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ALL Cultures Matter: Rachel Davis DuBois, the Woodbury Project, and the Intercultural Educational Movement

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Abstract

In this research we detail the professional life of Rachel Davis DuBois, with particular attention to her creation of the Woodbury Project and her work with the Intercultural Education Movement. Employing historical and biographical research methods, DuBois' archival materials at the University of Minnesota aided our exploration of the educational movement that DuBois was instrumental in establishing in the 1930s and that continued into the 1950s in the United States. In particular, DuBois founded the Service Bureau of Intercultural Education, where she designed several workshops to educate teachers on the curriculum and discussion methods of Intercultural Education. The goal of the movement was to promote understanding and respect between people of different races, ethnicities, and religions. However, DuBois left the bureau in the 1940's due to disagreements over its goals. DuBois' radical views on equality put her at odds with members of the bureau who favored a "melting pot" education approach that centered on tolerance. Yet, DuBois' work had

a lasting legacy. By the 1980s, Intercultural Education had evolved into Multicultural Education. Her intergroup dialogue methods are still practiced today. Insights from the Intercultural Education Movement are relevant as racial, ethnic, and religious tensions are widespread in modern American society.

Birth of a Movement

The movement for greater democracy and increased social justice is dependent on a society that respects the differences of all people. Indeed, focusing on that which unites rather than divides people is essential for decreasing racial and ethnic tensions. Education is an important mechanism for bringing people together cross-culturally, with the universal goal of intercultural understanding and democratic community building. Malcolm X famously noted that “education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”¹ In the 21st century, American schools increasingly are comprised of diverse students who hail from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. From the 1920s through the 1940s, Rachel Davis DuBois (RDD) led the Intercultural Education Movement (IEM) which promoted the intersection of ethnic and racial groups in a way that advanced not just tolerance, but equality, greater understanding, and mutual respect. Without a doubt, her Woodbury Project marked the beginning of a progressive social justice educational movement in the United States that attempted to foster cross-cultural understanding. The Woodbury project grew to become an important foundation for the IEM. Its legacy continues today.

In the early to mid-twentieth century this movement to educate teachers, create curriculum, and facilitate meaningful conversation in classrooms and cross-cultural group discussions was established to calm ethnic divisions and racial tensions. Given the rise of anti-immigration sentiment in the 1920s as evidenced by the Immigration Act of 1924 that established quotas on national origins, DuBois witnessed an increased need for intercultural cooperation.² In addition, the 1920s witnessed the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and the rise of authoritarianism.³ The IEM, as DuBois envisioned it, was a curriculum and neighborhood tool embraced by many communities and school systems. Eventually, the political climate of the 1950s, brought on by the emergence of Cold War, overshadowed and diminished the Intercultural Education Movement, but not before it left a legacy that opened the door to Multicultural Education.⁴ Intercultural Education became an educational movement after DuBois created a blueprint called the Woodbury Project that she developed during her early years as a teacher at Woodbury High School in New Jersey. In

this research, we detail Rachel Davis DuBois's professional life, with particular attention to the Woodbury Project and its influence on the Intercultural Education Movement.

DuBois used discussion and experiential methods inside and outside the classroom with students, teachers, parents, and community leaders. In education, discussion can create controversy, but controversy is important to fostering meaningful democratic change. DuBois emphasized bringing groups of people together to discuss issues and learn about each other in order to break down barriers. She believed discussion lead to the facilitation of democracy and egalitarianism. The use of group discussion became the primary pedagogy DuBois utilized in her intercultural education work. She wrote extensively about the group discussion method and argued for its use in bridging racial and cultural divides. Many educators have supported the use of the discussion method to further democratic education and understanding.⁵ In *Controversy in the Classroom*, Diana Hess (2009) argued for such discourse in contemporary classrooms, as well as the fostering of the skills teachers need to build curriculums that lead to the tackling of difficult issues. She writes, "Democratic education is a form of civic education that purposely teaches young people how to do democracy."⁶ In the early twentieth century, DuBois created a curriculum to address racism and nativism built on teaching through discussion. In the current climate, an examination of DuBois's life's work and the Intercultural Education Movement is warranted.

What is Intercultural Education?

