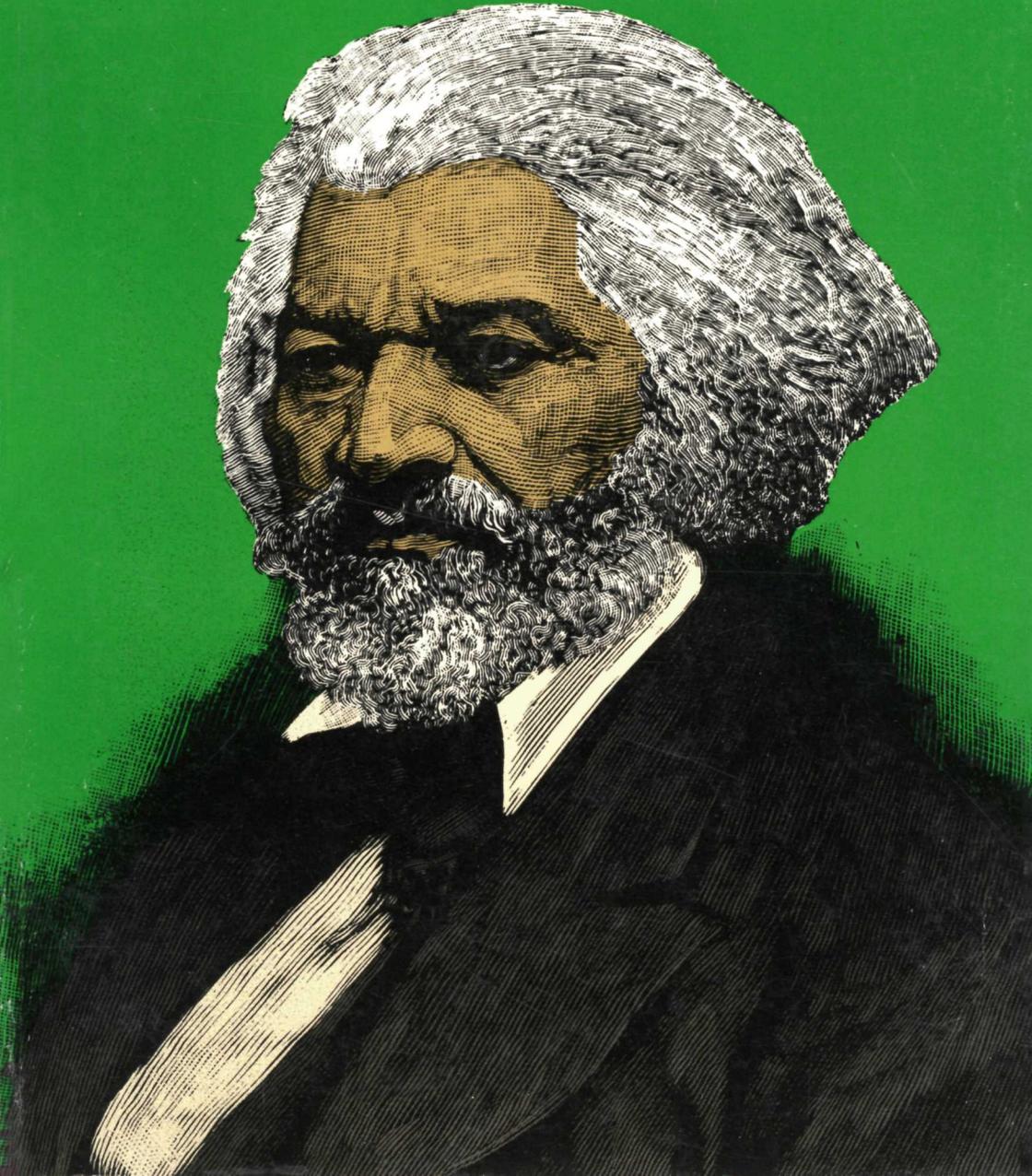


Frederick

Douglass





The

Clarion

Voice

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Douglass

The Clarion Voice

By

John W. Blassingame

Division of Publications

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Selection from The Break of Dawn by Arthur Lee Smith  
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## Introduction

An authentic hero of the spirit, Frederick Douglass remains a roadmark figure, pointing the past to the present. One who awakens our country's conscience to the extent that he did is not likely to be forgotten. To recapture the man, however, is not an easy exercise. He played many parts—among them orator, newspaper editor, author, Civil War recruiter, federal office-holder and foreign service minister. After 20 years as a slave, he came to manhood in the turbulent decades immediately preceding the Civil War. Soon entering the battle for human rights, he became an advocate whose interests were broad—he took arms against a sea of troubles, to use the language of one of his favorite authors. His protest techniques were likewise varied, headed by the gift of expression whether in the written or the spoken word.

Nothing if not articulate, Douglass will remain his own best interpreter. But to see him against the backdrop of his own day and age, to indicate something of the scope of his activities and to assess his relevance to our times, we need a trustworthy guide. John W. Blassingame is eminently fitted for this vital service. Editor of the Frederick Douglass Papers project, with headquarters at Yale, Blassingame is steeped in the Douglass literature, conversant with the epic quality of his career.

Blassingame lays before us a carefully done portrait in brief compass but with all the essential features present and in their proper degree of light and shade. Readers meeting Douglass for the first time could scarcely ask for a more pleasant introduction or experience a greater sense of discovery upon first acquaintance.

Blassingame's approach to Douglass is a skillful combination of the topical and the chronological. He addresses himself to the major components of the Douglass career, taking them in their historical order. Blassingame is

richly informative throughout, as illustrated by the opening and closing sections on the career of the black reformer. To his opening section on Douglass as a slave, Blassingame brings an insight sharpened by his special understanding of the mind and the personality of blacks in bondage. To his closing section, which deals with Douglass as "the Sage of Anacostia," Blassingame draws upon his unusual grasp of black leadership techniques at the turn of the century. In his final paragraphs, the author holds that Douglass is an enduring symbol, a conclusion to which the reader is likely to assent readily, having been furnished the requisite proof.

In composition, as in organization and content, this profile will not be found wanting. It is easily read, its style not unlike that of Douglass in clarity and verve. If this work succeeds in capturing Frederick Douglass, embracing something of the scope of his activities and the essence of his spirit, much is owed to Blassingame's own skill in communication. On whatever count, he has done his part.

Benjamin Quarles

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## Slave

Sometime in February 1817 or 1818 a son was born to Harriet Bailey, a black slave in Talbot County, Md. Christened Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, this son of an unknown white man would later write his name indelibly in American history as Frederick Douglass. His uncertain parentage and birthdate notwithstanding, he was one of the chief actors in the scenes which moved the enslaved to break their chains, made real the Declaration of Independence, and breathed liberty into the Constitution. But before he could speak for the oppressed of all nations, and sexes, Frederick Douglass had to suffer the privations of slavery.

Talbot, on Maryland's eastern shore, was one of the largest cereal producing areas in the State: wheat, corn, oats, and wool were the chief products. Containing many small farmers and a few large slaveholders, the county's total population declined from 15,610 people in 1790 to 12,090 in 1840. Slavery was relatively precarious; the number of slaves declined from 7,070 in 1790 to 3,687 in 1840. Since many of the planters were freeing their bondsmen, the number of free blacks increased from 268 in 1790 to 2,340 in 1840.

However widespread elsewhere, the emancipation spirit did not reach the plantation of Douglass' master, Capt. Aaron Anthony. On the contrary, Douglass suffered from many of the worst features of slavery, including an unstable family. He never saw his father. His sisters and brothers were scattered among several plantations; he saw them so infrequently that they always appeared as strangers to him. The relationship with his mother was almost unbelievably painful. She worked on a plantation about 19 kilometers away and Douglass was separated from her when he was an infant. "I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life. . . . I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day," he lamented. "She was with

me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Very little communication ever took place between us.”

Although she spent little time with her son, Harriet Bailey made a deep impression upon him. Douglass remembered her as “tall and finely proportioned, of dark, glossy complexion, with regular features, and amongst the slaves was remarkably sedate and dignified.” His grandparents, Betsey and Isaac Bailey, made an even greater impact on him. A master gardener, nurse and seinemaker, Betsey was held in high esteem in the area and lived in a cabin 19 kilometers from her master. She was a strong, spirited woman who lavished love on her grandchildren. Betsey became a substitute for his mother and the central person in Douglass’ life; her cabin he viewed as a protective haven. Until he was five Douglass faced few of the rigors of slavery. He lived with his grandparents and “it was a long time before I knew myself to be a slave. I knew many other things before I knew that. Grandmother and grandfather were the greatest people in the world to me. . . .”

While Douglass was initially a happy child, a white, threatening shroud hung over his future. As each year passed he came closer to the time when he would be taken from his grandparents to work for his master. Filled with dread and foreboding, Douglass was separated from his grandparents and taken to his master in 1824. At that time he first met his brother Perry and his sisters Eliza and Sarah. They were unable to comfort him as he wept constantly in the next few days after his grandmother left.

In the next few months he learned what it meant to be a slave. First, he came under the care of the ill-tempered and cruel old plantation cook, Aunt Katy. Feeding the young slaves a corn meal mush in hog troughs, Katy often punished Douglass by refusing to let him eat. Sometimes Douglass was “so pinched with hunger as to dispute with old ‘Nept,’ the dog, for the crumbs which fell from the kitchen table.” Often he had “followed with eager step, the waiting-girl when she shook the table-cloth to get the crumbs and small bones flung out for the dogs and cats.” Just before his mother died, she went to the kitchen tenderly holding the young boy in her arms and upbraided Katy for her cruelty. It was an unforgettable experience for Douglass. “There was deep and tender pity in her glance at me, and, at the same moment, a fiery indignation at Aunt Katy. . . . That night I learned as I had never learned before, that I was not only a child, but somebody’s child. I was grander upon my mother’s knee

than any king upon his throne." But his triumph was brief, for he was soon to learn about his master.

Aaron Anthony, the owner of Frederick and 29 other slaves, worked as a steward for Edward Lloyd. Owner of several plantations and hundreds of slaves, scion of a prominent and wealthy family, Edward Lloyd V (1779-1834) served in the Maryland General Assembly, the U.S. Congress, and as Governor of Maryland (1809-1811). His main plantation, the Wye House, was one of the most beautiful in the State. As praiseworthy as Lloyd appeared to his white neighbors, Douglass and his fellow slaves found much oppression on Lloyd's plantations. Adult slaves were fed corn meal, fish, and pork, and they received one pair of trousers or a skirt, a pair of shoes, and one blanket each year. Children received nothing but a long shirt. The hours of work were so long the slaves had little time to sleep. Generally the overseers who worked for Lloyd and Anthony were hard-driving, brutal, and heartless men. One of them killed a slave who disobeyed and was not even tried for murdering the black man.

Lloyd and Anthony were little better than their overseers. So fickle was Lloyd in his punishments, that he would give a slave 30 lashes or sell him for simply displeasing him. All the fears that Frederick had had of Anthony were confirmed soon after he arrived on the plantation. A sadistic man, Anthony terrified his slaves and appeared as a dreadful white apparition to young Douglass. While all of the floggings Anthony gave his slaves affected Douglass, none were as crushing as those administered to the boy's relatives. Douglass recalled that he was often

*awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he [Anthony] used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. . . . I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected it would be my turn next.*

The frightened young boy had few responsibilities during his first few months on the plantation. Generally he spent his time pulling the weeds out of the gardens, driving the cattle, chasing birds, and running errands. Though he received few whippings, Douglass suffered greatly from cold and hunger.

Because he had witnessed so much suffering, Douglass was delighted when he learned in 1825 that his master was sending him to live with a relative, Hugh Auld, in Bal-

timore. Receiving his first pair of trousers, Douglass eagerly embarked on his career of caring for the Auld's son, Thomas. For the first time he found, in Sophia Auld, a kindhearted white person.

Sophia Auld taught Douglass his ABCs and to spell a few words until her husband discovered it and told her it was illegal and unsafe to educate slaves. According to Hugh Auld, if Frederick was taught to read, "there would be no keeping him." Upon hearing these words, Fred became convinced that education was the key to freedom. "Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher," he asserted, "I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost or trouble, to learn how to read." During the next seven years, he did favors for his white playmates in return for reading lessons. Then, when he was 12 he obtained a copy of The Columbia Orator. In this book he found several denunciations of slavery which made a powerful impact on him.

Reading about the abolition movement in the newspapers and talking with Northern sailors, young Fred began to think of forging a pass for himself and escaping. By watching carpenters write letters on boards, Douglass learned to copy a few letters. Later he obtained lessons from white playmates and repeated the writing lessons in young Thomas Auld's notebook.

While in Baltimore Douglass saw many slaves who were well treated compared to plantation standards. The fast pace of city life made it impossible for masters to supervise slaves as closely as they did on the plantation. In fact, Douglass learned that "a city slave is almost a freeman compared with a slave on a plantation." Life in Baltimore gave Douglass his first clear idea of freedom.

In 1832 Aaron Anthony died and Frederick became the property of Anthony's son-in-law Thomas Auld. Again Douglass was taken from scenes of joy and returned to the plantation, a world ruled by intimidation. He concluded that Thomas Auld, his new master, was a fretful, cruel, and contemptible man. He was, Douglass declared, "a slaveholder without the ability to hold slaves. He found himself incapable of managing his slaves either by force, fear, or fraud." Their allowance restricted to a scanty supply of corn meal, Douglass and his fellow slaves often had to beg and steal just to survive.

