

A sepia-toned profile portrait of Frederick Douglass, facing right. He has a full, white beard and thick, wavy white hair. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark tie. The portrait is set within a decorative, double-lined border with rounded corners.

A VOICE FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE

Frederick Douglass's Thoughts
and Orations Over Time



Cedar Hill Estate library at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

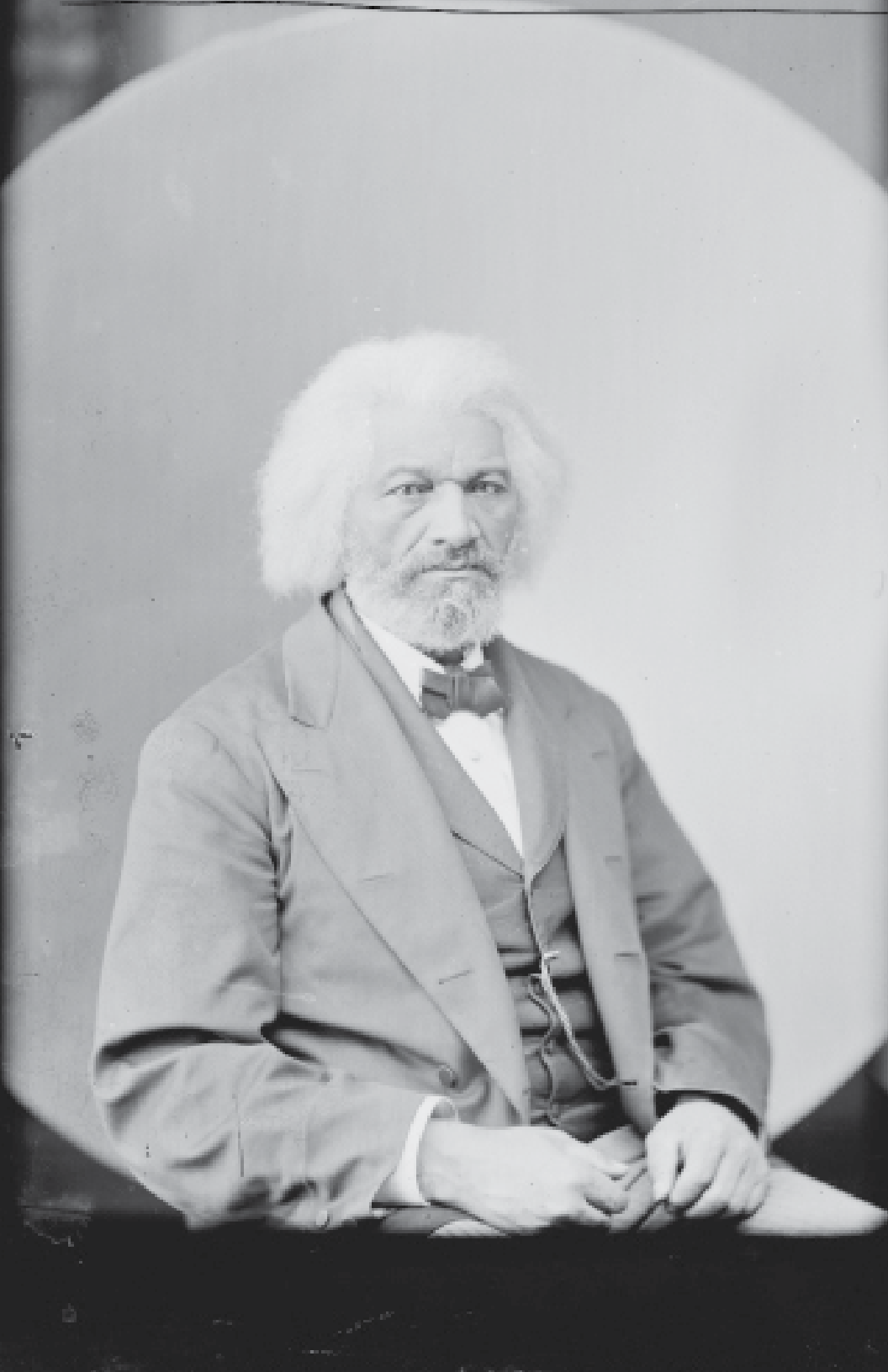
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Close up of Douglass's desk

Published by Eastern National



INTRODUCTION



Frederick Douglass, one of the best orators this nation has ever produced, was one of the most influential voices and thinkers of the nineteenth century. His words and ideals have inspired hope, change, and advocacy. He used an eloquent and fiery voice to sound his support for the liberation of the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised. His words pierced

America's consciousness, pointing out the undemocratic elements that ran through the political, social, and economic institutions in the United States during his lifetime.

His was a patriotic spirit that waged oratorical and written battles to adjust the balance of justice for those men and women who were excluded from the democratic process. Frederick Douglass maintained that the United States must live up to the emancipation principles that were professed by the nation's founders in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As he continued his fight for human rights, his rallying mantra was, "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and all we are Brethren."

Over the course of 50 years, Frederick Douglass delivered an estimated 2,000 speeches and penned several editorials and articles in his newspapers: *The North Star*, *Frederick Douglass' Weekly*, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, *Douglass' Monthly*, *The New National Era*, and other publications. He also published three autobiographies during those same years, despite the racism and social, political, and economic inequities that he faced throughout his life. At an early age, Frederick Douglass understood that knowledge led to freedom and that the written word could lead to change. As a former enslaved person who became a free man and patriotic citizen, he stated that his civic duty was "by voice and pen, in season and out of season...to stand for freedom of people of all colors, until in our land the last yoke was broken and the last bondsman was set free."