In the United States, Intercultural Education is defined as teaching to foster justice, equality, understanding, acceptance, freedom, and diversity.⁷ The term "intercultural" implies: "the relationships between and among all racial, religious, ethnic, and social-economic groups, whose patterns of behavior are distinctive in one or another important aspects."⁸ Intercultural Education has a substantive historiography; Montalto (1982) traced its history in his book.⁹ More recently, James and Cherry Banks (2004) detail the history of Intercultural Education in the early chapters of *The Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*.¹⁰ The movement was born out of RDD's attempt to build an educational pedagogy with which to counter the excesses of Red Scare politics, racial demagoguery, political witch hunts, and mass deportations. It was in this climate that organizations such as the Foreign Language Information Service, the International Institutes, and other immigrant service agencies gave expression to a growing enlightened impulse and laid the groundwork upon which the Intercultural Education Movement could build. This support, along

the encouragement from leading progressive educators such as Harold Rugg and William H. Kilpatrick, enabled DuBois to turn a school-wide assembly program into a nationwide Intercultural Education Movement.¹¹

Intercultural Education includes, in addition to formal classroom instruction: adult education, teacher training, and the work of civic and other organizations in the field of human relations. This educational movement is based on the belief that prejudices are culturally transmitted and that the schools can contribute significantly to intercultural cooperation. The role of education in this regard is to instill in students a healthy respect for the ways of life, customs and beliefs of fellow humans, and to help students realize that cultures different from their own are not thereby inferior.¹² In the United States, Intercultural Education chronologically preceded Multicultural Education, however, in England and several European countries, Intercultural Education was a movement that followed multiculturalism in the late 1990s.¹³ Recent theorists, such as David Coulby, Nektaria Palaiologou, and Paul Gorski, have critiqued the contemporary IEM, writing that its aspirational nature may hide cultural interactions such as genocide, conquest, and the slave trade.¹⁴ Additionally, Intercultural Education may not directly attack white supremacy or acculturation. Yet, the field remains relevant as evidenced by the existence since 1990 of a contemporary European academic journal titled *Intercultural Education*.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many American cities experienced race riots, lynchings, and other forms of violence targeted at ethnic and racial minorities. To counteract these problems, the IEM hoped to create exemplary models of community co-existence across racial and ethnic lines. When racial and cultural power imbalances are addressed, people learn from each other, which can lead toward the transformation of all peoples. According to DuBois, the purpose of IEM was to create dialogue that would lead to healing and to reconciliation across race and religion. In her book, *Neighbors in Action*, she claims that Intercultural Education was proven to help ease tensions in areas where groups were ignorant and fearful of each other; they could come together and engage in discussion to foster mutual understanding.¹⁵ Intercultural Education in the United States evolved, in the late twentieth century, to Multicultural Education, in which the emphasis shifted toward empowering all marginalized groups. While a goal of multiculturalism is to empower and level the playing field, some fear that multiculturalism can be divisive.¹⁶

Positionality, Biographical Theory, and Methodology

Both authors of this article share a common interest in Rachel Davis

DuBois and thus enjoy a positive positionality toward her biography; she was a female educator who fought for social justice and racial equality in an era of Jim Crow segregation. The first author, a black man and veteran educator and school administrator, is intent on increasing ways to promote intercultural understanding between cultural and racial groups. The secondary author, a white woman, is a professor with research interests in women educators and democratic education. The first author, in looking for interesting transformative figures in education history, encountered Rachel Davis DuBois while examining Multicultural Education history and ideas on critical race theory. The second author has a long-standing interest in underappreciated women educators and sought to further existing research on RDD. Both authors believe that DuBois's work is increasingly relevant and want to call attention to her to inspire educators to not only teach tolerance, but to foster respect of all cultures through planned curriculum and organized discussion and dialogue.

DuBois's life was a journey during which she traveled from the conservative melting pot immigration issues of the roaring twenties to the Civil Rights Movement that arose out of the more liberal 1960s. DuBois's work revolved around using personal experience to foster group discussion. Her sensitivity to the limited freedom and violence directed toward marginalized people was the catalyst for the Woodbury Project. Knowing DuBois's life history is important to understanding the ever-changing debate around education and social justice. Radical ideas are redefined over the course of decades. The IEM helped to push the envelope to create greater democratic institutions and dialogue across micro-cultures.

