

# [Dubois v. washington](https://assignbuster.com/dubois-v-washington/)

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The time period following the Civil War was known as Reconstruction. This period lasted from 1865 to 1877. During this period of time, African American slaves were being freed and given rights in society. Even though slavery was abolished, African Americans faced much hatred and abuse in the United States. Following this era, emerged the Progressive Era from 1890 to 1920. As immigrants began moving to the States, cities became overcrowded.

Many concerned African Americans believed that great change was needed to protect everyday people from being abused because of their race and skin color. This is when the reform concept began to take place in order to change society. The main issue being addressed was racism in the form of public segregation. Access to education, housing, and healthcare was scarce while lynchings were forceful in the South. Some African American reformists decided to fight for equal rights, but they each had different ideas of the method necessary for African Americans to confront this major problem of segregation.

Two influential reformists were Booker T. Washington and W. E. B DuBois. A few crucial points that set these two individuals apart was their background, opinion on the best way to help African Americans, and their impact on the Civil Rights Movement. Booker T.

Washington and W. E. B DuBois are two people with very different backgrounds and childhoods. To begin with, Booker T. Washington was an African American born into slavery on April 5, 1856 in Hale’sFord, Virginia.

Once he was freed by the 13th Amendment in 1865, Washington worked is salt furnaces and coal mines throughout his childhood. From 1872 to 1875 he attended the Hampton Institute. After his education in 1881, Washington founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. Washington built relationships with white patronsfrom both the North and South in order to expand his school. He needed to reassure his sponsors that the philosophy of the university wasn’t meant to challenge the Jim Crow Laws or lynchings, it was only meant to inspire African Americans to have an industrial education.

In 1895, Washington spoke at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. His speech argued that African Americans should accept segregation andracism as long as whites granted them opportunity in economy, education, and criminal justice system. This speech helped Washington earn the respect of many politicians. On the other hand, W. E. B DuBois was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

As a child, he attended school with white kids and teachers. His enthusiasm for learning was pushed and encouraged by his teachers. Later in 1885, he moved to Nashville, Tennessee and attended Fisk University where he first encountered the Jim Crow laws and American racism. He experienced racism and poverty for the first time in his life. This is when he decided to dedicate his life to ending racism. In 1888, he earned his bachelor’s degree.

DuBois went on theHarvardUniversity and became the first African American to get a PhD from Harvard. He even got a fellowship to study for two years at the University of Berlin in Germany. Following his studies, DuBois returned to the states and observed the lynchings and abuse that African Americans were now facing. As a result, DuBois wrote “ Souls of Black Folk” which were a collection of essays published in 1903 arguing that African Americans were responsible to give contributions to the issue of racial inequality, and that Washington’s argument was false in the sense that African Americans couldn’t accept racial segregation or racism in order to improve their quality of life. DuBois went on to create the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)in 1909 which took over the philosophy of the Niagara Movement of 1905.

These movements wanted to fight racial inequality. DuBois and Washington have different background that influence their different opinions about the way African Americans should fight inequality. The main question that conflicted Booker T. Washington and W. E. B DuBois was whether African Americans should be emancipated in the political aspect or the economic aspect.

Initially, Booker T. Washington was the preeminent leader of African Americans during the Progressive Era. Both Washington and DuBois agreed with the fact that African Americans should learn to become skilled self-reliant business owners who knew industrial trades, but they disagreed about what should happen to the Jim Crow laws. The Jim Crow laws were created after the Reconstruction period in the late 1870’s. The name Jim Crow came from a slang word used to say black man. When Federal troops were removed from the South, white legislation took over again.

Then, all of the people who opposed the Radical Republicans decided to begin limiting African American’s rights. This began with legislations passed all over the South requiring African Americans to pay poll taxes that they couldn’t afford in order to vote. Another method was having literary tests before voting that required citizens to read passages and to interpret them correctly. Usually, African Americans with little to no education after coming out of slavery, were unable to complete the task. Additionally, laws called grandfather clauses were formed. These said that you could only vote if your grandfather was able to vote before the Civil War.

This wasn’t the case for most African Americans because their families were usually slaves as well who had no freedom or rights. Later on into the 1950’s these laws were making segregation legal. As long as everything was “ separate but equal,” theSupremeCourt decided it abided by the Constitution. This was decided in the Plessy v. s Ferguson case of 1896.

This was when a black man, 30 year old Homer Plessy, purposely sat on the “ white only” train car and refused to get up. He was put in jail overnight, released on a $500 bond. His case went before the Supreme Court where it was decided that Plessy was wrong, and he lost the case. This was a sign for southerners that segregation was legal. Booker T. Washington believed that segregation and the Jim Crow laws should be accepted by African Americans.

Instead, he believed that all African Americansshould focus on the economic side of their rights to build up businesses and become self dependant. As long as African Americanswere allowed the same educational chances, economic success, and a fair criminal justice system , then the rest didn’t matter. In his speech to the Cotton States and International States in Atlanta, he earned many politicians respect by saying, “ Cast down your buckets where you are… Our greatest danger is that in the great leap between slavery and freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands.” Because he grew up working through industrial businesses, he is using himself as an example of where hard work on the economic side can lead to great successes. On the other hand, W. E.

B DuBois believed that African Americans had to take a stand against racial discrimination in order to become valued members of American politics. He presumed the fact that African Americans should be more socially and politically active. Whether it was published literature, or visual art , the importance was to showcase African American talent and importance in society. DuBois had the NAACP create a magazine named Crisis, from 1910 to 1934, in order to inform people about ways they could become a part of political life in America. He also argued in his collection of essays, Souls of Black Folk, that African Americans must take advantage of educational opportunities to enliven their race. Since he grew up in an intellectual and politically involved family, he believed that showing yourself to the world can help to make an impact on society.

. While Washington and DuBois disagreed on how to help African Americans evolutioninthe american society, they both helped advance the Civil Rights Movement, and earn rights for African Americans. Although Booker T. Washington and W. E. B DuBois contradict each other in the ideal method to fight against racial inequality, they both made an impact.

Their efforts in the fight for the African American race in society helped to inspire others to initiate the Civil Rights Movement. Du Bois’s organization, the NAACP, helped to get the African American communityinto the political world. Washington’s university, The Tuskegee Institute, helped set the example for other schools created for African Americans. Even if their actions and goals were set from different points of views, they both wanted to see this cause move forward whether it was through economics and using their hands to produce a future, or through politics displaying their place in society. Today, thanks to the work of these inspirational African American reformists, African Americans can become President without needing to worry about discrimination for their color, and even if there are still white supremacists and racists ideas among american citizens, it is partly because of these men’s’ dedication that they are outnumbered by so many African American supporters.