

# History essay example

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## **Race, Ethnicity and World War 1**

World War 1 was one of the largest wars ever fought up until that time. Discussions of World War 1 often include topics such as the sides that different countries were on, their political positions, the economics that played a part in the war, and the weaponry. However, the subject of race relations during that time period has a significant place in the discussion of the Great War. Race relations throughout the world were affected by the war. Furthermore, race relations on a national level within the United States were also impacted by the war. Throughout this paper, I will discuss the impact that World War 1 had on race and ethnicity relations affecting various groups within the United States.

A number of African American fought in World War 1; In fact, it is estimated that approximately 400, 000 Africans Fought in World War 1. African Americans are estimated to have made up approximately ten percent of the United States forces during the war. This did not necessarily change the way that African Americans were treated in this country. The sacrifices that African American soldiers made were largely ignored. Many African American were proud and honored to serve for their country in the war. One can assume that this is because this may have been one of the first times that Africans were recognized as citizens of this country; these soldiers were still seen as colored troops and not the same as white soldiers. One important difference to note in the treatment of African Americans during that time is that they were drafted disproportionately compared to their percentage in society to serve in the war. Furthermore, these were relegated to specific companies and were rarely allowed advancement within the company.

Other racial and ethnic groups were affected by the war as well. One group within the United States to be affected by the conditions that led up to the war and the war itself were Asian Americans. As early as 1910, Asian American began to be restricted from entering the United States. Also in 1910, the Angel Island Immigration Station opened where immigrants, mostly of Asian descent were held and prevented from communicating with others before gaining admission into the United States or being deported. In 1917, Asian immigrants were banned from the United States, except those of Japanese or Filipino decent. Furthermore, in 1917, Alien Land Laws were passed that banned immigrants from certain countries from entering certain states within the United States. Arizona was one such state to pass such laws.

Furthermore, because the United States fought against Germany in the war, there was a great deal of anti-German Semitism during that time that affected German Americans. Newspapers in the United States that were writing in German were shut down. German was no longer taught in public schools. In addition, churches founded by those of German decent stopped holding services. Germans accused of not being patriotic were often subject to attacks by other individuals. Additionally, many were forced to buy war bonds under threat of retribution.

The country of Mexico was invited to join the war by the Germans and fight against the United States in exchange for securing the state of Texas for the country of Mexico. This invitation was made via telegram which was intercepted and released to the public. This led to hostility against those of Mexican descent residing within the United States. This led to tens of

thousands of Mexican Americans in the state of Texas fleeing for Mexico. Puerto Ricans were granted citizenship in 1917 at the commencement of the war. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans were drafted to fight in the war. Those of African descent faced the same segregation and discrimination that African Americans did at that time. They served in segregated troops alongside African Americans and were prohibited from serving in other units.

#### W. E. B. DuBois and Civil Rights

W. E. B. DuBois was born William Edward Burghardt DuBois on February 23, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He was an African American civil rights activist and leader, a Pan-Africanist, a historian, and educator, a sociologist, a writer, and editor, a poet, and a scholar. W. E. B. DuBois graduated from high school in 1884 as the valedictorian of his high school class. After graduating from high school, he attended Fisk University where he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1888. Upon graduating from Fisk University, W. E. B. DuBois began his studies at Harvard University as a junior at the university. He received his bachelor of arts degree from Harvard University in 1890, graduating cum laude. After receiving his bachelor's degree, W. E. B. DuBois went on to obtain a master of arts degree from Harvard in 1891. In 1892, he entered the University of Berlin where he began graduate studies in the fields of history and economics. After completing his graduate studies, DuBois again entered Harvard University where he obtained his doctorate degree in 1895.

W. E. B. DuBois was a very influential civil rights activist. He was the founder of the African American protest group the Niagara Movement. This was a protest group for African American scholars and professionals. In 1909, W. E.

B. DuBois helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the NAACP. DuBois served as the editor of the organization's monthly magazine, *Crisis*, among other positions. In fact, DuBois was one the primary leader of the NAACP as it protested societal injustices against African Americans such as lynchings.

In 1934, DuBois left the NAACP because of a different view of what he felt was right for African Americans during that time. DuBois firmly believed in an African American nationalist approach that advocated African American controlled institutions, schools, and cooperatives. The NAACP, on the other hand, supported integration. However, he was not absent from the NAACP for long. In 1944, DuBois returned to the NAACP to take a position as the director of special research. He used this position to bring the grievances of African Americans before the United Nations in an effort to spur change. DuBois was very active in the Pan-Africa Movement as well. He promoted the well-being of people of African descent no matter the country. He was an organizer of several Pan-Africa congresses throughout the world. These congresses brought together intellectuals of African descent from various countries to discuss and take actions to improve upon the conditions of oppression of Africans throughout the world. As part of his involvement in the Pan-Africa movement, DuBois relocated to and became a citizen of the country of Ghana at the request of its president.

As an author, W. E. B. DuBois wrote 21 books and over 100 essays and articles. He was a very proficient author who had many of his works published. His writings can still be accessed today and are often taught in African American studies classes and other history classes. Many of his works

discussed the plight of African Americans throughout the country as well as those of African descent throughout the world. His writings were considered to be very influential in his time and still possess historical as well as scholarly significance today. His ideas are still studied and analyzed both when discussing the plight of African Americans during his time period and the plight of African Americans today.

Additionally, W. E. B. DuBois sought to educate Africans through the teaching position that he held at Atlanta University where he served as a professor of both history and economics.