

TECUMSEH

In 1846 the historian Henry Trumbull called Tecumseh (1775?–1813) “the most extraordinary Indian that has appeared in history.” In 1961 the historian Alvin Josephy echoed Trumbull in denominating Tecumseh “the Greatest Indian.” These high estimates are noteworthy in part because Tecumseh was unwaveringly hostile to the white Americans who relentlessly encroached on the lands of his people, the Shawnees, in areas of the Old Northwest Territory, present-day Ohio and Indiana. In the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809, the Shawnees—despite the opposition of Tecumseh and his charismatic brother, Tenkwatawa, known as the Prophet—ceded huge tracts of land to the United States. In response Tecumseh attempted to organize a multitribal resistance to the Americans. A turning point came in 1811, when William Henry Harrison (1773–1841), then governor of the Indiana Territory, decisively defeated the Prophet’s forces at Tippecanoe (near present-day Lafayette). (In 1840, Harrison would be elected president of the United States, with James Tyler as his vice president, running on the slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler too!”) Tecumseh was not present at the battle. The defeat left the Prophet’s followers disillusioned, and Tecumseh had no further success in bringing the tribes together in resistance. He fought on the side of the British in the War of 1812 and was killed at the Battle of the Thames, in southern Ontario.

The brief speech printed here derives from the captivity narrative of John Dunn Hunter, published in 1823. Hunter, born about 1802, was taken captive by Osage Indians when he was no more than two or three years old and lived among them until about 1816. He claimed to have heard Tecumseh speak to the Osages in 1811 or 1812. Although Tecumseh’s visit to the Osages has not been substantiated, it is quite possible that he spoke to them and that the young and impressionable John Dunn Hunter was there. This bicultural composite was crafted by Hunter, who wrote that he was deeply moved by the words of “this untutored native of the forest . . . as no audience . . . either in ancient or modern times ever before witnessed.”

Speech to the Osages¹

When the Osages and distinguished strangers had assembled, Tecumseh arose; and after a pause of some minutes, in which he surveyed his audience in a very dignified, though respectfully complaisant and sympathizing manner, he commenced as follows:

Brothers—We all belong to one family; we are all children of the Great Spirit; we walk in the same path; slake our thirst at the same spring; and now affairs of the greatest concern lead us to smoke the pipe around the same council fire!

Brothers—We are friends; we must assist each other to bear our burdens. The blood of many of our fathers and brothers has run like water on the ground, to satisfy the avarice of the white men. We, ourselves, are threatened with a great evil; nothing will pacify them but the destruction of all the red men.

1. The text is from John Dunn Hunter, *Memoirs of a Captivity among the Indians of North America* (1823), edited by Richard Drinnon (1973).

fathers have killed many of them: we are not squaws, and we will stain the earth red with their blood.

Brothers—The Great Spirit is angry with our enemies; he speaks in thunder, and the earth swallows up villages, and drinks up the Mississippi. The great waters will cover their lowlands; their corn cannot grow; and the Great Spirit will sweep those who escape to the hills from the earth with his terrible breath.