DuBois's educational biography is consequential. Her life's work demonstrates how she embraced an idea and then created a curriculum in which to carry out her ideas. Educators can learn much from historical biographies as they can highlight the importance of little-known individuals who worked to improve society.¹⁷ Craig Kridel argued that educational biographies have become increasingly accepted as relevant to educational research.¹⁸ In a recent book on life writing methods, Mulvihill and Swaminathan include biography as one of five genres of life writing.¹⁹ Nigel Hamilton's *How to do Biography* provides a blueprint for the process of writing biography so that the writing is meaningful.²⁰ In addition, understanding DuBois's life as a teacher and teacher educator adds to the growing body of scholarship on Progressive Era female educators who worked to improve society; these women include Annie Webb Blanton, Margaret Haley, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Lucy Maynard Salmon, and a host of other women detailed in books such as *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders during the Progressive Era* and "Everybody's Paid But the Teacher" *The Teaching Profession and the Women's Movement*.²¹

DuBois left an extensive and impressive archival treasure trove with which to study her influences, and a long record of her work on Intercultural Education. The archives, which are located at the University of Minnesota, are part of a larger archival library dedicated to the study of immigration. In this archival library, DuBois's materials include letters to and from prominent educational leaders; pamphlets that highlight her teaching of teachers; books she authored; curriculum materials; and a plethora of other insightful data. It is from these materials that the researchers learned about the Woodbury Project and the early formation of the IEM.

This educational biography is unique in that it highlights DuBois's early influences and the creation of the Woodbury Project which served as the foundation of Intercultural Education. Other writers, such as O.L. Davis, Jr. and Yoon K. Pak, have not focused on DuBois's early work.²² Both authors of this current research on DuBois's early influences believe that her story is extremely relevant in a time of increasing division and anger over the issues of immigration, race, and ethnicity, as well as inflated partisan polarization.²³

Early Life and Career

Rachel Davis (DuBois) was born in 1892 in Woodstown, New Jersey, the second of six children of Charles Howard Davis and Bertha Priscilla Davis. She died in 1993 in the same New Jersey town at the age of 101.²⁴ She came from a strong Quaker background and was raised on a farm that had been toiled by her Quaker ancestors since the seventeenth century. She proudly pointed out in her autobiography that she came from a long line of farmers and a love of the land ran through her father's and brother's blood.²⁵ DuBois was shaped by her experiences on the farm in that it fostered her appreciation of hard work and of others' worth regardless of their race and status.²⁶

DuBois's work with the Society of Friends organization during her early teaching and activist years groomed her and showed her willingness to stand against the tide of conservatism to promote change. As a public-school teacher and Quaker, DuBois was inspired by the Great War to become active as a pacifist. She sought to come to grips with the effects the war had on her community and country and to counteract the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment that resulted from the war. DuBois showed her strength of character and conviction during the war when she refused to sell savings stamps to her pupils.²⁷ She potentially faced harsh discipline for such action, but stood firm and was not punished but promoted by an empathetic school superintendent. An important turning point for DuBois arose when she attended the First International Conference of Friends in London in 1920. She heard stories of the brutal conditions of

war and imperial injustices that the war brought upon subjugated peoples. She became increasingly concerned when she learned of the reports of violence black Americans were subject to from many white Americans.²⁸ Returning from service in the World War I, African American troops understandably struggled as many refused to return to subjugated and marginalized roles they had occupied before the war.²⁹

Because of her experience at the London Conference, DuBois began to believe that in order for her to become an effective teacher of history, she needed to stop teaching for a few years. She returned home and resigned her position at Glassboro High School and began to volunteer for various committees and organizations concerned with social problems. In 1921, DuBois traveled to the southern United States with the Pennsylvania Committee on the Abolition of Slavery in the South. The Abolition of Slavery committee had roots dating back to colonial times and a storied history of working on the behalf of abolition. She called the trip a culture shock as she witnessed for the first time the “Colored” and “White” signs at a railroad station as she entered the South.³⁰

On this trip, DuBois first heard and met George Washington Carver, the famous scientist and educator. Carver was the principal speaker at the Farmers Conference that she attended while in the South. She says that she felt so unprepared for such a meeting and noted in her book, “I knew I was in the presence of not just a scientific genius but a spiritual genius as well I had to be careful not to show my ignorance!”³¹ She cursed her white high school education for failing her in that she had not learned about the many contributions African Americans had made to America's development. She also was made more aware of W.E.B. Du Bois by reading an article he wrote on race and war in *The Crisis*.³² DuBois enjoyed the inimitable logic of W.E.B. Du Bois as he underlined racial injustices all over the world as the main causes of World War I.³³ RDD's meeting with George Washington Carver and her introduction to W.E.B. Du Bois's writings had an obvious and profound effect on her. Carver's life story was inspirational for her because of his beginning as a slave, which might have taken away a chance to witness his greatness. She later pointed to these moments as providing the impetus for her life's work.³⁴

