

Bois shows how to lift the veil, however understood, and make everyone better for the lifting. *The Souls of Black Folk*, therefore, has a classic quality appropriate for every survey history course. The first point is the metaphor of a veil. The second point is the self-contradiction of the status quo.

"The price of culture is a lie," writes Du Bois, as "the only method by which undeveloped races have gained the right to share modern culture." Much, if not all, of what we call social history, in the sense of history from the bottom up, is about coping with culture as a lie. Just as Du Bois focused on saving the United States from itself, so, in a broader sense, is his book about saving history from itself. The place for academics to save history is in college. Du Bois has a deep concern for the meaning of a college education, "... the true college will ever have one goal, —not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes." For Du Bois college is about developing an identity acceptable both to the status quo and to the changes required for those whose best interests require changing the status quo. Du Bois uses the historical method to expose injustices associated with identity.

The index includes five citations for identity, two of which I could not find, except in a generic sense. I found seven uses of the word identity not indexed. That said, the five-page index is thorough, detailed, and useful for engaging the twenty "Questions for Consideration." These questions take up two pages.

The editors' notes and commentary are extensive, academic, and rarely overly basic. The three-page "Selected Bibliography" is appropriate. The seven-page "A Du Bois Chronology (1868-1963)" is useful as is the "Selected Photographs, Essays, and Correspondence" section.

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**Edward Countryman, ed. *How Did American Slavery Begin?* Boston & New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Pp. x, 150. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-312-21820-6.**

In a recent essay in *The New York Review of Books* (3 December 1998), Edmund Morgan called slavery "The Big American Crime." Indeed, it has remained, for the past fifty years, one of the central themes of the American experience, explored by some of the best minds and writers of our history. In many ways, our national genesis, our most basic values, and identity as a nation lay in the paradox of the simultaneous creation of freedom and slavery in early American history. In this way, Edward Countryman, editor of a series entitled "Historians at Work," sets out "to show students what historians do by turning closed specialist debate into an open discussion," inviting students "to confront the issues historians grapple with while providing enough support" for conflicting interpretations and reflection. To aid students, each selection

includes an informative introduction and ends with some questions for closer reading of the text. The question of "How Did American Slavery Begin?" begs others that speak to "the black beginnings of America's unique society."

The first section on the beginnings of American slavery illustrates the pretentiousness of such an approach. Ira Berlin's 1996 essay "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," reprinted in its entirety from the *William and Mary Quarterly*, comprises 45 of the 47 pages devoted to the topic. The attempt to engage students in an open discussion and to guide them with focus questions takes up two pages, perhaps not even requiring a knowledgeable scholar like Countryman to miss an afternoon's teatime. Of the 150 plus pages of text and commentary, less than ten percent even attempts to concoct background information and context for students.

The essays in *How Did American Slavery Begin?*, written by such notables as Winthrop Jordan and Edmund Morgan, embody some of the best writing and thinking on the subject of early American slavery, but, because of that, they also are among the best known, thus easily accessible in journals, reprints, and as parts of edited collections. Frankly, I'd rather have students read them in professional journals and scholarly monographs, all the while allowing them to engage in the research work of the profession as well as in the curiosity of surrounding context and content. Of course, I'd also like them to read the original documents first and to understand the debate from its origins. That's as open and as engaging as it gets. As anyone who has ever taught history courses understands, the one who always gets the most out of any class is the teacher. Why? They have done the intellectual work necessary for learning. There are few shortcuts to learning but many pretensions, especially if understanding the outcome is considered more important than the process. If, as Edmund Morgan maintains, slavery continues to be the "Big American Crime" of its past, then scholars who profit from it under pretensions of helping poor students engage in its debate surely must be guilty of a smaller academic tort.

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Edward Countryman, ed. *What Did the Constitution Mean to Early Americans?* Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. Pp. xii, 169. Paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-312-18262-7. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-312-21821-4.

This book is a collection of five essays plus an introduction in which the editor provides the historical context and traces the changes in historians' approaches to the Constitution.