Knowledge for Freedom Seminar

2022 Course Book

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Sponsored by the Teagle Foundation
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Knowledge for Freedom Seminar
2021 Source Book

Featured Texts

Aristotle's defense of slavery in Politics (350 BCE)

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE) was one of a trio of philosophers and teachers in Ancient Greece (along with Socrates and Plato) who helped shape the foundations of Western thought. He arrived in Athens from Northern Greece as an orphaned teenager to study under Plato who himself had earlier studied under Socrates. Later as a teacher on his own, Aristotle helped tutor the young Alexander the Great. He wrote several classic texts in philosophy and ethics, including perhaps his most famous work, Politics (350 BCE). This excerpt from Book One of Politics features a discussion of the different types of slavery –slavery "by law" and also "by nature," and illustrates how justifications for the total rule of some humans over others struck Aristotle as sometimes complicated but not necessarily immoral. Understanding such arguments from the very foundations of Western thought is essential as background for students who are studying how the fight over slavery's morality evolved over time.

SOURCE FORMAT: Translated Manuscript (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,305 words

Book One, Part V

But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature?

There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.

And there are many kinds both of rulers and subjects (and that rule is the better which is exercised over better subjects- for example, to rule over men is better than to rule over wild beasts; for the work is better which is executed by better workmen, and where one man rules and another is ruled, they may be said to have a work); for in all things which form a composite whole and which are made up of parts, whether continuous or discrete, a distinction between the ruling and the subject element comes to fight. Such a duality exists in living creatures, but not in them only; it originates in the constitution of the universe; even in things which have no life there is a ruling principle, as in a musical mode. But we are wandering from the subject. We will therefore restrict ourselves to the living creature, which, in the first place, consists of soul and body: and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject. But then we must look for the intentions of nature in things which retain their nature, and not in things which are corrupted. And therefore we must study the man who is in the most perfect state both of body and soul, for in him we shall see the true relation of the two; although in bad or corrupted natures the body will often appear to rule over the soul, because they are in an evil and unnatural condition. At all events we may firstly observe in living creatures both a despotical and a constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the

body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved. Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.

Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature. Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend a principle; they obey their instincts. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life. Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one strong for servile labor, the other upright, and although useless for such services, useful for political life in the arts both of war and peace. But the opposite often happens- that some have the souls and others have the bodies of freemen. And doubtless if men differed from one another in the mere forms of their bodies as much as the statues of the Gods do from men, all would acknowledge that the inferior class should be slaves of the superior. And if this is true of the body, how much more just that a similar distinction should exist in the soul? but the beauty of the body is seen, whereas the beauty of the soul is not seen. It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.

Book One, Part VI

But that those who take the opposite view have in a certain way right on their side, may be easily seen. For the words slavery and slave are used in two senses. There is a slave or slavery by law as well as by nature. The law of which I speak is a sort of convention- the law by which whatever is taken in war is supposed to belong to the victors. But this right many jurists impeach, as they would an orator who brought forward an unconstitutional measure: they detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject. Even among philosophers there is a difference of opinion. The origin of the dispute, and what makes the views invade each other's territory, is as follows: in some sense virtue, when furnished with means, has actually the greatest power of exercising force; and as superior power is only found where there is superior excellence of some kind, power seems to imply virtue, and the dispute to be simply one about justice (for it is due to one party identifying justice with goodwill while the other identifies it with the mere rule of the stronger). If these views are thus set out separately, the other views have no force or plausibility against the view that the superior in virtue ought to rule, or be master. Others, clinging, as they think, simply to a principle of justice (for law and custom are a sort of justice), assume that slavery in accordance with the custom of war is justified by law, but at the same moment they deny this. For what if the cause of the war be unjust? And again, no one would ever say he is a slave who is unworthy to be a slave. Were this the case, men of the highest rank would be slaves and the children of slaves if they or their parents chance to have been taken captive and sold.

Wherefore Hellenes do not like to call Hellenes slaves, but confine the term to barbarians. Yet, in using this language, they really mean the natural slave of whom we spoke at first; for it must be admitted that some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. The same principle applies to nobility. Hellenes regard themselves as noble everywhere, and not only in their own country, but they deem the barbarians noble only when at home, thereby implying that there are two sorts of nobility and freedom, the one absolute, the other relative. The Helen of Theodectes says:

"Who would presume to call me servant who am on both sides sprung from the stem of the Gods? "

What does this mean but that they distinguish freedom and slavery, noble and humble birth, by the two principles of good and evil? They think that as men and animals beget men and animals, so from good men a good man springs. But this is what nature, though she may intend it, cannot always accomplish.

CITATION: Aristotle, *Politics* (350 BCE), Book One, Parts V-VII, translated by Benjamin Jowett and available FULL TEXT via MIT

John Locke, Second Treatise on Government (1689)

INTRODUCTION

John Locke (1632-1704) was one of the Enlightenment era British political philosophers who had the greatest influence on the American revolutionaries. Locke was a true polymath (someone with a wide range of knowledge) who trained as a physician, worked as a government official and wrote numerous works of philosophy and political theory. Locke spent part of his career focused on British colonial affairs in North America. He also survived a turbulent period in British political culture, including the British Civil War (1642-51) and subsequent restoration of the monarchy, and even endured some time living in exile in Holland. This excerpt from Locke's Second Treatise covers chapters II through IV and was published after his return to England and following the Glorious Revolution (1688), which helped launch a period of stability in British government. Locke's views in the Second Treatise extolled the importance of "natural liberty" or natural rights and how the consent of the governed was critical for legitimate rule, positions which later became hallmarks of the American revolutionary ideology.

SOURCE FORMAT: Treatise or Book (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,600 words

CHAPTER. II. OF THE STATE OF NATURE.

Sect. 4. TO understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.

A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.

Sect. 5. This equality of men by nature, the judicious Hooker looks upon as so evident in itself, and beyond all question, that he makes it the foundation of that obligation to mutual love amongst men, on which he builds the duties they owe one another, and from whence he derives the great maxims of justice and charity. His words are, *The like natural inducement hath brought men to know that it is no less their duty, to love others than themselves; for seeing those things which are equal, must needs all have one measure; if I cannot but wish to receive good, even as much at every man's hands, as any man can wish unto his own soul, how should I look to have any part of my desire herein satisfied, unless myself be careful to satisfy the like desire, which is undoubtedly in other men, being of one and the same nature? To have any thing offered them repugnant to this desire, must needs in all respects grieve them as much as me; so that if I do harm, I must look to suffer, there being no reason that others should shew greater measure of love to me, than they have by me shewed unto them: my desire therefore to be loved of my equals in nature as much as possible may be, imposeth upon me a natural duty of bearing to them-ward fully the like affection; from which relation of equality between ourselves and them that are as*

ourselves, what several rules and canons natural reason hath drawn, for direction of life, no man is ignorant, Eccl. Pol. Lib. 1.

Sect. 6. But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence: though man in that state have an uncontroulable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession, but where some nobler use than its bare preservation calls for it. The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for our's. Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.

CHAPTER. III. OF THE STATE OF WAR.

Sect. 16. THE state of war is a state of enmity and destruction: and therefore declaring by word or action, not a passionate and hasty, but a sedate settled design upon another man's life, puts him in a state of war with him against whom he has declared such an intention, and so has exposed his life to the other's power to be taken away by him, or any one that joins with him in his defence, and espouses his quarrel; it being reasonable and just, I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction: for, by the fundamental law of nature, man being to be preserved as much as possible, when all cannot be preserved, the safety of the innocent is to be preferred: and one may destroy a man who makes war upon him, or has discovered an enmity to his being, for the same reason that he may kill a wolf or a lion; because such men are not under the ties of the common law of reason, have no other rule, but that of force and violence, and so may be treated as beasts of prey, those dangerous and noxious creatures, that will be sure to destroy him whenever he falls into their power.

Sect. 17. And hence it is, that he who attempts to get another man into his absolute power, does thereby put himself into a state of war with him; it being to be understood as a declaration of a design upon his life: for I have reason to conclude, that he who would get me into his power without my consent, would use me as he pleased when he had got me there, and destroy me too when he had a fancy to it; for no body can desire to have me in his absolute power, unless it be to compel me by force to that which is against the right of my freedom, i.e. make me a slave. To be free from such force is the only security of my preservation; and reason bids me look on him, as an enemy to my preservation, who would take away that freedom which is the fence to it; so that he who makes an attempt to enslave me, thereby puts himself into a state of war with me. He that, in the state of nature, would take away the freedom that belongs to any one in that state, must necessarily be supposed to have a design to take away every thing else, that freedom being

the foundation of all the rest; as he that, in the state of society, would take away the freedom belonging to those of that society or commonwealth, must be supposed to design to take away from them every thing else, and so be looked on as in a state of war.

CHAPTER. IV. OF SLAVERY.

Sect. 22. THE natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it. Freedom then is not what Sir Robert Filmer tells us, Observations, A. 55. a liberty for every one to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tied by any laws: but freedom of men under government is, to have a standing rule to live by, common to every one of that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, where the rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man: as freedom of nature is, to be under no other restraint but the law of nature.

Sect. 23. This freedom from absolute, arbitrary power, is so necessary to, and closely joined with a man's preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his preservation and life together: for a man, not having the power of his own life, cannot, by compact, or his own consent, enslave himself to any one, nor put himself under the absolute, arbitrary power of another, to take away his life, when he pleases. No body can give more power than he has himself; and he that cannot take away his own life, cannot give another power over it. Indeed, having by his fault forfeited his own life, by some act that deserves death; he, to whom he has forfeited it, may (when he has him in his power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his own service, and he does him no injury by it: for, whenever he finds the hardship of his slavery outweigh the value of his life, it is in his power, by resisting the will of his master, to draw on himself the death he desires.

