

Booker T. Washington vs W.E.B DuBois

After Reconstruction came to an end Jim Crow Laws segregated blacks and whites in public areas. This meant that there were separate bathrooms, water fountains, and schools, with the areas for blacks being in much worse condition. Two African American leaders stepped forward to lead the fight against this racism: Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.

Booker T. Washington was born a slave in Virginia in 1856, but gained his freedom thanks to the Emancipation Proclamation. Once free he saved his up money, and after studying hard he was able to attend college at Hampton Institute. He impressed officials there so much that he was soon placed in charge of Tuskegee Institute, an all-black college in Alabama, when he was only 25. From this educational leadership position Washington aided countless African Americans in the U.S.

Booker T. Washington was willing to accept a certain amount of segregation, in return blacks gained other opportunities, like schooling and jobs. While he did not like segregation Washington thought it better to live with this type of racism, if it meant better education and employment for blacks. He thought that if blacks received enough education and vocational training, then blacks could prove to whites they were just as smart and worked just as hard. By doing this whites would, over time, get rid of segregation as they came to see blacks as equal Americans. From his position at Tuskegee Institute Booker T. Washington encouraged all African Americans to learn and study hard.



W.E.B. DuBois had different ideas about dealing with racism. Born a free black in Massachusetts in 1868 DuBois worked hard and became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. He dedicated his life to trying end segregation. Along with Ida Wells he founded the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). This group worked through the court system to prove that Jim Crow Laws were racist, illegal, and should end in the United States

W.E.B. DuBois greatly disagreed with his rival Booker T. Washington. DuBois thought that African Americans did not have to prove to anyone that they were equal to whites and should never agree to any sort of segregation. DuBois believed that Washington had sold out the black community by agreeing to live with segregation in return for jobs and vocational training. W.E.B. DuBois believed in full political, economic, civil, and social rights and he and the NAACP fought tooth and nail through the court system to prove that Jim Crow Laws were unfair and should be gone forever.

History has not decided who was right, Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. DuBois. Regardless, both men inspired black and white Americans and both did help bring an end to segregation, but who did more for the cause of equality is left up to opinion.

Who is Who?

Directions: From the reading decide which African American leader goes with each description. Circle the correct leader on the right side of the page.

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| 1) Worked with Ida Wells: | Washington / DuBois |
| 2) Was the first African American to earn a doctorate: | Washington / DuBois |
| 3) Put in charge of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama: | Washington / DuBois |
| 4) Pushed for political, economic, civil, and social rights for African Americans: | Washington / DuBois |
| 5) Born a slave in Virginia in 1856: | Washington / DuBois |
| 6) Thought vocational training and education were the keys to end Jim Crow Laws: | Washington / DuBois |
| 7) Willing to accept a certain amount of segregation if blacks could get better schooling and jobs: | Washington / DuBois |
| 8) Worked through the court system to try and prove Jim Crow Laws were illegal: | Washington / DuBois |
| 9) Founded the NAACP, which stands for National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: | Washington / DuBois |
| 10) Wanted to prove that segregation was unfair: | Washington / DuBois |
| 11) Worked to show that blacks were equal to whites through hard work and education: | Washington / DuBois |

EXTRA: In your opinion, which leader had the better strategy to end segregation? Why?

Analyzing the Leaders

Directions: Using the reading to answer the following questions.

- 1) In one or two sentences summarize how Booker T. Washington planned on helping African Americans.

- 2) Briefly describe how W.E.B. DuBois planned on fighting against racism.

- 3) Explain how Booker T. Washington being born a slave could have impacted his ideas on how to overcome racism.

- 4) Jim Crow Laws are based on the idea of “separate, but equal.” How could W.E.B. DuBois prove that these laws were illegal and should not be allowed in court?

- 5) Do you agree with DuBois, that Booker T. Washington sold out the African American community? Explain.

- 6) In your own opinion, which leader had a better plan to end segregation? Make sure to back up your argument with examples from the reading and be thorough in your argument.