In one of his antislavery speeches, Frederick Douglass professed, "I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong." Consequently, he aligned himself with men and women of all races to advocate for many reform movements, including the abolition of slavery, racism, sexism, and capital punishment. In 1892, three years before his death, Douglass summed up his life by saying, "To those who have suffered in slavery I can say, I, too, have suffered...To those who have battled for liberty, brotherhood, and citizenship I can say, I, too, have battled." He lived a remarkable life devoted to serving others. Even though he experienced his own obstacles of racism, he was able to use the power of words instead of physical violence to achieve his freedom and then unselfishly find time to advocate it for others.

Frederick Douglass's life, his accomplishments and, most importantly, his words and ideas remain sources of inspiration for millions of people around the world.

*Ka'mal McClarin, Park Ranger
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site
Washington, D.C.*



Douglass's bedroom at Cedar Hill Estate



West parlor at Cedar Hill Estate

ON EDUCATION:

A little learning, indeed, may be a dangerous thing, but the want of learning is a calamity to any people.

Once you learn to read, you will forever be free.

*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass, 1881*

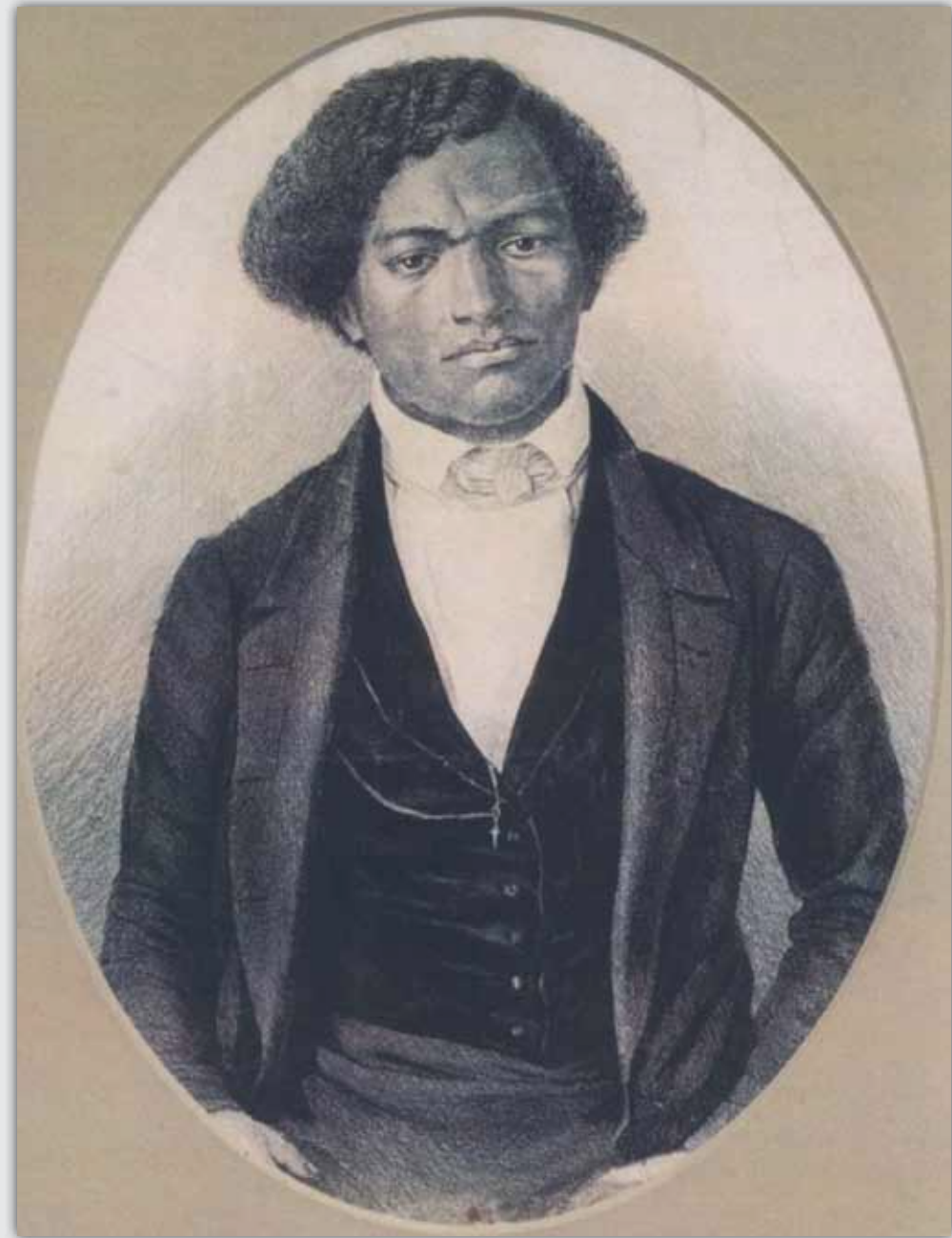
But if man is without education although with all his latent possibility attaching to him he is, as I have said, but a pitiable object; a giant in body but a pigmy in intellect, and at best but half a man. Without education he lives within the narrow, dark and grimy walls of ignorance. He is a poor prisoner without hope.



Douglass's library chair at Cedar Hill Estate

Education...means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light by which men can only be made free.