Sect. 24. This is the perfect condition of slavery, which is nothing else, but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive: for, if once compact enter between them, and make an agreement for a limited power on the one side, and obedience on the other, the state of war and slavery ceases, as long as the compact endures: for, as has been said, no man can, by agreement, pass over to another that which he hath not in himself, a power over his own life.
I confess, we find among the Jews, as well as other nations, that men did sell themselves; but, it is plain, this was only to drudgery, not to slavery: for, it is evident, the person sold was not under an absolute, arbitrary, despotical power: for the master could not have power to kill him, at any time, whom, at a certain time, he was obliged to let go free out of his service; and the master of such a servant was so far from having an arbitrary power over his life, that he could not, at pleasure, so much as maim him, but the loss of an eye, or tooth, set him free, Exod. xxi.

CITATION: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* , chapters II-IV (1689),FULL TEXT via Project Gutenberg

Phillis Wheatley, On Being Brought From Africa (1773)

INTRODUCTION

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was born in Africa, kidnapped and enslaved at the age of seven, and then forced into domestic service for the Boston family of John and Susanna Wheatley. During the 1760s and 1770s, Phillis Wheatley was enslaved in Boston but learned how to read and write, and proved to be a true prodigy as a poet. She began publishing poems in local newspapers in the late 1760s and became something of a celebrity by the early 1770s. Her first published collection of 28 poems, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) appeared in London and included "On Being Brought From Africa to America," which is presented below and which many now regard as her most famous literary effort. Later, during the American Revolution, Wheatley also achieved additional fame for supporting the patriot cause and for praising George Washington in a poem, which she sent to him directly and which he acknowledged in correspondence. The Wheatley family had a complicated relationship with Phillis Peters (the name she took once she married John Peters, a free black Bostonian). The family, especially Susanna Wheatley, promoted the young black poet, but kept her enslaved until they finally manumitted her in 1774. During her years in freedom, Phillis Peters continued to write poetry in Boston but often struggled with various financial and family difficulties such as losing multiple children to illness and enduring the absences of her husband. She died essentially alone in 1784 at the age of 31, but left behind a legacy of nearly 150 poems that helped define her age while challenging, however subtly, the paradox and injustice of slavery and racism that existed beside the American revolutionary ideals of natural rights and democracy.

SOURCE FORMAT: Poem // WORD COUNT: 58 words

Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

CITATION: Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," via Poetry Foundation.org

Abigail and John Adams, Letters (1776)

INTRODUCTION

Abigail Smith Adams and John Adams were married for 54 years, beginning in 1764. By the spring of 1776, when Abigail was in her early thirties and John was in his early forties, the couple had five young children, living in their home in Braintree, Massachusetts. John Adams, a noted lawyer, was then serving as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress and proving to be vital in helping to forge the movement for American independence from Great Britain. The couple exchanged regular letters during this period –though Abigail Adams sometimes complained about her husband's uneven attention to their correspondence. In this exchange from March and April 1776, Abigail Adams went further and pressed her husband on political matters, urging him to apply the revolutionary principles of freedom and equality to women as well as men. John Adams tried responding in teasing fashion, calling his wife "saucy," though the details of his reply suggested that he was well aware that the "Masculine systems" of their social hierarchy were more precarious than they may have appeared in such a turbulent age.

SOURCE FORMAT: Private letters // WORD COUNT: 470 words

Abigail Adams to John Adams
Braintree March 31 1776

…I long to hear that you have declared an independancy—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticuliar care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebelion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.
That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the
Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in immitation of the Supreem Being make use of that power only for our happiness….

John Adams to Abigail Adams
[PHILADELPHIA] Ap. 14, 1776

…As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient — that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent — that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But your Letter was the first

Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerfull than all the rest were grown discontented. — This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out. Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would compleatly subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot, as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy. — A fine Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated the _____ to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebell.

CITATION: Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31 – April 5, 1776 and John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 14, 1776, and available FULL TEXT via Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776)

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Jefferson was only 33 years old when he became the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. He was part of a Committee of Five, appointed by the Second Continental Congress, to prepare the revolutionary statement. Other members of the select drafting committee included John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert R. Livingston of New York and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania. Jefferson was the youngest of this group but already well-regarded for his breadth of learning and his talent as a writer. He began drafting the Declaration in June 1776, claiming afterward that only Adams and Franklin offered him any significant corrections or suggestions before the committee submitted the document to the Congress for final approval. The Congress voted for independence on July 2, 1776 and then debated and approved a handful of further changes to the Declaration, which they formally adopted on July 4. Printer John Dunlap then made the initial copies for distribution, but it was not until a few weeks later that an engrossed parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence was presented to delegates for their official signatures, led by President of the Congress, John Hancock of Massachusetts.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public document // WORD COUNT: 1,400 words

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,
When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our

common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

CITATION: Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, via National Archives

US Constitution on Slavery (1787)

INTRODUCTION
The original US Constitution, adopted in Philadelphia in September 1787 and ratified in the spring of 1788, addressed the issue of slavery in several ways, but never mentioned the word itself even once. The three clauses below represented the most direct examples of this awkward dance –the so-called three-fifths clause, African slave trade clause, and the fugitive slave clause. Historians disagree over what that tension illustrated. Some see it as an example of systemic racism at the core of America's founding. Yet others point to the hard fought battle waged by slavery's opponents in the 1780s and 1790s to limit slavery's sphere of influence mainly to southern states, clearly in hopes that all states in the new nation would eventually –and voluntarily– abolish the evil institution.

SOURCE FORMAT: Government document (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 170 words

Article 1, Section 2
Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons.

Article 1, Section 9
The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

Article 4, Section 2
No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

CITATION: US Constitution, September 17, 1787

Olaudah Equiano, Interesting Narrative (1789)

INTRODUCTION

Olaudah Equiano's autobiography was one of the most important abolitionist tracts of the eighteenth century. Equiano (also called Gustavus Vassa) spent much of his adult life on seas, enslaved to an officer in the British Royal Navy, and then later, after he purchased his own freedom, as a free Black deckhand and sailor in numerous voyages around the globe and even to the Arctic. By the 1780s, living in London, Equiano had become active in the British abolitionist movement, which in those years focused heavily on ending the African slave trade. This excerpt from his autobiography concerns material from the second chapter which describes his first-ever sea voyage –on a slave trading ship from the west coast of Africa after he had been enslaved and kidnapped in what is now southern Nigeria. The excerpt includes a description of Equiano's initial arrival in the Americas, at the island of Barbados (then a British colony) in the Caribbean. The material is gripping and vivid, though recent scholarship has questioned whether Equiano might have invented some details of his origin story, presumably for political reasons.

SOURCE FORMAT: Published memoir or book (excerpt) //WORD COUNT: 2,817 words

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CHAPTER II.
The author's birth and parentage—His being kidnapped with his sister—Their separation—Surprise at meeting again—Are finally separated—Account of the different places and incidents the author met with till his arrival on the coast—The effect the sight of a slave ship had on him—He sails for the West Indies—Horrors of a slave ship—Arrives at Barbadoes, where the cargo is sold and dispersed.

…The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not; and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest

consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across I think the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced any thing of this kind before; and although, not being used to the water,

I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us; they gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate: but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves.

One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen: I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place (the ship): they told me they did not, but came from a distant one. 'Then,' said I, 'how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?'

They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? had they any like themselves? I was told they had: 'and why,' said I,'do we not see them?' they answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? they told me they could not tell; but that there were cloths put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me: but my wishes were vain; for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape. While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck; and one day, to my great astonishment, I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up. As soon as the whites saw

it, they gave a great shout, at which we were amazed; and the more so as the vessel appeared larger by approaching nearer. At last she came to an anchor in my sight, and when the anchor was let go I and my countrymen who saw it were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop; and were not convinced it was done by magic.

Soon after this the other ship got her boats out, and they came on board of us, and the people of both ships seemed very glad to see each other. Several of the strangers also shook hands with us black people, and made motions with their hands, signifying I suppose we were to go to their country; but we did not understand them. At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow.

The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries.

Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful, and heighten my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites. One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings. One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never

heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade.

Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many. During our passage I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much: they used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant; I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise; and one of them, willing to increase it, as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder; and I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that every thing about me was magic.

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this; but as the vessel drew nearer we plainly saw the harbour, and other ships of different kinds and sizes; and we soon anchored amongst them off Bridge Town.

Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages. We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me every thing I saw filled me with surprise. What struck me first was that the houses were built with stories, and in every other respect different from those in Africa: but I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean; and indeed I thought these people were full of nothing but magical arts. While I was in this astonishment one of my fellow prisoners spoke to a countryman of his about the horses, who said they were the same kind they had in their country. I understood them, though they were from a distant part of Africa, and I thought it odd I had not seen any horses there; but afterwards, when I came to converse with different Africans, I found they had many horses amongst them, and much larger than those I then saw. We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this:—On a signal given,(as the beat of a drum) the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamour with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehensions of the terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I

remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting. O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations, now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery with the small comfort of being together and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

CITATION: Olaudah Equiano, The *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written by Himself,* Chapter 2 (1789), FULL TEXT via Project Gutenberg

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (1845)

INTRODUCTION

Frederick Douglas (1818-1895) was born enslaved on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. During most of his youth, Douglass was known as Frederick Bailey. From early on, Douglass was also separated from mother, Harriet Bailey, and never really knew for certain the identity of his father, though it was always rumored to have been one of his early masters, perhaps Aaron Anthony or Thomas Auld, who was Anthony's son-in-law. Douglass certainly had a complicated lifelong relationship with Auld, who was often cruel to him and to other enslaved people, and yet with whom he maintained unusual and intermittent contact until near the end of Auld's life in 1877. During his early years, Douglass spent time in Baltimore and on the Eastern Shore, enslaved as both a house servant and a field hand to various owners. He learned how to read in Baltimore, and famously purchased a copy of *The Columbian Orator*, from money he had earned after being hired out (or rented). Douglass finally escaped from slavery in 1838, with the help of a free black woman from Baltimore named Anna Murray, whom he later married in New York. Following his escape, the couple lived in Massachusetts and the newly renamed Frederick Douglass soon gained renown as an abolitionist orator embedded in the network of radical reformers and antislavery advocates gathered around controversial newspaper editor William Lloyd Garrison. In 1845, with Garrison's support, Douglass published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself.* This powerful testimony created an instant sensation and soon transformed Douglass into the nation's best known African American leader. The excerpt below comes from Chapter 11 which detailed Douglass's initial anxieties following his arrival in New York in September 1838. Among other concerns, Douglass was clearly worried about abolitionists in the mid-1840s who were so openly defiant about violating fugitive slave laws. And yet Douglass also went out of his way in this passage to praise David Ruggles, former head of the New York Vigilance Committee and one of the most defiant of all the Underground Railroad operatives of that era.

