

AMERICAN MASTERS



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***American Masters* to Explore the Life and Legacy of Notable Black Scholar and Civil Rights Pioneer W.E.B. Du Bois**

*The new documentary **W.E.B. Du Bois: Rebel with a Cause (w.t.)**,
spotlighting the NAACP founding member, is expected to premiere on
PBS in 2026*

More than 120 years after the publication of his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois' writing and ideology still resonate globally. His commentary on systemic racial discrimination against Black Americans and the concept of "double consciousness" identity made him an influential voice of the Harlem Renaissance and inspired trailblazers like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In celebration of Du Bois' legacy, ***American Masters*** and Peabody Award-winning director Rita Coburn are partnering to produce the new documentary ***W.E.B. Du Bois: Rebel with a Cause (w.t.)***, which is expected to premiere in 2026 on PBS.

The film will explore Du Bois' remarkable journey, through education and personal growth, examining how he transcended the social constraints of the early 20th century and worked to elevate the lives of Black people worldwide. Born just five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Du Bois lived a life marked by cultural influence, passing away in Ghana on the eve of the 1963 March on Washington.

“W.E.B. Du Bois authored 17 books, co-founded the NAACP, and challenged some of the ideas of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey. He even created infographics to depict the color line and explain why Black Americans were being held back. This documentary will give audiences a deeper understanding of his enormous contributions to our culture,” said Michael Kantor, Executive Producer of **American Masters**. “We’re thrilled to be collaborating with Rita Coburn again to bring this essential American story to a broad national audience.”

Coburn previously directed and produced **American Masters** documentaries about trailblazers Maya Angelou and Marian Anderson. Her film [Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise](#), which premiered on **American Masters** in 2017, was an official selection at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and won the AFI Docs Audience Award. [Marian Anderson: The Whole World In Her Hands](#), which aired on **American Masters** in 2022, received the highest documentary production grant from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) and was recognized with a Christopher Award.

“What Du Bois does in this moment is what he has always done – champion people of color and oppressed citizens of caste societies globally by fiercely addressing what he prophetically and famously wrote in his 1903 publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*: ‘the problem of the 20th century is the color line,’” Coburn said. “This documentary will work tirelessly to bring his still-resonant point of view, that ‘either the United States will destroy ignorance, or ignorance will destroy the United States,’ to the forefront.”

After producing the films on Angelou and Anderson, Coburn began developing **W.E.B. Du Bois: Rebel with a Cause (w.t.)** in 2022, having also received the highest documentary production grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She has assembled an impressive team of academic advisors and contributors for the project.

Executive producers for the film include Michael Kantor, B.K. Fulton and Sandra Evers-Manly. Kantor, representing **American Masters**, has expanded the brand’s reach with a number of critically acclaimed documentaries. B.K. Fulton, through his company Soulidify Productions, has made a significant impact on film, TV and theater, with credits including *The Piano Lesson*, the highest-grossing Broadway revival in history. Sandra Evers-Manly, founder of the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center, has produced widely praised films such as the Emmy Award-winning CNN Film *Into The Unknown*, the IMAX documentary *Deep Sky* and Tribeca Film Festival favorite *Ferguson Rises*.

“This is exceptional,” Evers-Manly said. “To have a phenomenal talent like Rita lend her vision, voice, and passion to document the life of a man who lived so many lives in service to the

advancement of our people is extraordinary. I have unwavering faith that her fresh perspective on Du Bois' legacy will bring his titanic contributions to light.”

This film from American Masters Pictures and RCW Media Productions is also produced in association with the Center for Independent Documentary.

Fundraising and grant management will be handled by Andrew T. Carr of Carrburn Consulting, Inc., and Susi Walsh of the Center for Independent Documentary, respectively.

Now in its 38th season on PBS, ***American Masters*** illuminates the lives and creative journeys of our nation's most enduring artistic giants – those who have left an indelible impression on our cultural landscape – through compelling, unvarnished stories. Setting the standard for documentary film profiles, the series has earned widespread critical acclaim: 28 Emmy Awards – including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special – two News & Documentary Emmys, 14 Peabodys, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards, an Oscar, and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of more than 250 masters past and present, the [American Masters website](#) offers full episodes, film outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the podcast “American Masters: Creative Spark,” educational resources, digital original series and more. The series is a production of The WNET Group.

American Masters is available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS App](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](#). For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](#) website.

For ***American Masters***, Michael Kantor is executive producer, Julie Sacks is series producer, and Joe Skinner is digital lead.

Support for ***W.E.B. Du Bois: Rebel with a Cause (w.t.)*** has been provided by The National Endowment for the Humanities, The University of Pennsylvania, The Leslie and Roslyn Goldstein Foundation and The Better Angels Society members Bobby and Polly Stein, Mauree Jane and Mark Perry, The Fullerton Family Charitable Fund, Diane and Hal Brierle, and Gilchrist and Amy Berg.

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Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this film do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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