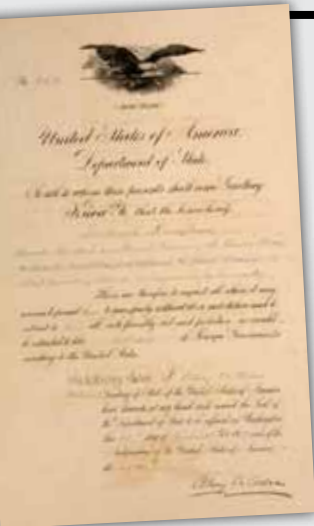
*"Blessings of Liberty and
Education" speech,
Manassas, Virginia,
September 3, 1894*



ON EQUALITY AND EQUAL RIGHTS:

I have made up my mind wherever I go, I shall go as a man, and not as a slave...I shall always aim to be courteous and mild in department towards all with whom I come in contact, at the same time firmly and constantly endeavoring to assert my equal right as a man and a brother.

*Address to the American
Colonization Society, Faneuil Hall,
Boston, Massachusetts, June 8, 1849*

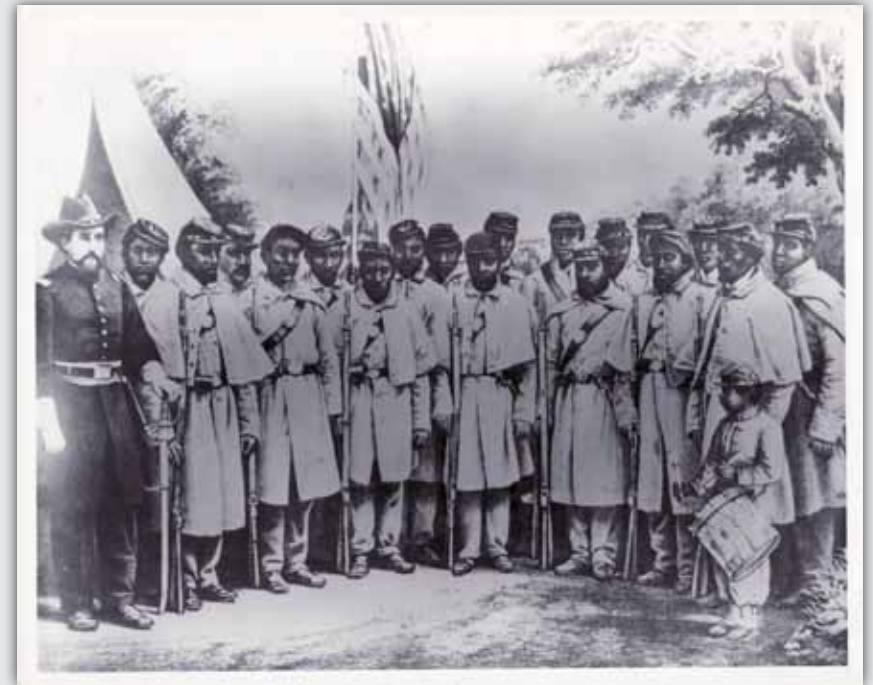


That we regard the whole colored population of the country, in the loyal as well as in the disloyal states, as our countrymen—valuable in peace as laborers, valuable in war as soldiers—entitled to all rights, protection, and opportunities for achieving distinction enjoyed by any other class of our countrymen.

*“How to End the War,”
DOUGLASS’ MONTHLY, May 1861*

Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters US, 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.

*Address at a mass meeting for the Promotion
of Colored Enlistment, National Hall,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 6, 1863*

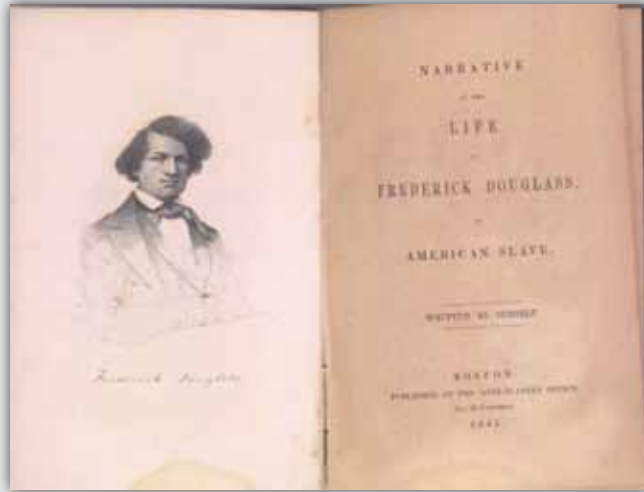


Black Union soldiers, ca. 1864-65

Believing that the white race has nothing to fear from fair competition with the black race, and that the freedom and elevation of one race are not to be purchased or in any manner rightfully subserved by the disfranchisement of another, we shall favor immediate and unconditional emancipation in all the states, invest the black man everywhere with the right to vote and to be voted for, and remove all discriminations against his rights on account of his color, whether as a citizen or a soldier.

*“Mission of the War” address,
Cooper Institute, New York City,
January 13, 1864*

ON EQUALITY AND EQUAL RIGHTS:



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, ca. 1845

In whatever else other nations may have been great and grand, our greatness and grandeur will be found in the faithful application of the principle of perfect civil equality to the people of all races and of all creeds.