SOURCE FORMAT: Published memoir (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,600 words

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CHAPTER XI.

I NOW come to that part of my life during which I planned, and finally succeeded in making, my escape from slavery. But before narrating any of the peculiar circumstances, I deem it proper to make known my intention not to state all the facts connected with the transaction….I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the *underground railroad*, but which, I think, by their open declarations, has been made most emphatically the *upperground railroad*. I honor those good men and women for their noble daring, and applaud them for willingly subjecting themselves to bloody persecution, by openly avowing their participation in the escape of slaves. I, however, can see very little good resulting from such a course, either to themselves or the slaves escaping; while, upon the other hand, I see and feel assured that those open declarations are a positive evil to the slaves remaining, who are seeking to escape. They do nothing towards enlightening the slave, whilst they do much towards enlightening the master. They stimulate him to greater watchfulness, and enhance his power to capture his slave. We owe something to the slaves south of the line as well as to those north of it;

and in aiding the latter on their way to freedom, we should be careful to do nothing which would be likely to hinder the former from escaping from slavery. I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave. I would leave him to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors, ever ready to snatch from his infernal grasp his trembling prey. Let him be left to feel his way in the dark; let darkness commensurate with his crime hover over him; and let him feel that at every step he takes, in pursuit of the flying bondman, he is running the frightful risk of having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible agency. Let us render the tyrant no aid; let us not hold the light by which he can trace the footprints of our flying brother. But enough of this, I will now proceed to the statement of those facts, connected with my escape, for which I am alone responsible, and for which no one can be made to suffer but myself.

In the early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly wages, he would, after counting the money, look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, “Is this all?” He was satisfied with nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them. I always felt worse for having received any thing; for I feared that the giving me a few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of robber. My discontent grew upon me. I was ever on the look-out for means of escape; and, finding no direct means, I determined to try to hire my time, with a view of getting money with which to make my escape….

Things went on without very smoothly indeed, but within there was trouble. It is impossible for me to describe my feelings as the time of my contemplated start drew near. I had a number of warm-hearted friends in Baltimore,–friends that I loved almost as I did my life, –and the thought of being separated from them forever was painful beyond expression. It is my opinion that thousands would escape from slavery, who now remain, but for the strong cords of affection that bind them to their friends. The thought of leaving my friends was decidedly the most painful thought with which I had to contend. The love of them was my tender point, and shook my decision more than all things else. Besides the pain of separation, the dread and apprehension of a failure exceeded what I had experienced at my first attempt. The appalling defeat I then sustained returned to torment me. I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one–it would seat my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with any thing less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me. But I remained firm, and, according to my resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any kind. How I did so,– what means I adopted,–what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance,–I must leave unexplained, for the reasons before mentioned.

I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a free State. I have never been able to answer the question with any satisfaction to myself. It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate. In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery. This in itself was enough to damp the ardor of my enthusiasm. But the loneliness overcame me. There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger; without home and without friends, in the midst of thousands of my own brethren–children of a common Father, and yet I dared not to unfold to any one of them my sad condition. I was afraid to speak to any one for fear of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the hands of money-loving kidnappers, whose business it was to lie in wait for the panting fugitive, as the ferocious beasts of the forest lie in wait for their prey. The motto which I adopted when I started from slavery was this–"Trust no man!" I saw in every white man an enemy, and in almost every colored man cause for distrust. It was a most painful situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or imagine himself in similar circumstances. Let him be a fugitive slave in a strange land–a land given up to be the hunting-ground for slaveholders–whose inhabitants are legalized kidnappers–where he is every moment subjected to the terrible liability of being seized upon by his fellowmen, as the hideous crocodile seizes upon his prey!– say, let him place himself in my situation–without home or friends–without money or credit–wanting shelter, and no one to give it–wanting bread, and no money to buy it,–and at the same time let him feel that he is pursued by merciless men-hunters, and in total darkness as to what to do, where to go, or where to stay,– perfectly helpless both as to the means of defence and means of escape,–in the midst of plenty, yet suffering the terrible gnawings of hunger,– in the midst of houses, yet having no home,–among fellow-men, yet feeling as if in the midst of wild beasts, whose greediness to swallow up the trembling and half-famished fugitive is only equalled by that with which the monsters of the deep swallow up the helpless fish upon which they subsist,–I say, let him be placed in this most trying situation,–the situation in which I was placed,– then, and not till then, will he fully appreciate the hardships of, and know how to sympathize with, the toil-worn and whip-scarred fugitive slave.

Thank Heaven, I remained but a short time in this distressed situation. I was relieved from it by the humane hand of Mr. DAVID RUGGLES, whose vigilance, kindness, and perseverance, I shall never forget. I am glad of an opportunity to express, as far as words can, the love and gratitude I bear him. Mr. Ruggles is now afflicted with blindness, and is himself in need of the same kind offices which he was once so forward in the performance of toward others. I had been in New York but a few days, when Mr. Ruggles sought me out, and very kindly took me to his boarding-house at the corner of Church and Lespenard Streets. Mr. Ruggles was then very deeply engaged in the memorable *Darg* case, as well as attending to a number of other fugitive slaves, devising ways and means for their successful escape; and, though watched and hemmed in on almost every side, he seemed to be more than a match for his enemies.

CITATION: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), FULL TEXT via Documenting the American South

Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Convention (1848)

INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) was the principal author of the Declaration of Sentiments, which emerged from one of the first women's rights gatherings in the United States. Over two days at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848, a few hundred women and men debated the future of what their official report described as the "social, civil, and religious condition of woman." Stanton had been a driving force behind this early feminist movement, along with noted Pennsylvania abolitionist and Quaker activist, Lucretia Mott, and a few others from among their mutual friends and relatives. Most of these women had been radicalized during the 1840s by their experiences in fighting slavery. In April 1848, the New York state legislature had also begun reforming certain common law doctrines which had limited married women's rights to their own property. Most feminists at Seneca Falls considered this measure as only a first step and that's why they were intent on gathering in upstate New York. When Stanton read the now-famous expression of sentiments at the convention's opening session (for women only), the effect was electrifying. A masterful propaganda document, this "declaration" rewrote the original Declaration of Independence in a fashion designed to highlight the hypocrisy of a country claiming a commitment to natural rights. Male allies such as Frederick Douglass then joined the convention on its second day and the group voted on a series of resolutions, including support for women's suffrage. Ultimately, nearly one hundred attendees signed the new Declaration. Sadly, however, the original handwritten document for this landmark statement on gender equality has never been recovered.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public document (full) // WORD COUNT: 1,000 words

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When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves, by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has

been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men – both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes, with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master – the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women – the law, in all cases, going upon the false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education – all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.
He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, – in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.
In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

Lucretia Mott
Harriet Cady Eaton
Margaret Pryor
Elizabeth Cady Stanton
[Signed by an additional 64 other women and 32 men]

CITATION
Declaration of Sentiments, July 19, 1848, Seneca Falls, NY, Reproduced by the National Park Service

Sojourner Truth, Woman's rights speech (1851)

INTRODUCTION

Born enslaved in New York in 1799 as Isabella, Sojourner Truth changed her name in 1843. Truth grew up speaking a Dutch dialect and probably spoke English with a noticeable Dutch accent. She was enslaved in New York during a period of gradual abolition (which ended in 1827). As a free woman, Truth joined a series of utopian religious communities in New York and Massachusetts. Her stirring 1851 speech to the Woman's Rights convention in Akron, Ohio drew immediate attention, but became even more mythical (and somewhat distorted) by later slight mistranslations of her words and dialect. It was from these later accounts that scholars originally derived the popular title, "Ain't I A Woman?" for these remarks. The version of the speech below was the original transcription recorded by newspapers in 1851. Truth was about six feet tall and imposing presence as a speaker and activist, fighting for both the abolition of slavery and women's rights.

SOURCE FORMAT: News report of public speech (full) // WORD COUNT: 344 words

May I say a few words? I want to say a few words about this matter.

I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?

I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.

As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and man a quart - why can't she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we cant take more than our pint'll hold.

The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and dont know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they wont be so much trouble.

I cant read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again.

The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept - and Lazarus came forth.

And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and woman who bore him. Man, where is your part? But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them.

But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between-a hawk and a buzzard.

CITATION: Sojourner Truth speech, Woman's Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio, May 29, 1851, published first in Salem Anti-Slavery Bugle (June 21, 1851) reprinted in Sojourner Truth Project

Frederick Douglass's "Fifth of July" speech (1852)

INTRODUCTION

Frederick Douglass, delivered this speech, sometimes called, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" or the Fifth of July speech, on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York. The speech, delivered to a local antislavery women's group, began with a sympathetic account of the American revolution and its great promise for freedom, but then pivoted to a second half (partially excerpted below) which detailed the gross hypocrisy of American enslavement on the legacy of that freedom struggle. Many historians consider this effort to be Douglass's finest oration, and arguably one of the most powerful American political speeches ever written.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,660 words

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, lowering 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."

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 jubilee 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 4th 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;" 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 government. 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 the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgement 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 to 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 ploughing, 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 hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

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 employments for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

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 passed.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! 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 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 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.

