. Second are the direct classical references that contribute to the structure of the whole book (or a part of the book). Third are the “underlying attitudes” from classical antiquity “that are expressed in varying ways throughout” this and other works.

[source: Cowherd, “The Wings of Atalanta,” 284. Quoted in David Withun, ch. 1]

Chad: So what category does Du Bois's “sitting with Shakespeare” quote fall in?

Chi: I think more than one! It kind of depends which part of the quote you're looking at. The first part of the quote gives us what feels like a small-C classical reference to Shakespeare (who's not an ancient author, but he's usually considered a key contributor to that long tradition of Western literature and thought). But then, later on, we realize that it's not so casual after all...

Chad: And the second time Du Bois mentions Shakespeare in this book, he levels a critique of how his discipline approaches knowledge. (And, by implication, how all modern disciplines approach what's meaningful and relevant to contemporary life and problems.) So what looked like a second casual reference is part of the deeper and more shaping work of the book as a whole.

Chi: I'd say that second reference is both category one and category two. Because it has to do with the larger shape and direction of this core argument about education and knowledge.

Chad: And maybe it's connected to category three if David Withun is right in attributing Du Bois's gadfly approach—his willingness to be a contrarian—as something he learned in part from studying Socrates.

[source: Withun, *Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture*, 12 (footnote 20)]

Chi: Also if Keith Byerman is right in seeing more than echoes of Plato in Du Bois's lifelong commitment to what he calls the Platonic “trinity of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.”

[source: Byerman, *Seizing the Word*, 4.]

Chad: Hey listeners! Have we convinced you that the classics matter to Du Bois?

Chi: In his personal life and in the arguments he makes in this book?

Chad: We hope so! Because there's so much more to discover. There are a *ton* of classical references in *The Souls of Black Folk*. We've barely scratched the surface. But we hope we've piqued your curiosity!

Chi: Thanks for listening to this “and another thing...” episode of Old-School. Whew! [Chad laughs] I feel a little calmer about my past teaching failures...like maybe there's hope after all.

Chad: Maybe now that we've spent the time and talked all of this out, we'll have better success convincing our future students to take these classical references seriously.

Chi: That is the pedagogical Promised Land! Here's hoping we get there...

["Who Dat" by Amber Spill]

Chad: The Old-School podcast is brought to you by the Berkeley Institute and the Department of African American Studies at UC Berkeley. The podcast is funded by gifts from Boyd and Jill Smith and the Foundation for Excellence in Higher Education.

Chi: Thanks to Amber Spill for our theme music. Special thanks to Chaitra Powell, the Curator of the Southern Historical Collection at the UNC Chapel Hill libraries, for her help navigating the Penn School's archives. And to the Penn Center on St. Helena Island for letting the UNC Library host those materials and make them more accessible to the public.

Chad: Thanks also to David Withun for writing such an amazing new book about Du Bois and the classics. It's called *Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Classics and Cosmopolitanism in the Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois*.

Chi: Check out our show notes if you want some more Old-School reading recommendations. You can find them at the African American Intellectual Traditions website: aaiti.berkeley.edu.

Chad: See you later back at the podcast. Our next episode is about the poet Robert Hayden and Plato's *Phaedo*. Thanks for listening. And bye for now.