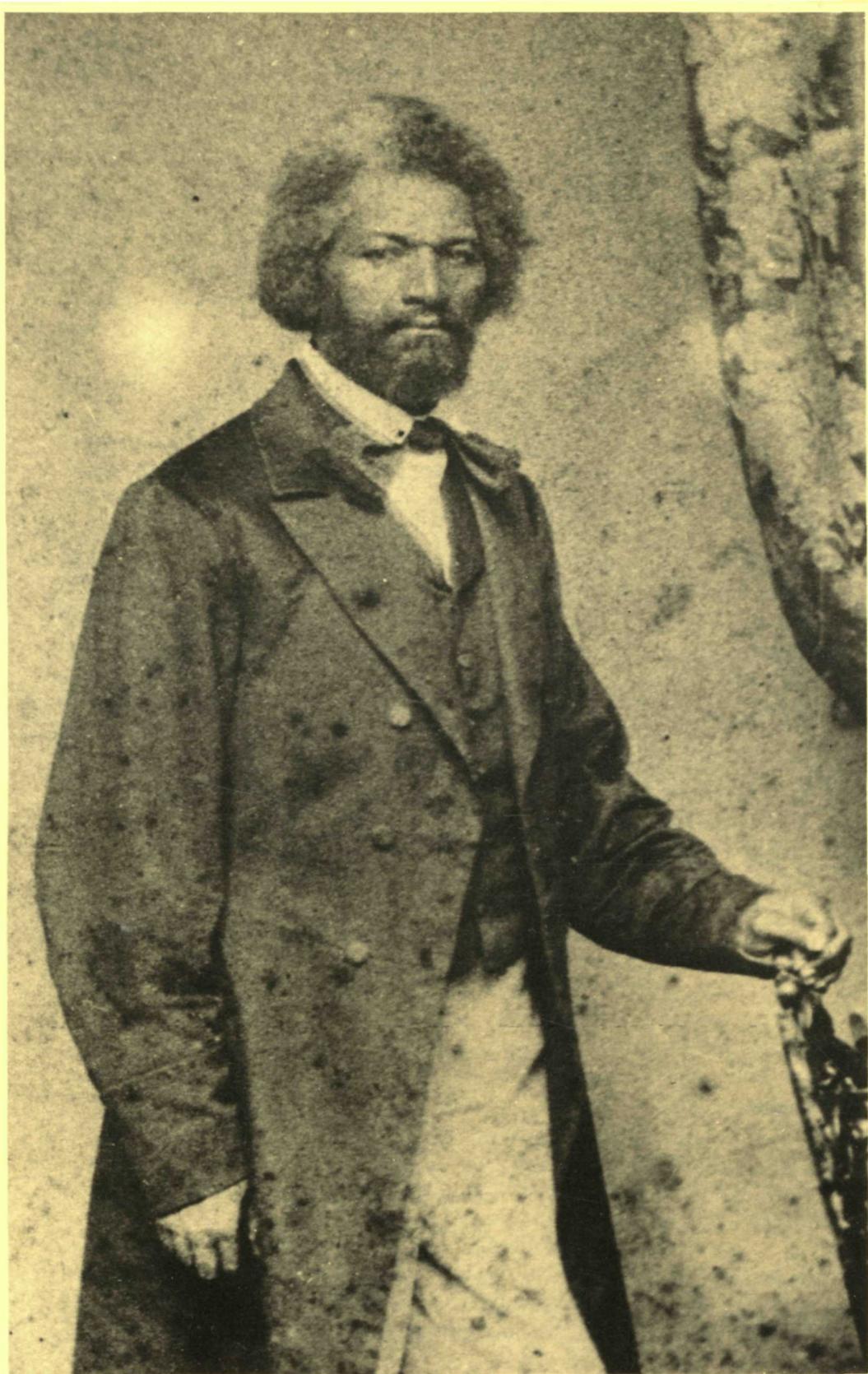
Repeated floggings failed to tame Douglass' spirit, so Auld decided to hire him out to Edward Covey for the express purpose of breaking him. Douglass later reported that

within a week, Covey had given him “a very severe whipping, cutting my back, causing the blood to run, and raising ridges on my flesh as large as my little finger.” During the next six months, Covey whipped Douglass often and forced him to work 10 and 12 hours daily, sometimes from dawn to midnight. Since Covey watched them constantly, the slaves had no respite from labor. Douglass recalled that the slaves toiled in “all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow, too hard for us to work in the field. Work, work, work, was scarcely more the order of the day than of the night. The longest days were too short for him, and the shortest nights too long for him.” Six months of back-breaking toil and constant floggings succeeded in breaking him. “I was broken in body, soul, and spirit,” he later wrote. “My natural elasticity was crushed; my intellect languished; the disposition to read departed; the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me. . . .”

While harvesting wheat one day Douglass was overcome by heat exhaustion and crawled under a tree to rest. Covey immediately ordered him to return to work but Douglass could not comply. Covey then kicked him several times and beat him over the head with a stick. After recovering from his wounds Douglass went to his master, but he was ordered to return to Covey. The next morning, “wearied in body and broken in spirit,” he did so. As soon as he arrived, Covey went after him with a whip. Douglass ran away to the home of a friend. When he returned, Covey decided to tie him up and whip him. But Douglass had had enough; he decided to resist. The 16-year-old boy fought with the white man for two hours until Covey let him alone. For the remaining six months that Douglass spent with Covey, “he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger.” This fight was a major turning point in Douglass’ life. The fight represented

*a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.*

While living with Covey and on other plantations, Douglass had many opportunities to determine the impact of slavery on both blacks and whites. Slavery crushed the white man’s finer instincts, made him indifferent to suffering.



It brutalized the slave, enforced his ignorance, placed a premium upon his deceitfulness, blighted his hopes, and did not reward his industry. Above all else, slavery undermined religion and guaranteed immorality. Since the church upheld slavery in the South, Douglass became suspicious of organized religion. His most brutal masters were avid churchgoers. Covey, for example, had often asked Douglass to sing at family devotional services. The white ministers tried to make the slaves satisfied with their lot in life. In their sermons the ministers sometimes told Douglass and his fellow slaves that it was God's will that they obey their masters.

Neither Douglass nor many of his fellow slaves believed such sermons. Their God was the God of freedom, a Deliverer. The spirituals they sang were prayers for deliverance from oppression. Beautiful and melancholy, the spirituals expressed the yearnings of the slaves for liberty. "The songs of the slave," Douglass declared, "represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery." Converted when he was 13, Douglass hungered to read the Bible. Two black men in Baltimore, Charles Johnson and a Mr. Lawson, became his spiritual leaders. Douglass spent much time with Lawson, reading the Bible, attending church, "singing, praying, and glorifying God." Lawson had a profound influence on the formation of Douglass' character.

Ever after his meetings with Lawson, Douglass prayed fervently for his freedom. Like other slaves, he believed that God watched over him and took a special interest in his welfare. Although he suffered all the cruelties of slavery the "living word of faith and spirit of hope departed not from me, but remained like ministering angels to cheer me through the gloom. This good spirit was from God, and to him I offer thanksgiving and praise." While he found sustenance in the God of freedom, Douglass found little to praise in churches which welcomed slaveholders to their bosoms. After his confrontation with Covey, it would only be a few years, he found, before his God would answer his prayers for freedom.

In 1834 and 1835 Douglass was hired out to a kinder man, William Freeland. While working for Freeland, Douglass taught the local slaves every Sunday at the home of one of the 2,000 free Negroes in Talbot County. Delighted to be doing something to better the condition of his race,

Douglass taught more than 40 slaves that year. A special camaraderie developed among most of the slaves on Freeland's plantation. Welded together by their oppression, the slaves interacted as brothers and sisters. In 1835, after much discussion, Douglass and several others decided to escape to the North. However desirable freedom was, it was still a difficult decision. They faced a long and hazardous journey, possible starvation and recapture even if they reached their destination. But one of the slaves betrayed them before they could escape and Douglass was locked up as one of the ring-leaders. Later Freeland took Douglass back to Baltimore and hired him out to a shipbuilder.

Douglass' return to Baltimore represented his second resurrection. He became a skilled ship caulker and learned much about the relations between black and white laborers. During the 1830s there were many skilled black artisans in Baltimore. But the influx of European immigrants led to many conflicts between white and black workers. On one occasion a gang of white apprentices beat Douglass when the whites refused to work with black ship carpenters. While recovering from his wounds, Douglass became acquainted with many free blacks.

The free black community in Baltimore consisted of a number of men who were engaged in protest against discrimination and the American Colonization Society's attempts to convince free blacks to emigrate to Africa. Other blacks had established a number of churches and benevolent societies and debating clubs. Douglass joined one of these, the East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society, and sharpened his oratorical and literary skills. He also met and fell in love with a free Negro, Anna Murray. She had been born in Denton, Md., to former slaves. At an early age she went to Baltimore and became the housekeeper of the city's postmaster.

His expanding horizons and his love for Anna produced a crisis for Douglass. Slavery was so stultifying for him that he could not bear the thought of marrying while he was still a slave. He knew that slavery was not conducive to normal family relationships. He had learned through bitter experience that slavery meant "perpetual unpaid toil; no marriage, no husband, no wife, no parent, no child, ignorance, brutality, licentiousness; whips, scourges, chains, auctions, jails and separations; and embodiment of all the woes the imagination can conceive." Ambitious, sensitive, literate, and reflective, Douglass could tolerate captivity no longer. He felt himself to be a powerful ship held to the rock of

slavery by heavy chains as the winds of freedom whirled around him.

Abolitionist

**I**n the summer of 1838 Douglass borrowed a sailor's suit and papers, boarded a train, and rode to freedom. On September 4, he arrived in New York City. As he walked the streets he "felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions." But his enthusiasm quickly waned when he remembered that he was subject to capture and return to slavery. Friendless, homeless, fearful, and lonely, he dared not speak to anyone. Every white man he viewed as an enemy, a potential kidnapper who might return him to bondage. Soon, however, he confided in a black sailor who directed him to the home of David Ruggles, secretary of the New York Vigilance Committee, an organization dedicated to helping blacks escape from slavery. Douglass remained with Ruggles until Anna arrived. Anna, who had sold some of her belongings to help Douglass escape, brought along a trunk filled with household goods. She and Douglass were married by the Rev. James W. C. Pennington, a slave who had escaped earlier from Maryland.

Two weeks after his escape from Baltimore, Frederick and Anna arrived in New Bedford, Mass. There, they made the decision to drop the surname Bailey and take a new one, Douglass. In New Bedford Douglass learned that black men voted, that their children went to school with whites, and that no fugitive slave could be recaptured. But even in New Bedford, whites were too prejudiced to work with a black ship caulker. Consequently, Douglass was forced to work at odd jobs: sawing wood, sweeping chimneys, loading ships, digging cellars. Sometimes he made nine dollars a month, barely enough to pay the rent. Anna worked as a laundress to supplement Frederick's meager earnings. Three of their children, Rosetta, Lewis, and Frederick, Jr., were born in New Bedford.

Soon after his arrival in New Bedford Douglass started attending the Elm Street Methodist Church and was immediately assigned to a Jim Crow gallery. He was willing to bear this humiliation until he learned that all of the white members would be allowed to go to the communion table before any of the black ones. He left the church for he believed that such prejudice was contrary to Christian teachings. Consequently he joined a small body of black Christians, the African Methodist Episcopal Zionists, and eventually became a Sunday school teacher and "local preacher." Douglass was a deeply religious man; his speeches contain many

passages from the Bible. His home life reflected his beliefs and before each meal every member of the family read a verse from the Bible.

The small black community, with its churches, social organizations, and talented men, gave Douglass some scope for increasing his oratorical skills. But it was William Lloyd Garrison, the fiery and uncompromising white abolitionist who published the anti-slavery newspaper, the Liberator, who became his greatest teacher. The Liberator became his textbook. In later years Douglass described the Liberator as “a paper after my own heart. It detested slavery—exposed hypocrisy and wickedness in high places—made no truce with the traffickers in the bodies and souls of men; it preached human brotherhood, denounced oppression, and, with all the solemnity of God’s word demanded . . . complete emancipation. . . .”

Taking its place beside his Bible, the Liberator taught Douglass that sectarianism was false, color prejudice was sinful, and churches that defended slavery were “synagogues of Satan.” For three years Douglass read the Liberator and attended anti-slavery meetings in New Bedford. When the abolitionists met in Nantucket in 1841 he attended and was asked to speak. Afterwards the abolitionists convinced him to become a lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Treated as a prize specimen or showpiece, Douglass spoke of his experiences as a slave and secured subscribers to the Liberator and the National Anti-Slavery Standard. Eventually, Douglass outgrew his role as a showpiece and began to denounce all forms of oppression.

Anna encouraged Douglass and occasionally traveled with him to lectures. She cooperated with the other women active in the anti-slavery societies, prepared articles to sell at the fairs of the societies, and donated some of her earnings to the abolitionists. She was a reserved woman, proud of her husband’s contributions to the cause of freedom.

In his crusade against slavery, Douglass joined with many other black men and women who were among the most effective agents of the anti-slavery societies. One of the first of these agents was Charles Lenox Remond, for whom Douglass named his third son. Others were William Wells Brown, the first black playwright; Frances E. W. Harper, Maryland-born poet; Henry Bibb, a former Kentucky slave who later edited a newspaper in Canada; Henry Highland Garnet, a fiery minister who was the first black man to speak in the U.S. House of Representatives; the Rev. Jermain W. Loguen; John Mercer Langston, an Ohio

free Negro lawyer; John Jones, a Chicago merchant, and many others who were in the forefront of the abolition crusade. These blacks labored with several famous white abolitionists including Theodore Tilton, Sidney Howard Gay, Henry Ward Beecher, John Greenleaf Whittier, Lewis Tappan, Edmund Quincy, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abby K. Foster, Lucretia Mott, Sarah Grimké, Maria Chapman, Lydia Maria Child, Anna Dickinson, Julia Ward Howe, and Lucy Stone. From 1841 to 1860 Douglass was one of the most prominent of the abolitionists.

He was an incomparable orator. His booming voice, his sarcasm, his naturalness, and his extempore delivery made Douglass a commanding figure. He was poised, fluent, and witty, and had a phenomenal memory. His voice was of unequalled depth, volume, power, and had a great range of intonation. His speeches were always logical, often lyrical, and incomparably lucid. Laced with poetic allusions and built on a firm philosophical foundation, they embodied constant appeals to justice, equality, and freedom.

A democrat and a philosophical revolutionary, Douglass believed that freedom was a natural right, a gift from God. No one could take away this inalienable right. But in the United States with all of its pretensions about liberty, blacks were denied their freedom. For them the American Bill of Rights was a "bill of wrongs," the constitution, "a compromise with manstealers and a cunningly devised complication of falsehoods." Douglass came to the conclusion that freedom for the oppressed could not be won without struggle. He contended that it would not be an easy struggle, for the bounds of the "tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those they oppress." He reiterated that "he who would be free must strike the first blow." In an 1849 speech Douglass insisted that he and other Americans should rejoice if the slaves revolted, if "the sable arms which had been engaged in beautifying and adorning the South were engaged in spreading death and destruction."

Douglass' arguments were so eloquent that many people began to doubt that he had been a slave. In part to prove his authenticity, he wrote his first autobiography in 1845. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, with its tale of barbarism, silenced his detractors. The New York Tribune's reviewer praised the book, saying that he had never read a narrative "more simple, true, coherent and warm with genuine feeling." Many people felt the same way; between 1845 and 1850 more than 30,000 copies of the Narrative were sold. As convincing as Douglass'

story was, its publication placed him in an extremely precarious position. Legally he was still a slave and under Federal law could be returned at any time to Maryland. Fearing that his owner would try to have him recaptured, he found himself "tormented with the liability of losing [his] liberty." To prevent capture and reenslavement, Douglass began looking for a haven in a foreign land. Preparing for his trip abroad, Douglass moved his family to Lynn, Mass., and took his daughter Rosetta to Albany, N.Y., to be cared for by Abigail and Lydia Mott. Assured by friends and Anna that his family would not suffer, Douglass spent the years 1845 to 1847 in England. Although he was able to send some money back during this period, Anna supported the family primarily by binding shoes.

Douglass left the United States on August 16, 1845. Because he was black, he was denied a cabin on the Cunard line steamer, the *Cambria*. Nevertheless, many of the passengers congregated in his part of the ship and just before reaching England they implored him to deliver a lecture. When he tried to comply the Southern whites on board almost mobbed him.