—Excerpted from Frederick Douglass, What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? July 5, 1852, Rochester, New York with FULL TEXT via TeachingAmericanHistory.org

William Wells Brown, *Clotel* (1853)

INTRODUCTION

Born enslaved near Lexington, Kentucky, William Wells Brown (c. 1814-1884) ultimately became renowned for his wide-ranging antislavery writings. Although born in Kentucky, Brown spent most of his enslaved life in St. Louis, Missouri. He escaped to freedom in 1834, settling in Ohio, where he was active in the Underground Railroad, helping other runaways find freedom in Canada. Brown published a widely read account of his enslavement, entitled, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself* in 1847. Then owing to concerns over his safety, Brown relocated to Great Britain, spending about five years overseas between 1849 and 1854, until British abolitionists helped purchase his freedom. During this period, Brown claimed to deliver over a thousand antislavery lectures. This was also when he wrote, *Clotel; or the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853), which was the first published novel written by an African American. The excerpt below comes from chapter 25, recounting what happened to Clotel, the enslaved fictional daughter of Thomas Jefferson, who had escaped from slavery (disguised as a white man, like Ellen Craft) but who had been captured after attempting rescue her daughter. Clotel then committed suicide on the outskirts of Washington to avoid being recaptured by slave traders. It was what Brown imagined to be the ultimate act of antislavery resistance, or "Death is Freedom" as the chapter title suggests.

SOURCE FORMAT: Novel (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,314 words

CHAPTER XXV.

DEATH IS FREEDOM.

"I ASKED but freedom, and ye gave
Chains, and the freedom of the grave."–Snelling.

THERE are, in the district of Columbia, several slave prisons, or "negro pens," as they are termed. These prisons are mostly occupied by persons to keep their slaves in, when collecting their gangs together for the New Orleans market. Some of them belong to the government, and one, in particular, is noted for having been the place where a number of free coloured persons have been incarcerated from time to time. In this district is situated the capitol of the United States. Any free coloured persons visiting Washington, if not provided with papers asserting and proving their right to be free, may be arrested and placed in one of these dens. If they succeed in showing that they are free, they are set at liberty, provided they are able to pay the expenses of their arrest and imprisonment; if they cannot pay these expenses, they are sold out. Through this unjust and oppressive law, many persons born in the Free States have been consigned to a life of slavery on the cotton, sugar, or rice plantations of the Southern States. By order of her master, Clotel was removed from Richmond and placed in one of these prisons, to await the sailing of a

vessel for New Orleans. The prison in which she was put stands midway between the capitol at Washington and the president's house. Here the fugitive saw nothing but slaves brought in and taken out, to be placed in ships and sent away to the same part of the country to which she herself would soon be compelled to go. She had seen or heard nothing of her daughter while in Richmond, and all hope of seeing her now had fled. If she was carried back to New Orleans, she could expect no mercy from her master.

At the dusk of the evening previous to the day when she was to be sent off, as the old prison was being closed for the night, she suddenly darted past her keeper, and ran for her life. It is not a great distance from the prison to the Long Bridge, which passes from the lower part of the city across the Potomac, to the extensive forests and woodlands of the celebrated Arlington Place, occupied by that distinguished relative and descendant of the immortal Washington, Mr. George W. Curtis. Thither the poor fugitive directed her flight. So unexpected was her escape, that she had quite a number of rods the start before the keeper had secured the other prisoners, and rallied his assistants in pursuit. It was at an hour when, and in a part of the city where, horses could not be readily obtained for the chase; no bloodhounds were at hand to run down the flying woman; and for once it seemed as though there was to be a fair trial of speed and endurance between the slave and the slave-catchers. The keeper and his forces raised the hue and cry on her pathway close behind; but so rapid was the flight along the wide avenue, that the astonished citizens, as they poured forth from their dwellings to learn the cause of alarm, were only able to comprehend the nature of the case in time to fall in with the motley mass in pursuit, (as many a one did that night,) to raise an anxious prayer to heaven, as they refused to join in the pursuit, that the panting fugitive might escape, and the merciless soul dealer for once be disappointed of his prey. And now with the speed of an arrow–having passed the avenue–with the distance between her and her pursuers constantly increasing, this poor hunted female gained the *"Long Bridge,"* as it is called, where interruption seemed improbable, and already did her heart begin to beat high with the hope of success. She had only to pass three-fourths of a mile across the bridge, and she could bury herself in a vast forest, just at the time when the curtain of night would close around her, and protect her from the pursuit of her enemies.

But God by his Providence had otherwise determined. He had determined that an appalling tragedy should be enacted that night, within plain sight of the President's house and the capital of the Union, which should be an evidence wherever it should be known, of the unconquerable love of liberty the heart may inherit; as well as a fresh admonition to the slave dealer, of the cruelty and enormity of his crimes. Just as the pursuers crossed the high draw for the passage of sloops, soon after entering upon the bridge, they beheld three men slowly approaching from the Virginia side. They immediately called to them to arrest the fugitive, whom they proclaimed a runaway slave. True to their Virginian instincts as she came near, they formed in line across the narrow bridge, and prepared to seize her. Seeing escape impossible in that quarter, she stopped suddenly, and turned upon her pursuers. On came the profane and ribald crew, faster than ever, already exulting in her capture, and threatening punishment for her flight. For a moment she looked wildly and anxiously around to see if there was no hope of escape. On either hand, far down below, rolled the deep foamy waters of the Potomac, and before and behind the rapidly approaching step and noisy voices of pursuers, showing how vain would be any further effort for freedom. Her resolution was taken. She clasped her *hands* convulsively, and raised *them,* as she at the same time raised her *eyes* towards heaven, and begged for that mercy and

compassion *there,* which had been denied her on earth; and then, with a single bound, she vaulted over the railings of the bridge, and sunk for ever beneath the waves of the river!

Thus died Clotel, the daughter of Thomas Jefferson, a president of the United States; a man distinguished as the author of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the first statesmen of that country.

Had Clotel escaped from oppression in any other land, in the disguise in which she fled from the Mississippi to Richmond, and reached the United States, no honour within the gift of the American people would have been too good to have been heaped upon the heroic woman. But she was a slave, and therefore out of the pale of their sympathy. They have tears to shed over Greece and Poland; they have an abundance of sympathy for "poor Ireland;" they can furnish a ship of war to convey the Hungarian refugees from a Turkish prison to the "land of the free and home of the brave." They boast that America is the "cradle of liberty;" if it is, I fear they have rocked the child to death. The body of Clotel was picked up from the bank of the river, where it had been washed by the strong current, a hole dug in the sand, and there deposited, without either inquest being held over it, or religious service being performed. Such was the life and such the death of a woman whose virtues and goodness of heart would have done honour to one in a higher station of life, and who, if she had been born in any other land but that of slavery, would have been honoured and loved. A few days after the death of Clotel, the following poem appeared in one of the newspapers:

"Now, rest for the wretched! the long day is past,
And night on you prison descendeth at last.
Now lock up and bolt! Ha, jailor, look there!
Who flies like a wild bird escaped from the snare?
A woman, a slave–up, out in pursuit,
While linger some gleams of day!
Let thy call ring out!–now a rabble rout
Is at thy heels–speed away!

"A bold race for freedom!–On, fugitive, on!
Heaven help but the right, and thy freedom is won.
How eager she drinks the free air of the plains;
Every limb, every nerve, every fibre she strains;
From Columbia's glorious capitol,
Columbia's daughter flees
To the sanctuary God has given–
The sheltering forest trees.

"Now she treads the Long Bridge–joy lighteth her eye–
Beyond her the dense wood and darkening sky–
Wild hopes thrill her heart as she neareth the shore:
O, despair! there are *men* fast advancing before!
Shame, shame on their manhood! they hear, they heed

The cry, her flight to stay,
And like demon forms with their outstretched arms,
They wait to seize their prey!

"She pauses, she turns! Ah, will she flee back?
Like wolves, her pursuers howl loud on their track;
She lifteth to Heaven one look of despair–
Her anguish breaks forth in one hurried prayer–
Hark! her jailor's yell! like a bloodhound's bay
On the low night wind it sweeps!
Now, death or the chain! to the stream she turns,
And she leaps! O God, she leaps!

"The dark and the cold, yet merciful wave,
Receives to its bosom the form of the slave;
She rises–earth's scenes on her dim vision gleam,
Yet she struggleth not with the strong rushing stream:
And low are the death-cries her woman's heart gives,
As she floats adown the river,
Faint and more faint grows the drowning voice,
And her cries have ceased for ever!

"Now back, jailor, back to thy dungeons, again,
To swing the red lash and rivet the chain!
The form thou would'st fetter–returned to its God;
The universe holdeth no realm of night
More drear than her slavery–
More merciless fiends than here stayed her flight–
Joy! the hunted slave is free!

"That bond woman's corse–let Potomac's proud wave
Go bear it along *by our Washington's grave,*
And heave it high up on that hallowed strand,
To tell of the freedom he won for our land.
A weak woman's corse, by freemen chased down;
Hurrah for our country! hurrah!
To freedom she leaped, through drowning and death–
Hurrah for our country! hurrah!"

CITATION: William Wells Brown, *Clotel, Or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (London: Patridge & Oakey, 1853), FULL TEXT via DocSouth

Lincoln's private letters on slavery and sectional crisis (1841, 1855)

INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1855, Abraham Lincoln was a well-respected 46-year-old attorney from Springfield, Illinois, but outside of his extensive legal casework, he was also an active politician. The former congressman held no public office, but Lincoln was an acknowledged leader of the emerging Republican Party in Illinois. The new party was not calling for the immediate abolition of slavery, but it was openly antislavery. That was essentially unprecedented in American political history. No major political party had ever taken such a sectional position on such a divisive issue. Lincoln had always considered himself antislavery but his willingness to help organize and lead a sectional party was a notable departure for him. He had never before prioritized the fight against slavery in this type of fashion. These letters help illustrate both his evolution and also the challenges he faced as a moderate politician trying to organize and hold together a new antislavery coalition. The first letter, to the sister of his closest friend, described Lincoln encountering a slave coffle while he was still a young Whig politician in 1841. The second letter, written fourteen years later, responded to a visit which Lincoln had missed from a leading Kentucky conservative named Judge George Robertson, who had once helped engineer passage of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. Especially at the end of this letter, one can detect a new sense of urgency from Lincoln on the nation's sectional crisis. In fact, Lincoln would rely on the final few sentences of this letter in 1858 when he framed his radical House Divided speech at the beginning of his senatorial campaign against Stephen A. Douglas. The other letter on this page, from August 1855, went to Joshua Speed, who had once been Lincoln's roommate and closest friend back when they were young Whig politicians living in Springfield during the late 1830s and early 1840s. Here Lincoln cautiously addressed his own partisan evolution since that time, but he also recalled the same sad slave trading episode he had once described to Speed's sister. In retrospect, the difference in how Lincoln related his impressions of the slave coffle seems especially revealing.

