



The Black Intellectual Tradition and the Great Conversation

with Dr. Zena Hitz, Dr. Anika Prather, Christine Perrin, Dr. James LaGrand

Panel 5: Classics for the People

Outline:

Classics for the People

- **Dr. Zena Hitz (00:20):** There is an idea that the classics are aristocratic, and to read them is to take the views of the powerful into yourself.
- **Dr. Anika Prather (06:38):** Read the classics for yourself, they are transformative.
- **Dr. Zena Hitz (10:25):** These marginalized people see something that the aristocrats don't see. The books mean more for the marginalized. Because there is so much humanity, and it is where you come to know what a human being is, if you are reading it as a validation of your power, you are missing out.
- **Dr. Anika Prather (12:23):** "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not...so, wed with truth I dwell above the veil."
- **Dr. James LaGrand (13:38):** There is something more powerful that someone like DuBois experiences, out of context of material deprivation and lack of political freedom.
- **Dr. Zena Hitz (16:39):** As a black academic, who would talk to you, and how would they talk to you, and what would they tell you? The possibilities for an open, collaborative conversation on something profound would be hard to find outside of things in church. We need other people to confirm who we are.
 - **Dr. Zena Hitz:** The soul is what always needs to be liberated.
- **Dr. Christine Perrin (20:03):** The loneliness that is felt and censorship over what you say might not have been as precious.
 - **Dr. Christine Perrin:** There is a deep human need to name and commune with souls. You almost have to be in a difficult position to seek it.
 - **Dr. Zena Hitz:** An immigrant from Vietnam said that he felt that W.E.B. DuBois said something about his experience. It is the humanity in the books. These books are all speaking to all of us.



- **Dr. James LaGrand (25:18):** There is a sense in which to borrow too much of this doesn't seem authentic.
 - **Dr. Zena Hitz (27:10):** Shakespeare could be anybody. We lack the confidence. You can be anybody and everybody and yourself at the same time.
 - **Christine Perrin:** The self can't be boiled down to such a simplistic notion.
 - **Dr. Anika Prather:** People don't really understand the, "I have a dream," speech. Martin Luther King Jr. was saying that he wanted to be an advocate for the beloved community. His dream was to end the racial divide completely. Christians should be the champions of this, because we should understand what it means to be one.
- **Dr. Zena Hitz (33:45):** These slogans about how these books are "not for you" is a lie. It is the lie that the slaveholders tell you. They want to use the canon to reinforce their power.
 - **Dr. Zena Hitz:** You have to take the books back. They belong to all of us.
 - **Dr. LaGrand:** It is a challenge to show that this is not a form of miseducation, it draws on the goods that are meant to draw us together as human beings.
 - **Christine Perrin:** Many authors have been lost because there was no one coming into their horizon.