Landing in Britain on August 28, 1845, Douglass began a two-year lecture tour which took him to many places throughout the United Kingdom. In his speeches he stressed human brotherhood, denounced Englishmen acting in concert with Southern slaveholders, and argued that slavery was the common enemy of mankind. He came to Britain, he told his audiences, because

*slavery is a system of wrong, so blinding to all around, so hardening to the heart, so corrupting to the morals, so deleterious to religion, so sapping to all the principles of justice in its immediate vicinity, that the community surrounding it lack the moral stamina necessary to its removal. It requires the humanity of christianity, the morality of the world to remove it.*

While denouncing slavery and advocating temperance, Douglass met some of the leading English reformers, notably Thomas Clarkson, Daniel O'Connell, and John Bright. Mayors and Members of Parliament vied with each other for the privilege of introducing him at the rallies he held. He was so popular with the British that he often spoke for two and a half hours day after day; sometimes a thousand people would line up to shake his hand after a speech. Despite all the acclaim, Douglass was most impressed with the color blindness of the British. In all public conveyances, inns, and restaurants he was received on equal terms with

whites. In contrast to the United States where he was “caricatured, scorned, scoffed, mocked, and maltreated with impunity by any one . . . [with] a white skin,” in England he met “nothing to remind me of my complexion.” He discovered that the British “measure and esteem men according to their moral and intellectual worth, and not according to the color of their skin.”

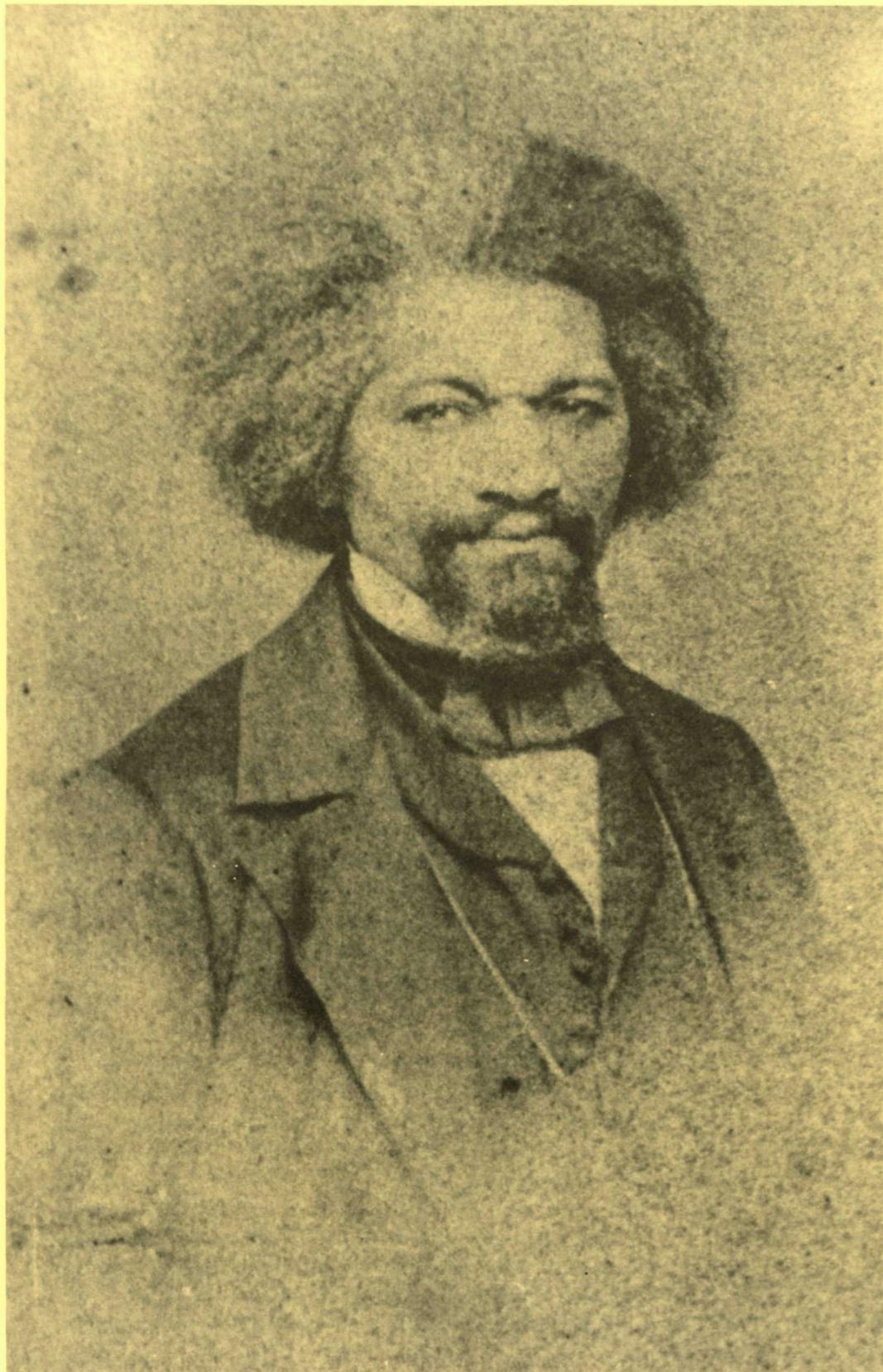
Like many American blacks who have breathed the freer air of a foreign land, Douglass looked back upon his native land with bitterness and ambivalence. As much as he loved the promise of America, its practices made him feel like an alien. In 1846 he wrote Garrison about his impressions gained from living abroad.

*In thinking of America . . . when I remember that all is cursed with the infernal spirit of slaveholding, robbery and wrong; when I remember that with the waters of her noblest rivers, the tears of my brethren are borne to the ocean, disregarded and forgotten, and that her most fertile fields drink daily of the warm blood of my outraged sisters; I am filled with unutterable loathing, and led to reproach myself that anything could fall from my lips in praise of such a land. America will not allow her children to love her.*

Unlike American whites, Douglass could not find freedom in the United States. That, he found in Great Britain. While there, a group of Englishmen raised \$710 and purchased his freedom. Although some white abolitionists in America castigated him for acknowledging property rights in men by buying his freedom, Douglass was practical. After all, the whites were not subject to be returned to slavery. He was. They were not subject to be separated from their families. He was. Douglass would not stand on philosophical and legal niceties if he could avoid the slaveholder’s lash. And, more importantly, the plans he had for the future could only be carried out by a free man.

Editor

**T**he great project Douglass had in mind was the publication of a newspaper. Douglass felt that by publishing a newspaper he could help to elevate blacks, both slave and free. His British friends agreed with him and raised more than \$2,000 for that purpose. White abolitionists in the United States were dismayed. They did not want to lose a talented lecturer nor to have another abolition tract competing with the Liberator, the Anti-Slavery Standard, and other papers. At first Douglass reluctantly acquiesced and returned to the lecture platform. So many people urged him to establish the paper, however, that in the fall of 1847 he decided



to move to Rochester, N.Y., and publish the North Star. He hoped the paper would help dispel the notion of the black man's inferiority and be the means of "making them acquainted with their own latent powers, by enkindling their hope of a future and developing their moral force." On December 2, 1847, the first issue of the North Star appeared with the motto, "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color—God is the father of us all, and we are all Brethren."

From 1847 to 1860 Douglass published the journal, changing its name to Frederick Douglass' Paper in 1851. Between 1858 and 1863 he also published Douglass' Monthly Magazine. The number of subscribers, black and white, varied between 3,000 and 4,500 and were located in 18 states and two foreign countries. Despite financial difficulties Douglass was able to publish his journal continuously for 13 years. It was the most successful black newspaper before the Civil War. But success was gained as a result of considerable personal sacrifice. The sacrifices would have been even greater if Douglass had not been able to depend on his family for support. Anna was a frugal household manager and helped Douglass in his endeavors. His sons Lewis and Charles folded, wrapped, and delivered papers while his daughter Rosetta served as his secretary, taking dictation and handling subscriptions. Anna celebrated each new issue of the paper by preparing a sumptuous meal for the family.

Much of the economic support for the paper came from Douglass' lectures. The lectures also enabled him to sign up new subscribers. Often he offered free copies of his books as bonuses for subscriptions. Although plagued by slow or nonexistent payments, Douglass was aided by several agents who sold his paper—Martin R. Delany, William Wells Brown, George T. Downing—by black conventions and organizations of black women, English reformers, and American philanthropists. Representatives Gerrit Smith, Horace Mann, Joshua Giddings, and Senator Charles Sumner, advocates of political action to bring about emancipation, all were enthusiastic in their support of the paper. An Englishwoman, Julia Griffiths, served as his office manager.

Several other black newspapers were published between 1847 and 1860. Samuel Ringgold Ward, a minister in white churches, edited the Impartial Citizen in Syracuse, N.Y., in 1848. Louis H. Putnam edited the Colored Man's Journal in New York City from 1851 to 1861; W. H. Day, a graduate of Oberlin College, published the Alienated American in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1852 to 1856. Mifflin W. Gibbs, a Philadelphia free Negro who had emigrated to Cali-

fornia, edited the Mirror of the Times in San Francisco from 1855 to 1862 and in 1856 the Rev. Jabez Campbell began publishing the long-running journal of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Recorder. These able editors battled valiantly in the cause of abolition and equality for free blacks. Among them, Frederick Douglass was without peer.

Douglass believed that although blacks should accept aid from whites in their struggles, they had to be their “own representatives and advocates.” Blacks, he said, had to work “not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends.” In their struggles all blacks, slave and free, rich and poor, were united. They were one under the burden of prejudice, proscription, disfranchisement, and the charge of inferiority. Suffering with the slave, Douglass attacked everything and everyone who supported that accursed system.

Douglass explored practically every aspect of the slavery question in his newspaper editorials. From 1847 to 1851 he had followed William Lloyd Garrison in denouncing the Constitution as a pro-slavery document. But his association with Charles Sumner, Gerrit Smith, and others caused him to change his mind, and in 1851 he argued that the Constitution could be used “in behalf of emancipation.” Frustrated by the slowness of Garrison’s moral suasion, Douglass sought more powerful instruments to use in destroying slavery. He called for international action to encourage emancipation and urged Englishmen to speak out against American iniquities. When Northern whites, claiming to be “free soil” men, fought against the extension of slavery into new territories, Douglass upbraided them and their efforts which he saw as an evasion of the real issue.

*The efforts to shut the slave power out of the Territories, one by one, will keep the country in a constant commotion with Border Russian outrages, assassinations, incendiarisms, conspiracies, civil wars, and all manner of sickening horrors. The only true remedy for the extension of slavery, is the immediate abolition of slavery. For while the monster lives he will hunger and thirst, breathe, and expand. The true way is to put the knife into its quivering heart.*

Garrison and his followers contended that abolitionists should not vote because America’s government was pro-slavery. For a white man, whose skin automatically guaranteed his admission to the ballot box, such action was a protest against the system. A black man, on the other hand, was automatically barred from the ballot box because of his skin

color. In Douglass' eyes when blacks supported Garrison on this point, they were acquiescing in discrimination. As early as 1780 Paul Cuffee and other blacks in Massachusetts had denounced taxation without representation. In 1838 sailmaker James Forten, Bishop Morris Brown, and abolitionist Robert Purvis and other blacks worked to defeat a Pennsylvania bill disfranchising blacks. They told the Legislature that "when you have taken from an individual his right to vote, you have made the government, in regard to him, a mere despotism; and you have taken a step towards making it a despotism to all." During the next 12 years blacks in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Connecticut repeatedly demanded the right to vote. Such prominent blacks as Philip A. Bell, Charles B. Ray, Theodore S. Wright, Henry Highland Garnet, Charles L. Reason, George B. Vashon, Charles H. Langston, and William H. Day urged blacks to participate in politics. So many of these men were his friends that Douglass could not easily ignore the rising tide against Garrison's rejection of politics, a rejection that was fast becoming a principle.

An uncompromising advocate of immediate abolition, Douglass was convinced by the 1850s that anti-slavery advocates had to obtain a political foothold to be effective. Consequently, he joined the Liberty and Free Soil parties to ensure that emancipation would not be ignored by the major parties, and his editorials began to reflect this new view. It was mandatory, he argued, for the oppressed to participate in the political process. Before the Civil War this participation gave the friends of freedom a chance to "pluck executive patronage out of the hands of the pliant tools of the whip and the chain; to turn the tide of the National Administration against the man-stealers of this country and in favor of even a partial application of the principles of justice."

Racial Uplift

**D**uring much of the 19th century some influential whites argued that blacks and whites could not live together in amity. Consequently, in 1817 they organized the American Colonization Society to encourage free blacks to return to Africa. Since the organizational meeting was held in the chambers of the U.S. House of Representatives, it was a powerful society. Among its members were Speaker of the House Henry Clay, Gen. Andrew Jackson, and the author of the "Star-Spangled Banner," Francis Scott Key. Between 1817 and 1860 the society sent about 15,000 ex-slaves to Liberia. Many masters freed their slaves with the express

stipulation that they be transported to Africa. Several branches of the colonization society were established by Southern whites. New York, Indiana, the U.S. Congress, and several Southern States appropriated money for exportation.

Free blacks had much interest in their African homeland, but most denounced the colonization society. As early as 1839 Douglass had contended that blacks were "American citizens, born with natural, inherent and just rights; and that the inordinate and intolerable scheme of the American Colonization Society shall never entice or drive us from our native soil." Working with and supported by others in the anti-slavery and abolitionist societies, he would maintain this position throughout his life. He argued that because whites felt guilty about their treatment of blacks they wanted to remove them from their sight. Since free blacks were showing that they had all of the endowments of other men, whites wanted to remove free blacks because they represented a threat to slavery. This, Douglass argued, would never do. Most of the blacks were born in America and their blood and sweat had helped to make the country great. Many of the black man's ancestors had arrived in the United States decades before those very whites who were advocating their deportation. Absurd in its inception, colonization of all blacks would be too costly to the national government.

Douglass was still denouncing colonization when President Abraham Lincoln pushed a bill through Congress in 1862 appropriating \$100,000 for the purpose of encouraging black colonization. During his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln had argued that blacks and whites were so dissimilar they could not live together peacefully. Although anti-slavery in sentiment, Lincoln felt that whites were superior to blacks and he spoke out against racial equality. On September 18, 1858, Lincoln said:

*I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.*

The President held the same ideas in 1862 when he presented his colonization scheme to a group of black leaders.

Douglass was incensed, and he charged that Lincoln was showing “his pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy.”

While he battled against the colonization society and the President, Douglass also had to struggle with black separatists who encouraged their fellows to leave the United States voluntarily. It was inevitable that many blacks would become separatists. At one time or another most 19th-century free blacks felt as W.E.B. Du Bois did in the 1930s:

*I was not a man; I was by long education and continued compulsion and daily reminder a colored man in a white world; and that white world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds . . . that I was and must be a thing apart.*

As a result of such feelings many 19th-century blacks stressed racial solidarity, pride, and loyalty. They retained a strong sentiment and nostalgia for their homeland. They prefixed “African” before the names of many of their churches, schools, and social organizations.