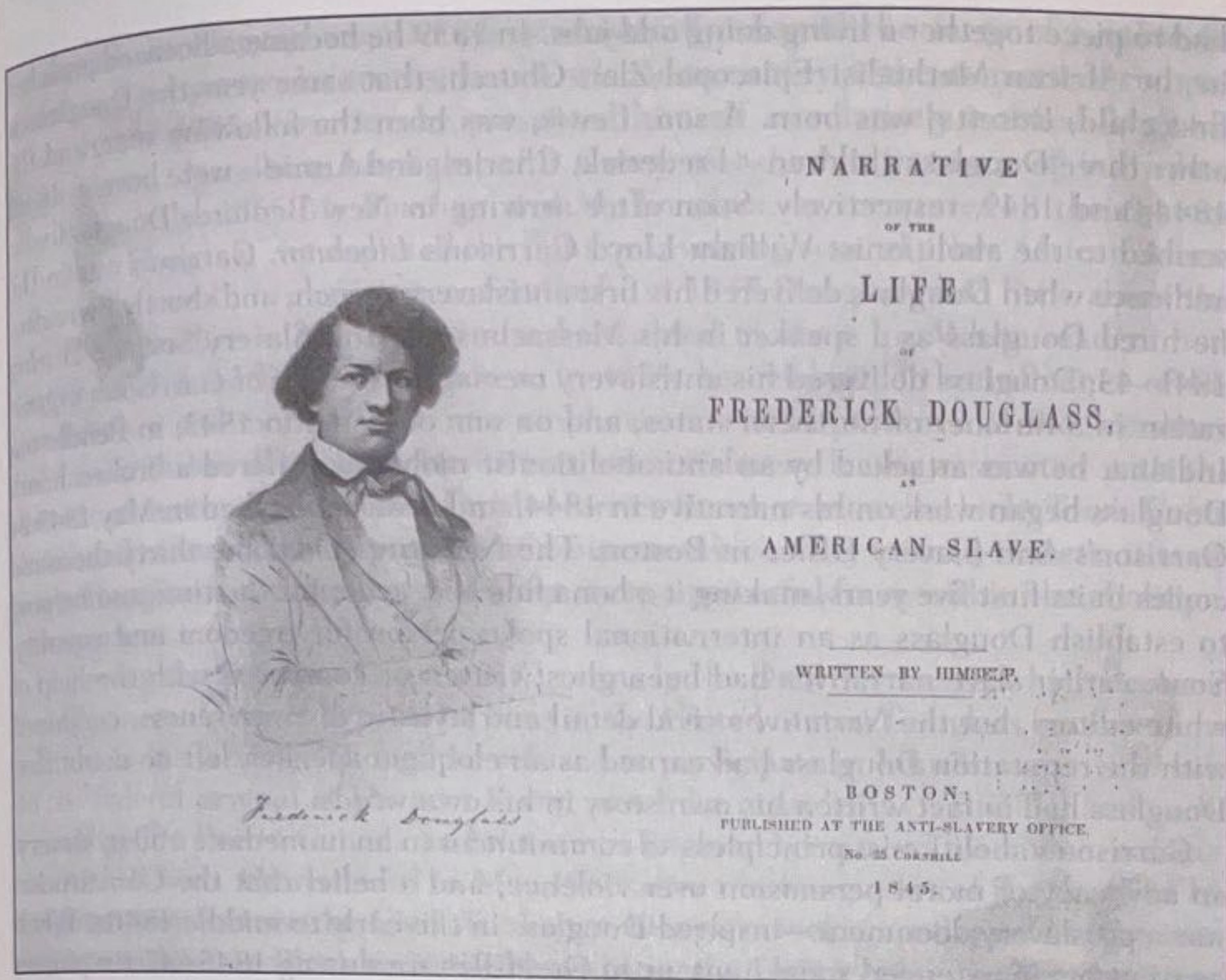
Brothers—We must be united; we must smoke the same pipe; we must fight each other's battles; and more than all, we must love the Great Spirit: he is for us; he will destroy our enemies, and make all his red children happy.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1818–1895

