**W.E.B. Du Bois: The Path from Integration to Pan-Africanism**

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**Abstract**

Studying the evolution of W.E.B. Du Bois from integrationist to Pan-Africanist and socialist tells a lot about the blacks in America and the blacks in general fighting for the liberation of other parts of the world. More specifically, the purpose of this paper is to explain the ideological change that W.E.B Du Bois and how the author transitioned from integration and integrationist to Pan-Africanism and socialism. This paper intended to analyze how Du Bois’ theory of Dual Consciousness was helpful in identifying the struggles that black people went through to reconcile Blackness with Americanism. The paper also addresses the topic of systematic racism and prejudice, as well as historical trauma, in the framework of the Black community and identity achievement.[[1]](#footnote-1) By discussing Du Bois’s development as an intellectual, the paper shows that Du Bois is relevant and valuable in contemporary discussions on Blackness and justice.

**Introduction**

It can be noted that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be considered the formative years of Black politics and subjectivity in American society. Of all the influential thinkers of the period, W.E.B. Du Bois could be deemed the most significant one whose racial growth was identical to the black awakening. By positioning himself as an activist intellectual, Du Bois was thus able to reflect on questions of identity and liberty as black Americans in their fight for civil rights.[[2]](#footnote-2) These social roles informed his perspective as a scholar, activist, and leader in the African American quest for identity and freedom. This paper will analyze W.E.B. Du Bois's ideologies as an integrationist, nationalist, and Pan-Africanist, exploring how Black identity and the concept of double consciousness have shaped these perspectives.[[3]](#footnote-3) It will examine how systemic racism has created a fractured sense of identity within the Black race, hindering efforts to break free from oppression and disenfranchisement. Additionally, the paper will explore the transitions throughout W.E.B Du Bois's life that influenced his evolving views on what it means for Black people to achieve true freedom and how black people have defined their identity in the aftermath of slavery and continue to do so in modern America.

**Early Integrationist Philosophy**

W.E.B. Du Bois advocated for racial integration and supported education and culture for black people in American society. Shaw pointed out that his notion of the 'Talented Tenth' called for a select group of educated black people to spearhead the battle for societal enfranchisement.[[4]](#footnote-4) Du Bois subscribed to the notion that education, skills, and aesthetics would lead to societal assimilation and gain equal citizenship rights. The integrationist approach was based on his idea that education and the attainment of knowledge were the keys to eradicating racial prejudice and achieving racial amalgamation. He also actively advocated for black civil rights on the legal front and encouraged integration to move toward improved race relations.

The integrationist views held by Du Bois were significantly shaped by his own schooling experiences, such as when he was pursuing a Ph.D. in Sociology at Harvard University and became the first African American to earn that degree.[[5]](#footnote-5) It was not only proof that education can change people's lives for the better but also the paradigm that African Americans can gain their rights and recognition if they acquire knowledge and academic degrees. Education was a priority for Du Bois, and this could eliminate race prejudice and counteract its manifestations through an informed, intellectual African American stratum. The events he witnessed at Harvard, united with his devotion to education, defined his initial fight for racial integration and the notion that knowledge could be an effective weapon in the fight against injustice.

**Transition to Black Nationalism**

Yet, racial violence and discrimination continued to be present, causing W.E.B. Du Bois, who previously adhered to the integrationist approach, to reconsider his views due to the lack of rapid change. As outlined by Marable, this change signified a new phase in Du Bois’s Black Nationalism, whereby he started advocating for Black economic autonomy and establishment of institutions. [[6]](#footnote-6)Du Bois highlighted the ideas of pride and identity in the black race and encouraged African Americans to be one people. He saw that the fight for integration was not sufficient to offer African Americans equality and justice, which is why he supported the creation of black-owned establishments to address these issues.

Du Bois’s nationalist phase occurred when he had a clearer perception of racism as a systematic problem. Du Bois and Gates also point out that he had come to learn that ambition could not be used to overcome the system of racial segregation.[[7]](#footnote-7) Du Bois's critique of integrationist approaches was predicated on the understanding of how the socio-political and economic system kept blacks subjugated and prevented them from chances at upward mobility. The change of mind in his perspective can be seen as a significant shift and a new phase in Du Bois's movement philosophy by recognizing organized group action and structural transformation as critical factors if the talismans of black manhood were to be realized.

