

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Du Boisian Scholar Network?

The Du Boisian Scholar Network (DBSN) is an organization composed of scholars and activists working in the tradition pioneered by W.E.B. Du Bois. The Network is rooted in sociology and welcomes others who share its goals. Seeking to enact emancipatory change both within and beyond the academy, we advance a critical intellectual agenda, collaborate with communities and movements, and create scholarly support systems for this work.

What is a convening? Can I present my work?

The convening is different from the usual academic conference. It aims to generate collective debate of issues that are important to the Network. Rather than papers, the organizing committee makes a deliberate effort to invite a diverse group of participants to present their ideas — we call these provocations—to generate broad debate among the participants. The goal is to collectively advance the organization's mission: developing a Du Boisian intellectual agenda, supporting the work of graduate students and young scholars working in a Du Boisian spirit, and promoting solidarity within the academy and between the academy and communities.

Is this a closed group?

No. The network is open to everyone who shares its vision and wants to work to enact it. The network welcomes academics, scholars who work outside the academy, and activists who work within and beyond the academy.

Is this network only for sociologists?

No. Although the network was created by sociologists, it welcomes and encourages participation from scholars from all disciplines and activists that share the vision of scholarship for emancipation and liberation.

Is this a network of elite schools?

Some people ask us if this network is open only to people in elite schools and they also ask us if we are the same group that have organized other events around Du Bois within the academy, such as the recent 150th anniversary of Du Bois' birth. The answer is no. Our members participate in other organizing efforts around Du Bois within and outside the academy, but the network has only hosted the 2017 Convening at Northwestern University. We strive to challenge the elitism that is pervasive within the academy and have members from across the field of higher education institutions.

Is there room for public work and scholar activists?

Yes! Following the spirit and example of Du Bois, one of Network's goals is to support scholars' public engagement and collaboration with community organizations. We welcome suggestions and advice on how to continuously incorporate this work in future convenings and efforts.

What is the Du Boisian spirit you talk about? What do liberation and emancipation mean?

People may differ in how they understand liberation and emancipation. The Network aims to be a broad, pluralistic organization. But at a minimum, liberation and emancipation mean opposing racism, colonialism, patriarchy, cis-heteronormativity, ableism and all forms of social and political oppression. This may take different political forms for people, but following the spirit of Du Bois' work, the network aims to promote scholarship and activism that contribute to a world that is more just, more solidary, and in which all can live and strive without fear, violence, and exploitation.

Do I need to know the work of Du Bois to be part of the Network?

No. The Network aims to promote scholarship on and based on Du Bois, but one does not need to be knowledgeable on Du Bois to be part of it. Besides, we think that a contemporary Du Boisian agenda needs to address issues that Du Bois

did not address, such as questions of indigeneity and settler colonialism, environment, women of color feminisms, queer of color critiques, and intersectionality. The Network welcomes all those who embrace scholarship for emancipation and liberation.

Who is on the board and why?

To answer this question we need to tell a bit about the story of the Network. The Network was created by a group of seven colleagues and friends that saw the need for a Du Boisian collective. This group organized the first convening at Northwestern in May 2017. After the very positive response to that convening, the original group began to develop a governance structure and incorporate as a non-profit organization. We are currently in the process of doing that. But until we develop these structures of governance, we saw the need to invite more people to help us develop the Network. We invited a number of scholars and graduate students who have expressed interest in the Network and we now have interim board of seventeen people. This is an interim board because its goal is to lead the Network to a point where we can hold elections to elect the Network's leadership. We are not there yet, but once we incorporate the structure and guidelines we will create a mechanism to become a formal member of the Network and a process for electing the leaders of the Network. We hope that this will happen within the next year.

What does this network plan to do besides hold convenings? Why should I get involved?

We provide support and communication networks for people doing research oriented towards emancipation, and for connecting activists working for change with potentially relevant or helpful research. We encourage critical reflection among academics on the connections between their work and emancipatory agendas. We strive to promote more institutional support for this kind of work. Moreover, fighting injustice is tiring work. The network offers a community of people willing to support each other, so that no one feels isolated or alone, and everyone has an opportunity to refuel and live to fight another day.

How can I become a member?

At this point, the best way to be part of the Network is to attend the convening and develop initiatives with other participants. If you can't attend the convening, then get in touch with people from the Network to get involved. Once we incorporate we will create a formal mechanism to become a member of the Network, with guidelines on what membership entails for the member and for the network.