Between 1921 and 1930 DuBois worked with a number of progressive organizations looking to help the poor, women, blacks, and immigrants who sought to achieve increased justice. DuBois traveled with Jane Addams and a group of Quaker women from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to discuss the consequences of the Versailles Treaty that ended World War I. Addams was a tireless advocate for immigrants and the poor who populated the American cities. Rachel DuBois worked closely with Addams and her female congregation to address the injustices and cruelty placed on

oppressed people. On various days at the International League meeting, they discussed the political, economic, military, and psychological aspects of the treaty. In a very short time, Rachel DuBois was learning more than she could have learned in a book and gained an understanding of the causes of injustice, poverty, and inequality.³⁵

Woodbury Influences

In 1924, Rachel Davis DuBois returned to teaching and obtained a position at Woodbury High School in New Jersey. She was asked to assume responsibility for the required assembly programs that took place once a week at the school. During this time, she became disenchanted with the effectiveness of these assemblies and the inability of the guest speakers to connect with the students and speak to their level of understanding. DuBois was an advocate and wanted the classroom to be a place of real student connection to issues and problems that she wanted to address. She began to think about how valuable the student assemblies could be if used to booster the pride of all the students, including the minority students. DuBois was deeply influenced by progressive education leaders, such as John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and Harold Rugg. Rugg was a well-known and respected professor at Teachers College. One of his published pamphlets, *Americanizing Our Foreign-Born*, was filled with teaching suggestions that she found very helpful. The text highlighted the value of America's cultural diversity and reflected Rugg's belief that in a democracy all aspects of every social problem should be studied: peace-war, labor-management, as well as equal rights for minorities.³⁶

Certainly, progressive educational ideas influenced Rachel Davis DuBois' pedagogical thinking and curriculum development.³⁷ Indeed, the Woodbury Project curriculum is comparable to the experiential pedagogy of John Dewey. John Dewey, one of the most studied educational philosophers, had gained prominence during the early twentieth century and his ideas on democracy and education were becoming widespread.³⁸ Dewey broke down divisions between theory and practice, thought and action, the child and the curriculum.³⁹ He believed in hands-on activities, cooperative learning, making materials immediately relevant for students, treating teachers as professionals, and reconstructing society through democratic means. DuBois employed all of these aspects of Dewey's educational philosophy in the training and group techniques of the IEM.⁴⁰

After her first year of running the assembly program at Woodbury High School, DuBois looked forward to the summer and traveling to see old friends. When traveling to Oakland, California, to visit an old college friend, she

stopped off in Denver to attend the annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). There, for the first time, she met the renowned educator and civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois and the writer Langston Hughes. W.E.B. Du Bois took a keen liking to Rachel Davis DuBois and her work, and immediately helped her meet and talk to many black leaders. RDD credited these and other experiences through her travels with revitalizing her teaching and creating the empathy and understanding required for intercultural educational leadership.⁴¹

DuBois cherished her relationship with W.E.B. Du Bois, as witnessed by their continuing correspondence over the remainder of his life. RDD was inspired to make the race problem her focus, and would continue to foster close working relationships, not only with W.E.B. Du Bois, but also with A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King, Jr. W.E.B. Du Bois and RDD's correspondence with one another revealed their dedication as comrades to address the problems of injustice toward blacks.⁴² RDD saw W.E.B. Du Bois often when she sat on the board of the NAACP. W.E.B. Du Bois would regularly write to her and express his discontent with the NAACP and the inadequate office space,⁴³ the misplaced use of resources due to political patronage, and the ineffective leadership. In one correspondence with RDD, W.E.B. Du Bois expressed the anger he felt toward the leadership, including Walter White. RDD obviously wrote to W.E.B. Du Bois many times seeking assistance and guidance, in her attempt to grow the IEM through monetary and academic means.⁴⁴