Distressed by the barriers they faced in the United States, a number of blacks yearned for a place beyond its borders where they might find refuge. Canada, Central America, Haiti, and Africa all had their appeal. Each offered a haven for the oppressed, and opportunity for the black man to demonstrate his talents. At the root of the emigration schemes was a heavy emphasis on black nationalism and a militant black unity. The poet James M. Whitfield, the minister Henry Highland Garnet, and the Harvard-trained physician Martin R. Delany all called for emigration. In 1852 Delany argued that blacks, if they were ever to progress, had to “stand independently of anything pertaining to white men or nations.” Respect and equality would come for blacks, Whitfield declared, only when they had “men of their own race occupying a primary position instead of a secondary and inferior one.” This would never happen in the United States where blacks would always be “crawling in the dust to the feet of our oppressors.” Outside America, however, blacks could look forward to a glorious future. Delany believed that it was “the destiny of the negro, to develop a higher order of civilization and Christianity than the world has yet seen.”

Such men as Delany, Whitfield, and Garnet entertained no fears about black inferiority or powerlessness. While whites had achieved much, Delany barely acknowledged them as his equals. Besides, considered globally, colored peoples outnumbered whites. Eventually the former

would rise. "The white races," according to Delany, are but one-third of the population of the globe—or one of them to two of us—and it cannot much longer continue that two-thirds will passively submit to the universal domination of this one-third." He also believed that the establishment of a powerful black nation would halt the slave trade and lead to the abolition of slavery in the South.

While sharing many of the ideas of the African emigrationists, Douglass was opposed to a mass exodus of free blacks. First, it would be an admission of despair, for departure would "virtually tell the enemy, we have no hope." Second, and most important, it would help to fasten the chains even tighter around the slave. Emigration would drain off talent which was needed in the struggle. Prejudice and discrimination, he contended, were not invincible. Since blacks were rising in the land of their bondage, they should remain and reap the fruits of their toil. Emigration would create divisions among the blacks and decrease their strength. American blacks could ill afford emigration at a time when they were "becoming a nation in a nation which disowns them."

Rather than emigration or colonization, Douglass urged the free blacks to stay and fight against prejudice and discrimination. United efforts were central to this fight. Beginning in 1843 Douglass took a leading role in the national conventions held by blacks to plan concerted actions to resist oppression. These conventions established permanent bureaus to protect the black man's civil rights, foster his employment, collect statistics, and encourage historical studies. Major stress was placed upon unified struggle. In 1855 Douglass wrote, "Brethren let us rally! The times call upon us, one and all, to sink minor differences, and with one voice, one will, and one soul struggle to be free!" Seeking to foster unity, in 1849 Douglass called for the establishment of a permanent National League of Colored People.

Douglass insisted that the free blacks were duty bound to fight for the emancipation of their enslaved brothers. Every free black, he claimed, "should be ashamed to consider himself free while his brother is a slave." Remembering vividly his own sufferings in Maryland, Douglass felt deeply for those still in chains. At an early stage in his career he began helping slaves to escape to Canada through what was known as the underground railroad. Since the escaped slave was a fugitive who could legally be returned to his owner, Douglass violated the law every time he aided one of them. When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law

of 1850 he was placed in even greater danger, for, backed by the law Southern agents could scour the North, apprehend fugitives, have them arrested, and take them back to slavery. Northern blacks were incensed by the passage of the bill and vowed to defy it. Samuel Ringgold Ward of New York, for example, angrily announced that "if anyone came to take him he had better perform two acts for the benefit of himself and his family. He should first make his will and then make his peace with his Maker."

Vehemently refusing to abide by what he considered an unjust law, in April 1850 Douglass joined with others in resolving that "compromise or no compromise, constitution or no constitution . . . no testimony short of a bill of sale from Almighty God can establish the title of the master to his slave, or induce us to lift a finger to aid in his return to the house of bondage." In August that same year Douglass helped to write an address to slaves in the South urging them to flee from their masters. At a convention in Pittsburgh in 1852 he insisted that "the only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen or more dead kidnapers. . . ." In the June 9, 1854, edition of his paper he contended that the remedy for the infamous law was a "good revolver, a steady hand, and a determination to shoot down any man attempting to kidnap." Raising money to aid fugitives and hiding them in his Rochester home, he sometimes helped as many as 40 slaves a month to reach Canada and freedom. Had he been caught, he could have been imprisoned.

Free blacks, Douglass wrote, should arm themselves and resist the enforcement of the infamous Fugitive Slave Law. Anyone trying to kidnap a fugitive slave should be killed like a "ravenous wolf in the act of throttling an infant." Douglass urged every free black to "sleep with his revolver under his head, loaded and ready for use." They should provide all fugitive slaves who made their way north with arms, he said, and teach them "at once that it is no harm to shoot any man who would rob them of their liberty." Resistance had to be the order of the day if blacks, slave and free, were not to be branded as an inferior race, for the search for fugitives was a reproach that must be wiped out. "Every slave-hunter who meets a bloody death in this infernal business is an argument in favor of the manhood of our race. Resistance is, therefore, wise as well as just."

Although he frequently advised blacks to take up arms to resist enslavement, Douglass did not see eye to eye with John Brown, one of the few men who wanted to help

slaves to rebel. For ten years Brown was a close friend of Douglass and frequent visitor at his home. A deeply religious man who had fought pro-slavery men to make Kansas a free State, Brown in the mid-1850s tried to convince Douglass to join him in military operations against the South. A small band of armed men would help slaves escape and establish a free state in the mountains. Douglass was sympathetic, but he came to feel that the plan was visionary and would bring down all the force of the Federal Government. But Brown would not be deterred. On October 17, 1859, he and his small band of black and white men attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Va., (now West Virginia). Within 24 hours Col. Robert E. Lee and a company of United States marines captured John Brown.

Douglass admired Brown's heroism and "sympathized with the great objects of his life." He prophesied that Brown's attack had sounded the death knell of slavery. Two weeks after Brown's attack, Douglas wrote:

*He has attacked slavery with the weapons precisely adapted to bring it to the death. Moral considerations have long since been exhausted upon slaveholders. It is in vain to reason with them. . . . Slavery is a system of brute force. It shields itself behind might, rather than right. It must be met with its own weapons. Capt. Brown has initiated a new mode of carrying on the crusade of freedom, and his blow has sent dread and terror throughout the entire ranks of the piratical army of slavery. His daring deeds may cost him his life, but priceless as is the value of that life, the blow he has struck, will, in the end, prove to be worth its mighty cost.*

Since Brown had papers implicating Douglass in the conspiracy, his capture imperiled Douglass' life. Warrants went out for Douglass' arrest. To avoid sharing Brown's fate on the gallows, Douglass fled to Canada and later to England. He returned upon the death of his daughter Annie in 1860.

Unwilling to throw his life away in futile utopian schemes, Douglass dedicated himself instead to a two-pronged attack against prejudice and oppression. Feeling that every advance of free blacks loosened the chains of the slave, Douglass fought constantly for the moral, intellectual and social uplift of free blacks. He urged blacks to battle against segregation at every turn. Refusing to send his children to segregated schools in Rochester, Douglass argued that dual school systems wasted money and intellectual power. For a nation, he wrote, "to cramp, and circumscribe the mental faculties of a class of its inhabitants, is as unwise as it is cruel, since it, in the same proportion, sacrifices its power and happiness." Douglass was especially active in his fight

for color blind schools because he believed that education was one of the primary forces for the elevation of blacks.

At no time did Douglass feel that blacks should submit to discrimination without protest. He refused to accept any injustice in silence. He denounced discrimination against blacks in inns, on steamboats, railroads and street-cars, and in places of public amusement. One of the first to adopt the practice of entering and refusing to leave places which barred blacks, Douglass was a forerunner of the black protest in the 1950s. Despite threats, he demanded equal treatment on Massachusetts trains in the 1840s:

*My treatment in the use of public conveyances about these times was extremely rough, especially on the Eastern Railroad, from Boston to Portland. On that road, as on many others, there was a mean, dirty, and uncomfortable car set apart for colored travelers called the Jim Crow car. Regarding this as the fruit of slaveholding prejudice and being determined to fight the spirit of slavery wherever I might find it, I resolved to avoid this car, though it sometimes required some courage to do so. . . . I . . . sometimes was soundly beaten by conductor and brakemen. On one occasion six of these 'fellows of the baser sort,' under the direction of the conductor, set out to eject me from my seat. As usual, I had purchased a first-class ticket and paid the required sum for it, and on the requirement of the conductor to leave, refused to do so. . . . They . . . found me much attached to my seat, and in removing me I tore away two or three of the surrounding ones, on which I held a firm grasp, and did the car no service in some other respects. . . . The result was that Stephen A. Chase, superintendent of the road, ordered all passenger trains to pass through Lynn, where I then lived, without stopping.*

Douglass refused, he said, "to be proscribed when I can possibly help it." Because he considered himself a man, he argued that he was "entitled to the rights and privileges of a man." He was especially adamant on this point when it came to white churches which relegated blacks to a separate gallery. Such churches, he declared, must have had an idea of heaven which was "a place of unfading joy, and resplendent magnificence, where white people shall play forever upon their golden harps; and colored people, if we, like Uncle Tom, submit to their indignities with becoming meekness, shall be permitted from the negro pew, to peep into the glory of THEIR third heaven to all eternity!"

Having contempt for whites who tried to discriminate against him, Douglass was incensed when blacks voluntarily submitted to segregation. He upbraided his friend, Samuel Ward, when he spoke before a segregated audience. Such an act represented an admission that blacks believed

they were inferior. If blacks themselves accepted segregation, why should whites cease to oppress them? Perhaps the greatest anger Douglass displayed was toward Elizabeth Greenfield, a free Negro singer who had performed before the crowned heads of Europe and was known as the Black Swan. After she performed before a segregated audience in 1852 Douglass wrote that “the conduct of the Black Swan . . . should be reprobated by the colored people. She should be called no longer the Black Swan, but the White Raven.” Rather than repent, a year later Miss Greenfield held a concert in New York City from which blacks were excluded.

Like many talented blacks, Miss Greenfield had to decide whether to adhere to principles of equality or to abandon them to make money. Because she chose the latter course, Douglass accused her of abandoning her people and voluntarily accepting personal humiliation. “We marvel,” he said, “that she can allow herself to be treated with such palpable disrespect; for the insult is to her, not less than to her race.”

While urging blacks to fight against discrimination, Douglass realized that protest alone would not lead to their elevation. To rise, blacks had to become industrious laborers and businessmen. During the first meeting of the American League of Colored Laborers in 1850, Douglass served as a vice president and contended that blacks had to engage in all kinds of economic activity. In words very similar to those made popular by Booker T. Washington 40 years later, Douglass urged blacks to become economically independent. Consequently, he was foremost among those advocating the establishment of an industrial college for blacks in the 1850s. With or without the industrial college, blacks should enter trades, buy land, and build homes. The work of every successful black artisan would help to break down prejudice. Douglass’ journals praised successful black businessmen and stressed the importance of good grooming. Believing in “the education of the hands and heart,” Douglass felt that most blacks had to engage in trades and agriculture as they emerged from slavery. Artisans and farmers would form a firm foundation for a few blacks to engage in literary and professional pursuits. The elevation of blacks depended heavily, however, on their intellectual improvement.

Prejudice and discrimination would subside, Douglass averred, when blacks could cite their accomplishments in all fields. Toward this end, he urged his fellows to establish improvement, debating, and literary societies. Since blacks had to become more literate, he stressed the impor-

tance of adult education. Lyceums and evening and Sabbath schools should be formed for this purpose. According to Douglass, blacks were “an oppressed people because we are not a reading people; any effort, therefore, directed and calculated to induce colored people to read is desirable as it constitutes the first step in our exodus from degradation.”

In an effort to encourage the subscribers to his newspaper to read, Douglass reprinted interesting essays and reviewed new books, plays, magazines, and lectures. Excerpts from the works of Thomas Carlisle, Edmund Burke, Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Harriet Beecher Stowe appeared regularly. Douglass also provided a forum for blacks of a literary bent. Joseph C. Holly, Frances E. W. Harper, James M. Whitfield, and other black poets published some of their first poems in his paper. Some of them, especially Harper and Whitfield, were renowned poets by the end of the 19th century. While encouraging black writers, Douglass wrote a short story himself, “The Heroic Slave,” which detailed the adventures of a fugitive slave who led a revolt. He also reviewed and published a number of anti-slavery poems and novels. Douglass published excerpts from many slave narratives and urged his subscribers to read works written by blacks. For example, Douglass felt a copy of William C. Nell’s Services of Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812 “ought to be in the hands of every colored man,” for it showed that “the hated black man has deserved well of his country.”

Reformer

**D**ouglass did not restrict his activities to the elevation of blacks. Many of the 19th-century reform movements attracted his attention. Like many black leaders, for example, Douglass believed in the equality of the sexes. Since so many women were involved in the abolition movement, it was inevitable that Douglass would join with them in fighting to abolish discrimination based on sex. The prevailing opinion of the role of women appeared in a New York newspaper which asserted that “woman’s offices are those of wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend.” A woman was expected to be subject to man. In an editorial in 1852, the New York Herald asked, “How did woman first become subject to man as she now is all over the world? By her nature, her sex, just as the negro is and always will be, to the end of time, inferior to the white race, and therefore, doomed to subjection; but happier than she would be in any other condition, just because it is the law of her nature.”

The attitudes toward blacks and women were so similar that Douglass' interest in the rights of the latter was natural. Beginning in the 1840s such women as Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and others began to insist that women receive the same educational, economic, and political rights as men. Douglass not only supported these sentiments, but also attended the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1848. Although 31 other men attended, Douglass was the only one to play a prominent role in the debate. During the convention the delegates were deeply divided over the resolution calling for the right to vote for women. At the urging of Elizabeth Stanton, Douglass spoke in favor of the resolution and it passed by a small majority. Douglass was the only man who voted for the suffrage resolution. For the rest of his life Douglass was a frequent delegate at women's rights conventions.

All of the delegates attending these meetings were ridiculed in the press. Accused of being crackpots, fanatics, man-haters, utopians, infidels, and free lovers, they were bombarded from every side. The New York Herald's characterization was typical:

*Who are these women? What do they want? . . . Some of them are old maids, whose personal charms were never very attractive, and who have been sadly slighted by the masculine gender in general; some of them women who have been badly mated, whose own temper, or their husbands', has made life anything but agreeable to them, and they are therefore down upon the whole of the opposite sex; some, having so much of the virago in their disposition, that nature appears to have made a mistake in their gender—mannish women, like hens that crow; some of the boundless vanity and egotism, who believe that they are superior in intellectual ability to 'all the world and the rest of mankind,' and delight to see their speeches and addresses in print; and man shall be consigned to his proper sphere—nursing babies, washing the dishes, mending stockings, and sweeping the house. This is 'the good time coming.' Besides the classes we have enumerated, there is a class of wild enthusiasts and visionaries—very sincere, but very mad—having the same vein as the fanatical Abolitionists, and the majority, if not all of them, being in point of fact, deeply imbued with the anti-slavery sentiment. Of the male sex who attend these Conventions for the purpose of taking a part in them, the majority are hen-pecked husbands, and all of them ought to wear petticoats.*

With such notoriety, the women found it difficult to get newspapers to announce their meetings. Douglass showed no reluctance in doing so.

