**Refining the “Talented Tenth” theory**

W.E.B. Du Bois, a prominent African American intellectual and civil rights activist, introduced the concept of the "Talented Tenth" in the early 20th century, emphasizing the importance of higher education for the most capable members of the Black community. Du Bois believed that a small group of educated Black leaders, or the "Talented Tenth," could uplift and empower the entire race through their knowledge and skills. He argued that these leaders should be well-educated in liberal arts and sciences, as they would serve as advocates for social change and equality. During a time when many Black people faced severe discrimination and limited educational opportunities, Du Bois's vision highlighted the critical role of education in achieving racial equality and economic advancement. His ideas challenged prevailing attitudes and underscored the necessity of investing in the education of Black individuals to foster future leaders who could fight for justice and civil rights.

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The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life

-Excerpt from *Talented Tenth* essay of 1903

When I came out of college into the world of work, I realized that it was quite possible that my plan of training a talented tenth might put in control and power, a group of selfish, self-indulgent, well-to-do men, whose basic interest in solving the Negro problem was personal; personal free dom and unhampered enjoyment and use of the world, without any real care, or certainly no arousing care, as to what became of the mass of American Negroes, or of the mass of any people. My Talented Tenth, I could see, might result in a sort of interracial free-for-all, with the devil taking the hindmost and the foremost taking anything they could lay hands on.

-Excerpt from *Talented Tenth Memorial Speech of 1948*