W.E.B. Du Bois wrote a memorandum to schools advancing the importance of RDD's work. He also discussed the need for courses on the development of culture and intercultural relations in schools.⁴⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois also corresponded with RDD on questions of funding on numerous occasions, and these letters are located in the archives at the University of Minnesota. He was never shy to voice his lack of funds, and it appeared he continuously needed to seek the help of benefactors and philanthropists. He would advise her about people who were sympathetic to the work she was doing. What was always consistent in the correspondence between W.E.B. Du Bois and RDD was a friendship and fondness that was respectful and affectionate.⁴⁶

Rachel DuBois revealed the possibility of a relationship between her husband's line of the DuBois family and the famed black leader's family. W.E.B. Du Bois told her during one of their many correspondences that they might be related. Some of W.E.B. Du Bois's ancestors were French Huguenots, a protestant group of Frenchmen mostly from northern France. Two brothers, Louis and Jacques Du Bois, had emigrated to the United States. One of the brothers went to the Caribbean, married a native woman, and had two sons,

who were brought to the United States for better schooling. One son married a black woman. The other married a white woman and then went on to live in white society. W.E.B. Du Bois's ancestral background is a prime example of the mixed racial background that comprises an interesting but difficult racial past of many people in the United States.⁴⁷

Woodbury Project

Upon her arrival back at Woodbury the following fall, Rachel DuBois made it a point to redirect the assemblies and used them as intergroup education assemblies. She set about changing the assemblies to be experienced as vehicles to promote her platform of interracial harmony. She brought the entire student body together and permitted actual demonstrations of the artistic achievements of various ethnic groups. DuBois made a pedagogical decision early on that her assemblies on intercultural understanding were going to appeal to the student's emotions as well as to their intellect. With the assistance of the student-faculty committee, she planned a year-long series of assemblies, held at two to six-week intervals, each devoted to the history, achievement, and contributions of different ethnic groups. Assemblies were usually timed to coincide with a holiday associated with one particular ethnic group. For example, presentations on Italians were covered in October because of Columbus Day and blacks would be studied in February due to Lincoln's birthday, which was the reason Carter Woodson choose February for Negro History Week.⁴⁸ Although the holiday curriculum has been criticized in contemporary education literature, Rachel Davis DuBois' Woodbury project was remarkable for its time; it involved in-depth study, included members from the communities being studied, and required student involvement in both learning the content and performing the assemblies. Yoon Pak noted that DuBois' curriculum would be "considered innovative and challenging, even through present-day eyes."⁴⁹

In implementing this new model, DuBois was aware that many of the articles and books being written about Americanization were not suitable to progressive Intercultural Education. Americanization placed an emphasis on conformity based on mistrust and fear on the part of old-line Americans. The assembly committee she coordinated developed questions that were outside of the norm, and she wanted all the students to see themselves as Americans and to grow to appreciate and understand the other cultures within the community and the country. The point DuBois wanted to convey was that America was built by many people, old-line as well as recent immigrant, black as well as white. Because of the lack of resources, she broadened her search for information to create a program that increased awareness of a myriad of ethnic contributions.⁵⁰

Each assembly was a combination of oratory, drama, and performance. DuBois sought out informatives who were part of the communities who knew the history and cultural practices of the groups being studied whether they be Jewish, black, or Native American. A typical assembly, such as the one presented at Woodbury High School on Jews, featured a Jewish rabbi who spoke on Jewish religious ideals, incorporated the playing of records of Hebrew music, from Eili, Eili! to Irving Berlin, and included a talk by a member of the Jewish Fine Arts Club of Philadelphia. Student participants in the program made a dramatic presentation of Jewish contributions to ancient and modern civilizations, delivered speeches on the Jewish influence on American literature and theatre, and presented a short skit depicting Jewish immigrants arriving on an improvised gangplank while the Statue of Liberty greeted them. During the year, students were introduced to performances of Italian opera and Negro spirituals, German folk dances and Indian war chants, demonstrations of Galileo's experiments with falling bodies, the procedure for making peanut bread using actual flour sent by Dr. George Washington Carver of The Tuskegee Institute, recitation of black poetry, and readings from the German "Tales of the Black Forest." Prominent individuals, including Dr. William Pickens of the NAACP, Chih Meng, Director of China Institute of America, Judge Alessandrone of Philadelphia, all accepted invitations to appear at the school.⁵¹