SOURCE FORMAT: Private letters // WORD COUNT: 1,600 words

Abraham Lincoln to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841 (excerpt)

…By the way, a fine example was presented on board the boat for contemplating the effect of condition upon human happiness. A gentleman had purchased twelve negroes in different parts of Kentucky and was taking them to a farm in the South. They were chained six and six together. A small iron clevis was around the left wrist of each, and this fastened to the main chain by a shorter one at a convenient distance from, the others; so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot-line. In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and many of them, from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery where

the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where; and yet amid all these distressing circumstances, as we would think them, they were the most cheerful and apparantly happy creatures on board. One, whose offence for which he had been sold was an over-fondness for his wife, played the fiddle almost continually; and the others danced, sung, cracked jokes, and played various games with cards from day to day. How true it is that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," or in other words, that He renders the worst of human conditions tolerable, while He permits the best, to be nothing better than tolerable.

Abraham Lincoln to George Robertson, August 15, 1855

Springfield, Illinois
August 15, 1855

Hon. Geo. Robertson
Lexington, Ky.

My Dear Sir: The volume you left for me has been received. I am really grateful for the honor of your kind remembrance, as well as for the book. The partial reading I have already given it, has afforded me much of both pleasure and instruction. It was new to me that the exact question which led to the Missouri compromise, had arisen before it arose in regard to Missouri; and that you had taken so prominent a part in it. Your short, but able and patriotic speech upon that occasion, has not been improved upon since, by those holding the same views; and, with all the lights you then had, the views you took appear to me as very reasonable.

You are not a friend of slavery in the abstract. In that speech you spoke of "the peaceful extinction of slavery" and used other expressions indicating your belief that the thing was, at some time, to have an end[.] Since then we have had thirty six years of experience; and this experience has demonstrated, I think, that there is no peaceful extinction of slavery in prospect for us. The signal failure of Henry Clay, and other good and great men, in 1849, to effect any thing in favor of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, together with a thousand other signs, extinguishes that hope utterly. On the question of liberty, as a principle, we are not what we have been. When we were the political slaves of King George, and wanted to be free, we called the maxim that "all men are created equal" a self evident truth; but now when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim "a self evident lie." The fourth of July has not quite dwindled away; it is still a great day–for burning fire-crackers!!!

That spirit which desired the peaceful extinction of slavery, has itself become extinct, with the occasion, and the men of the Revolution. Under the impulse of that occasion, nearly half the states adopted systems of emancipation at once; and it is a significant fact, that not a single state has done the like since. So far as peaceful, voluntary emancipation is concerned, the condition of the negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free mind, is now as fixed, and hopeless of change for the better, as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent. The Autocrat of all the Russias will resign his crown, and proclaim his subjects free republicans sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves.

Our political problem now is “Can we, as a nation, continue together permanently–forever–half slave, and half free?” The problem is too mighty for me. May God, in his mercy, superintend the solution.

Your much obliged friend, and humble servant

A. Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln to Joshua Speed, August 24, 1855 (excerpt)

Springfield, Aug: 24, 1855

Dear Speed:

You know what a poor correspondent I am. Ever since I received your very agreeable letter of the 22nd. of May I have been intending to write you in answer to it. You suggest that in political action now, you and I would differ. I suppose we would; not quite as much, however, as you may think. You know I dislike slavery; and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave—especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that any one is bidding you to yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself.

I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations, under the constitution, in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils; but I bite my lip and keep quiet. In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip, 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 a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings, in order to maintain their loyalty to the constitution and the Union.

I do oppose the extension of slavery, because my judgment and feelings so prompt me; and I am under no obligation to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must. You say if you were President, you would send an army and hang the leaders of the Missouri outrages upon the Kansas elections; still, if Kansas fairly votes herself a slave state, she must be admitted, or the Union must be dissolved. But how if she votes herself a slave state unfairly—that is, by the very means for which you say you would hang men? Must she still be admitted, or the Union be dissolved? That will be the phase of the question when it first becomes a practical one. In your assumption that there may be a fair decision of the slavery question in Kansas, I plainly see you and I would differ about the Nebraska-law.

I look upon that enactment not as a law, but as violence from the beginning. It was conceived in violence, passed in violence, is maintained in violence, and is being executed in violence. I say it was conceived in violence, because the destruction of the Missouri Compromise, under the circumstances, was nothing less than violence. It was passed in violence, because it could not have passed at all but for the votes of many members, in violent disregard of the known will of their constituents. It is maintained in violence because the elections since, clearly demand it's repeal, and this demand is openly disregarded….The slave-breeders and slave-traders, are a small, odious and detested class, among you; and yet in politics, they dictate the course of all of you, and are as completely your masters, as you are the masters of your own negroes.

You enquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a whig; but others say there are no whigs, and that I am an abolitionist. When I was at Washington I voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times, and I never heard of any one attempting to unwhig me for that. I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery.

I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that "all men are created equal." We now practically read it "all men are created equal, except negroes." When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read "all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and catholics." When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocracy.

Mary will probably pass a day or two in Louisville in October. My kindest regards to Mrs. Speed. On the leading subject of this letter, I have more of her sympathy than I have of yours.

And yet let [me] say I am Your friend forever
A. LINCOLN

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841; to George Robertson, August 15, 1855; to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855; *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (1953)

Dred Scott Decision (1857)

INTRODUCTION
The Dred Scott case began as a set of freedom suits filed by Dred and Harriet Scott in St. Louis Circuit Court in 1846. The Scotts were parents with two young daughters, determined to protect them from the domestic slave trade. Their former slaveholder, a US Army surgeon, had taken them into free territory, and thus they had a strong case for legal liberation under what was known as the "once free, always free" doctrine. The case proceeded under Dred Scott's name only (because of another doctrine limiting women's rights called "coverture"). Dred Scott did win at one stage, but lost his family's case on appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court. Attorneys for Scott re-filed in federal court in 1854. The case took years, but ultimately the Taney Court reached a 7-2 verdict against Dred Scott in March 1857. Here are excerpts from Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's majority opinion and from a dissenting opinion by Justice John McLean. Both Taney and McLean had ties to Dickinson College.

SOURCE FORMAT: US Supreme Court opinion // WORD COUNT: 1,210 words

From majority opinion by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (March 6, 1857)

In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument.

It is difficult at this day to realize the state of public opinion in relation to that unfortunate race, which prevailed in the civilized and enlightened portions of the world at the time of the Declaration of Independence, and when the Constitution of the United States was framed and adopted. But the public history of every European nation displays it in a manner too plain to be mistaken.

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute; and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern, without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion.

And in no nation was this opinion more firmly fixed or more uniformly acted upon than by the English Government and English people. They not only seized them on the coast of Africa, and

sold them or held them in slavery for their own use; but they took them as ordinary articles of merchandise to every country where they could make a profit on them, and were far more extensively engaged in this commerce than any other nation in the world.

The opinion thus entertained and acted upon in England was naturally impressed upon the colonies they founded on this side of the Atlantic. And, accordingly, a negro of the African race was regarded by them as an article of property, and held, and bought and sold as such, in every one of the thirteen colonies which united in the Declaration of Independence, and afterwards formed the Constitution of the United States. The slaves were more or less numerous in the different colonies, as slave labor was found more or less profitable. But no one seems to have doubted the correctness of the prevailing opinion of the time.

From the dissenting opinion of Associate Justice John McLean (March 7, 1857)

The pleader has not the boldness to allege that the plaintiff is a slave, as that would assume against him the matter in controversy, and embrace the entire merits of the case in a plea to the jurisdiction. But beyond the facts set out in the plea, the court, to sustain it, must assume the plaintiff to be a slave, which is decisive on the merits. This is a short and an effectual mode of deciding the cause; but I am yet to learn that it is sanctioned by any known rule of pleading.

The defendant's counsel complain, that if the court take jurisdiction on the ground that the plaintiff is free, the assumption is against the right of the master. This argument is easily answered. In the first place, the plea does not show him to be a slave; it does not follow that a man is not free whose ancestors were slaves. The reports of the Supreme Court of Missouri show that this assumption has many exceptions; and there is no averment in the plea that the plaintiff is not within them.

By all the rules of pleading, this is a fatal defect in the plea. If there be doubt, what rule of construction has been established in the slave States? In Jacob v. Sharp, (Meigs's Rep., Tennessee, 114,) the court held, when there was doubt as to the constuction of a will which emancipated a slave, 'it must be construed to be subordinate to the higher and more important right of freedom.'

No injustice can result to the master, from an exercise of jurisdiction in this cause. Such a decision does not in any degree affect the merits of the case; it only enables the plaintiff to assert his claims to freedom before this tribunal. If the jurisdiction be ruled against him, on the ground that he is a slave, it is decisive of his fate.

It has been argued that, if a colored person be made a citizen of a State, he cannot sue in the Federal court. The Constitution declares that Federal jurisdiction 'may be exercised between citizens of different States,' and the same is provided in the act of 1789. The above argument is properly met by saying that the Constitution was intended to be a practical instrument; and where its language is too plain to be misunderstood, the argument ends.'

In Chirae v. Chirae, (2 Wheat., 261; 4 Curtis, 99,) this court says: 'That the power of naturalization is exclusively in Congress does not seem to be, and certainly ought not to be,

controverted.' No person can legally be made a citizen of a State, and consequently a citizen of the United States, of foreign birth, unless he be naturalized under the acts of Congress. Congress has power 'to establish a uniform rule of naturalization.'

It is a power which belongs exclusively to Congress, as intimately connected with our Federal relations. A State may authorize foreigners to hold real estate within its jurisdiction, but it has no power to naturalize foreigners, and give them the rights of citizens. Such a right is opposed to the acts of Congress on the subject of naturalization, and subversive of the Federal powers. I regret that any countenance should be given from this bench to a practice like this in some of the States, which has no warrant in the Constitution.

