

W.E.B. DuBois

FEBRUARY 23RD, 1868-AUGUST 17TH, 1963

“History cannot ignore W.E.B. DuBois because history has to reflect truth and DuBois was a tireless explorer and a gifted discoverer of social truths. His singular greatness lay in his quest for truth about his own people. There were very few scholars who concerned themselves with the honest study of the black man and he sought to fill this immense void. The degree to which he succeeded disclosed the great dimensions of the man” -Martin Luther King Jr.

Family Life

- DuBois was raised as an only child in Great Barrington Massachusetts
- Both parents had left or died by age 17
- At age 28 DuBois married Nina Gome, they had 2 children together

Education

- DuBois was the only black student in his graduating class in 1884
- He attended Fisk University for 3 years on a Scholarship funded by a local clergyman and his high school principal
- DuBois then entered Harvard and graduated in 1890 with his bachelor degree in Economics & Social Problems
- He studied at University of Berlin in Germany where he received his doctoral degree

Ideas & Beliefs

- After much research DuBois formed the belief that the greatest enemy of blacks wasn't necessarily whites, but the ignorance of whites concerning their accomplishments & capabilities
- He tried to find a “cure” for prejudice regarding color
- He believed that political power was the only way blacks could become equal in the eyes of the Americans
- He felt that the answer was to develop and encourage black youth through education. If blacks were educated, they could gain the political power needed to become equal
- DuBois' ideas and beliefs for the struggle for black equality was completely different than his contemporaries, Marcus Garvey and Brooke T. Washington

Accomplishments

- At age 15, DuBois worked for the New York Globe and advocated editorials reflecting the need of black people to become more involved in the community
- 1894-1896 DuBois served as the professor of English, German, Greek & Latin at Wilberforce University in Ohio
- He became the assistant instructor in Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania
- In 1905-1911 DuBois started & led the Niagara Movement (1st black organization that demanded civil rights) with 28 other black leaders where he was elected secretary
- In 1911, he joined the NAACP and became the 1st black-staff executive & the founder and editor of NAACP's official publication *The Crisis*
- In 1933, he left the NAACP and returned to Atlanta University as a visiting professor in the Department of Economics & Sociology where he retired at age 76
- 1961 President Nkrumah of Ghana asked DuBois & his wife to come to Ghana to work on an Encyclopedia Africana

Books Written

- The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States – 1894
- The Philadelphia Negro – 1897
- The Souls of Black Folk – 1900
- Black Flame – 1961

DuBois wasn't always met with open arms during his lifetime. If he could have lived for a few more years, he would have truly seen the effect his courageous philosophy had. His impact on the blacks and American History isn't always seen and appreciated by others, but it makes him an influential figure in American history.