

## W.E.B. DuBois

W.E.B. Du Bois is probably best known as a scholar and author, but he was also one of the founding board members of the [NAACP](#).

From the [W.E.B. Du Bois Library at UMass Amherst](#):

At a time when Booker T. Washington counseled acceptance of the social order, [W.E.B.] Du Bois sounded a call to arms and with the founding of the Niagara Movement and later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People entered a new phase of his life. He became an impassioned champion of direct assault on the legal, political, and economic system that thrived on the exploitation of the poor and the powerless.

The Niagara Movement emerged out of years of struggle against racial oppression in the United States and frustration with the slow pace of change on the one hand and the moderate, accommodationist policies of Booker T. Washington on the other. In February 1905, W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter helped call together an all-black "national strategy board" to chart a new and more radical course toward social and racial justice. Inviting fifty nine like-minded intellectuals and activists to a conference on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls in July 1905, twenty nine of whom attended, they established the Niagara Movement, an early and strident voice for equality.

From the outset, the Niagara Movement defined itself against both racial oppression and Washingtonian conciliation, demanding immediate freedom of speech and press, full suffrage, the "abolition of all caste distinctions based simply on race and color," a "recognition of the principal of human brotherhood as a practical present creed," and a belief in the dignity of labor. Their demands were simple, but radical for America in 1905: "We want to pull down nothing but we don't propose to be pulled down. We are not 'knockers' save at the Door of Liberty & Opportunity. We are 'out after the Stuff' but that 'stuff' includes education, decent travel, civil rights, & ballots. . ."

With Du Bois as General Secretary, the Movement grew rapidly, establishing chapters in twenty one states by mid-September and reaching 170 members by year's end. Symbolically, they selected Harper's Ferry, W.Va. — the site of John Brown's raid — for their second annual conference in 1906, and they met subsequently in Boston, Oberlin, and Sea Isle City, N.J. Through its committees and branches, the Movement organized against segregation in travel and education and worked to secure voting rights and civic equality.

Weak finances and internal dissension, however, increasingly hampered the effectiveness of the organization. After a bitter feud within its Massachusetts branch and continuing conflict with Washington, the momentum of the Movement slowed and by 1910, it was disbanded altogether. Their work, however, was not abandoned. Du Bois and most of the original members were instrumental in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, a less radical movement that nevertheless shared the same basic goals.

More [history](#) of W.E.B. Du Bois' involvement in the NAACP:

1905-1909 Founder and General Secretary of The Niagara Movement.

1910-1934 Director of Publicity and Research, Member Board of Directors, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

1910-1934 Founder and Editor of The Crisis, monthly magazine of the NAACP.

1920 Receives the Spingarn Medal of the NAACP.

1934 Resigns from the NAACP.

1944-48 Returns to NAACP as Director of Publicity and Research.

1945 Attends founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco as representative of the NAACP

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