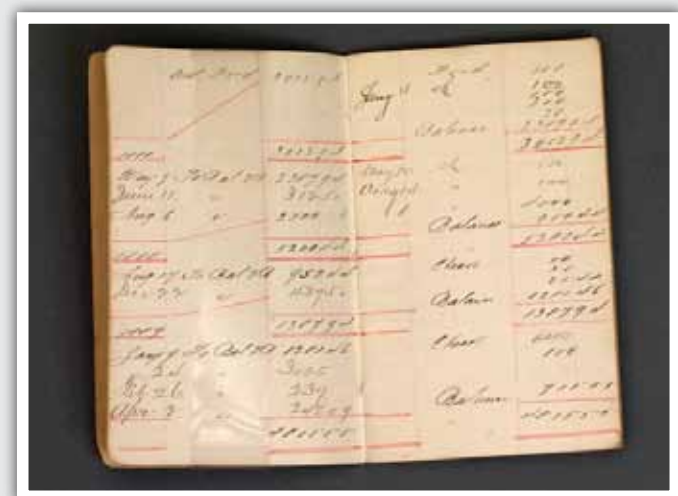
If we would reach a degree of civilization higher and grander than any yet attained, we should welcome to our ample continent all the nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples, and as fast as they learn our language and comprehend the duties of citizenship, we should incorporate them into the American body politic. The outspread wings of the American eagle are broad enough to shelter all who are likely to come.

*“Our Composite Nationality” address,
Boston, Massachusetts, December 7, 1869*

Neither we, nor any other people, will ever be respected till we respect ourselves, and we will never respect ourselves till we have the means to live respectfully.

Color prejudice is not the only prejudice against which a Republic like ours should guard. The spirit of caste is malignant and dangerous everywhere. There is the prejudice of the rich against the poor, the pride and prejudice of the idle dandy against the hard-handed workingman. There is, worst of all, religious prejudice, a prejudice which has stained whole continents with blood. It is, in fact, a spirit infernal, against which every enlightened man should wage perpetual war.

*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass, 1881*



Douglass's business ledger

ON FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION:

We solemnly dedicate *The North Star* to the cause of our long oppressed and plundered fellow countrymen. May God bless the offering to your good! It shall fearlessly assert your rights, faithfully proclaim your wrongs, and earnestly demand for you instant and evenhanded justice. Giving no quarter to slavery at the South, it will hold no truce with oppressors at the North. While it shall boldly advocate emancipation for our enslaved brethren, it will omit no opportunity to gain for the nominally free, complete enfranchisement....

“To Our Oppressed Countrymen,”
THE NORTH STAR, December 3, 1847

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.

“West India Emancipation” speech,
Canandaigua, New York,
August 4, 1857



ON FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION:

We are fighting for unity; unity of idea, unity of sentiment, unity of object, unity of institutions, in which there shall be no North, no South, no East, no West, no black, no white, but a solidarity of the nation, making every slave free, and every free man a voter.

*“Our Work Is Not Done” speech,
Annual Meeting of the American
Anti-Slavery Society, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania, December 3-4, 1863*

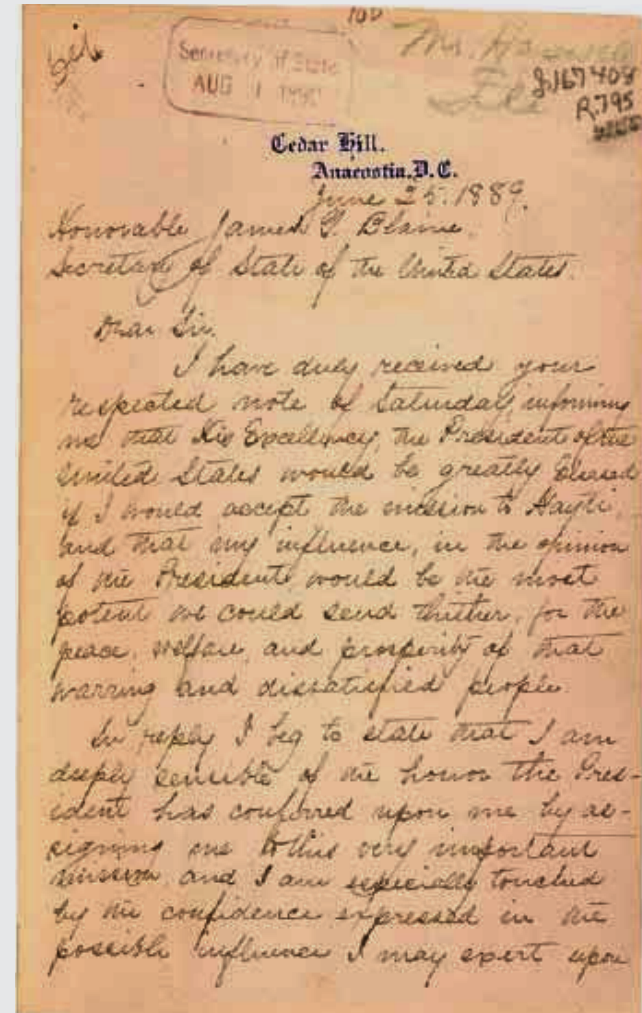


It is true that we are no longer slaves, but it is equally true that we are not yet free. We have been turned out of the house of bondage, but we have not yet been fully admitted to the glorious temple of American liberty. We are still in a transition state and the future is shrouded in doubt and danger.

Douglass's home printing press

*“We Are Not Yet Quite Free,”
FREDERICK DOUGLASS' PAPER,
August 3, 1869*

The relation between the white and colored people of this country is the great, paramount, imperative, and all-commanding question for this age and nation to solve.

