

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 86.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT has taken a long time. But it is coming. Large areas of the negro population are beginning to feel and to say so that the Booker T. Washington crusade is not the crusade that will uplift the negro. The Presbytery of Philadelphia has been the latest to utter itself. It has gone further than any other colored body so far in denunciation. It has pronounced “Booker Washington’s popularity” as a “popularity that helps not the freed men but that helps Booker Washington and the Tuskegee Institute.” While such opposition is not yet intelligent, it is the first step thereto.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
(1856–1915)

Booker T. Washington undertook the negro question from a totally false standpoint. He insisted in looking upon it, not as a sub-division of the Social Question, as the “negro question” is in fact, but as a race question. In so far, his theory differs in nothing from that of most of his adversaries. Had he simply stuck to the theory and not sought to draw conclusions, he would not have reached the popularity that he did reach with the capitalist class—from Carnegie down. But he drew conclusions. His conclusion was that the negro had to be turned into a skilled mechanic. Whatever conclusion is drawn from false premises must be false also. In this instance the falseness of the conclusion, and, inferentially, of the premises also jumped in exactly with the needs and the stress of the capitalist class, who thereupon boomed Mr. Washington, and even put him on their pension list.

The situation is this. The capitalist class of the land is finding out the truth of Lincoln’s dictum to the effect that tho’ you may cheat all the people some time, and some people all the time, you can not cheat all the people all the time. Our capitalist

class has been cheating the whole working class. This is mainly white. It is finding out that it can not cheat them all the time. Many are risen. Many more are rising. In this dilemma the capitalist class must turn to docile Labor. Where shall it find such? Import it from China? That would arouse too immediate a resistance. Conquer 10,000,000 Filipino cheap labor{ers}? That was tried; but the conquered failed to knuckle under with the meekness that was expected. Booker T. Washington then hove in sight. His Tuskegee is worth all the pensions that the Carnegies can bestow upon it. It and he are expected to rear the industrial army that American capitalism imagines it can save its neck with against the uprising white Labor of the land.

It follows that the opponents of Booker T. Washington, who think he should teach more religion and less carpentering, are as mistaken as he. It follows also, that both Mr. Washington and his paymasters will find out the truth of the saying that you can not buy from one person what belongs to many.

While the opposition in the colored camp to Booker T. Washington has taken long to come, it HAS come; while it is far from intelligent, it WILL become intelligent.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2007