In the concluding chapter of his famous autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845), Douglass describes the moment in 1841 when he first stepped forward to speak at an antislavery convention in Nantucket, Massachusetts. “It was a severe cross,” he says, “and I took it up reluctantly.” However reluctant he may have been, in the moments following the speech the twenty-three-year-old fugitive “felt a degree of freedom” and, just as important, realized he had discovered his vocation. As he states at the end of the *Narrative*: “From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren—with what success, and with what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide.” Douglass would continue to plead the cause of African Americans for over fifty years. He published three versions of his autobiography—the *Narrative* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881; rev. ed. 1892)—as well as a novella, “The Heroic Slave” (1853), and numerous essays and speeches. He also established and edited three African American newspapers—the *North Star* (1847–51), *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* (1851–59), and *Douglass’ Monthly* (1859–63)—and edited a fourth, the *New National Era* (1870–73). By the time of his death, Douglass was thought of, in the United States and abroad, as the most influential African American leader of the nineteenth century and as one of the greatest orators of the age. In the manner of Benjamin Franklin, whom he greatly admired, Douglass presented himself as a representative American whose rise to prominence spoke to the promises of the nation’s egalitarian ideology. But he also had a clear-eyed understanding of the hurdles that slavery and racism placed in the way of African Americans. Regularly invoking the principles of the Declaration of Independence, Douglass throughout his life challenged the nation to live up to its founding ideals. In “Lessons of the Hour” (1894), one of his final speeches, Douglass condemned the rise of lynching with the passion and vigor of his early writing, seeing this latest outbreak of violence against black people as a threat to what he had devoted his life to achieving: a multiracial United States offering equal rights and justice for all.

Douglass was born into slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey in February 1818 at Holme Hill Farm in Talbot County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. His mother was Harriet Bailey; his father was a White man whose identity is still not known, although widely assumed to have been his mother’s owner, Aaron Anthony. In 1826, about a year after the death of his mother and shortly after the death of Anthony, Douglass became the property of Thomas Auld and was sent to live with Thomas’s brother Hugh Auld and his wife, Sophia, in Baltimore. According to the 1845 *Narrative*, Sophia began to teach Douglass how to read, but Hugh forbade her to continue because, he said, learning “would forever unfit him to be a slave.” Nevertheless, as the autobiographies recount, Douglass cleverly found ways to learn how to read and write. During this first residence in Baltimore, Douglass acquired and pored over *The Columbian Orator* (1797), a popular school text, finding its many speeches denouncing oppression applicable to his own situation. He read about abolition as an organized movement in the *Baltimore American* and established a close relationship with the free Black Charles Lawson, a lay preacher who became his spiritual mentor and told Douglass that he had been chosen to do “great work.”



Douglass's *Narrative*. Frontispiece and title page of the first edition (1845).

In 1833, after seven years in Baltimore, Douglass was returned to Thomas Auld's plantation, where he quickly became known for his rebellious attitude and was sent to work on the farm of Edward Covey, a specialist in "slave breaking." Douglass's account of his decline and reawakening at Covey's farm, culminating in a hand-to-hand battle with Covey in August 1834, is the turning point of the *Narrative* (and an important moment in the other autobiographies as well). Following this confrontation, Douglass took on a greater leadership role among the slaves, conducting a Sabbath school at William Freeland's plantation in 1835 and, in 1836, organizing an escape attempt with a group of other enslaved people. For his role in the failed plot, Douglass was briefly jailed in Easton, Maryland. He was then returned to the Aulds in Baltimore, where he learned the caulking trade in the shipyards. Though Hugh Auld kept most of the money Frederick earned, Douglass was able to save enough to develop a feasible plan of escape. In this plan he was helped both financially and emotionally by the free Black Anna Murray, to whom he became engaged on September 3, 1838, the very day he boarded a train for New York disguised as a sailor and carrying the borrowed papers of a free Black seaman. Douglass withheld information about his mode of escape until the third of his autobiographies, the 1881 *Life and Times*, when disclosing it could no longer endanger the lives and plans of other fugitives from Baltimore. Within days of his escape Anna joined him in New York City, and they were married on September 15. They soon left for New Bedford, Massachusetts, where the likelihood of his being captured as a fugitive was reduced by his assuming the name "Douglass," which he took from Sir Walter Scott's poem *Lady of the Lake* (1810).