Douglass was foremost among the reformers in urging women to agitate and petition for the right to vote. Even

when many women were timid on this issue, Douglass insisted that it was “the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves the sacred right of the franchise.” In fact, he argued, the American woman should “take her rights as far as she can get them.” Few men were as committed to equality of the sexes as Douglass. For instance, he once rejected the idea of changing the name of his paper to the Brotherhood, because it “implied the exclusion of the sisterhood.” Calling for the admission of women to all of the black conventions he attended, Douglass continued to reveal his conviction that “right is of no sex.”

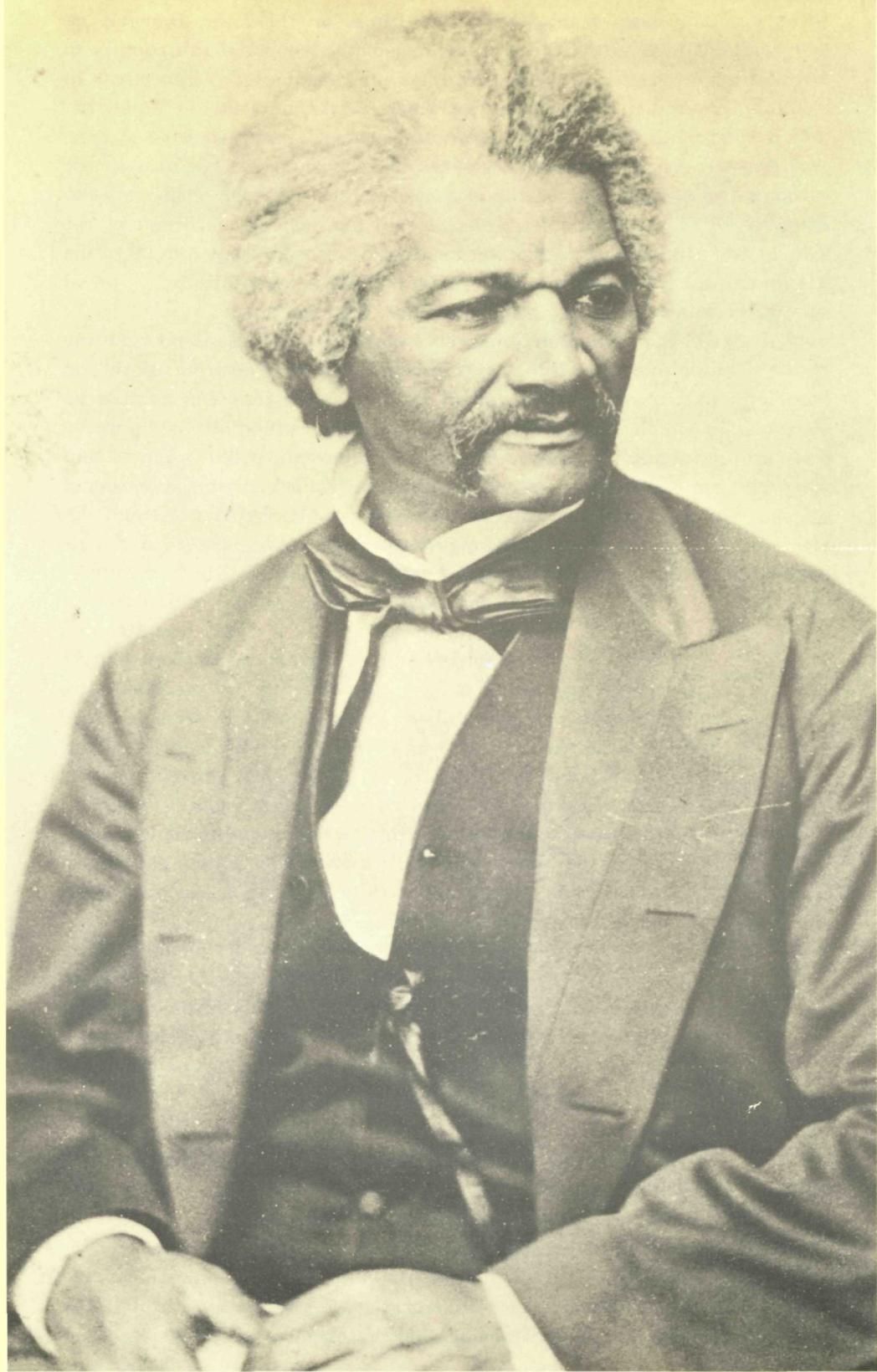
Determined to free all classes of mankind from oppression, Douglass enlisted in a wide spectrum of reform movements. He railed against land monopolies because he felt that the distribution of free land would alleviate poverty. Joining in the universal peace movement, he fought to outlaw war. Many of his editorials called for the abolition of capital punishment because he contended that it was “unfriendly to the progress of civilization, hostile to a true religion, [and] repulsive to the best instincts of humanity.”

Attacks against demon rum were featured consistently in Douglass’ editorials. While a slave, Douglass had observed that masters often gave their slaves whiskey to make them forget their bondage. Consequently, he associated alcohol with slavery. Alcohol caused distress for wives and children. It led to poverty and crime. It was a potential barrier to the education of blacks. All of the black conventions that Douglass attended passed resolutions condemning addiction to alcohol. Douglass went further. He attended the first meeting of the New York Woman’s State Temperance convention in 1852 and fought successfully for the passage of a short-lived prohibition law in 1855.

Douglass fought valiantly to uplift mankind. The weak, the friendless, the proscribed, whether black or white found in him a firm supporter. A co-worker in the campaign for equal rights for women, temperance, abolition, and peace, he sought to emancipate man from the chains of prejudice, slavery, alcohol, and war.

Black  
Warrior

**T**he election of Abraham Lincoln as President in 1860 caused panic in the South. The Illinois lawyer was known as an anti-slavery man. Early in his career he told an audience that “if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.” Although he shared many of the popular ideas concerning the inferiority of blacks, Lincoln was troubled by slavery. The first time that he saw enslaved blacks he began



to hate the system. In August 1855 he wrote to a friend and asked him to recall a trip the two of them had taken in 1841

*on a Steam Boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border. It is hardly fair for you to assume, that I have no interest in the thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable.*

And as a Congressman, Lincoln had supported bills that would have abolished slavery in the District of Columbia.

Because of his anti-slavery views, Douglass applauded Lincoln's nomination and campaigned for his election. Though criticizing the Republicans for their "infinitesimal amount of anti-slavery profession" and desire only to limit the expansion of slavery, Douglass felt that the party embodied the only viable political opposition to the South. He viewed Lincoln's election as the first break in the South's ability to dictate who would be President. As the months wore on, however, Douglass became disenchanted.

In his inaugural speech Lincoln tried to quiet the fears of the seven slave States that had seceded and those still in the Union by promising not to interfere with "the institution of slavery in the States where it exists." But since Republicans were dedicated to excluding slavery from any new territories, the South was not placated. Douglass rejected the feverish efforts to reach a compromise, for they were aimed at preserving slavery. He felt that it would be better to dissolve the Union if it could only be "maintained by new concessions to the slaveholders; if it can only be stuck together and held together by a new drain on the negro's blood."

When attempts at compromise failed, the South Carolinians attacked the U.S. troops at Fort Sumter in April 1861 and precipitated the bloodiest war of the 19th century. To retain the support of pro-slavery Northern whites and those loyalists in the slaveholding States that had not seceded, Lincoln refused to touch the institution of slavery for two years. Many northern whites were willing to give their lives to preserve the Union, but few were willing, initially, to fight to free the slaves.

Blacks, however, viewed the war in a different light. For them, it was no less than a war of liberation. And in Douglass' mind the Union could only win the war if abolition of slavery were one of the war aims.

*Could we write as with lightning, and speak as with the voice of thunder, we should write and cry to the nation, REPENT, BREAK EVERY YOKE, LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE, FOR HEREIN ALONE IS DELIVERANCE AND SAFETY! It is not too late. The moment is propitious. . . . Now is the time to put an end to all our present national calamities. . . . Any attempt now to separate the freedom of the slave from the victory of the Government, . . . any attempt to secure peace to the whites while leaving the black in chains . . . will be labor lost.*

Slavery, Douglass argued, was the South's strength. Black bondsmen toiling in the field freed whites to go to the front and furnished them with supplies. Slavery was the main cause of the war, America's national disaster. Since the North could never defeat the South while slaves toiled in the field, Lincoln should abolish slavery. The North should fight for the time-honored principle of freedom. Douglass further contended that "fire must be met with water, darkness with light, and war for destruction of liberty must be met with war for the destruction of slavery."

But Lincoln was cautious; whenever an enthusiastic military officer liberated slaves, Lincoln rescinded the order. Yet, there were signs of progress. In April and June 1862 he signed bills abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia and in the territories. Then, on January 1, 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in the rebellious states, but only in those areas not under Federal control, as an act of "military necessity." Although the act left 800,000 blacks enslaved in the border states, it was cheering for Northern free blacks.

Frederick Douglass saw in the Proclamation "a little more than it purported;" and saw in its spirit, "a life and power beyond its letter." He said that January 1, 1863, was indeed "a day for poetry and song, a new song." He told a meeting in Boston that the Proclamation raised the war to a new level. It inaugurated "a struggle between the beautiful truth and the ugly wrong." His happiness was not unbounded. Freedom had been proclaimed, but it had not been won. A war to preserve the Union had become a war of liberation, but the war was not over. Many battles lay ahead, and it remained to be seen whether blacks would play a significant role in the struggle. Would Lincoln, for instance, accept black troops into the Union Army?

Although George Washington and Andrew Jackson had utilized black troops during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, most Northern whites were initially appalled by any suggestion that blacks fight in the Civil War. Blacks, they said, were cowards. Besides, it would be hor-

rendous to have inferior blacks shedding the blood of white men. It would lead to social equality, interracial sex, and citizenship. It would be humiliating to have black men fight to protect whites. A black man in arms would be an insult to the white soldier. An Ohio Congressman argued that “this is a government of white men, made by white men, for white men, to be administered, protected, defended, and maintained by white men.” Then, too, if black men were armed it would cause an insurrection among the slaves and lead to arson and murder and the extermination of Southern whites. Another Congressman contended that the recruitment of black troops would undermine the “supremacy of the white race in eleven states of this Union, and [make] the colored the dominant race in those States.”

From the outset, black men rejected the claims of their detractors. They held several mass meetings at the beginning of the war demanding a chance to participate. Others formed companies and volunteered, but the War Department rejected their services. Douglass contended that the arms of black men were needed to win the war. And it made little sense to enlist foreign-born whites while denying native-born blacks a chance to fight. The only way to end the war, he claimed, was to “stop it on the soil upon which it originated, and among the traitors and rebels who started it. This can be done by ‘carrying the war into Africa.’ Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service and formed into a liberating army, to march into the South and raise the banner of Emancipation among the slaves.” In rejecting the service of blacks, the Union Army was pandering to a cruel prejudice that could only hinder the war effort. It was like a man facing a strong foe with one hand tied behind his back.

Devastating losses in the first years of the war decimated the Union Army and forced the United States, for the first time, to resort to a draft. Realizing that the war would be long and despising the draft, whites began to change their attitudes about having blacks in the Army; officials decided that blacks could die as well as whites. After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the Union Army began accepting black recruits. In March 1863 Douglass issued his famous call, “Men of Color, to Arms!” Several of his editorials and speeches focused on this theme. Blacks had to volunteer, he argued, because they needed to learn the use of firearms for their future protection and defense, to prove their manhood and courage, gain self-respect, and to establish their claim to all of the rights enjoyed by other citizens. “Nothing can be

more plain," he said, "nothing more certain than that the speediest and best possible way open to us to manhood, equal rights, and elevation is that we enter this service." Military service would break the shackles binding the slave and remove prejudice and discrimination in the North. "Once let the black man," he said, "get upon his person the brass letters U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on the earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States."

When the Governor of Massachusetts, John A. Andrew, authorized the organization of a black regiment, the 54th Massachusetts, Douglass became one of its earliest recruiters. His sons, Lewis and Charles, were among the first to volunteer. Between February and mid-April Douglass personally recruited more than 100 men. Reprints of his editorials were circulated throughout black communities in the North, and he traveled extensively on recruiting tours. Douglass was so successful as a recruiter that during the summer of 1863 Lincoln met with him and promised him an appointment as brigadier general in charge of raising black troops in the South. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, however, refused to sign a commission for Douglass. Even so, Douglass played a major role in recruiting the nearly 200,000 black men who served in the Union Army. Sixteen of these men were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for their bravery.

Throughout the war these brave black men labored under severe handicaps. Except in Louisiana, they were not permitted to hold commissions as officers until 1865. Rarely were black doctors appointed as surgeons or black ministers as chaplains. Often, the black troops were forced to work in labor details and excluded from the battlefield. And, as if this were not enough, they were paid less than white soldiers. Then, too, while they fought in the South, white mobs attacked their loved ones in many Northern cities. If they were captured in the South, the Confederates either hanged them as rebellious slaves or sold them as laborers to the highest bidder.

Both at home and at the front, blacks were incensed by their unequal treatment. Douglass was too, but he insisted at first that if necessary, blacks should fight without any pay and "smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave." Accepting his advice, the men of the 54th refused to accept any pay for their services until they were paid the same as white troops. While he felt that freedom was a larger issue

than equal pay, Douglass continually called for equality of treatment. By July 1863 he was so discouraged by discrimination in the Army and by its failure to retaliate in kind whenever the Confederates murdered black soldiers that he stopped his recruiting. "Colored men have a right," Douglass argued, "not only to ask for equal pay for equal work, but that merit, not color, should be the criterion observed by Government in the distribution of places." In a meeting with Lincoln in late July 1863, Douglass convinced him to work to end the brutal treatment of black troops by the Confederates and to give them the same opportunities as whites in the Union Army. Still Lincoln did little to remove most of the inequities until a few months before the war ended.

Warriors who were scorned by the very people they fought to defend, the black soldiers fought under many disabilities. But the freedom they sought was sweeter than the wrongs they endured seeking it. Whether at Port Hudson, Fort Wagner, Fort Pillow, Petersburg, or Appomattox, they offered their lives to break the galling chains which had bound them for more than 200 years. As Douglass had predicted, the war to save the Union had become a war to free the slaves.

Politician

**D**uring the Civil War Douglass clearly saw that freedom would not be enough for blacks. If the post-war blacks enjoyed no more rights than the antebellum free Negroes, freedom would mean little. The slave would only cast off his chains and be at liberty to starve and suffer at the hands of his oppressors without any chance of redress. If freedom was not to lose its lustre, it had to be crowned with the right to vote. Throughout the antebellum period, most Northern states excluded blacks from the ballot box. In New York they were allowed to vote only if they possessed \$250 or more in property. Douglass had campaigned against the restriction because black men had a right to "vote on their manhood . . . not on their dollars and cents." Douglass believed that blacks needed the vote because without it they were left defenseless.

