



We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity

Tommie Shelby. Harvard Univ., \$27.95 (298p) ISBN 0-674-01936-9

Shelby, an African-American philosopher, dissects the history of black political thought from W.E.B. Du Bois to Malcolm X in order to arrive at a new political philosophy that takes black solidarity as its foundation. He does an excellent job of summarizing the central tenets in black political thought, from Booker T. Washington's beliefs about self-reliance to Marcus Garvey's more radical strain of black independence. His approach to history is rigorous and genuinely critical. Shelby finds merits and flaws in almost every political theory he discusses, leading to an evenhanded, meticulously thought-out argument that builds upon the best elements of black political thought. Shelby argues for a new strain of black nationalism and solidarity, one that draws upon traditional liberal philosophy and avoids the constraints of forced group identification. For an academic text, Shelby's prose is determinedly clear, if not always engaging. He has the frustrating habit of announcing his arguments pages and chapters before he actually makes them, rather than just building such discussions into his text. However, this flaw does little to detract from the overall accomplishment of Shelby's work and its contribution to both black political thought and American philosophy. (*Nov.*)