

## W.E.B. Du Bois

On Feb. 23, 1868, W. E. B. Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a state that did not allow slavery. He was born William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, but is most commonly referred to by his initials. He attended school, and was the valedictorian of his high school. He attended Fisk University in Tennessee, and spent his summers teaching African-American students in the backwoods rural areas around the school. He later attended Harvard, and the University of Berlin, and worked as a college professor, teaching Latin and Greek.



W.E.B. Du Bois published *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, a dissertation on the problems of slavery in 1895. This is still seen as one of the most important works on this period of time. He was a man of words, and later published another book, a sociological study of the city of Philadelphia, entitled *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. DuBois's focus was on academics and education, and he worked for the advancement of African-American citizens.

DuBois was one of the founders of the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and served as a director for this organization for almost 25 years. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the NAACP was at the forefront of civil rights protests, and Du Bois was one of its most vocal members.

W.E.B. Du Bois eventually left the NAACP, largely due to a difference in opinion over the way civil rights should be achieved. The NAACP fought for integration and equality, while Du Bois preferred a more aggressive approach, creating African American controlled schools, businesses, and cooperatives.

Du Bois was also very concerned with the plight of people of Africa, and of people of African descent, regardless of where they lived. This movement was referred to as "pan-Africanism", and Du Bois attended the first Pan-African Conference, held in London in 1900. In 1961, at the age of 95, he became a citizen of Ghana, though he did not give up his American citizenship to do so.

W.E.B. Du Bois is best known for his writing and academic works. All together, he authored over 20 books, and published over 100 pieces in newspapers and other media. In addition to his social studies, he authored two novels, and a book of poetry, making him a man of art as well as social science.

Du Bois received many honors during his lifetime, and is considered to be the foremost African American intellectual of his period in America. Du Bois died shortly after becoming a citizen of Ghana, and just before the Civil Rights march in Washington D.C. would bring change to a nation.