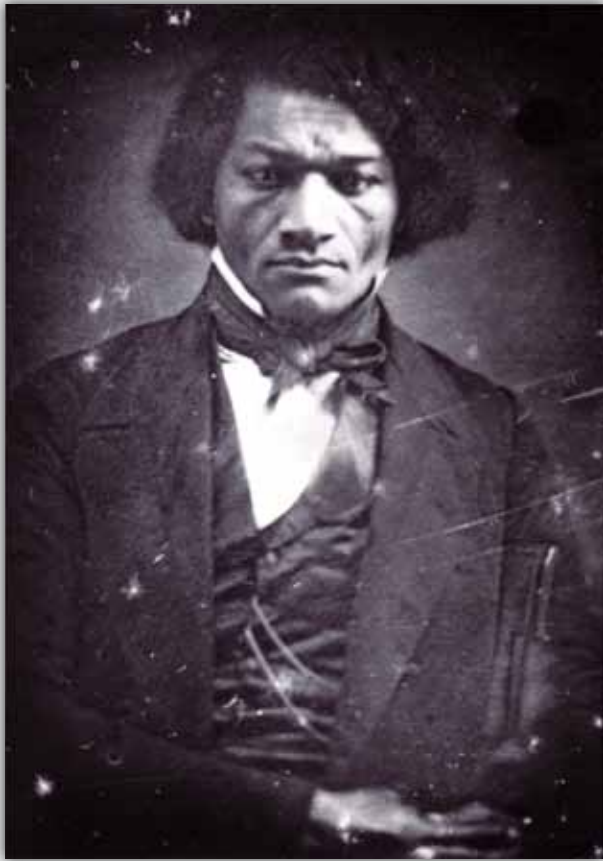


Douglass's acceptance letter to Haiti post

In a composite nation like ours, as before the law, there should be no rich, no poor, no high, no low, no white, no black, but common country, common citizenship, equal rights and a common destiny.

*“Our Composite Nationality”
address, Boston, Massachusetts,
December 7, 1869*

ON SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION:



Though I am more closely connected and identified with one class of outraged, oppressed and enslaved people, I cannot allow myself to be insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of any part of the great family of man. I am not only an American slave, but a man, and as such, am bound to use my powers for the welfare of the whole human brotherhood.

*Letter from Montrose, Scotland, to
William Lloyd Garrison,
American abolitionist leader,
February 26, 1846*

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.



The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, 1881

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages.

*Speech celebrating the
Declaration of Independence,
Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852*

ON SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION:

Slavery is the...perpetual unpaid toil; no marriage, no husband, no wife, no parent, no child; ignorance, brutality, licentiousness; whips, scourges, chains, auctions, jails and separations; an embodiment of all the woes the imagination can conceive.

I have never placed my opposition to slavery on a basis so narrow as my enslavement, but rather upon the indestructible and unchangeable laws of human nature, every one of which is perpetually and flagrantly violated by the slave system.

*My Bondage and
My Freedom, 1855*

The story of our inferiority is an old dodge, as I have said; for wherever men oppress their fellows, wherever they enslave them, they will endeavor to find the needed apology for such enslavement and oppression in the character of the people oppressed and enslaved.

*“What the Black Man Wants”
speech, annual meeting of the
Massachusetts Anti-Slavery
Society, Boston, Massachusetts,
April 1865*



West parlor curtain tiebacks at Cedar Hill Estate

I know no class of my fellowmen, however just, enlightened, and humane, which can be wisely and safely trusted absolutely with the liberties of any other class.

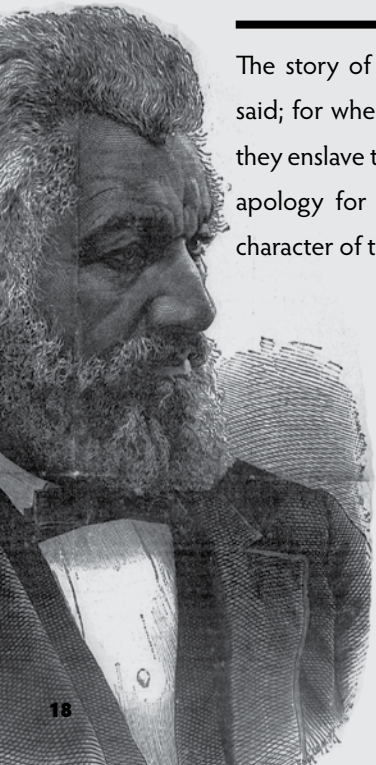
No man can put a chain about the ankle of fellow-man, without at last finding the other end of it about his own neck.

Though slavery was abolished, the wrongs of my people were not ended. Though they were not slaves, they were not yet quite free. No man can be truly free whose liberty is dependent upon the thought, feeling, and action of others, and who has himself no means in his own hands for guarding, protecting, defending, and maintaining that liberty.

*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass, 1881*

The American people have this lesson to learn: that where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.

*“Southern Barbarism” speech on the
occasion of the 24th Anniversary of
Emancipation, Washington, D.C., 1886*



ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS:



Douglass in Cedar Hill Estate library, ca. 1890s

Standing as we do upon the watch-tower of human freedom, we cannot be deterred from an expression of our approbation of any movement, however humble, to improve and elevate the character and condition of any members of the human family.

Illustration opposite page, (l-r): President Abraham Lincoln, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, Frederick Douglass

In respect to political rights, we hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man.... All the political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally so for woman.

"The Rights of Women,"
THE NORTH STAR, July 28, 1848

I expect to see the day when woman shall take her place on the floor of Congress. I believe they would be as likely to be influential in debate on the floor of Congress as elsewhere. I know at any rate that in every debate that I have ever yet had with woman I have got the worst of it.

"Women and Negroes Must Work Together"
address, Providence, Rhode Island,
December 11, 1868



ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS:

I would give woman a vote, give her a motive to qualify herself to vote, precisely as I insisted upon giving the colored man the right to vote....

