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W.E.B Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868, in Atlanta, Georgia. He was an American historian, sociologist, pan activist, civil rights activist, writer, author, and editor who also became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895. Because of his contributions to the African-American community, he is mostly considered as a Black elite who wanted equal rights for African Americans and supported the civil rights movement. He was the first person who opposed the Atlanta Compromise between Booker T. Washington, the Tuskegee Institute and Southern White leaders in 1895. The Atlanta Compromise said that African Americans would receive basic education and due process under the law, but ultimately, they submitted to white political rule and segregation.

Martin Luther King led a movement that resulted in the eradication of segregation, a social, political system that Dubois lived under. Dubois was fundamental in founding the NAACP which played a part in the eradication of that system. The NAACP fought the legal battle while Martin Luther King’s movement brought international notoriety to the plight of black people in the South (Wright 11). However, Martin Luther King’s leadership was effective in the material realm, while Dubois was much more of an intellectual giant. Dubois was a man of immense sophistication, who graduated with a Ph.D. from Harvard and studied in Germany. His ideas were more universalist. So, for the everyday Black American, Martin is a hero but for the black intellectual, Dubois provided cognitive frameworks which were a point of departure for the intelligentsia, which included Martin. There was an ideological fight between two men having completely distinct set of attributes as MLK was fighting to have Black Americans recognized as equal to their white counterparts but W.E.B's struggle was to have Black people in America recognized as people at all, possessing any rights at all. Du Bois influenced the people of his community in many ways and being an intellectual, he believed in strengthening the positions of ignored communities through political power. Du Bois's influence can be seen through his works and how he chooses to deal with racism. DuBois thought that racism had to be combatted and fought because it was unnatural and immoral (Lemann). His ideas can best be seen in the black movements of the 1960s including both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement. All the injustices and inequalities made Du Bois speak up about these issues and through his poems, he addressed the core issues of racism. Du Bois wrote about the miserable life of his people but white people were not ready to accept and respond nicely to his scrupulously correct portrayal of the brutality, hostility, and hypocrisy of white Americans towards Black Americans.

His language was based on factual grounds which came as shocking to the blacks as well because he opposed the conciliatory policies of Booker T. Washington and his followers. The poem is his greatest achievement which had a profound effect on the perception of black people and shows that Du Bios was more of a sophisticated person who believed in practicality and rational policies for his people. Although he was a great leader who spoke for equal rights, people do not see him as a great leader because of his opposed nature. Most of the Americans questioned his citizenship and challenged his efforts when he grew critical of America’s foreign policy and capitalism and praised the achievements of communism of the Soviet Union. This was not acceptable to America and thus he left America in 1961. As for now, Du Bois’s works are the major part of American Literature and African Americans are very inspired by his struggle. His works are still valid today which remained important in race studies for the last few years. Recently, an event was held in America to celebrate the publication of the “The Souls of Black Folk” and a staged adaptation of the book also got premiered in New York. His poems are like songs of sorrow that teach us about race, injustice, and inequalities. His writing is appreciated and acknowledged in American literature.

**Works Cited:**

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