Though Douglass in the *Narrative* emphasizes the splendor of New Bedford compared to towns under slavery, life in New Bedford was not easy for the newly married couple. Douglass was discriminated against when he sought work as a caulker and

had to piece together a living doing odd jobs. In 1839 he became a licensed preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; that same year the Douglasses' first child, Rosetta, was born. A son, Lewis, was born the following year, and the other three Douglass children—Frederick, Charles, and Annie—were born in 1842, 1844, and 1849, respectively. Soon after arriving in New Bedford, Douglass subscribed to the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*. Garrison was in the audience when Douglass delivered his first antislavery speech, and shortly thereafter he hired Douglass as a speaker in his Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. During 1841–43, Douglass delivered his antislavery message on behalf of Garrison's organization in a number of northern states, and on one occasion in 1843, in Pendleton, Indiana, he was attacked by an anti-abolitionist mob and suffered a broken hand. Douglass began work on his narrative in 1844, and it was published in May 1845 by Garrison's Anti-Slavery Office in Boston. The *Narrative* sold some thirty thousand copies in its first five years, making it a bona fide best-seller for the time and helping to establish Douglass as an international spokesperson for freedom and equality. Some earlier slave narratives had been ghostwritten or composed with the help of white editors, but the *Narrative*'s vivid detail and stylistic distinctiveness, combined with the reputation Douglass had earned as an eloquent speaker, left no doubt that Douglass had in fact written his own story in his own words.

Garrison's abolitionist principles—a commitment to an immediate end to slavery, an advocacy of moral persuasion over violence, and a belief that the Constitution was a proslavery document—inspired Douglass in the early to middle 1840s. When he went on an extended speaking tour in Great Britain during 1845–47 (in part to escape the fugitive-slave hunters that he feared would track him down after the publication of the *Narrative*), he spoke as a Garrisonian abolitionist. But upon his return to the United States as a free man—British antislavery friends had purchased his freedom for \$711 in 1846—Douglass became increasingly suspicious of Garrison, particularly when Garrison attempted to bully him into shutting down his newspaper, the *North Star*, which Douglass founded not in New Bedford, but in Rochester, New York, where Douglass resettled in part to escape the influence of Garrison. In the inaugural issue of December 3, 1847, Douglass declared that in the antislavery and antiracism struggle, African Americans “must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends.” Garrison, who wanted absolute loyalty and control of the movement, began to question Douglass's antislavery politics and even published unsubstantiated rumors in the *Liberator* about Douglass's romantic involvement with Julia Griffiths, a White Englishwoman living in the Douglass home and helping with editorial work on the *North Star*. But along with the personality clashes, there were ideological differences between the two. By 1851, after forming a friendship with the New York abolitionist Gerrit Smith, Douglass formally broke with Garrison, announcing his belief in a more pragmatic political abolitionism that regarded the Constitution as an antislavery document and defended the strategic use of violence as a response to the violence of slavery.

In 1855 Douglass published *My Bondage and My Freedom*, a revised and substantially longer version of his 1845 autobiography. In covering the ten years of his life since the *Narrative*, Douglass wrote about his encounters with racism in the North, his work as an abolitionist, and his break with Garrison. No longer willing to “leave the philosophy” of abolition to Garrison and other White abolitionists, Douglass asserted his intellectual and interpretive independence and also his deeper connections to Black moral reformers and abolitionists. It is significant that the second autobiography was introduced not by White abolitionists (as with the *Narrative*) but by the Black physician and abolitionist James McCune Smith (1813–1865), who celebrated Douglass as “a Representative American man—a type of his countrymen.” *My Bondage and My Freedom* was widely read, selling eighteen thousand copies during its first two years.

his commitment to a cosmopolitan vision of a world without invidious racial distinctions and prejudices. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance for Americans across the color line of Douglass's exemplary career as a champion of human rights.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself¹

Preface²

In the month of August, 1841, I attended an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket, at which it was my happiness to become acquainted with FREDERICK DOUGLASS, the writer of the following Narrative. He was a stranger to nearly every member of that body; but, having recently made his escape from the southern prison-house of bondage, and feeling his curiosity excited to ascertain the principles and measures of the abolitionists,—of whom he had heard a somewhat vague description while he was a slave,—he was induced to give his attendance, on the occasion alluded to, though at that time a resident in New Bedford.³