**Evolution toward Pan-Africanism and Socialism**

These last two shifts in Du Bois’s ideology brought him to Pan-Africanism and socialism based on his changing perception of race and racial oppression in the world. For his part, Rabaka notes that, despite this, Du Bois understood that the suffering of black people in America was intimately tied to the anti-colonial and imperialist struggles elsewhere in the world.[[8]](#footnote-8) As a result, he began convening Pan-African Congresses, where he promoted international black unity and condemned colonial structures that discriminated against Blacks in Africa and other parts of the world. Du Bois also underlined the necessity of blacks to connect their oppression to the liberation movements around the globe, as the fight against racism was not limited to the borderlines of the United States.

Thus, when Du Bois finally joined the Communists at the age of 93, his political stance encompassed both races and the need for equitable economics. As highlighted in the People's World Archives, his statement upon entering the union cemented his belief that both capitalism and racism went hand in hand.[[9]](#footnote-9) From this perspective, Du Bois claimed that capitalism could not change from within; it would inevitably collapse under its weight, and its inherent flaws were intertwined with race relations. Therefore, this was not the change of mind in his later years but the result of the years he spent watching the decline of American civil rights through the workings of the capitalistic system. The same rationality can be said of Du Bois's move towards socialism as he continued to be an advocate for both racial and economic justice.

**The Impact of Double Consciousness**

Another idea presented by Du Bois is double consciousness, defined by Lewis as the inner conflict that black people faced in accepting both their ethnic roots and American status.[[10]](#footnote-10) The internal conflict stemmed from the conflict between their cultural values of being African and the duties and responsibilities of an American citizen, leading to psychological fragmentation. Du Bois's idea of double consciousness pointed to the struggle of living in a society that suppressed Blackness even as the country touted liberty and egalitarianism. Consequently, African Americans remained marginalized and experienced limitations to their social integration, as they would always have to navigate and figure out where they belonged in a society that perceived them as both a part and separate from it, thus influencing the individual and group ethnic subjectivity.

**Systemic Racism and Identity Formation**

Du Bois and Gates talk about how racism continues to present Blacks with significant challenges in terms of progression and self-definition.[[11]](#footnote-11) Discrimination based on ethnicity in education and employment has also locked people in their positions and denied them the chances they desire, thus stagnating social mobility. Such discrimination was accompanied by social and economic policies of segregation, resulting in poverty cycles. The societal prejudice based on race created a sense of suppression among people of color, and the transgenerational impact of oppressive measures like slavery and the Jim Crow laws left an indelible mark on the African Americans' psyche. Moreover, the systemic racism through which African Americans were deprived of their liberty hampered cultural evolution and further hindered equality and self-actualization.

**Modern Implications**

Eaton has seen Du Bois's ideas as more relevant to today's discourse on Blackness and liberation.[[12]](#footnote-12) Eaton also emphasizes the problem of double consciousness, which means that black people are simultaneously racially and nationally positioned. Global diasporic relations and solidarity frameworks further compound this tension. Nonetheless, social justice issues that Du Bois decried, such as systemic racism, economic injustice, and gaps in education, remain prevalent today. Currently, the theorization of Blackness has moved towards more modern frameworks, including Intersectionality and Globalization. Furthermore, considering the contemporary movement for racism and power transformation, it is worth stating that Du Bois's ideas remain relevant as a modern way of activism.

**Conclusion**

Thus, the change in W.E.B. Du Bois's political ideology from integrationism to Pan-Africanism reflects the growth of the Black political activist model. In his works, where he describes double consciousness and systemic racism, Du Bois provides paradigms that allow for the comprehension of the problems that Black people face in the formation of their identity and their liberation. Therefore, this shows that he was flexible in his approach, seeing changes in his perception and his adoption of Pan-Africanism and socialism as the right tactics to fight for the race. Race and citizenship are questions that black Americans still pose today, and in engaging these questions, Du Bois' theories remain helpful as resources for understanding race relations and fighting for social justice.

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Du Bois, W. E. B., and Henry Louis Gates Jr. Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race. The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=705871&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Eaton, Kalenda. "Eternal Blackness: Considering Afropolitanism as a Radical Possibility." Africa Today 65, no. 4 (2019): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.65.4.02>.

Lewis, David L. W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography. Henry Holt and Co, 2009.

