

# Conversations on The Souls of Black Folk

Contributed by  
Monday, October 4, 2004

An interview with Rebecca Carroll concerning her collection of essays, *Saving the Race: Conversations on Du Bois from a Collective Memoir of Souls*.

Recently InTheFray Contributing Writer Jairus Grove spoke with Rebecca Carroll about *Saving the Race*, *The Souls of Black Folk*, and the role that race plays in our world.

The interviewer: Jairus Victor Grove, InTheFray Contributing Writer

The interviewee: Rebecca Carroll, editor/author of *Saving the Race: Conversations on Du Bois from a Collective Memoir of Souls*.

To read Jairus Victor Grove's review of Rebecca Carroll's *Saving the Race: Conversations on Du Bois from a Collective Memoir of Souls*, click [here](#).

The diversity of experiences expressed in this book alone calls into question the coherence of ideas like black identity or black community. What political utility do you think these concepts have after your engagement with this project?

I think the idea of a "political utility" in the context of race is counterproductive and in terms of the coherence of an idea like black identity or black community, neither is an idea so much as a lived experience; an experience that can be defined and internalized individually as one is inclined to do so.

The recent rise to prominence of black conservatives such as Condoleezza Rice, Ward Connelly, and Clarence Thomas seems to reflect a Republican agenda to divide traditionally Democratic and progressive communities, both Black and Hispanic. Do you believe blackness is intrinsically political? If so, how do we keep race political?

If by political you mean involvement with government matters and larger social cause concerns, I don't believe blackness is any more intrinsically political than human nature.

There is a definitive moment in your own narrative where you say that you decided or felt the conviction that you were a black woman. In our increasingly hybrid times, claims to identity require some history or heritage to be sacrificed or at least underplayed. Do you think the decision to elevate your blackness to the forefront of your own hybrid identity would have been different or more difficult if your other racial heritage was also marginalized, say, Hispanic or Arabic?

No, if anything I think it would have been easier there isn't the same stark contrast and opposition between blacks and Hispanics/Arabs as there is between blacks and whites.

Although this book makes a convincing and complex case for the necessity of blackness as at least a way of thinking through an existence marked by skin color and the trauma of survival, what is next? Too often the imagination of a world without race is simply a world of whiteness. Is it time to imagine what is to come after race? If so, do you have any ideas resulting from this work particularly your conversations with LeAlan Jones and others who make reference to the need to begin imagining what a world without race looks like?

I don't think LeAlan was suggesting a world without race, but rather a world in which race was more interconnected, more blurred, better understood, and less blatantly segregated which, progress being as it may, is still what it is. So no, I don't think we need to begin imagining what a world without race looks like; I think we need to start imagining what a world WITH race looks like.

To read Jairus Victor Grove's review of Rebecca Carroll's *Saving the Race: Conversations on Du Bois from a Collective Memoir of Souls*, click [here](#).

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The interviewer

Jairus Victor Grove, InTheFray Contributing Writer

The interviewee

Rebecca Carroll, Editor, The Independent Film and Video Monthly.

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(A portion of the proceeds from the purchase of these books will go the InTheFray if the link below is used.)

Saving the Race: Conversations on Du Bois from a Collective Memoir of Souls

URL: <http://www.powells.com/cgi-bin/biblio?inkey=17-0767916190-0>

The Souls of Black Folk

URL: <http://www.powells.com/cgi-bin/biblio?inkey=62-1930097131-0>