*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass, 1881*

When I ran away from slavery, it was for myself; when I advocated emancipation, it was for my people; but when I stood up for the rights of woman, self was out of the question.

It was a great thing for the friends of peace to organize in opposition to war; it was a great thing for the friends of temperance to organize against intemperance; it was a great thing for humane people to organize in opposition to slavery; but it was a much greater thing...for woman to organize herself in opposition to her exclusion from participation in government.

*Address to the National American
Woman Suffrage Association,
published in The Woman's Journal,
April 14, 1888*



REFLECTIONS:

No, I make no pretension to patriotism. So long as my voice can be heard on this or the other side of the Atlantic, I will hold up America to the lightening scorn of moral indignation. In doing this, I shall feel myself discharging the duty of a true patriot; for he is a lover of his country who rebukes and does not excuse its sins.

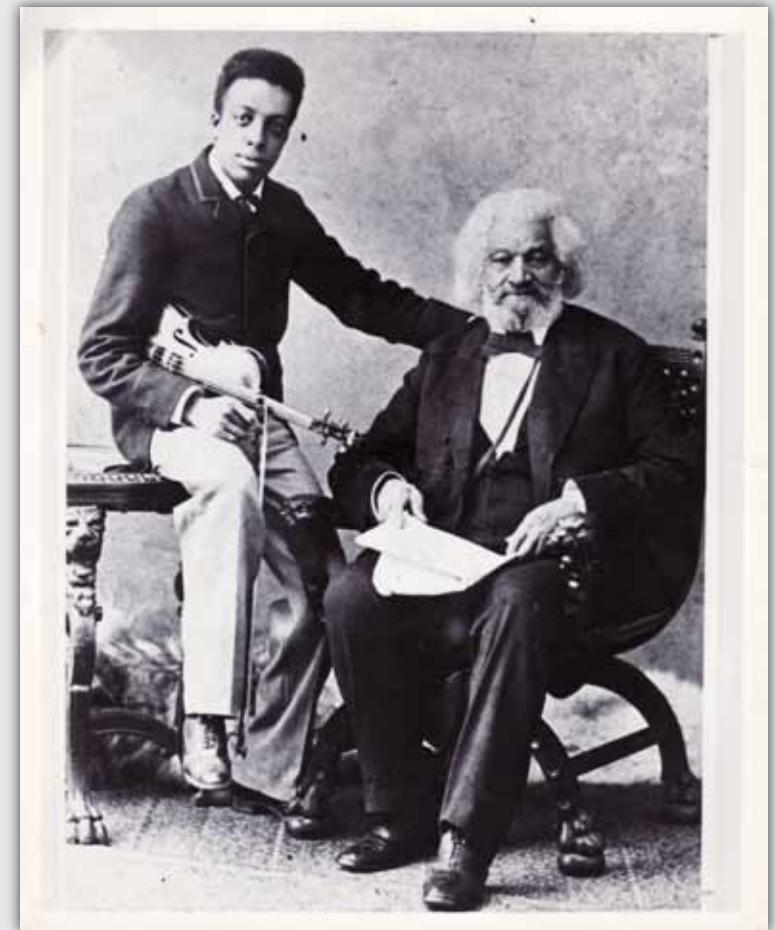
*“American Slavery” speech, Market Hall,
New York City, October 22, 1847
National Anti-Slavery Standard,
October 28, 1847*

I have stood on each side of Mason and Dixon's Line; I have endured the frightful horrors of slavery, and have enjoyed the blessings of freedom. I can enter fully into the sorrows of the bondman and the blessings of freemen. I am one of yourselves, enduring daily the proscription and confronting the tide of malignant prejudice by which the free colored man of the North is continually and universally opposed.