Marable, Manning. W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat. New updated ed. Paradigm Publisher, 2005. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://archive.org/details/webduboisblackra0000mara/page/n7/mode/2up>.

Rabaka, Reiland. The Negritude Movement: W.E.B. Du Bois, Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and the Evolution of an Insurgent Idea. Critical Africana Studies: African, African American, and Caribbean Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Studies. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=1026578&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Shaw, Stephanie J. W. E. B. Du Bois and The Souls of Black Folk. The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=582996&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

**Annotated Bibliography**

"From the People’s World Archives: W.E.B. Du Bois Joins the Communist Party." People's World. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://peoplesworld.org/article/from-the-peoples-world-archives-w-e-b-dubois-joins-the-communist-party/>.

This article focuses more on Du Bois’s later years – his communism and anti-imperialism, which are consistent with his Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism. The source is valuable for the discourse on the ways Du Bois’s political stance and the ideas he supported affected his perspective on Blackness and justice. Therefore, this will help to assess better how Du Bois evolved from an integrationist to a more international and anti-colonial perspective.

Du Bois, W. E. B., and Henry Louis Gates Jr. Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race. The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=705871&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

This article is a discussion on how Du Bois understands race, Identity, and Black power historically and sociologically. In this way, it is a valuable resource for understanding how Du Bois thought about the development of the black self and subjectivity in the face of oppression. The book will prove to be helpful in comprehending Du Bois's tireless search for the meaning of blackness in the conditions of their subjugation as well as his political development.

Eaton, Kalenda. "Eternal Blackness: Considering Afropolitanism as a Radical Possibility." Africa Today 65, no. 4 (2019): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.65.4.02>.

While detailing Afropolitanism as a post-colonial, Eaton associates the idea with modern radicalism by linking it to thinkers such as Du Bois. The source will help to analyze the extent to which Du Bois's Pan-Africanist and nationalist ideologies are relevant to contemporary debates on Blackness. Eaton's identification of subsequent themes of freedom, identity, and race projection related to the idea of solidarity can help optimize the modern context of Du Bois's shifting perspectives on freedom for the Black race.

Lewis, David L. W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography. Henry Holt and Co, 2009.

This biography provides a detailed, historical account of the events of Du Bois's life, which aids in understanding his evolution as a thinker and activist. The broader themes discussed by Lewis that help in understanding these changes in Du Bois are his shift from integrationism to a more militant Pan-Africanism as well as his analysis of the American racial structure. This source will help to assess the changes in Du Bois's perception of black people's freedom and self-identification, focusing on the factors that influenced such changes.

Marable, Manning. W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat. New updated ed. Paradigm Publisher, 2005. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://archive.org/details/webduboisblackra0000mara/page/n7/mode/2up>.

Despite the fact that the biography fails to provide a chronological account of Du Bois's life, it is highly informative of his political development from the integrationist stance to Pan-Africanism. The work will be necessary for analyzing how Du Bois changed his views on nationalism and Black people's identification throughout his life, accompanied by his personal experiences with racism and studying socialism and communism. In this section, Marable examines Du Bois's involvement with the Pan-African movement and his continual engagement with demands for transformative social justice, which is helpful in noting his later works and opinions on black emancipation.

Rabaka, Reiland. The Negritude Movement: W.E.B. Du Bois, Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and the Evolution of an Insurgent Idea. Critical Africana Studies: African, African American, and Caribbean Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Studies. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=1026578&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Comparing Du Bois with other theoreticians such as Rabaka, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon, the paper aims to reveal the principles of the black aesthetic. Thus, exploring Du Bois's affiliation with the Negritude movement is going to enhance the conversation about Du Bois's Pan-Africanist stance and his perception of Black subjectivity beyond the American experience. The source will help investigate DU Bois's later life and how his vision turned to Black Internationalism and partnership with other subjugated people globally.

Shaw, Stephanie J. W. E. B. Du Bois and The Souls of Black Folk. The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=582996&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

This work analyses W.E.B. Du Bois's The Souls of Black Folk and addresses the author's ideas of double consciousness and the "Veil." Shaw describes Du Bois' conversion, which highlights his learning process and shifts in his ideas about race, self, and liberty. The text will assist in understanding Du Bois's integrationist perspective within The Souls of Black Folk and his early optimistic approach towards the incorporation of African Americans into American society amidst the discrimination they faced.

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