Many whites opposed the extension of the franchise to blacks. The ex-slaves, they argued, would be vindictive toward their former masters and should not be given the power to rule them. The blacks were inferior and too ignorant to know how to use the ballot. They would inevitably be brought into conflict with their former masters. Since blacks were considered degenerate and wild men, they were not fit "to enter the political community with the white

people of the country.” Pennsylvania Democrats contended that “the white race alone is entitled to the control of the government.” A ballot in a black man’s hand would undermine the “inherent superiority” of whites and lead inevitably to social equality, mixed schools, and interracial marriages. The Northern opponents of suffrage for blacks were convinced that the American government was exclusively for the benefit of white people.

Between 1859 and 1867 Douglass and other blacks fought a long campaign against such views. They wrote letters, gathered petitions, held state and national conventions, and spoke on numerous occasions. The vote was necessary, Douglass said, to guarantee some protection for blacks. To allow whites the right to vote while denying it to blacks would be to commit “the lamb to the care of the wolf—the arming of one class and disarming the other.” To exclude blacks from the ballot box because they were ignorant was hypocritical. How could they be otherwise when it had been a crime to teach slaves to read in the South, and Northern schoolhouses were closed in the black child’s face? But at least the ex-slave could speak and understand the English language. Surely he was more qualified to vote than many immigrants who could neither write, read, speak, nor understand English.

President Lincoln was deeply affected by the appeals made by Douglass and other blacks. He knew, as clearly as anyone, that blacks had earned the rights of citizenship on the battlefield. In an April 11, 1865, speech, three days before his assassination, Lincoln spoke about suffrage and asserted, “I would myself prefer that it were now conferred upon the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.”

Douglass firmly believed that the black man could not long survive in some halfway house between freedom and bondage. Having offered his life to save his country, he had earned all the rights that other male citizens enjoyed. The old proscriptions against his holding office, obtaining an education, traveling freely without discrimination, and working at jobs commensurate with his talents had been blasted with his musket fire. If America was to be united on a firm foundation, it needed its loyal black citizens to counter the still smouldering disloyalty in the South. But this loyalty could not be ensured with partial measures. Some whites felt that improving the condition of blacks threatened their safety. “Why should you be afraid to permit us,” Douglass asked, “to enter the race of competition with you? Is our degrada-

tion necessary to your elevation?" Meeting with other black leaders at the National Convention of Colored Men in 1864, Douglass joined with them in spelling out the concerns of the Nation's blacks.

*In a republican country, where general suffrage is the rule, personal liberty, the right to testify in courts of law, the right to hold, buy, and sell property, and all other rights, become mere privileges, held at the option of others, where we are excepted from the general political liberty. . . . The possession of that right is the keystone to the arch of human liberty: and, without that, the whole may at any moment fall to the ground; while, with it, that liberty may stand forever,—a blessing to us, and no possible injury to you. If you still ask us why we want to vote, we answer, Because we don't want to be mobbed from our work, or insulted with impunity at every corner. We are men, and want to be as free in our native country as other men.*

As a result of the campaign for voting rights, Douglass was convinced that the only hope for blacks lay with the Republican Party. Slaveholders and their sympathizers were too heavily represented in the Democratic Party. Democrats, North and South, were rabidly anti-black. However haltingly the Republicans moved toward the idea of equality, there could be hope. But blacks, Douglass asserted in 1864, could "not expect a single voice for justice, mercy or even decency" from Democrats.

Events bore out Douglass' prediction. Soon after the war, President Andrew Johnson restored "home rule" in the South and asked the Southern States to protect the rights of Negroes. Despite his efforts, the Southern States, which were then controlled by the Democrats, afforded few rights to the freedmen. Most of the state conventions in 1865, elected by whites only, adopted the 13th Amendment (abolishing slavery) but passed laws, the Black Codes, severely restricting the rights of the former slaves. Facing economic ruin, convinced that the mass of the former slaves would not work without being coerced, and fearing that the freedmen would slay all whites on January 1, 1866, the Southern legislators drew on the antebellum laws regarding free Negroes and the vagrancy laws of the Northern states for the provisions of the Black Codes. The Codes limited the right of blacks to work, made it easy for them to be arrested as vagrants, prohibited blacks from testifying against whites, and fined blacks heavily for seditious speeches, insulting gestures, absence from work or possession of firearms. Contracts were authorized allowing the "master" to chastise minor "servants," and prohibited "servants" from receiving visitors without the master's approval.

Douglass viewed these developments with alarm. A reconstruction policy had to be established, he declared, which would destroy the power of the former slaveholders. It had to be a policy which would "establish in the South one law, one government, one administration of justice, one condition to the exercise of the elective franchise for men of all races and colors alike." Along with Republican Congressmen Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, Douglass called upon the Nation to make sure that blacks could acquire land. After centuries of unrequited toil, they needed land to make their freedom real, to become economically independent of former slaveholders whose sole object was "to get as much work for as little pay as possible." Unless blacks could acquire land they would, he feared, "continue to live a miserable life and die a wretched death." The Black Codes were proof of this.

A howl of protest went up in the North over this apparent rebirth of slavery in the South. When Congress convened in December 1865 many Northerners were convinced that something had to be done to protect the freedman. Expecting a contrite South, the North was shocked when the former Confederate States elected the Vice President, six cabinet officers and fifty-eight members of the Congress of the Confederate States of America and four generals and five colonels of the Confederate army to the U.S. Congress. Angered by the "arrogance" of the South and Johnson's failure to consult them, the Republicans rejected the Presidential Reconstruction plan and refused to seat the Southern Congressmen.

A steady barrage of legislation was passed by the Republican Congress, often over Johnson's veto. On April 9, 1866, the Civil Rights Bill, passed over the President's veto, guaranteed blacks equal rights with whites. On January 8, 1867, Congress, again over his veto, granted suffrage to blacks in the District of Columbia. The boldest and most significant part of the Congressional plan was embodied in the Reconstruction Act of March 2, 1867, that organized the former Confederate States into five military districts, required the registration of black and white males as voters and the election of delegates to new constitutional conventions in each State, disfranchised many ex-Confederates, and required ratification of the 14th Amendment, which granted citizenship to blacks and ensured civil rights, before any of the States could elect Congressmen.

On March 3, 1865, Congress had established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands,

known as the Freedmen's Bureau. This combination welfare department, medicare organization, education bureau, and court distributed five million rations to destitute whites and 15 million rations to destitute freedmen from 1865 to 1869 thereby saving many from starvation. By 1870 the Bureau had resettled 30,000 persons or refugees displaced by the war. The Bureau established 47 hospitals for the freedmen by 1867 and treated 450,000 cases of illness. The Bureau was also instrumental in educating the freedmen. By 1870, 247,333 pupils were being taught in 4,392 Bureau schools by more than 9,000 teachers. In the economic realm, the Bureau drew up labor contracts to be signed by the freedmen and the planters, adjudicated disputes between the parties, and leased abandoned plantations to the freedmen. While the Bureau was unable to grant land to the freedmen, blacks had acquired 65,124 hectares of land in Florida and 141,610 hectares in Georgia by 1874. The protection the freedmen received depended on the Bureau officials; often, the officials were beguiled by the planters and united with them to keep the blacks "in their place." Generally, however, the Bureau agent was simply overwhelmed by the magnitude of his task.

In the succeeding years other acts were passed that concerned blacks. On July 28, 1868, the 14th Amendment and on March 30, 1870, the 15th Amendment, which guaranteed the right of citizens to vote, were ratified. Reacting to stories about atrocities committed against the freedmen, Congress passed Ku Klux Klan Acts in 1870 and 1871. The territorial government of the District of Columbia enacted public accommodation legislation in 1872. Then, on March 1, 1875, after prolonged and acrimonious debate, Congress passed a Civil Rights Bill which prohibited discrimination nationwide against blacks in public accommodations.

During this period Douglass worked incessantly for the Republican Party. He campaigned for Republican Congressmen in 1866 and attacked Andrew Johnson's policies. When Johnson offered to appoint Douglass commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, he refused partly because Johnson was at odds with Republican Party leaders. Douglass campaigned, until his death, for Republican Presidential candidates including Ulysses S Grant in 1868. However much they wavered, the Republicans were far ahead of Democrats in maintaining the freedom and punishing the enemies of blacks. For Douglass, the Republican Party was the deck, "all else is the sea." Throughout the post-war period he felt that the Democrats wanted to reverse the progress made by blacks during Reconstruction.

For an ordinary man, such unswerving loyalty would have been the mark of a party hack. But Douglass never abandoned his right to condemn his party's shortcomings. During the scandals which rocked the Grant administration, for example, he declared that "the moral atmosphere is tainted, rotten. . . . Avarice, duplicity, corruption, servility, fawning and trickery of all kinds confront us at every turn." Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Freedmen's Bank which had been chartered by Congress to encourage former slaves to save. Throughout the South blacks deposited more than \$57 million in the bank a few years after they were freed. Unscrupulous officials, bad management, and speculation had crippled the bank by 1874. Hoping to restore confidence, the trustees appointed Douglass president in the spring of 1874. As soon as he discovered its true condition, Douglass recommended that the bank be closed even though most of the large, unrepaid loans had gone to unscrupulous white speculators. Douglass complained bitterly that the bank had been "the black man's cow but the white man's milk." In the same vein he criticized the Supreme Court in 1883 when it declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. The court was, he said, extremely reactionary for it struck down a law which "was a banner on the outward wall of American Liberty, a noble moral standard uplifted for the education of the American people."

The compromise of 1877 which saw the Republican Party largely abandon Southern blacks made Douglass "an uneasy Republican." Eventually he concluded that "parties are made for men and not men for parties . . . follow no party blindly. If the Republican Party cannot stand a demand for justice and fair play it ought to go down. . . ."

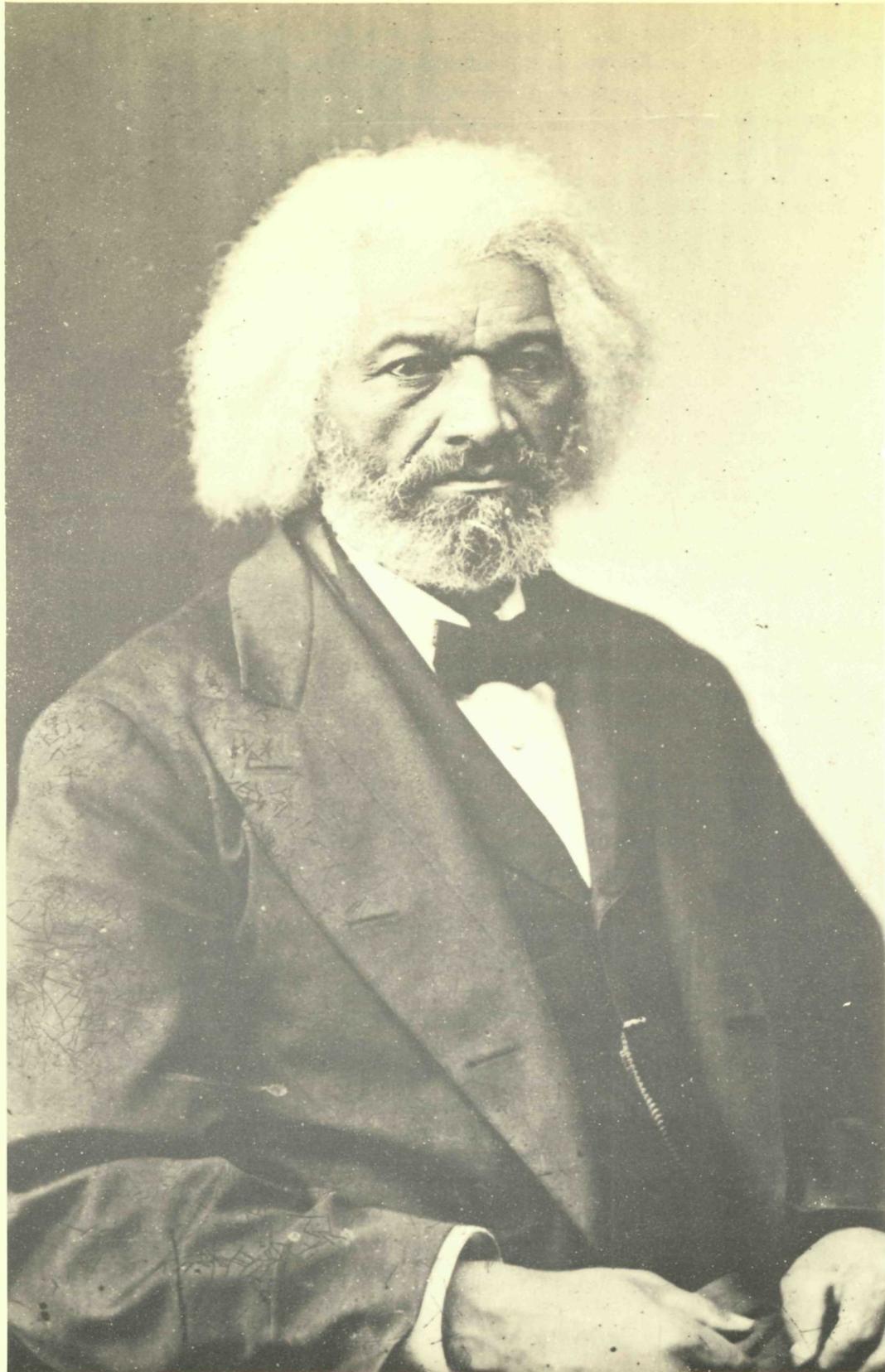
The return of whites to complete control in the South led to a virtual reign of terror against blacks. The Klan rode; homes were burned; black men were murdered and driven by force from the ballot box; blacks were lynched. And the Republican-controlled government did little to protect them. By 1880 Douglass saw that the black man had reached a point where the "workshop denies him work and the inn denies him shelter; the ballot box a fair vote, and the jury-box a fair trial. He has ceased to be the slave of an individual, but has in some sense become the slave of society." Since no institutions protected the oppressed blacks, they were being driven inexorably to the last resort of men who have no redress for their grievances—to armed resistance, daggers, and dynamite.

Although he saw that the Republican Party was abandoning the South, Douglass found the prospect of trusting the Democrats worse. Even after the end of Reconstruction he continued to try to salvage something for blacks.

Douglass' support for the Republican Party did not go unrewarded. Throughout the period, he was interested in blacks obtaining positions in the national government as evidence of the black's elevation. Through his influence with Grant, Ebenezer Bassett, a Yale graduate, became consul general to Haiti, the first black man to hold a diplomatic post. As an indication of his prominence as a symbol of Black Republicanism, Douglass was appointed marshal and recorder of deeds in the District of Columbia in 1877 and 1881—the first black to hold these offices. In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed him minister to Haiti. Douglass' friends and supporters urged him not to accept the post and criticized the administration for not offering him a Cabinet position. Certainly he deserved such an offer because of his long service to the Nation and the party, but racial prejudice was a strong barrier. Almost a century would pass after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued before prejudice had receded far enough to allow the appointment of black men to positions on the Supreme Court and in the Cabinet. Even so, in the context of the times, Frederick Douglass rose higher than most of his contemporaries, black or white. After all, the distance between the slave pens of Maryland and the office of marshal of the District of Columbia or minister to Haiti was longer, more difficult, more painful than the road traveled by any other prominent American of the 19th century.