During the month of February, Negro History Week took center stage in the assembly. The program had a good start with contributions made by the eager black students and a successful and engaging speaker from the NAACP, field secretary Dr. William Pickens. Before the end of the month, DuBois was told to inform the black students that their program highlighting black contributions in poetry and music was being canceled by the Board of Education. The School Board then sought her quiet resignation, although they themselves said she was one of the best teachers in the school and was tenured. Her fall from favor was led by the local American Legion, which was attempting to weed out dissention. During this post-World War I period, repression increased, not only for immigrants and unions, but also pacifists, socialists, and anyone deemed to be dangerous to the American government. In an attempt to discredit her progressive intercultural curriculum, DuBois was charged with Bolshevik leanings, refusal to salute the flag, belief in interracial marriage, and support of the cult of nakedness.⁵² These accusations were part of the tactics employed during the first Red Scare, which was a result of the reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The impact was that educational and political discussions deemed threatening were repressed and teachers who led these initiatives were removed from teaching.⁵³

DuBois kept her position for the next three years due to her tenure, the

support of the local superintendent, the backing of local Quaker groups, and a New Jersey tenure law that made her ouster difficult. She survived these attacks and retained her position, but she noted in her biography⁵⁴ that she spent less time in the classroom after this episode and lost some of her zest for the work. During this time, DuBois spent considerably more time arranging and preparing the publication and distribution of a pamphlet describing the Woodbury assemblies. The Women's International League helped facilitate this work and DuBois also experimented with assemblies on other themes.⁵⁵

While working on her pamphlet, DuBois was planning on retiring quietly before going back to school to pursue a doctorate. Interestingly, in the three years following the American Legion episode, the political climate had changed due to the growth in Hitlerism. Furthermore, racial unrest grew because of the Great Migration and tensions caused by increased minority populations in urban industrialized cities.⁵⁶ In fact, James A. Banks attributes the development of the field of intercultural education to educators who needed to respond to growing anti-semitism and racial rioting in the 1930s.⁵⁷ By this time period, the added economic downturn caused by the Great Depression, led some progressive education leaders such as Harold Rugg to advocate for reconstruction of the social order. Clearly, DuBois's work was needed more than ever, and she had become focused on expanding her Woodbury plan of study to other schools. She decided to attend Teachers College and pursue her doctorate while working on the Woodbury Project. She noted in her memoir "having kids is not something I want and thus there was nothing to hold me back in my professional endeavors."⁵⁸

Before registering for classes at Teachers College, she contacted a friend, Dr. Harriet Rice, in hopes of getting her help in preparing the pamphlet describing the Woodbury Project. Rice was a black woman who DuBois met at an American Friends Center in Philadelphia. Rice was willing to move to New York and work with her on the project, so they both searched around the Teachers College area to look for an apartment together. Rachel DuBois and Rice applied for a room and although DuBois was honest with Rice about her racial identity, she and Rice were still allowed to become roommates. This period was one where DuBois was able to make personal connections in the black community that proved invaluable to her gaining real insight from black people with whom she came into contact. DuBois was a dark-complexioned Caucasian woman who could pass for black in many circles. She used this feature to her advantage by gaining entrance into the black world and building trusting relationships across racial lines. DuBois was able to gain knowledge of the black culture in intimate ways that were not easily accessible for most white people in the 1930s. She went to dances and interracial gatherings and passed as

a black woman many times. She would surprise blacks when she would reveal that she was white. Although DuBois never mentions it in her autobiography, it is possible that she witnessed at least brief moments of discriminatory behavior toward her during her early life. Her ability to pass for a light-skinned black woman surely could have fooled some whites into thinking she was black. When she applied for housing at Teachers College, whites continually believed she was black until she set the record straight.⁵⁹

Woodbury Project to Service Bureau for Intercultural Education

During her time at Teachers College, the Woodbury Project work that became the center of her life evolved into what became the Intercultural Education Movement. DuBois, along with Rice, created the educational pamphlet they called *The Woodbury Plan*. The plan reflected programs that DuBois had started and practiced while she worked at Woodbury in the 1920s after her experiences in London and the deep South. In the Woodbury programs, the two women presented music and art of America's various cultures to help influence growth in the attitudes of the students toward different races and micro-American cultures.⁶⁰ The Woodbury Project became the basis for the educational programs that she promoted throughout her long career. In the 1930s she established a clearinghouse on IE that was published widely and became the bedrock of the Intercultural Education curriculum.