In the argument, it was said that a colored citizen would not be an agreeable member of society. This is more a matter of taste than of law. Several of the States have admitted persons of color to the right of suffrage, and in this view have recognised them as citizens; and this has been done in the slave as well as the free States. On the question of citizenship, it must be admitted that we have not been very fastidious. Under the late treaty with Mexico, we have made citizens of all grades, combinations, and colors. The same was done in the admission of Louisiana and Florida. No one ever doubted, and no court ever held, that the people of these Territories did not become citizens under the treaty. They have exercised all the rights of citizens, without being naturalized under the acts of Congress.

CITATION: Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sandford (1857) 60 U.S. 393 with FULL TEXT available via Legal Information Institute (Cornell)

Lincoln's "House Divided" speech (1858)

INTRODUCTION

Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous "House Divided" speech on the evening of June 16, 1858 at the Illinois Republican State Convention in Springfield, Illinois. It was, in effect, an acceptance speech. Earlier that day, Illinois Republicans had adopted an unprecedented endorsement for the local attorney and former congressman as their "first and only choice" in the forthcoming campaign to unseat incumbent Senator Stephen A. Douglas. The reason why such an endorsement was unusual was because in those days there was no tradition of public campaigning for US senate seats. Before the ratification of the 17th amendment in 1912, state legislatures always selected US senators and would-be candidates typically conducted their efforts in private and after the fall legislative elections. But Lincoln's Republican allies believed it was critical to organize an early public campaign with him as the the party's official nominee in order to head off growing pressure on them to support Douglas, a leading Democrat. The pressure was coming because Douglas was in the midst of a bitter feud with President James Buchanan, the more openly pro-slavery leader of his national party. To some Republicans, especially party leaders from New York, this Democratic feud represented a rare opportunity to flip an old political enemy. Yet Lincoln and the Illinois Republicans knew all too well that Douglas was not committed to their core antislavery positions –most notably their firm belief in stopping slavery's expansion into western territories such as Kansas. That is why Lincoln used his acceptance speech on June 16 o try to explain why Douglas and his controversial doctrine of settling the fate of of slavery in the territories by "popular sovereignty" or by a vote of the settlers themselves, represented a mortal threat to the future of the Republican Party and the nation itself.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // **WORD COUNT: 672 words**

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year, since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only, not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved---I do not expect the house to fall---but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.

Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new---North as well as South.

…We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free; and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State.

To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty, is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation.

That is what we have to do. But how can we best do it?

There are those who denounce us openly to their own friends, and yet whisper us softly, that Senator Douglas is the aptest instrument there is, with which to effect that object. They do not tell us, nor has he told us, that he wishes any such object to be effected. They wish us to infer all, from the facts, that he now has a little quarrel with the present head of the dynasty; and that he has regularly voted with us, on a single point, upon which, he and we, have never differed.

They remind us that he is a very great man, and that the largest of us are very small ones. Let this be granted. But "a living dog is better than a dead lion." Judge Douglas, if not a dead lion for this work, is at least a caged and toothless one. How can he oppose the advances of slavery? He don't care anything about it. His avowed mission is impressing the "public heart" to care nothing about it….

… Now, as ever, I wish to not misrepresent Judge Douglas' position, question his motives, or do ought that can be personally offensive to him.
Whenever, if ever, he and we can come together on principle so that our great cause may have assistance from his great ability, I hope to have interposed no adventitious obstacle.

But clearly, he is not now with us---he does not pretend to be---he does not promise to ever be.

Our cause, then, must be intrusted to, and conducted by its own undoubted friends---those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work---who do care for the result.

Two years ago the Republicans of the nation mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong. We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us. Of strange, discordant, and even, hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought the battle through, under the constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud, and pampered enemy.

Did we brave all then, to falter now?---now---when that same enemy is wavering, dissevered and belligerent?

The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail---if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise councils may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later the victory is sure to come.

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln, Speech to Republican state convention, June 16, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (1953)

Abraham Lincoln, Autobiographical Sketch (1859)

INTRODUCTION

By the age of fifty, Abraham Lincoln was an attorney in Springfield, Illinois, running a two-man law firm. He had been married for seventeen years. The Lincolns had three surviving boys, with their eldest son Robert getting ready to try to become the first member of the family ever to go to college. Yet future president Lincoln was a more powerful national figure than it might appear. He was widely regarded as the leader of the Republican Party in Illinois. That was important because for the Republicans to win the presidency, they almost had to win Illinois, a key swing state in the electoral college of that era. Moreover, Lincoln had recently vaulted into popular consciousness following his impressive performance in a series of senatorial debates against Democrat Stephen A. Douglas during the fall campaign in 1858. So, it was really no surprise in late 1859 when a Pennsylvania newspaper editor reached out to Jesse W. Fell, a leading Illinois Republican whom he knew well, to ask if he could help secure some autobiographical information from Lincoln which they could use to create a profile of him as part of a series on leading Republican presidential contenders. The result from Lincoln was a short but revealing sketch that offered nothing about his wife or children or his faith, but provided numerous signs that in describing his background that he was diligently trying to connect to various audiences in the Northern electorate.

SOURCE FORMAT: Letter and recollection // WORD COUNT: 710 words

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J.W. Fell, Esq.

Springfield, Dec: 20. 1859

My dear Sir:

Herewith is a little sketch, as you requested– There is not much of it, for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me– If anything is made out of it, I wish it to be modest, and not to go beyond the materials– If it were thought necessary to incorporate any thing from any of my speeches, I suppose there would be no objection– Of course it must not appear to have been written by myself– Yours very truly

A. Lincoln

[Enclosure:]

I was born Feb. 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families — second families, perhaps I should say– My Mother, who died in my ninthtenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams, and others in Macon counties, Illinois– My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky, about 1781 or 2, when, a year or two later, he

was killed by indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest– His ancestors, who were quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania– An effort to identify them with the New-England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite, than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like–

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age; and he grew up, litterally without education– He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer county, Indiana, in my eighth year– We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union– It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods– There I grew up– There were some schools, so called; but no qualification was ever required of a teacher, beyond the reading, writing, and Arithmetic "readin, writin, and cipherin" to the Rule of Three– If a straggler supposed to understand latin, happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizzard– There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course when I came of age I did not know much– Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three, but that was all– I have not been to school since– The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I havehave picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity–

I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty two– At twenty one I came to Illinois, and passed the first year in Illinois — Macon County — Then I got to New-Salem (then at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard County, where I remained a year as a sort of Clerk in a store– then came the Black-Hawk war; and I was elected a Captain of Volunteers — a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since– I went the campaign, was elated, ran for the Legislature the same year (1832) and was beaten — the only time I ever have been beaten by the people– The next, and three succeeding biennial elections, I was elected to the Legislature– I was not a candidate afterwards. During this Legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to make practice it– In 1846 I was once elected to the lower House of Congress– Was not a candidate for re-election– From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before– Always a whig in politics, and generally on the whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses– I was losing interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again– What I have done since then is pretty well known —

If any personal description of me is thought desired desirable, it may be said, I am, in height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on an average, one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and grey eyes — no other marks or brands recollected–

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln to Jesse W. Fell, December 20, 1859, enclosing autobiography, FULL TEXT via *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*

Frederick Douglass editorials (1860-61)

INTRODUCTION

Less than ten years after his escape from slavery in 1838, Frederick Douglass had established himself as a leading abolitionist newspaper editor. He launched *The North Star* from his new home in Rochester, New York in 1847. This venture marked the beginning of his rupture with William Lloyd Garrison, his mentor and editor of nation's best known abolitionist journal, *The Liberator.* In the early 1850s, Douglass merged *The North Star* with a Liberty party newspaper and then renamed the venture as *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. During this period, Douglass became openly aligned with the Liberty Party or the political abolitionist movement, which was led by Gerrit Smith and which opposed or tried to ignore many of Garrison's more radical policy positions, such as pacifism and women's rights. By mid 1860, Douglass transformed his paper into a monthly periodical, something he continued until late 1863, when abandoned the newspaper business temporarily because he thought President Lincoln was about to name him as the nation's first black army officer. These excerpts from *Douglass's Monthly* reflect his political evolution during the secession crisis. Douglass had originally supported Gerrit Smith as the Liberty Party presidential nominee in 1860, though he always seemed to recognize the importance of having the Republicans as a moderate antislavery movement. His December 1860 editorial suggests how he remained hopeful that Lincoln's victory might ultimately break the power of the slaveholders over the nation's future. By May 1861, following the outbreak of Civil War, Douglass seemed even more hopeful that there had finally been "a revolution in Northern sentiment" not only for ending "the slaveholding rebellion," but also slavery itself. This optimism did not last long. By September 1861, in a powerful rebuke of the Lincoln Administration, entitled, "Cast Off the Mill-Stone," Douglass argued that the only way to preserve the nation was to destroy slavery. –something that President Lincoln had not yet acknowledged. In the immediate aftermath of Lincoln's decision to revoke an emancipation edict by Gen. John Fremont in Missouri, Douglass seemed especially scornful of Union efforts to placate the few remaining loyal slave or border states.

SOURCE FORMAT: Newspaper editorials (excerpts) // **WORD COUNT: 933 words**

"The Late Election," *Douglass' Monthly*, December 1860

What, then, has been gained to the anti-slavery cause by the election of Mr. Lincoln? Not much, in itself considered, but very much when viewed in the light of its relations and bearings. For fifty years the country has taken the law from the lips of an exacting, haughty and imperious slave oligarchy. The masters of slaves have been masters of the Republic. Their authority was almost undisputed, and their power irresistible. They were the President makers of the Republic, and no aspirant dared to hope for success against their frown. Lincoln's election has vitiated their authority, and broken their power. It has taught the North its strength, and shown the South its weakness. More important still, it has demonstrated the possibility of electing, if not an Abolitionist, at least an anti-slavery reputation to the Presidency of the United States. The years

are few since it was thought possible that the Northern people could be wrought up to the exercise of such startling courage. Hitherto the threat of disunion has been as potent over the politicians of the North, as the cat-o'-nine-tails is over the backs of the slaves. Mr. Lincoln's election breaks this enchantment, dispels this terrible nightmare, and awakes the nation to the consciousness of new powers, and the possibility of a higher destiny than the perpetual bondage to an ignoble fear.

