

## **From the Archives of The DuBois Circle**

### **The Dubois Circle: Celebrating 117 Years**

In 1906, a group of women in Baltimore was handpicked to start an auxiliary group to work with and support the activities of Dr. W. E. B. Dubois and the members of the local branch of the Niagara Movement in their fight to address the social, political, and economic injustices faced by African Americans. In January 1906, the chosen women, Margaret Hawkins, Eva Jenifer, Minnie Gaines, Lelia Waller, and Caroline Cook, established The Dubois Circle.

In the beginning, the organization chose to make its purpose the pursuit of literary studies. Meetings often focused on the topics of art and culture. Members met monthly in their homes, mostly located on Druid Hill Avenue and the surrounding streets.

Many members of The DuBois Circle were not employed. Those who worked outside their homes were teachers, social workers, businesswomen, and activists. Often, they worked with their husbands, noted pastors, doctors, educators, attorneys, and businessmen in the fight for racial equality and social justice. At a time when women did not enjoy the full benefits of citizenship, such as the right to vote, The Dubois Circle advocated diligently for women's right to vote and racial equality. They became members of numerous women's clubs, both local and national, to join the fight for women's suffrage. Members worked through the clubs and their churches to help secure women's suffrage.

While the organization was committed to the fight for women's suffrage, the records identify at least ten members who were involved actively in the suffrage movement on many levels. Most notably, member Estelle Young founded the Colored Women's Suffrage Club in 1915, which held weekly meetings for many years at the Colored Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), educating women on the importance of voting. The Dubois Circle members served as the officers and executive board for the suffrage club from the beginning and throughout its existence. In 2019, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment granting women the right to vote, The Dubois Circle celebrated and honored its members, along with all women, for their role in the struggle.

Over the years, the focus of the organization has changed to address the issues of the day. We have addressed local, national, and global issues and how we could affect them. The members have carried out a wide range of programs that covered

topics from race to business and focused on issues concerning education, the media, mental health, youth, economics, politics, and world affairs. We continue to supply monetary support to students at Morgan State University who qualify for the Melissa Purdue Funds and donate annually to a local charitable organization during the Christmas season. The Dubois Circle continues to address issues relating to the fulfillment of America's promise of equity, justice, and freedom.

Written and submitted by Beverly Carter, Esq., Historian and Archivist