The Sage  
of Anacostia

**D**uring and immediately after the Civil War Douglass spent much time in the Nation's Capital. What he saw there convinced him that if he hoped to influence events he had to have a base in the capital, and a few years after the war he began discussing the possibility of establishing a newspaper in Washington. By 1869 the Rev. J. Sella Martin, pastor of the Fifteenth Street Colored Presbyterian Church, had acquired the necessary backing for the paper and urged Douglass to join the enterprise. On January 13, 1870, the Washington New Era appeared with Martin as editor. Although he was still living in Rochester, Douglass became corresponding editor. He wanted the New Era "to take its place among the many lights existing to guide, and the many shields uplifted to defend the colored race in their transition from bondage to freedom, . . . inspiring its readers



with manly sentiments, ennobling aspirations, reflecting the highest intellectual and moral resources of the colored people." Moving to Washington in August 1871, Douglass became editor and changed the name to the New National Era declaring that "the field of our labors is as wide as the limits of the nation; it is our aim to speak to and for the people of the whole land, rather than any particular locality." When he went to Santo Domingo in January 1871, Douglass left his son Lewis in charge of the paper. After his return from the island in March, Douglass wrote a series of articles on Santo Domingo. But the calls on Douglass' time were too heavy for him to devote full time to the paper. And after his Rochester home burned in June 1872, and he became heavily involved in the Presidential campaign, he had to sever all ties. On February 6, 1873, Douglass turned the paper over to his son, Lewis Douglass.

In the summer of 1872 Douglass decided to move his family to Washington. He was especially anxious to do so because he felt that his wife Anna would be more comfortable living among Washington's large black population. He also felt that he could help alleviate the problems confronting blacks in the District of Columbia, problems he had become aware of when serving on Washington's legislative council for a few months in 1871. The family moved into a home on A Street, in Northeast Washington.

Five years later Douglass purchased a home in what was then suburban Washington. Just across the Anacostia River, the eastern branch of the Potomac, his new 20-room house was situated on a hill surrounded by 3.7 hectares of land. He purchased an adjoining 2.3 hectares in 1878. In purchasing the house, Douglass became one of the first men to break a restrictive covenant in Washington. According to the original deed, blacks were to be barred from purchasing the estate.

Since his new home was surrounded by a large number of cedar trees, Douglass named it Cedar Hill. At the time it offered a commanding view of the river and much of the city. Commodious verandas, porticos, halls and rooms provided plenty of space for the Douglass family. Douglass used the well-stocked library in preparing his numerous lectures and essays. Paintings of Douglass and portraits of Sumner, Blanche K. Bruce, Toussaint L'Ouverture, John Brown, Lincoln, and others adorned the parlors. An orchard, garden, and croquet field were situated on the grounds.

After Anna's death in 1881, Douglass turned increasingly to literary activities. In 1845 he had published his

first autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Ten years later, he wrote his second, My Bondage and My Freedom (1855). He spent much of his time trying to sort out his life and writing his third autobiography, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (1882).

In 1884 he took a crucial step which brought criticism from both blacks and whites. In January that year he married Helen Pitts, a white woman who had served as a clerk in the Recorder's office. A talented woman whose ancestors had fought in the Revolutionary War, Helen brought new joy into Douglass' life. But locally and nationally whites were enraged. Some Congressmen called for a law banning interracial marriage in the District of Columbia. A number of blacks accused Douglass of abandoning his race. Douglass insisted that no one had a right to determine a man's associates or his marriage partner. He had not abandoned his race. In marrying the woman he loved, he had struck another blow against prejudice and discrimination.

For the most part, Douglass found Washington to be a congenial place. Interested in the betterment of the local residents, he joined many campaigns to improve their lot. For a while he was president of the Industrial Building and Savings Company which sought to promote the purchase of homes by blacks. Douglass also invested heavily in other enterprises controlled by blacks and especially the Alpha Life Insurance Company, the Capital Savings Bank, and the Freedom Manufacturing Company. He did not, however, neglect social matters. Douglass often attended the theater and read Shakespeare's plays before the Uniontown Shakespeare Club. Young students from Howard University, of which he was a trustee, frequently went to Cedar Hill for tea and games of croquet. Although Douglass did not have a formal affiliation with any church, he was a deeply religious man. He often addressed ministerial associations and was fond of saying that in the 1840s "the A.M.E. Zion Church at New Bedford gave me license to preach and I have been preaching ever since." The church he attended regularly in Washington was the Metropolitan A.M.E.

As he viewed the election of each new President, Douglass found much in the style of life in Washington which was wryly humorous. In 1876 he gave one of the most comical descriptions ever written of office seekers and lobbyists in the capital. The hungry spoilsmen were always obsequious and dishonest he said, for "in the pre-eminently deceitful and treacherous atmosphere, promises even on paper do not amount to much. Everybody is fed and being fed

upon great expectations and golden promises, and since the diet is less than dog cheap, nobody fails of a full supply.”

In a more serious vein, Douglass viewed Washington as a symbol of the Nation’s principles. It represented the unity of the people, welcomed all of them as citizens. Its monuments and public buildings were ennobling, they indicated to Americans “the value of free institutions and how to perpetuate and maintain them.” For Douglass, Washington was “a glorious symbol of civil and religious liberty.” It was truly home for all Americans:

*Elsewhere we may belong to individual States, but here we belong to the whole United States. Elsewhere we may belong to a section, but here we belong to a whole country, and the whole country belongs to us. It is national territory, and the one place where no American is an intruder or a carpet-bagger. The new comer is not less at home than the old resident. Under its lofty domes and stately pillars, as under the broad blue sky, all races and colors of men stand upon a footing of common equality.*

The ideal that Washington represented was not followed in actual practice. While most public institutions treated blacks with respect, many of the hotels, restaurants, and places of public amusement discriminated against them. Situated between two former slave States, Washington shared many of the prejudices of Maryland and Virginia. Soon after the war discrimination had become so prevalent that Douglass began speaking out against it. In this regard Douglass felt that Washington was “a most disgraceful and scandalous contradiction to the march of civilization.”

Even more disgraceful was the disfranchisement of American citizens in Washington. In 1866 when blacks constituted about one-third of the District’s population, Congress passed a law giving all males the right to vote. Whites became alarmed, however, when 8,200 blacks and 9,800 whites registered in 1870. Fearing that the rapidly increasing black population would lead to black control of the city government, local whites petitioned Congress to prevent the subordination of “the rights and interest and feelings of the white man to those of the negro.” Accordingly, in February 1871 local autonomy was taken away from District citizens and vested in a governor, boards of health and public works, and an 11-man upper house of the legislative council all appointed by the President. Local residents elected a non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives and the 22 members of the lower chamber of the city’s legislative council. But the influx of blacks continued to worry local whites. Consequently, in 1874 Congress removed what local

whites called the “curse of Negro suffrage” by abolishing all elective offices. In their place appeared three Presidentially appointed commissioners. While undergoing some changes in subsequent years, control of District affairs remained largely in the hands of Congress and the President until the passage of a Home Rule Bill in 1974.

Frederick Douglass viewed the loss of home rule with alarm. Without it, he recognized that blacks could not obtain fair treatment in schools, jobs, or any other area of life. Without the vote, they would stand helpless before community prejudices. More than this, however, was involved. Citizens of Washington, the symbol of American principles, were denied an inherent right enjoyed by all other Americans. Whether black or white, local residents had no voice in choosing those who ruled them. No citizen could protect his interests. The citizens of the District of Columbia were in an anomalous position. Reminiscing about this state of affairs in the 1880s, Douglass recalled:

*These people are outside of the United States. They occupy neutral ground and have no political existence. They have neither voice nor vote in all the practical politics of the United States. . . . Practically they are aliens; not citizens, but subjects. ¶ The District of Columbia is the one spot where there is no government for the people, of the people, and by the people. Its citizens submit to rulers whom they have had no choice in selecting. They obey laws which they had no voice in making. They have a plenty of taxation, but no representation. In the great question of politics in the country they can march with neither army, but are relegated to the position of neutrals. ¶ I have nothing to say in favor of this anomalous condition of the people of the District of Columbia, and hardly think that it ought to be or will be much longer endured. . . .*

Douglass followed local affairs affecting blacks with much interest and became one of the social leaders in the capital. In 1873, for example, he complained bitterly because a black man was not appointed president of Howard University. Douglass represented local blacks at a number of ceremonial functions. After Charles Sumner’s death, Douglass marched at the head of the black honor guard in the funeral procession. Similarly, he was one of Vice President Henry Wilson’s pallbearers and one of the black mourners who accompanied the body to Massachusetts. As marshal of the District of Columbia, he participated in the inaugural ceremonies, escorting the President to the Capitol. He also attended Congressional and diplomatic receptions. Such famous black leaders as John Mercer Langston, P.B.S. Pinchback, and Senator Blanche K. Bruce often dined at his home.

Respected as the "Sage of Anacostia," Douglass received many indications of the esteem of local blacks. On the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1883 he was honored with a banquet attended by several Congressmen and other notables. A similar reception was held in 1886 when Douglass returned from a tour of Europe and Egypt. On that occasion the Rev. Walter H. Brooks, pastor of the 19th Street Baptist Church, read a poem he composed for the occasion symbolizing the meaning of Frederick Douglass for the black residents of Anacostia and the District of Columbia:

Honor the statesman now returning  
From the shores of France and Spain,  
From the British Isles and mainland,  
To his native home again.

Honor the man whose potent speeches  
In the world both old and new,  
Now for him a fame undying  
Made the bondman friends most true.

Honor the old man in his glory,  
Read the story of his life,  
Tell it to your sons and daughters  
Till they feel the bitter strife.

Strife for freedom, land, and manhood,  
Strife for all the rights of men,  
Hold him up the friend of letters,  
In his threescore years and ten.

Hold him up a people's leader,  
In the struggle which we wage  
'Gainst oppression dark and cruel,  
Honor him the prince and sage.

Honor him, and hail him welcome  
Welcome Frederick Douglass here,  
Where he made long fight for freedom,  
Wielding tongue of fire e'er.

Honor him with shouts of gladness,  
Bid the nation honor, too,  
For in him the cause of justice  
Finds a champion strong and true.

On February 20, 1895 Frederick Douglass died after attending a meeting for women's rights that afternoon. Four

days later, following a private family service at Cedar Hill, thousands of Washingtonians paid their respects to the champion of human rights as his body lay in state at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. He was buried in Rochester, N.Y.

Symbol  
for the Present

**I**n death as in life Douglass symbolized the best of American ideals and traditions. Douglass left a legacy which is shared by all Americans. Booker Washington could admire him because of his early devotion to industrial education. Martin Luther King could applaud his nonviolent resistance. Du Bois found in him an early advocate of agitation for equal rights, for Douglass believed:

*The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. ¶ This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.*

A universal reformer, Douglass was a citizen of the world. He traveled to Great Britain, France, Italy, and Egypt. He became an early symbol of Pan-Africanism, or the unity of blacks throughout the world. Haitians revered Douglass and appointed him as their commissioner at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

A representative American, Douglass believed firmly in the Declaration of Independence. He constantly showed the inconsistency between America's ideals and its practices. In the face of oppression, he cited the example of the patriots who had fought against tyranny. He was determined to do the same for his oppressed brothers. He pointed the way toward an America where men would be treated as equals. Douglass dedicated himself to freeing white America from the shackles of color prejudice. The white man's happiness, he argued, could not be "purchased by the black man's misery." He believed in interracial cooperation. At the same time, he stressed the need for unity among blacks.

The father of 20th century protest movements, Douglass taught blacks that they must fight against discrimination, prejudice, and oppression. Self-respect, constant struggle, education, and hard work were the roads that led to freedom. While blacks had to rely primarily upon their own efforts, he felt that they should cooperate “with all men without distinction of color.” He demanded “freedom now” long before it became a theme in the 1960s. According to the writer Albion Tourgee, Douglass’ “memory should be an inspiration to every colored man and a warning to every white American that caste discrimination, . . . cannot long be justified by its results.”

Americans honored Douglass during his lifetime and after his death. Upon receiving news of his death, the North Carolina legislature adjourned, and the Legislatures of Indiana, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York passed resolutions of regret. Buildings, schools, prizes, and societies have been named after him. The United States Post Office has issued a commemorative stamp in his honor and in 1954 a Broadway play, In Splendid Error, portrayed his life. Dozens of black and white poets have sung his praises. In The Break of Dawn Arthur Lee Smith (Molefi K. Asante) wrote in 1964:

Douglass! We miss thee now,  
In this decadent age,  
We need thy virtuous soul  
To soothe our wounded bodies.

We need thy moral freshness  
To blow over our sick nation  
Filling us with higher spirits  
Of intangible goodness!

Where is thy clarion voice  
That rang so loudly  
So short a period ago  
Against a wall of like vices?

Where hides thy mighty force  
That moralized, yes, two continents,  
By shaking conscience foundations  
With striking messages of right?

We are tired of hate and bias,  
Long enemies of black and poor,  
Who are counted lower than dirt,  
Though they plow the row.

Douglass, your fame is known,  
Your courage is a cherished gem  
In the treasury of the born  
Black and white alike.

The poets view Douglass' life and dedicate Americans anew to the principles he enunciated. Robert Hayden spelled this out clearly when he wrote:

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful and terrible thing, needful to man as air, usable as the earth; when it belongs at last to our children, when it is truly instinct, brain-matter, diastole, systole, reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more than the gaudy mumbo-jumbo of politicians: this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world where none is lonely, none hunted, alien, this man, superb in love and logic, this man shall be remembered—oh, not with statutes' rhetoric, not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone, but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives fleshing his dream of the needful, beautiful thing.

So many of the evils that Douglass fought against still exist that his life may be seen as a warning to America. Douglass contended that it was not enough to write a constitution embodying sacred rights while denying those rights to minorities. It was not enough to venerate the Declaration of Independence and give lip service to the idea that all men are created equal while clinging to practices which ensure that some men would live and die as unequals. Such inconsistency was cruel mockery of truth and conducive to perpetual discontent, riot, and rebellion. Douglass believed in the promise of America, but he did not believe that promise would be fulfilled:

*Until the public schools shall cease to be caste schools . . . until the colored man's pathway to the ballot-box . . . shall be as smooth and as safe as the same is for the white citizens, . . . until the courts of the country shall grant the colored man a fair trial and a just verdict, . . . until color shall cease to be a bar to equal participation in the offices and honors of the country, . . . until the trades-unions, and the workshops of the country shall cease to proscribe the colored man, . . . until the American people shall make character, and not color, the criterion of respectability.*

A

Douglass

Portfolio



Frederick Douglass works at his desk in the library at Cedar Hill (*previous page*).

On September 15, 1838, Anna Murray became the wife of Frederick Douglass. She had been born free, the daughter of former slaves, Bambarra and Mary Murray. The savings that Anna had carefully set aside during her years of work enabled Douglass to escape to New York whither she followed him and they were married.