–Excerpted from "The Late Election," *Douglass' Monthly*, December 1860, FULL TEXT via University of Rochester

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"Sudden Revolution in Northern Sentiment," *Douglass' Monthly*, May 1861

During the fast three weeks after the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln's Administration, there was a general sentiment all over the North looking to a peaceful solution of the revolutionary crisis now upon the country.—The Government at Washington seemed to be paralyzed, the Border States were active in their efforts to avert civil war, partly by securing new and stronger guarantees for slavery, and partly by threats of disunion if the Government should attempt to defend itself by force against the rebel force of the so-called Confederate States. Fort Sumter was to be abandoned; other Southern forts were to follow in the same path, and the Secession States were to be acknowledged and to have an easy time generally. Southern Commissioners remained at Washington, and kept up the hopes of the Cotton States by sending encouraging telegrams over the country that things were working well and favorably to all their plans and purposes. Democrats were doing what they could all over the North to cripple and fetter the Republicans, and Republicans themselves were divided as between a policy of peace and a policy of war, each wing of the latter party claiming to represent the spirit and purposes of the Administration. In this general disjointed condition of facts, the Northern people stood apparently powerless.

But what a change now greets us! The Government is aroused, the dead North is alive, and its divided people united. Never was a change so sudden, so universal, and so portentous. The whole North, East and West is in arms. Drums are beating, men are enlisting, companies forming, regiments marching, banners are flying, and money is pouring into the national treasury to put an end to the slaveholding rebellion….

–Excerpted from "Sudden Revolution in Northern Sentiment," *Douglass' Monthly*, May 1861, FULL TEXT via University of Rochester

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"CAST OFF THE MILL-STONE," Douglass' Monthly, September, 1861

We are determined that our readers shall have line upon line and precept upon precept. Ours is only one humble voice; but such as it is, we give it freely to our country, and to the cause of

humanity. That honesty is the best policy, we all profess to believe, though our practice may often contradict the proverb. The present policy of our Government is evidently to put down the slaveholding rebellion, and at the same time protect and preserve slavery. This policy hangs like a mill-stone about the neck of our people. It carries disorder to the very sources of our national activities. Weakness, faint heartedness and inefficiency is the, natural result. The mental and moral machinery of mankind cannot long withstand such disorder without serious damage. This policy offends reason, wounds the sensibilities, and shocks the moral sentiments of men. It forces upon us inconsequent conclusions and painful contradictions, while the plain path of duty is obscured and thronged with multiplying difficulties. Let us look this slavery-preserving policy squarely in the face, and search it thoroughly.

Can the friends of that policy tell us why this should not be an abolition war? Is not abolition plainly forced upon the nation as a necessity of national existence? Are not the rebels determined to make the war on their part a war for the utter destruction of liberty and the cow plete mastery of slavery over every other right and interest in the land? .–And is not an abolition war on our part the natural and logical answer to be made to the rebels? We all know it is. But it is said that for the Government to adopt the abolition policy, would involve the loss of the support of the Union men of the Border Slave States. Grant it, and what is such friendship worth? We are stronger without than with such friendship. It arms the enemy, while it disarms its friends. The fact is indisputable, that so long as slavery is respected and protected by our Government, the slaveholders can carry on the rebellion, and no longer.— Slavery is the stomach of the rebellion. The bread that feeds the rebel army, the cotton that clothes them, and the money that arms them and keeps them supplied with powder and bullets, come from the slaves, who, if consulted as to the use which should be made of their hard earnings, would say, give it to the bottom of the sea rather than do with it this mischief. Strike here, cut off the connection between the fighting master and the working slave, and you at once put an end to this rebellion, because you destroy that which feeds, clothes and arms it. Shall this not be done, because we shall offend the Union men in the Border States?

–Excerpted from "CAST OFF THE MILL-STONE," *Douglass' Monthly*, September, 1861, FULL TEXT via University of Rochester

Lincoln's First Inaugural (1861)

INTRODUCTION

Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) won election as the nation's sixteenth president in November 1860 after a complicated four-way contest that took place during a period of bitter sectional polarization. Following his victory, seven out of fifteen slave states claimed that they were leaving the union or seceding to form a new government, which they called the Confederate States of America. Most white southerners seemed terrified that once antislavery Republicans held control of the federal government, they would abolish slavery. Lincoln tried to use his Inaugural Address on March 4, 1861, to calm their nerves. In particular, Lincoln appeared to employ this ceremonial speech to try to dissuade Upper South states from joining a rebellion against the nation. Although the new president acknowledged in this excerpt that there was a "substantial dispute" over slavery's morality, he denied that Republicans were planning to attack the institution in states where it had long existed. Instead, he claimed his party would honor longstanding constitutional compromises over slavery, though without allowing any further extension into the western territories. Lincoln also blasted secession, calling it "the essence of anarchy," because he believed it would forever undermine the principles of representative self-government. Lincoln ended by appealing to patriotism and shared national heritage. Nevertheless, just a short six weeks after this powerful speech, Confederate troops fired on US military forces at Fort Sumter in South Carolina and the Civil War began.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 700 words

…Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that:

"I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations and had never recanted them; and more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

"Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes."

… Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it, does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissable; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all that is left….

…One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction, in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all, by the other.

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them….In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend it."

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (1953)

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (1863)

INTRODUCTION

On July 7, 1863, in the immediate aftermath of the news reaching Washington DC that Union forces had not only won a major battle at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, but also had prevailed in a long bloody, siege at Vicksburg, Mississippi, President Abraham Lincoln responded to a "serenade" from a crowd outside the White House with an impromptu speech. Near the beginning of his brief remarks, Lincoln observed, "How long ago was it –eighty odd years– since on the Fourth of July for the first time in the history of the world a nation by its representatives, assembled and declared as a self-evident truth that 'all men are created equal." Of course, while the president did not know it at the time, this passage represented the first draft of the famous, far more poetic, opening of his address delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was short –a mere ten sentences– but it has become the most famous speech in American history. There are many ways to interpret its meaning, but one of the most powerful insights concerns how Lincoln subtly worked to evoke memories in his audience. He did not name individuals or policies, but instead Lincoln used the language of American politics, culture and religious faith to help inspire his listeners and readers. Such writing, of course, requires careful composition and revision. The version below, for example, was not merely the second draft of Lincoln's response to the July serenade. This famous text, which now adorns the Lincoln Memorial, actually comes from a version that Lincoln hand wrote in March 1864. It was not that much different than the version which he had delivered in November 1863, but the small differences reflect the brilliance of a writer who knew that every word mattered.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech // WORD COUNT: 272 words

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here, have, thus far, so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of

freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln, Address at Soldiers' National Cemetery, Gettysburg, PA, November 19, 1863 [BLISS COPY / FINAL TEXT], FULL TEXT via *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (1953)

Frederick Douglass, Mission of the War (1864)

INTRODUCTION

The great abolitionist orator and writer Frederick Douglass delivered this speech, "The Mission of the War," to the Women's Loyal National League at the Cooper Institute in New York on January 13, 1864. At that time, Douglass was about 46 years old and still hoping that President Lincoln would name him as the US army's first black officer. The two men had met for the first time during the previous August at the White House. "I felt big there," Douglass had told audiences during the previous month about his encounter with the president. But Lincoln had not yet named the former antislavery newspaper editor to a military position and would, in fact, not do so before his death in April 1865. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had founded the Women's Loyal National League in 1863 and were preparing in early 1864 to deliver a massive series of petitions to Congress –from nearly half a million people– calling for the abolition of slavery by constitutional amendment. Douglass was a strong supporter of this abolition amendment and used his speech in New York to explain why he had always considered the Civil War to be "an abolition war," even when some Union generals and politicians had resisted.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 788 words

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…Then there is the danger arising from the impatience of the people on account of the prolongation of the war. I know the American people. They are an impulsive people, impatient of delay, clamorous for change, and often look for results out of all proportion to the means employed in attaining them.

You and I know that the mission of this war is national regeneration. We know and consider that a nation is not born in a day. We know that large bodies move slowly—and often seem to move thus when, could we perceive their actual velocity, we should be astonished at its greatness. A great battle lost or won is easily described, understood and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it. There are vast numbers of voters, who make no account of the moral growth of a great nation and who only look at the war as a calamity to be endured only so long as they have no power to arrest it. Now, this is just the sort of people whose votes may turn the scale against us in the last event.

Thoughts of this kind tell me that there never was a time when antislavery work was more needed than now. The day that shall see the rebels at our feet, their weapons flung away, will be the day of trial. We have need to prepare for that trial. We have long been saved a proslavery peace by the stubborn, unbending persistence of the rebels. Let them bend as they will bend, there will come the test of our sternest virtues.

I have now given, very briefly, some of the grounds of danger. A word as to the ground of hope. The best that can be offered is that we have made progress—vast and striking progress—within the last two years.

President Lincoln introduced his administration to the country as one which would faithfully catch, hold and return runaway slaves to their masters. He avowed his determination to protect and defend the slaveholder's right to plunder the black laborer of his hard earnings. Europe was assured by Mr. Seward that no slave should gain his freedom by this war. Both the President and the Secretary of State have made progress since then.

Our generals, at the beginning of the war, were horribly proslavery. They took to slave catching and slave killing like ducks to water. They are now very generally and very earnestly in favor of putting an end to slavery. Some of them, like Hunter and Butler, because they hate slavery on its own account, and others, because slavery is in arms against the government.

The rebellion has been a rapid educator. Congress was the first to respond to the instinctive judgment of the people, and fixed the broad brand of its reprobation upon slave hunting in shoulder straps. Then came very temperate talk about confiscation, which soon came to be pretty radical talk. Then came propositions for Border State, gradual, compensated, colonized emancipation. Then came the threat of a proclamation, and then came the Proclamation. Meanwhile the Negro had passed along from a loyal spade and pickax to a Springfield rifle. Haiti and Liberia are recognized. Slavery is humbled in Maryland, threatened in Tennessee, stunned nearly to death in western Kentucky, and gradually melting away before our arms in the rebellious states.