The publicity DuBois received led to invitations to start Woodbury Project programs at a number of senior high and junior high schools in the Midwest and Northeast. In 1934, after working extensively across racial lines with African Americans and Jews among others, DuBois founded the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education (SBIE) in New York City. She wanted the Bureau to serve as a resource for teachers wanting to expand appreciation of diversity. DuBois sought to bring the Woodbury programs to a broader audience. By 1935, the Woodbury Assembly Project was conducted in 15 high schools. Through the Bureau, she offered intercultural workshops, pamphlets, biographies, and curriculum units designed to help integrate the study of race and nationality into the classroom. DuBois's initial concern for African Americans grew to include all immigrant groups who were economically and socially marginalized by nativist white supremacy organizations during the Great Depression Era.⁶¹ The weakened economy caused an even greater rise in racial, ethnic, and religious tensions.

Intercultural Education programs in different parts of the country shared a few aspects in common while also catering to specific populations. At lower grade levels, Intercultural Education focused on good behavior toward others.

The curriculum particularly highlighted the political, social, and cultural contributions of different ethnic and racial groups, and at times included field trips to ethnic neighborhoods. In the early 1930s, DuBois and her colleagues in the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education had a deep commitment to ethnic and racial tolerance and began to experiment with intercultural curricula in New York and New Jersey area schools. DuBois was specifically interested in challenging claims of racial superiority, which at the time were a major part of Nazi propaganda and government indoctrination. These IE activists recognized that racism was a grave threat to fundamental democratic ideals and created programs for both elementary and secondary students that explained and denounced race-based totalitarianism. By the late 1930s, many of the largest public-school systems in the U.S. had introduced some form of IE. Intercultural Education was introduced into various social studies curriculums including history, civics, economics, and geography.⁶²

Intercultural Education began with educating the teachers who would be responsible for carrying out the plan of instruction. In her initial sessions, DuBois asked 25 white teachers in the class if any had ever been in the home of a Negro American of their own cultural and professional level. She felt this question was important because she believed that her meetings with people like singer Marian Anderson and educator George Washington Carver were important to developing her racial and ethnic sensibilities. DuBois met Anderson at the home of a black judge where they all conversed over tea. She described the experience as greatly satisfying and enriching for all parties involved. After this experience, she planned such events to be a part of her courses along with the training necessary to equip young teachers.⁶³

By the early 1940s, Catholic elementary and secondary schools used Intercultural Education programs in their schools throughout New York City and Chicago. In 1945, IE programs were designed and released to the schools in the form of syllabi and activities. These programs were designed to develop appreciation and understanding between different racial, religious, and national groups. The syllabi were designed to offer teachers suggestions on procedures and techniques for implementing intercultural programs that could be correlated with the entire curriculum. With the aid of the intercultural workshop syllabi, teachers developed practices to promote intergroup understanding and goodwill. The programs outlined in the syllabi included all grade levels and were not planned as a separate course or activity but as an integrated part of already standardized studies, such as history, civics, and reading.⁶⁴

Publications used in schools emphasized the building of relationships across ethnic and cultural lines. For example, a reading list for teachers included a

book titled *This is Our Town* because it was devoted to intergroup relationships. In the book, the narrative demonstrated how people in the same town lived together and worked together for the common good, even though they held different religious beliefs and came from different racial backgrounds.⁶⁵

Using selections from an intercultural workshop list of public and parochial school books written for children, the SBIE recommended that the following questions be asked by school teachers and leaders when selecting books:

Do the people in the book seem real or are they stereotypes? Can the child reading the book identify himself with sympathy and satisfaction with the book characters? Are unusual ways of living made to seem queer or are they explained naturally? Is the literary quality good? Do the illustrations help the book? From an interracial and intercultural point of view is it fair and true?⁶⁶

The SBIE gave books and materials the utmost critique. Early in the creation of the program RDD expressed concern many times with the lack of good materials and the need to create new materials.⁶⁷

The use of radio and music was also emphasized in workshops. Workshop literature states that both forms of expression have had a wide influence both consciously and unconsciously in developing better race relations, particularly between two groups, blacks and Latina/o/x Americans. The use of audiovisual materials, like motion pictures, also was advanced as IEM materials suggested that they contribute much toward building a greater understanding between groups of people and toward gaining greater appreciation of human dignity.⁶⁸

The Intercultural Education teaching program intended to develop appreciation and understanding of the art of various racial and ethnic groups to help eliminate the prejudices already formed and to replace the prejudices with an understanding of differences and similarities among groups.⁶⁹ In attempting to understand another group, the study of the folk art, crafts, painting, sculpture, and architecture of that group as a way of life was deemed important. The aim of the art program was to provide an opportunity for creative expression and development of new skills along with an increase in the knowledge of the background of the customs and contributions of the different ethnic groups who produced the art.