*Speech printed in THE NORTH STAR,
August 4, 1848*



Douglass's shoes

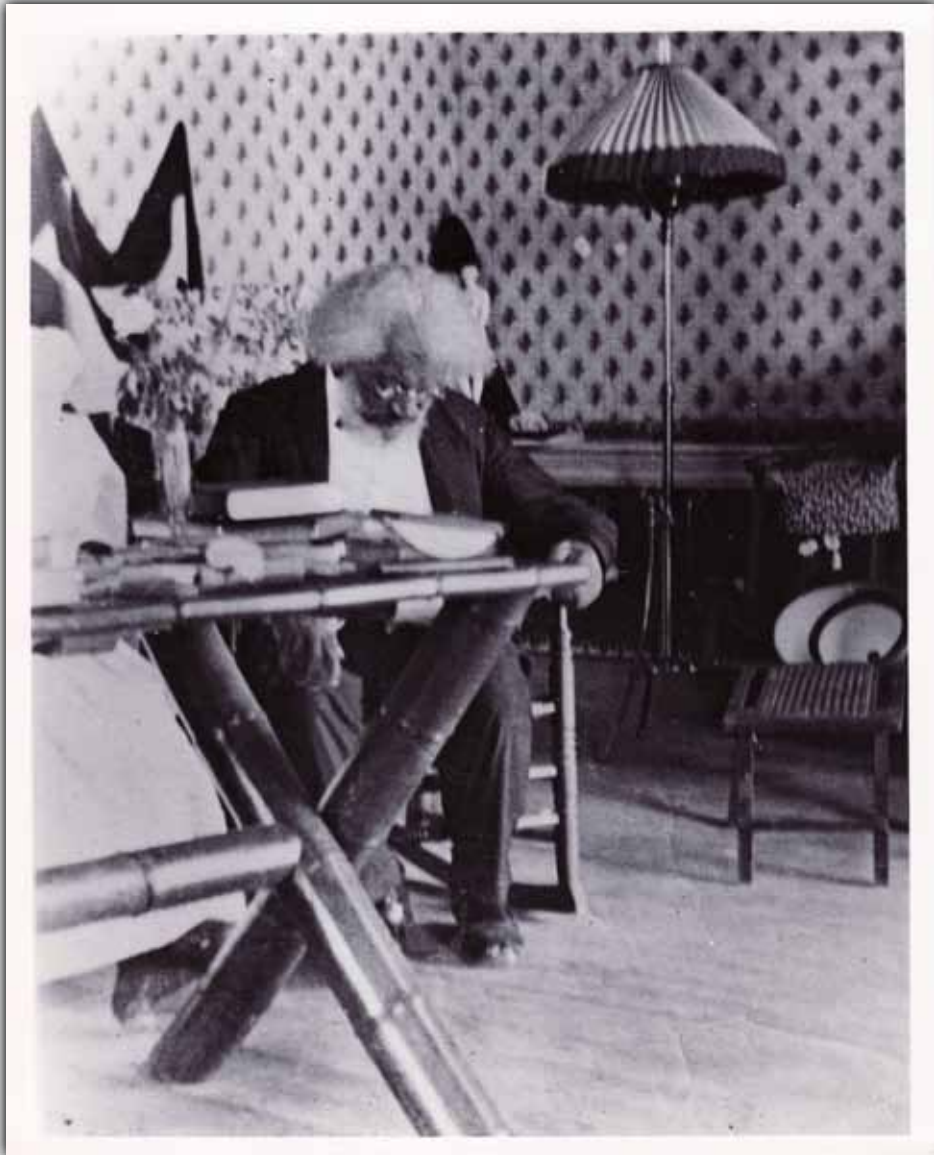


Douglass and grandson Joseph

Our minds are made up to live here if we can, or die here if we must; so every attempt to remove us will be, as it ought to be, labor lost. Here we are, and here we shall remain.

*On the proposal to send Negroes to
colonize Liberia, THE NORTH STAR,
January 26, 1849*

REFLECTIONS:



Douglass in Haiti, ca. 1889-93

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome. But now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work.

*Speech celebrating the
Declaration of Independence,
Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852*

Contemplating my life as a whole, I have to say that, although it has at times been dark and stormy, and I have met with hardships from which other men have been exempted, yet my life has in many respects been remarkably full of sunshine and joy. Servitude, persecution, false friends, desertion and deprecation have not robbed my life of happiness or made it a burden.



Cane hand carved with images from *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

REFLECTIONS:

To those who have suffered in slavery I can say, I, too, have suffered...To those who have battled for liberty, brotherhood, and citizenship I can say, I, too, have battled.

*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass, 1881*

Men may combine to prevent cruelty to animals, for they are dumb and cannot speak for themselves; but we are men and must speak for ourselves, or we shall not be spoken for at all.

*Address before the National
Convention of Colored Men,
Louisville, Kentucky,
September 24, 1883*

The life of the nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful, and virtuous, for upon these conditions depends the life if [*sic*] its life.

*Speech on the 23rd anniversary
of Emancipation,
Washington, D.C., April 1885*



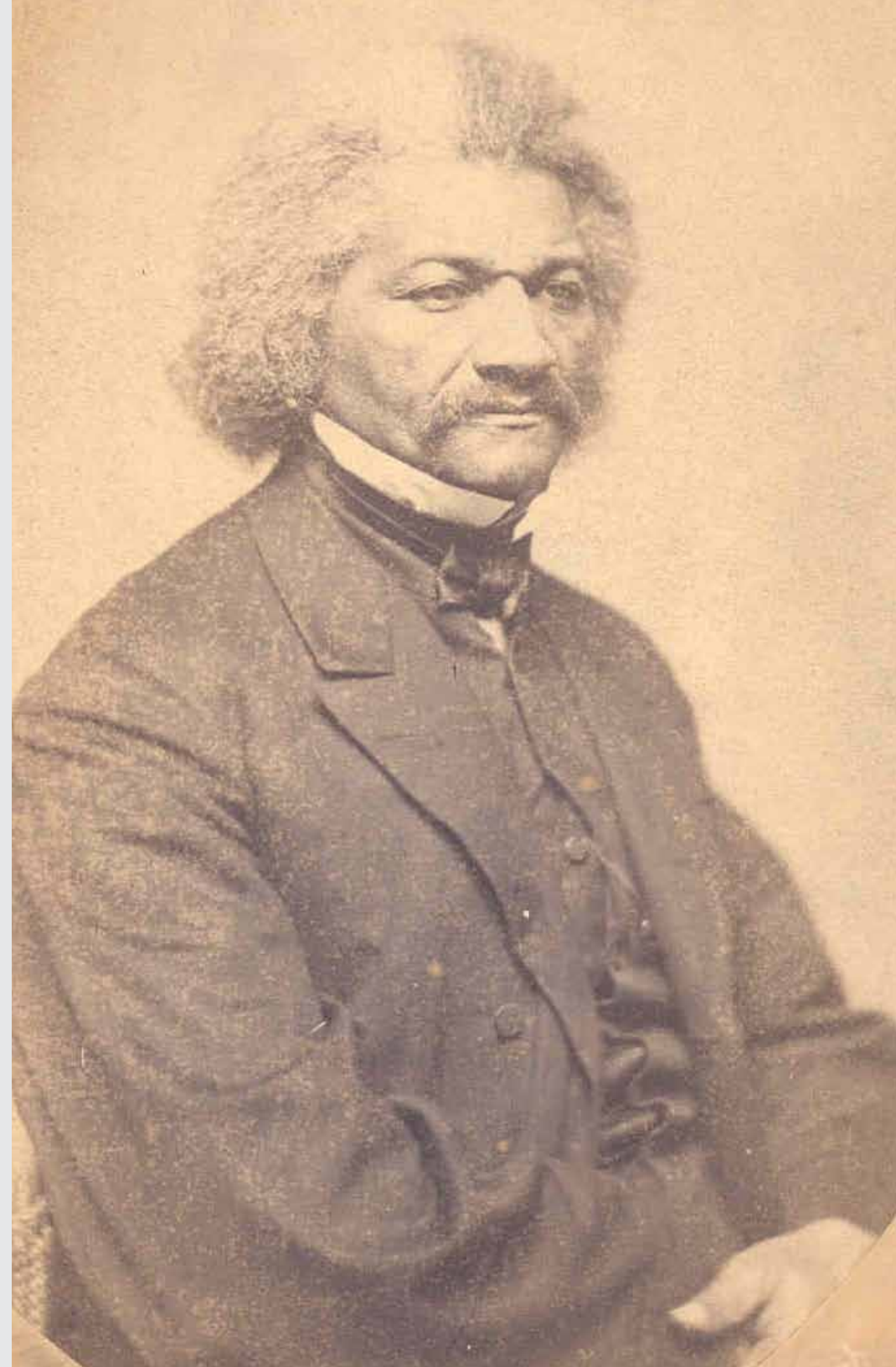
Cedar Hill Estate today at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

