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The Einstein Affect

At the time of the 1800s and 1900s, living the American dream was challenging for two black Einsteins. The two black Einsteins were William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. “Du Bois’s prominence in this century’s Afro-American political life is widely recognized. Yet attempts to categorize him with respect to the various strategic and ideological programs constitutive of black political debate have yielded an uncommonly confusing picture” (*W.E.B Du Bois and American Political Thought* 71). Washington on the other hand “transcended his humble beginnings and triumphed over the intense racism directed toward him and those he strove to serve” (*Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* 87). Du Bois’s vision for black Americans was that “blacks would rise with help of educated leaders, the top 10 percent of the black population, who would use their training and skills to help others and to fight for rights for the race” (*Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the struggle for racial uplift* 62). In opposition to Du Bois’s vision, Washington envisioned “blacks rising up from the bottom of society through individual effort and hard work” and that is the vision that I would agree with. (198 words)

*Argument #1:*

“I agree with W.E.B. Du Bois because he pushed for Civil Rights for blacks and also believed that social change could be established if Negroes were educated. I also agree with Du Bois with his disagreements towards Washington, because Washington believed that blacks should accept the discrimination and focus on hard work……I also believe that blacks should have been intellectual (Du Bois) and shoudn't just focus on labor work (Washington). Du Bois thought that being more intellectual would have made blacks more equal to whites, and I stronly agree that it would have. Overall, Du Bois wanted blacks to have everything whites had. That is why I agree with Du Bois” (Hopson).

*My Rebuttal #1:*

I respect Porsha Hopson’s view, but Washington was not against blacks being educated and he was in agreement with the concept of full civil rights. He just simply wanted blacks to be educated in a skillful manner. He saw the importance of building a foundation from where the blacks were at, due to the fact that blacks were just coming out of slavery. I believe Washington worked behind the scenes because he was fearful of losing whites backing him up. If he did what Du Bois did, protest racial conditions, all his hard work would have gone to waste and he would have lost the only influence that would help black people, whites. Washington urged blacks to build relationships with the whites, because those relationships would bring more opportunities. “In all things that are purely social, black and whites can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress,” Washington said. Although it was a tough situation to confront, the whites were the hierarchy and without their permission the blacks would not be granted their rights. “Open protests would provoke a much harsher reaction” (*Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the struggle for racial uplift* 63). (193 words)

*Argument #2*

“I'm siding with W.E.B Du Bois because he believed that academic education was more important than industrial. I agree with this because one may know how to do physical labor but if you are not educated, there is no way for you to know how invest your earnings and built from that skill. I also agree with Du Bois in the idea that working for the white simply make African American servants to them. Whereas Booker T. Washington wanted African American to be patient and wait for the white’s trust; to earn our rights, Du Bois suggested that we take our rights. I agree 100% with this, whites had no reason you give African Americans a right to vote or any equal rights. Du Bois looked at knowledge is power and history has proven this to be right time after time” (Roberts).

*My Rebuttal #2:*

Jessica Roberts’ argument is quite valid but Washington would say, “no race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem” (*Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the struggle for racial uplift* 126). In life, people do not begin by getting their P.H.D’s, people begin by graduating in kindergarten. Washington is a man of forgiveness. He knew that blacks are “the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen” (127). He saw that black Americans should not permit their grievances to overshadow the opportunities that they would receive. You can be as educated as you want but if you do not know and befriend the people over you, your education will mean nothing. It is better to work together than to work alone but it is best to work with your influences, which are over you, than people who are in the same level as you. Knowledge indeed is power but being smart with knowledge is even more powerful (175).

*Argument #3*

In the Atlanta Address, Booker T. Washington states that southern Negroes and whites should, "Cast down [their] bucket[s] where [they] are." For Negroes this meant to focus on learning important common occupations, such as agriculture and domestic services, (for the Negro was already equipped to do these things) to foster better race relations with fellow whites and to also take advantage of the current opportunities available. For whites this meant simply to trust and rely on the Negro. In this way, Mr. Washington believed that, "In all things that are purely social we can be as seperate as the five fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." However, there would emerge another "philosopher" of the time by the name of W.E.B. Du Bois. Contrary to Mr. Washington, Du Bois believed that, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line," as stated in the forethought of The Souls of Black Folk……... Only through true integration of the Negro in America can this issue be resolved, not the illusion of inclusion (referencing Mr. Washington's analogy of the fingers and the hand)” (Carter).

*My Rebuttal #3:*

Justin Carter makes a great point and I commend him for that. But on the flip side, Washington meant so much more when he said “cast down their buckets where they are.” He was directing it to the black Americans “who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next door neighbor” (*Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the struggle for racial uplift* 126). To those blacks he would say “cast down your bucket where you are.” He wants the black Americans to make friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom they are surrounded by. I believe that gives your race a sense of strength, not weakness. Washington points out that black Americans’ greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom they may overlook the fact that the masses of blacks are to live by the production of their own hands, and fail to keep in mind that blacks shall prosper in proportion as they learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial. (195 words)

*Argument #4:*

“I agree with DuBois because he believed that even a small percent of blacks being educated can influence other blacks to want to have an education as well. Unlike Washington, I do not believe that being just "hands on" will get the blacks far because you still have to have some type of education in order to know where to go from there. They do all the working "hands on" for whites and then what???” (Rogers).

*My Rebuttal #4:*

Alaxsundria Rodgers has a great point but I disagree. Washington encouraged blacks to strengthen in the skills that they already knew, so that they could benefit from them since they did not have anything else. Black Americans were always exposed to labor work and whites were dependent on the blacks for some of those things. Washington knew that black Americans could and would make a profit from the skills that they already know. Washington never encouraged blacks to be uneducated, he only encouraged them to focus on their skills. They were free from slavery meaning they were free to get an education if they chose to. “Washington declared that blacks would be given full political rights after they had made progress in the personal, professional, and economic realms of life. Black advancement, he declared, would eventually lessen the racism of whites” (*Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* 87). (150 words)

*Conclusion:*

I defend Washington simply because he was very complex and misunderstood most of the time. Beginning his life amid the desperation of slavery, fame did not come easy for him just like all his success. “Washington suffered from spiteful and unfair attacks from critics during his lifetime and after his death” (*Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington)*. “His image emerged from these assaults as a meek and naive "Uncle Tom," a man who bowed to whites to obtain what little he could from them, instead of boldly representing blacks' aspiration to enter fully into the mainstream of American life” (87). He wanted to lift black Americans from a low status and that proves to be far more effective in the long run, than the stereotype of what his work suggests. Instead of casting him as a malleable tool of white racists, he is a skillful leader who saw little choice but to operate within parameters prescribed by whites in order to advance his race's cause. “He was "the lion and the fox," employing both open and clandestine forms of protest while constantly exhorting blacks to overcome the obstacles placed before them through hard work and self-improvement” (87). (199 words)

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