In addition, festivals were an important component of DuBois' Intercultural Education. Principals, parents, teachers, and students worked together in designing and making costumes and contributing to the same project. Festivals and pageants were an outgrowth of class activities. DuBois believed that Intercultural Education should not be relegated to special programs only

but must be an integral and formative part of education in general. In schools where there were children of different nationalities, pieces for exhibit were brought from home, explained, and put on display. This exhibit might be open for parents in the community to visit, with children to act as guides.⁷⁰

Conclusion

DuBois's Woodbury curriculum project grew out of her vision in the 1920s and an educational need she saw to effect progressive change in American culture. The Woodbury Project was effective in educating many citizens about each other's culture and promoting, not just tolerance, but a level of mutual respect across cultures. The work of DuBois expanded with the establishment of the SBIE in the 1930s and revealed great promise. Such programs might be helpful in today's divisive political environment. The tools of the internet, social media, and instant communication over long distances can expand the classroom. The IE curriculum can be very useful in a society where attacks on white supremacy, without creating cross cultural understanding and communication, opens the door to greater resistance. DuBois used the neighborhood group and conversation method to educate both the young and old, black and white, immigrant and native. Intercultural Education could be a useful tool in addressing the current racial divide and increased nativism. Although IE has its shortcomings and does not address the hegemony of white supremacy, it can be a valuable tool in educating young people to respect all cultures.

The work of the IEM was effective in helping many teachers understand inherent biases in society. The ability to see these biases and challenge prevailing discriminatory practices is the first step to becoming an effective teacher and advocate for the creation of a society that is aware of its prejudices in order to work toward social justice. The framework DuBois created was considered overtly radical during her lifetime. In the end, DuBois's activist goals met with resistance from members of the SBIE, and she was forced to resign her position in 1941 from the very organization she had established.⁷¹ What would DuBois think about some of the comments made today by political leaders who question the worthiness of some immigrants compared to others? Is the education community to blame for the ignorance on the issue of intercultural awareness? Almost one hundred years after DuBois began her crusade to educate the public to respect each culture equally, the world is in need of a new IEM to deal with a new set of immigrants. The new immigrants are from Asia, Africa, South and Central America, and the Middle East.

DuBois combined Dewey's ideas of experience with the technique of

group discussion and discourse in an attempt to bring about real change and promote increased democracy. DuBois's Woodbury Project is dependent on class discussion and feedback. In *Controversy in the Classroom*, Diana Hess states that, "to many democratic theorists and practitioners, discussion is a proxy for democracy itself."⁷² Discussions in democratic societies, especially if characterized by inclusion and widespread participation, are markers of what Robert Dahl called "intrinsic equality," the fundamental assumption that the good of every human being is intrinsically equal to that of any other.⁷³

Around the world, some people view immigration as controversial and threatening. While there are multiple causes of anti-immigration sentiment, people in many nations have witnessed an increase in the aggressive rhetoric of jingoism and nativism.⁷⁴ Factors that have contributed to heightening the controversy over immigration issues include, civil wars that have displaced large numbers of people, rising authoritarianism in certain countries, and terrorism from extremist Muslim groups and anti-Muslim groups who have exhibited violence around the world.⁷⁵ Educators are in need of a curriculum movement that teaches students the facts about different ethnic groups and attacks the falsehoods that reinforce fear and ignorance.

The argument for the democratic power of discussion in and outside the classroom that Hess and Dahl advocate, are much the same today as when Rachel Davis DuBois promoted Intercultural Education in the 1930s. The curriculum she taught teachers, students, parents, and community members encouraged a greater democratic society and ushered in the IEM. DuBois eventually worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s as the leader of a group dialogue initiative inspired by her work. Group discussion has proven effective in the past in confronting ignorance and can be invaluable today to bridge the divide between racial, ethnic, and religious differences. DuBois's methods can help people realize that all cultures matter, but people must talk to one another and break down the walls that separate them.

Notes

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