In August 1845 Frederick Douglass left the United States and sailed for England. In part, he fled from America to escape capture as a fugitive slave. The publication of his The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave had revealed his true identity and many of his friends urged him to leave. While he was in England, English abolitionists raised the funds to buy his freedom. This document, dated November 30, 1846, is the bill of sale between Thomas Auld and his brother, Hugh Auld, for Douglass. Five days later Hugh Auld gave Douglass his freedom and in April 1847, he returned to the United States a free man.



Know all men by these presents, that I, Thomas Auld of Talbot County and State of Maryland, for and in consideration of the Sum of One hundred Dollars, current money, to me in hand paid by Hugh Auld of the City of Baltimore in the said State, at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof, I, the said Thomas Auld do hereby acknowledge, have granted, bargained and sold, and by these presents do grant, bargain and sell unto the said Hugh Auld, his executor, administrators and assigns, One negro man by the name of Frederick Bailey or Douglas as he calls himself; - he is now about twenty eight years of age. - To have and to hold the said negro man for life. And I the said Thomas Auld, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, all and singular the said Frederick Bailey alias Douglas, unto the said Hugh Auld, his executor, administrators and assigns, against me the said Thomas Auld, my executor & administrators, and against all and every other person or persons whatsoever, shall and will warrant and forever defend by these presents. In Witness whereof, I set my hand and seal this ~~thirtieth~~ thirtieth day of November, eighteen hundred and forty-six.

Signed, sealed and delivered

in presence of  
Myrightem Cousins

John G. Sears.

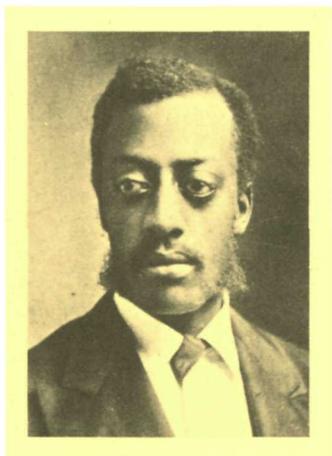
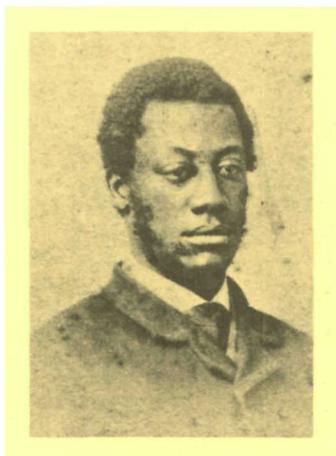
Thos Auld, 

State of Maryland, Talbot County, to wit: - That it Remembred and it is hereby certified, that on the thirtieth day of November, Anno Domini, eighteen hundred and forty-six, before the Subscriber, a Justice of the Peace of the State of Maryland, in and for Talbot County, personally appeared Thomas Auld, he being the person named and described, as and professing to be, the party to the foregoing deed or indenture; and personally known to me; and doth acknowledge the said instrument of writing to be his act and deed. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name on the day and year aforesaid.

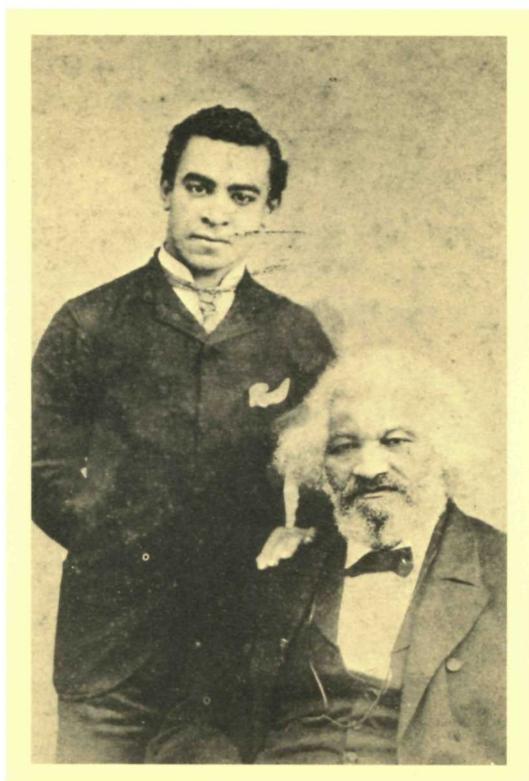
N. H. Harrington



Four of Douglass' five children grew to adulthood: (*above*) Rosetta, the oldest; (*above right*) Lewis, the second oldest, Charles Remond, the third child; and (*below right*) Frederick, Jr., next to the youngest. The fifth child, Annie, died in March 1860 when she was 10 years old.

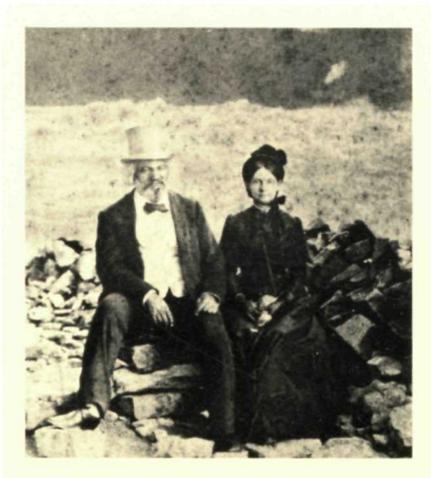


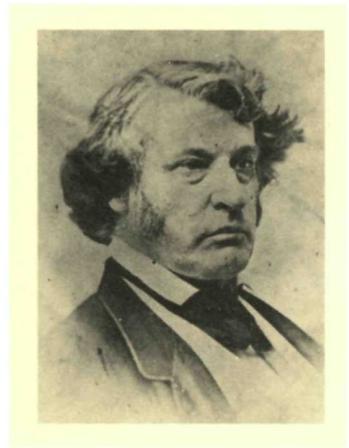
Two of Douglass' grandchildren: Annie Sprague and (below) Joseph Douglass with his grandfather.





(Above) Douglass and his second wife, Helen Pitts (seated), and her niece, Eva Pitts (standing). (Below) The Douglasses at Niagara Falls. Helen Pitts Douglass recognized the stature and national prominence of her husband and spared no effort to make his home a memorial to him after his death. She organized the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, which was chartered by Congress in 1900. Sixty-two years later her dreams were realized when an Act of Congress made the Frederick Douglass Home a unit of the National Park System, thereby ensuring its preservation.





William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) was the editor and publisher of The Liberator and the most radical of the abolitionists. He introduced Douglass to the movement. (*right*) Charles Sumner (1811-74) was U.S. senator from Massachusetts from 1851 until his death. An ardent abolitionist, he was a close friend of Douglass. He opposed President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction Plan and proposed that the former Confederate States not be readmitted to the Union until they guaranteed voting rights for blacks. Sumner's plan was accepted. In 1870 Sumner dashed the hopes of another President, Ulysses S. Grant, when he steadfastly opposed Grant's cherished project of annexing Santo Domingo.

This extraordinary document, a safe-conduct for Douglass, carries the signatures of two cabinet members, a U.S. senator, and the President. This pass was signed by Secretary of the Interior, John Palmer Usher, and U.S. Senator Samuel Clarke Pomeroy of Kansas. The note at the bottom bears the signature of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair. On the left is Abraham Lincoln's signature.

Department of the Interior.

Washington D. C. Aug. 10. 1863

To whom it may concern,

The bearer of this, Frederick Douglass, is known to us as a loyal, free, man, and is, hence, entitled to travel, unmolested,-

We trust he will be recognized everywhere, as a free man, and a gentleman.

Respectfully,

J. M. McKim

Secy.

J. C. Pomeroy

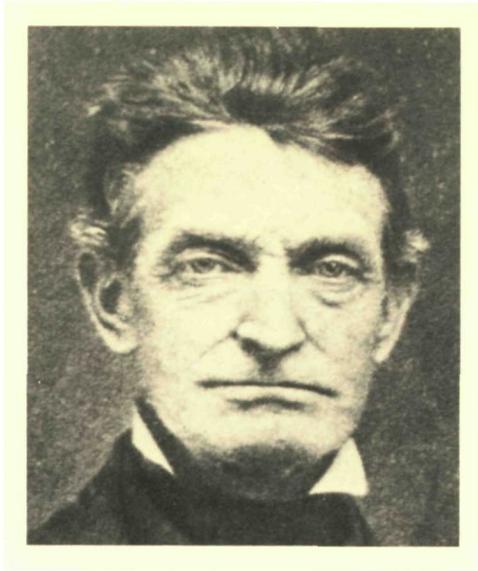
U. S. S.

Kansas

Copy the Bearer Frederick Douglass who is known to me to be free man  
M. Blair

I am sure  
A. Lincoln.  
Aug. 10. 1863.

John Brown (1800–1859) was the champion of the blacks in Kansas and at Harpers Ferry. Douglass' involvement in Brown's schemes forced his flight to Canada and ultimately to England late in 1859. (Below) Philip Bell was among the black leaders who urged participation in the political processes of the Nation to achieve abolition and equality.



60

George Luther Stearns, a Massachusetts abolitionist, was recruiting commissioner for black troops once the decision was made to allow them to fight. This letter (*right*), signed by Stearns, names Douglass his agent. All three of his sons served with the Union armies.

On pages 62 through 65 are a few important documents from Douglass' life. In order, they are: the title page of one of Douglass' printed speeches, which was given during the Centennial celebrations. The letter names Douglass U.S. minister resident and consul general to Haiti. It is signed (*overleaf*) by Secretary of State James G. Blaine. And, Douglass' special passport as minister to Haiti.

1210 Chestnut St.  
Phila Aug 8<sup>th</sup> 1863

I hereby authorize Frederick Douglass to go to  
Washington D.C as my Agent to transact  
business connected with the Recruiting Service for  
United States Colored Volunteers

Genl S. Stearns  
Major & A.A.S. U.S.A.  
Actg. Com<sup>r</sup> U.S. Col Troops

# ORATION

BY

# FREDERICK DOUGLASS

DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE

## UNVEILING OF THE FREEDMEN'S MONUMENT

IN MEMORY OF

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

In Lincoln Park, Washington, D. C.

April 14th, 1876.

## WITH AN APPENDIX.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

GIBSON BROTHERS, PRINTERS.

1876.

Department of State,  
Washington, July 1, 1889.

Frederick Douglass, Esq.,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have to advise you that the President has appointed you Minister Resident and Consul General to Hayti.

I enclose a bond in the sum of five thousand dollars, which you are required by law to furnish, with due security, before entering upon  
the

the duties of the Consulate General.

I, also, enclose a blank form of oath of office which you are requested to fill out and return to this Department, together with your bond when executed, at the same time stating your place of birth.

Your commission and instructions will then be addressed to you.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

James G. Sullivan

Enclosures:

- 1 Bond
- 2 Oath of Office

No. 204



(Special Passport.)

United States of America,  
Department of State.

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Know Ye, that the bearer hereof,

Frederick Douglass,

Minister Resident and Consul General of the United States,  
to Hayti, and Chargé d'Affaires to Santo Domingo, is  
about proceeding abroad, accompanied by his suite.

These are therefore to request all whom it may  
concern to permit him to pass freely, without let or molestation, and to  
extend to him all such friendly aid and protection, as would  
be extended to like Officers of Foreign Governments  
resorting to the United States.

In testimony whereof, I Alvey A. Adee  
Acting Secretary of State of the United States of America,  
have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of  
the Department of State to be affixed at Washington,  
this 20<sup>th</sup> day of September D. 1889 and of the  
Independence of the United States of America,  
the 11<sup>th</sup> —

Alvey A. Adee



Looking at this photograph (*previous page*) one cannot help wondering if Douglass, his wife, and friends have not just gotten up from the dining room table after a delightful meal and are about to enter the parlor. Perhaps Douglass will pick up his violin and play a few favorite airs. Or they may just sit and talk about the events of the day or of some cherished project.



Cedar Hill, the home of Frederick Douglass, sits high on the south side of the Anacostia River. From it the Douglasses enjoyed magnificent views of Capitol Hill.

The house is furnished with many pieces of furniture that Douglass and his family owned and used while they lived here. Some of the furniture was purchased by Douglass from the estate of Sen. Charles Sumner. The most important asset of the home is Douglass' library, which is intact with the books on the shelves as he kept them.

The house had been built in the late 1850s by the Union Land Associates, who were subdividing a 96-hectare farm into building lots. The brick rectangular building may have been used as an office. About 1863 John Van Hook, one of the associates, moved into the dwelling which by that time had become a spacious, comfortable home. On September 1, 1877, Douglass bought the house and 3.9 hectares adjoining this property to the south. Douglass and his family began making improvements—fencing, outbuildings, and a two-story frame addition containing the kitchen and a bedroom—to the property almost immediately. In 1877 he added the library and the bedroom above it. And in the same year the two alcoves in the East Parlor on either side of the fireplace were built.

When the Douglasses first came to Washington, they had bought and lived in a house on Capitol Hill. That house, at 316 A Street, NE., is today the Museum of African Art and is open to visitors.

*Frederick Douglass*





Bibliographical  
Note

Readers interested in more information on the life and times of Frederick Douglass should consult a number of works. Fortunately, Douglass has attracted a host of biographers, beginning with the lightly researched studies of Frederic M. Holland, Frederick Douglass: The Colored Orator (New York, 1891), James M. Gregory, Frederick Douglass: The Orator (Springfield, Mass., 1893), Charles W. Chestnutt, Frederick Douglass (Boston, 1899) and Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass (Philadelphia, 1906). While a more scholarly approach was taken by Philip S. Foner, Frederick Douglass (New York, 1964), the most objective and revealing biography was written by Benjamin Quarles, Frederick Douglass (Washington, 1948).

There is, of course, no substitute for the writings of Douglass himself for an understanding of his thought. Philip Foner has collected many of these in his The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (4 vols., New York, 1950-55). The best source of information on Douglass is his autobiographies: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Boston, 1845); My Bondage and My Freedom (New York, 1855); and Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (Hartford, 1881). Many of his speeches and editorials can be found in the journals he edited, The North Star, 1847-51, Frederick Douglass' Paper, 1851-60, and Douglass' Monthly, 1858-63.

A number of books describe the events, people, and institutions which were of special importance in Douglass' life. Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution (New York, 1956) and John W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South (New York, 1972) are cogent and dispassionate discussions of slavery. Benjamin Quarles in Black Abolitionists (New York, 1969) and Leon Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961), portray the milieu in which

Douglass worked in the North. The Civil War era is chronicled in Dudley T. Cornish, The Sable Arm (New York, 1956) and Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (Boston, 1953).

John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction (Chicago, 1961), W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction (New York, 1935), and Robert Cruden, The Negro in Reconstruction (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969) are essential for unraveling the complexities of life in the United States in the 15 years following the Civil War. The post-Reconstruction developments and Douglass' role in them are considered in August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor, 1963), Rayford Logan, The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901 (New York, 1954) and C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (2d. edition, New York, 1966).

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