It may be said that I am growing old and am easily satisfied with things as they are. When our young men shall have worked and waited for victory as long as I have worked and waited, they will not only learn to have patience with the men opposed to them, but with me also for having patience with such.

*Address before the
Bethel Literary and Historical
Association, Washington, D.C.,
October 21, 1890*

CHRONOLOGY: THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

- 1818** Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey is born into slavery to Harriet Bailey in Talbot County, Maryland.
- 1826-1838** Is taught to read by his owner's wife. Sent to Baltimore to work as a servant and laborer, he eventually becomes a skilled caulker in a Baltimore shipyard.
- 1838** Meets Anna Murray, a free person of color. Escapes to New York, sends for and marries Anna. Changes his name to Frederick Douglass.
- 1841-1847** Speaks at an abolitionist meeting in Massachusetts; becomes an anti-slavery lecturer. Publishes his first autobiography in 1845, then leaves for England and Scotland to escape slave hunters. English friends purchase his freedom, and he returns to the United States.
- 1847** Begins publication of *The North Star* weekly newspaper in Rochester, New York, and becomes an eloquent and passionate spokesman for emancipation and the rights of women.
- 1855** Writes *My Bondage and My Freedom* and helps runaway slaves find freedom via the Underground Railroad.
- 1861-1868** Works to aid the Union cause. Meets with President Lincoln to improve the treatment of African American soldiers.
- 1872-1881** Douglass and family move to Washington, D.C. Douglass purchases Cedar Hill in 1877. Becomes a federal marshal for the District of Columbia and then recorder of deeds in 1881. Writes last autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Anna, his wife and mother of their five children, dies.
- 1884** Marries Helen Pitts, a white woman from Honeoye, New York, who worked in the recorder's office.
- 1886-1887** Frederick and Helen travel to England, France, Italy, Egypt, and Greece.
- 1889-1893** Appointed to post of U.S. Minister and Consul General to Haiti. Resigns post in 1893 and returns home. Continues to speak out for oppressed people and as a champion of human rights.
- Dies February 20 at Cedar Hill.
- 1895** Helen Pitts Douglass founded the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, and in 1916, the association joined with the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., to continue to preserve the home and his memory.
- 1900**



CREDITS

For more information on Frederick Douglass, contact:

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Or visit Frederick Douglass National Historic Site at: www.nps.gov/frdo/

Research and Introduction by Ka'mal McClarin, Park Ranger,
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

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Page 12-13: *The North Star*, June 2, 1848. Edited by Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany.
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Back cover bust of Frederick Douglass by sculptor Johnson M. Mundy, 1872

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Suggested Reading:

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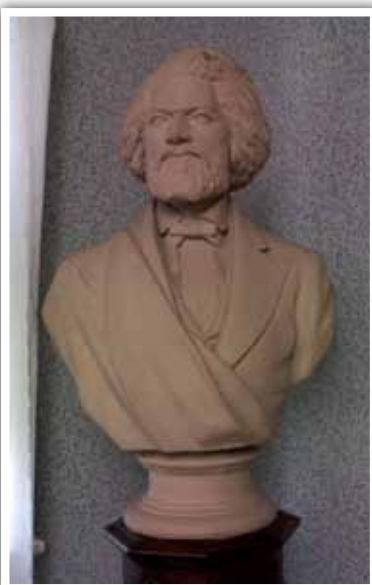
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The purpose of this booklet is to introduce readers to Frederick Douglass through his own words concerning political, social, and economic events and issues over the course of his life. The quotes were chosen for the reader to appreciate and understand Douglass as one of our nation's outstanding thinkers, writers, and orators of the nineteenth century.

This booklet celebrates Frederick Douglass's memory by highlighting the many humanitarian themes, issues, and events to which he dedicated his voice and pen. The quotes and images showcase Douglass's pursuit of knowledge, freedom, equality, and justice for all human beings.



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