

William edward burghardt du bois

[Literature](#), [Biography](#)



William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts on February 23, 1868 to Mary Silivans and Alfred Du Bois. A descendant of African American, French, and Dutch ancestors, he demonstrated his intellectual gifts at an early age. He was published in the community's newspaper by the age of 14. The only black in his class of 12 graduated from high school as valedictorian at the age of 16. He was orphaned shortly after his graduation and was forced to fund his own college education. He got his Bachelor of Arts from Fisk University and received a scholarship to attend Harvard University.

Harvard considered his high school education and Fisk degree inadequate preparation for a master's program, and had to register as an undergraduate. Du Bois received his second bachelor's degree in 1890 and then enrolled in Harvard's graduate school. He earned his master's degree and then his doctoral degree in 1895, becoming the first black to receive that degree from Harvard. After completing his master's degree, he was selected for a study-abroad program at the University of Berlin where he studied for two years. In between getting all of his education, Du Bois did have a social life.

In 1896, Du Bois married Nina Gomer and had two children. The work of Du Bois has recently become recognized for its significant contribution to sociological theory. Du Bois himself was overwhelmingly concerned with the scientific perspective of value free sociological research. This theoretical perspective is anything but free. Du Bois looks at the social world from the vantage point of minority and blacks. Du Bois believed that assimilation was

the best means of treating discrimination against blacks in the 1920's. Education was a key to a diverse and cultural society.

Du Bois being a well-respected intellectual and leader, worked to reach goals of education and peaceful resolutions between the races and classes. Du Bois felt that blacks needed political power to protect what they had and what they earned. He felt that the greatest enemy of blacks was not necessarily whites but it was the ignorance of the whites concerning the capabilities of the black race. He wanted to encourage the development of black youth in America so that they understand why racism started. He stated "[t]he most talented of the youth should be educated to be leaders" (Bennett, 1964).

Du Bois had begun his research into the historical and sociological conditions of black Americans that would make him the most influential black intellectual of his time. His doctoral dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America*, was published in 1896 as the initial volume in the volume in the Harvard Historical Studies Series. After teaching for several years at Wilberforce University in Ohio, Du Bois conducted a study of the social and economic conditions of urban blacks in Philadelphia in 1896 and 1897. A book was published as a result the *Philadelphia Negro*.

This study of race in the city of Philadelphia is largely descriptive. The study was also significant for its analysis of a number of social problems, including crime and class. Du Bois stated "one of his famous concepts, the "Talented Tenth," to describe the elite group of leaders in the black community" (McGraw-Hill, 2004, p. 687). He became a professor of economics and history

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at Atlanta University in 1897 where he headed the school's "Negro Problem" program. His studies made an impact on the history and sociology of blacks living in the United States.

Du Bois was one of the first sociologist analysts in the United States and a civil rights activist who had experienced the brutality of white racism firsthand. Marxist class analysis was in his later writings. Du Bois was perhaps the first major social science theorist to emphasize that racial oppression and social class oppression are closely linked. Du Bois states "the linking together of racial oppression and modern capitalism explained why there have never been true democracy and freedom for all American" (Feagin & Feagin, 2012, p. 39).

Du Bois argued "with evidence that a truly democratic society must include not only social and political equality for Americans of color but also substantial decision making control o workplaces by workers" (Feagin & Feagin, 2012, p. 39). The concept of the Veil and double consciousness was another theory that was deep to Du Bois's theory on race. The Veil is an imaginary barrier that separates whites and blacks. Du Bois hoped his work would allow whites a glimpse behind the veil, so they could begin to understand the black experience in America.

Perhaps the most fundamental component of the black experience in America was living with what Du Bois double consciousness. According to Du Bois "the tension of being both black and American can manifest itself in pathologies within the black community and discrimination in white America (McGraw-Hill, 2004, p. 687). One of Du Bois's conclusions in his work is that both whites and blacks bear responsibility for the poor state of race relations

in America. In 1905, Du Bois, along with Minnesota attorney Frederick L. McGhee and others, helped found the Niagara Movement.

The movement grew out of a meeting of 29 black leaders who gathered to discuss segregation and black political rights. They met in Canada after being denied hotel accommodations on the U. S. side of Niagara Falls and drafted a list of demands. The Movement championed freedom of speech and criticism, the recognition of the highest and best human training as the monopoly of caste or race, full male suffrage, a belief in the dignity of labor, and the united effort to realize such ideals under sound leadership. They drafted a series of demands essentially calling for an immediate end to all forms of discrimination.

Du Bois was later the founder and general secretary of the Niagara movement was denounced as radical by most whites at the time. There was a dispute over whether or not white people should be included in the organization and in the struggle for civil rights. Believing that they should, in 1909 Du Bois with a group of like-minded supporters founded the NAACP. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1910 to 1934 served it as director of publicity and research, a member of the board of directors, and editor of the Crisis (" NAACP," n. d.). This organization sought to fight for equality on the national front.

It also intended to improve the self image of African Americans. After centuries of slavery and decades of second class status, Du Bois and others believed that many African Americans had come to accept their position in organizational policy and direction. He believed the depression dictated a shift from the organization's stress on legal rights and integration to an

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emphasis on black economic advancement, even if this meant temporarily accepting segregation. Du Bois resigned from the NAACP staff in 1934 because he was unwilling to advocate racial integration in all aspects of life, a position adopted in the NAACP.

