

Social Theory for a Global Age: A Conversation about the Life and Work of W.E.B. Du Bois with Gurminder K Bhambra and Vanessa E. Thompson

Sponsored by the BSA Theory Study Group

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Online

About the Event

W. E. B. Du Bois was a contemporary of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, though his long life means that he was active well beyond the 1890-1920 period associated with the emergence of classical sociology. He was author of *The Philadelphia Negro*, *Souls of Black Folk*, *Black Reconstruction*, *Color and Democracy*, among many other publications. Alongside his scholarly work, Du Bois was active in politics in a variety of roles including as one of the founders of the civil rights organisation, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and was editor of its monthly magazine, *The Crisis*. He was a delegate to the newly established United Nations, involved in the fifth Pan-African Congress, and an anti-war activist for much of his later life.

The general failure to acknowledge Du Bois as a canonical thinker within the discipline of sociology and modern social theory more generally is a matter of great significance from the point of view of histories of our discipline. However, it is not simply an issue of his presence within the canon, but how sociological concepts have been structured by the absence of an address of his sociology, its different interpretations and what we can learn from Du Bois today. In this conversation, Gurminder K Bhambra and Vanessa E Thompson discuss the significance of Du Bois to their own work and to sociology more generally.

- **Gurminder K Bhambra** is Professor of Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies at the School of Global Studies, University of Sussex. She has recently finished a book with John Holmwood on *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory* (forthcoming with Polity Press 2021). She is Series Editor of the *Theory for a Global Age* series, Manchester University Press and, in 2015, she set up the *Global Social Theory* website to support students and academics interested in social theory in global perspective.
- **Vanessa E. Thompson** is Post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Social and Cultural Studies, European University Viadrina. Her book manuscript is entitled *Spaces of Black Solidarity: Anti-Black Racism and Urban Activism in Paris*, and engages with black spatial politics, forms of black transnational solidarity and multi-racial alliances in the struggle for black lives. In her current project she looks at policing of blackness in Europe.