Fortunate, most fortunate occurrence!—fortunate for the millions of his manacled brethren, yet panting for deliverance from their awful thralldom!—fortunate for the cause of negro emancipation, and of universal liberty!—fortunate for the land of his birth, which he has already done so much to save and bless!—fortunate for a large circle of friends and acquaintances, whose sympathy and affection he has strongly secured by the many sufferings he has endured, by his virtuous traits of character, by his ever-abiding remembrance of those who are in bonds, as being bound with them!—fortunate for the multitudes, in various parts of our republic, whose minds he has enlightened on the subject of slavery, and who have been melted to tears by his pathos, or roused to virtuous indignation by his stirring eloquence against the enslavers of men!—fortunate for himself, as it at once brought him into the field of public usefulness, “gave the world assurance of a MAN,” quickened the slumbering energies of his soul, and consecrated him to the great work of breaking the rod of the oppressor, and letting the oppressed go free!

I shall never forget his first speech at the convention—the extraordinary emotion it excited in my own mind—the powerful impression it created upon a crowded auditory,⁴ completely taken by surprise—the applause which followed from the beginning to the end of his felicitous remarks. I think I never hated slavery so intensely as at that moment; certainly, my

1. First printed in May 1845 by the Anti-Slavery Office in Boston, the source of the present text. Punctuation and hyphenation have been slightly regularized and a few typographical emendations have also been made.

2. The preface is by William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), the most influential White abolitionist at that time. He edited the antislavery newspaper the *Liberator*, which he founded in 1831, and headed the American Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison called for immediate emanci-

pation and advocated nonviolent moral persuasion as the best way of achieving social reform. Most slave narratives of the period came with prefaces by White abolitionists attesting to the moral character and literacy of the Black author.

3. Douglass escaped from slavery in Maryland in September 1838 and settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he became active among the New Bedford abolitionists.

4. Auditorium (archaic).

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds—faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts—and solemnly pledging my self anew to the sacred cause,—I subscribe myself,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

LYNN, Mass., April 28, 1845.

1845

What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?

Extract from an Oration, at Rochester, July 5, 1852¹

Fellow Citizens—Pardon me, and allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits, and express devout gratitude for the blessings, resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the "lame man leap as an hart."²

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering

1. Douglass delivered this Fourth of July address on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York, before a racially mixed audience of approximately six hundred people. Later that year he published it as a pamphlet. He first published the "Extract"

(several key pages from the longer work) in the appendix to *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), the source of the present text.

2. Deer. The quotation is from Isaiah 35.6.

up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."³

Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are to-day rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July. Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;"⁴ I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their govern-

3. Psalms 137.1–6.

4. From "To the Public," an editorial by William

Lloyd Garrison in the first issue of his antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* (January 1, 1831).

ment. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the state of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be,) subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of these same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being. The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or write. When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, then will I argue with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver, and gold; that, while we are reading, writing, and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants, and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators, and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men—digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hillside, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives, and children, and, above all, confessing and worshiping the christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave,—we are called upon to prove that we are men!⁵

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day in the presence of Americans, dividing and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom, speaking of it relatively and positively, negatively and affirmatively? To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven that does not know that slavery is wrong *for him*.

What! am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system, thus marked with blood and stained with pollution, is wrong? No; I will not. I have better employment for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

5. As suggested by his reference to women and children, Douglass here uses "men" to mean "human."

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman cannot be divine. Who can reason on such a proposition! They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would to-day pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What to the American slave is your Fourth 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 denunciations 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. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

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 every-day practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

1852, 1855



THE NORTON
ANTHOLOGY

BEGINNINGS
TO 1865

SHORTER TENTH EDITION

AMERICAN
LITERATURE