Du Bois had argued that blacks should join together, apart from whites, to start businesses and industries that would allow blacks to advance them economically. Du Bois became the editor of the organization's periodical called *The Crisis*, a job he performed for 20 years. *The Crisis* contained the expected political essays, but one poems and stories glorifying African American culture or accomplishments. The magazine always published young African American writers. He resigned from the editorship of *The Crisis* and the NAACP in 1934. His first novel, *The Silver*

Fleece was published in 1911, the same year that he attended the Universal Races Congress organized in London by the English Ethical Culture movement. Du Bois influence as a race leader and charging that the organization was dedicated to the interest of the African American. He had been an advocate of black capitalism and black support of black businesses and drawn toward the socialist doctrines. Du Bois's influenced many people and the love of literature. Du Bois wrote many books, including three major autobiographies. The most significant work was " *The Souls of Black Folks*".

In his work " *The Souls of Black Folks*" he described the life and problems that blacks in America was not easy. Du Bois had a very different plan in the struggle for black equality for the abolishment of racism than other people that wanted a " separate black nation" and others that just wanted the blacks to stay submissive. Du Bois only wanted blacks to work hard to

become active parts of American society. Through his writings, speaking, and political activism he devoted his life to advancing black movement to a higher level. Du Bois always practiced what he preached.

His speeches influenced many, and always used the pen as his mightiest weapon. He used it to encourage blacks to be proud and have pride in everything they have accomplished. Du Bois had used the pen to encourage blacks to fight for the rights that they have had been denied. In the 1930's during the affects of the Great Depression blacks has suffered greatly. At the time Du Bois was bringing blacks together. Dubois was a member of the Socialist party from 1910 to 1912 and always considered himself a Socialist. In 1948 he was co chairman of the Council on African Affairs.

In 1950 he served as chairman of the Peace Information Center and ran for the U. S. Senate on the American Labor party ticket in New York. In 1950-1951 Dubois was tried and acquitted as an agent of a foreign power in one of the most ludicrous actions ever taken by the American government ("NAACP," n. d.). Du Bois traveled widely throughout Russia and China in 1958-1959 and in 1961 joined the Communist party of the United States. Du Bois was also active in behalf of pan-Africanism and concerned with the conditions of people of African descent wherever they lived.

In 1900 he attended the First Pan-African Conference held in London; he was elected as vice president, and wrote the " Address to the Nations of the World. " In 1911 Du Bois attended the First Universal Races Congress in London along with black intellectuals from Africa and the West Indies. Du Bois organized a series of pan-African congresses around the world, in 1912-1927. The delegations comprised intellectuals from Africa, the West Indies,
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and the United States. The Fifth Congress in Manchester, England elected Du Bois as chairman.

During World War I, W. E. B. Du Bois challenged the President Woodrow Wilson to make good on his promise of winning the war for democracy by reversing the segregationist policies of his administration and extending full citizenship rights to African Americans. Du Bois worked to illuminate the ties that bound American people of color to the larger world of foreign affairs. Throughout World War I, Du Bois struggled to balance patriotism with his steadfast commitment to civil rights. In the early 1900s, he had traced the roots of the war to the problem of the color line, citing European rivalry over African American colonies as a primary cause of the conflict.

He was convinced that African Americans could use the war to secure equal rights at home. After the United States declared war on April 6, 1917, Du Bois predicted that service in the armed forces would help all African Americans in the civil rights movement while also demonstrating the high price they are willing to pay as American citizens. During the war, Du Bois's most infamous war-time editorial, "Close Ranks" undercut the civil rights militancy. Du Bois urged his fellow African Americans to forget their special grievances for the duration of the war and give themselves unreservedly over to the American effort.

To many civil rights activists, the call diminished Du Bois's previous war-time lynching and race riots. The leading voice of the Progressive-era civil rights movement, Du Bois seemed to have forsaken the cause of integration. November 11, 1918, Du Bois published documents exposing white officers' abuse and exploitation of African American soldiers and their laboring. " " Du
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Bois's most celebrated editorial in the immediate post-World War I period announced that the time to close ranks has ended.

In May 1919, Du Bois labeled returning veterans "soldiers of democracy" and wrote that they have saved democracy in France and would now "save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why." In the midst of the Red Summer of 1919, when 25 postwar riots and dozens of lynchings of black civilians and former soldiers swept the nation, Du Bois's words served both lament and inspiration" (Peter, 2005, p. 234). The Cold War hastened the fulfillment of some of Du Bois's most cherished reform goals. At the same time, the Cold War foreclosed almost as many possibilities as it created.

The anti-communism of the postwar period made Du Bois's race-conscious Marxism unpopular. After a successful early career as a publishing scholar, Du Bois recognized that the resolution of American racial problems could not be accomplished solely by revealing the truth. His famous statement, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line," demonstrates the focus of his ethical inquiries (Roth, 2005, p. 412). He believed "that it was unethical for the United States to blame the freed slaves for the vices that had been instilled in them during generations of enslavement" (Roth, 2005, p. 12).

Du Bois is famous for his disagreements with Booker T. Washington, in his efforts to secure industrial training and a prosperous economic future for the masses of blacks, had depreciated the need for political rights, higher education, and acquaintance with the higher values of civilizations. The promise of prosperity, Du Bois believed, "could not substitute for civil rights

and liberal learning” (Roth, 2005, p. 412). As time passed, Du Bois began to lose hope that African Americans would never see full equality in the United States.

In 1961, he moved to Ghana. He died at the age of 96 just before Martin Luther King Jr. led the historical civil rights march in Washington. Du Bois appeared at the wrong time in history. Movements might have been appreciated and installed pride in African Americans today. Racial awareness developed too late for him of that time period to see its affect on people today. The movement that Du Bois fought for made everyone think of what a difference one person can make. The people of today either blacks or whites should fight for their beliefs.