The hour is one of hope as well as danger. But whatever may come to pass, one thing is clear: The principles involved in the contest, the necessities of both sections of the country, the obvious requirements of the age, and every suggestion of enlightened policy demand the utter extirpation of slavery from every foot of American soil, and the enfranchisement of the entire colored population of the country. Elsewhere we may find peace, but it will be a hollow and deceitful peace. Elsewhere we may find prosperity, but it will be a transient prosperity. Elsewhere we may find greatness and renown, but if these are based upon anything less substantial than justice they will vanish, for righteousness alone can permanently exalt a nation.

I end where I began—no war but an Abolition war; no peace but an Abolition peace; liberty for all, chains for none; the black man a soldier in war, a laborer in peace; a voter at the South as well as at the North; America his permanent home, and all Americans his fellow countrymen. Such, fellow citizens, is my idea of the mission of the war. If accomplished, our glory as a nation will be complete, our peace will flow like a river, and our foundation will be the everlasting rocks.

CITATION: *New York Tribune,* January 14, 1864, available FULL TEXT via BlackPast.org

Anna Dickinson, Perils of the Hour (1864)

INTRODUCTION

Anna Dickinson (1842-1932) was the first woman ever to offer a political speech in the chamber of the US House of Representatives. The young Pennsylvania native was only 21 years old at the time. Dickinson delivered her speech, "The Perils of the Hour," on January 16, 1864, not only before members of both the House and Senate, but also with President Lincoln and many of his cabinet in rapt attendance. Despite her age and gender, Dickinson had became a celebrity orator, well known for her effective support of Republican candidates. But Dickinson was a radical and had been an occasional critic of the Lincoln Administration's cautious policies regarding slavery, so there was a real element of drama in her appearance in early 1864. As young 13-year-old girl, Dickinson had published her first writings in William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator.* Now, speaking before most of official Washington, the young woman continued to press for emancipation and civil rights, as she had done throughout her life. But Dickinson also used the occasion to provide a kind of endorsement for President Lincoln and his potential second term. Later during the reelection campaign, Dickinson occasionally seemed to regret that endorsement –and never stopped pushing for more progressive policies on race and slavery– but she remained loyal to the Republican effort. For a few decades after the Civil War, Dickinson remained an orator and writer, but never again achieved the same level of celebrity. She also struggled with poor health and depression. Dickinson never married and ultimately became estranged from her sister who at one point had her committed to an asylum. She then lived quietly for the last forty years of her life with friends in central New York, before her death in 1932.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 1,357 words

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…Honor to the gallant defender of his country's flag, whether he has heard the fearful storm of storm and shell at Antietam, or followed Rosecrans through the fierce and doubtful contests of the two years past – whether he fought at Gettysburg or followed Grant, whose victorious eagles had never yet retreated! [Prolonged applause.] The soil was sacred where our heroes fell. They should be honored while living and their memories revered when dead. They had died that the nation might live.

But for what did they fight and for what had they died? In order that, in the language of the President, "good government might not perish from the earth." In 1776 our independence was asserted, but 1861 was the beginning of liberty. To-day we were fighting an oligarchy built upon the degradation of four millions of black men and eight millions of white men. Liberty threatened, had seized and wielded the only weapon of attack or defence – liberty. It was for slavery they were contending, we for liberty, and God save the right! [Applause.]

We were told that the war was for the Constitution and the Union, for the Government and the flag. True we were fighting for a Constitution, but for a Constitution whose spirit should be liberty. True we were fighting for a government, but for one which should crush the oppressor and secure freedom and protection to the weak and the oppressed. True, we were fighting for a flag, but for a flag which should welcome and make glad the suffering and oppressed of all the world. To-day we were fighting for a Government too august for any but freemen.

There were those who professed to have doubts that we would win. They said, "Let us control affairs, and a different order of things will prevail." Nobody doubted it! We had tried them. Did not the old time occupants of the seats of power remember that when their standard-bearer, one James Buchanan by name, was President, treason was permitted to arm itself against the nation, our ships scattered to distant seas, our troops far removed, our arms stolen, our Treasury robbed and the Government a beggar in the market at twelve per cent? The former friends and allies of these men who now complain of corruption and fraud are guiding the hosts of rebellion, and the different between them was, that one stood as perjurers and the other as cowards! [Ap-plause.]

The stone lifted from its long resting-place disclosed a multitude of nameless insects and creeping things which darted in every direction or burrowed straightaway into the earth out of sight. The Democratic party had been over-turned, (but she did not like describing disagree-able things,) and it must be left to imagine what might be found there! [Laughter.]

But ah! The mismanagement of the war! Not much! The day of the shoveling brigades was gone by, [applause and laughter] and the soldier did not now fight and die to win vic-tories to be lost by the incapable, disaffected, and the treacherous commanders. There had been blunders, chief of which was the appointment (according to Gen. Patterson) of 207 Democratic Generals out of 230 to be appointed. What in Heaven's name could be expected but blundering? [Laughter.]

Slavery alike the strength and weakness of the South, and long the stepping-stone to power of northern politicians, had been struck from under them, and they cried out accordingly. The Emancipation Proclamation was a *fact.* They cried out against the "barbarism" of making soldiers of the slaves, and giving them blue coats and muskets. If the masters had rebelled against a good government they must expect their slaves to rebel against them in turn.

We had made soldiers out of them, and has asked them to fight for our country and for freedom for themselves. But while these black men were fighting and falling and dying for the cause, they were chased, mobbed, outlawed and hunted to death by a Union-saving — [drowned in applause.] With what sublime patience these down-trodden people had waited for the tardy justice of the nation. We had heard long the sharp cries of torture coming up from the house of bondage. We had heard this. What was it to us? They had long stretched their hands towards us for help. We cared not and heeded not. Now we needed them – who could say how much! At last we were prepared to say, "You have suffered enough; henceforth we stand out of your way and let you fight for your rights and your race." Dying for the county, they should be recognized as citizens thereof. They should be granted the land rightfully theirs by centuries of labor.

Doing a soldier's duty, the black man should have a soldier's pay. Burdened with a man's responsibilities, he should have a man's rights. No acts of Congress, no proclamation of amnesty

to defeated rebels, should interfere. A constitutional amendment should shield him, from a tribunal which proclaimed that he "had no rights which white men were bound to re-spect." This was not charity nor generosity; it was simple justice. These slaves were made free, but not men. They were declared liberated, but were held at the mercy of pro-slavery tribunal. It was useless to say that this matter would take care of itself. We should attend to it ourselves. In 1787 slavery was supposed to be almost dying. It did not die, and the little draft then let open had kindled a tempest of consuming fire. This slavery was not to be left dying at the end of the war, but dead and buried, its epitaph written by the point of the sword and the bayonet. [Applause.]

The statesmen of the South had been wiser than ours. The South had proved herself sharper than the sharpest Yankee. The South had had sixty years of Presidents to our twenty four; eighteen Supreme Judges to our eleven; twenty-four presiding of the Senate to our eleven; twenty-three Speakers to our twelve. It had trampled on the Indians, and assailed Mexico, in the interest of slavery. It had grasped the virgin soil of the territories, to be polluted by slavery, and sought to convert the flag of freedom into the emblem of oppress-sion.

It had sustained freedom of speech by rifling the mails and maiming and murdering innocent men for a simple expression of opinion. It had overthrown the rights of the people in the Territories. It had shut out schools and churched, these being incompatible with the accursed system. It had come into our pulpits and made the truth a lie. It had made the Senate-chamber a scene of blood. It had tempted, used, and flung away some of the noblest minds in the North. Cringing, slimy creatures might now or hereafter wriggle their way into the Hall of representatives, but hence-forth slavery would get no more great men – no more majestic souls to ruin.

Compromise! Let no man prate of compromise. Defeated by ballots, the South had appealed to bullets. Now let it stand by that appeal. There was not an arm of compromise in all the North long enough to stretch over the sea of blood and the mound of fallen Northern soldiers to shake hands with their murderers on the other side! (Applause.) These dead he-roes had fought and fallen that the cause might succeed.

Their bodies had been shattered that the body politic might be made perfect. We must continue the work dropped from their nerveless hands. Like the noble Curtius, they had thrown themselves into the black chasm opened by slavery, and as coming ages thread the spot, their voices will say, "Tread lightly, tread lightly, for the martyrs of liberty sleep beneath."

This was pre-eminently a people's war. It was guided by the man of the people, who had never been behind the great heart of the people. We had done much, and all was hopeful before us. Granted that we had much yet to do, we had the man to complete the grand and glorious work, *and that work was left for his second term of office*. [Tremendous and long-continued applause.]

CITATION: *Daily National Republican,* January 18, 1864, available FULL TEXT via Chronicling America or Gracie Perine, Anna E. Dickinson (Fall 2021)

Lincoln's Blind Memorandum (1864)

INTRODUCTION

When President Abraham Lincoln went to Gettysburg in November 1863 to help dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery, the tide finally seemed to be turning in his favor. The Union army had not only won pivotal victories during the previous summer by stopping the Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania and by gaining full control over the Mississippi River, but also (and not unrelated) by achieving major political victories for Lincoln's Republican Party and their Unionist allies in various fall elections . Yet by the summer of 1864, that sense of Northern euphoria had collapsed. The war was grinding on toward stalemate, and though Lincoln had been renominated by the National Union Party (a coalition of Republicans and War Democrats like Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, Lincoln's new running mate), there was a growing sense that perhaps Lincoln was not up to the job of finishing the war. In August 1864, there were even some leading Republicans who were calling to replace him at the head of the national ticket. It was in this climate that Lincoln sat down at his White House desk on Tuesday morning, August 23, 1864 and composed a brief and mysterious memorandum that began by warning that his administration might very well be facing defeat at the polls in November. Lincoln then pledged to "co-operate" with the winner of that election, presumably soon-to-be Northern Democratic nominee Gen. George McClellan, to "save the Union" before inauguration day (March 4, 1865) since no Democrat could "possibly save it afterwards." The president then folded up this memo and had his seven cabinet officers sign it without reading its contents. He put the folded note away in his desk and did not reveal its contents to anyone until after he won a resounding victory on November 8, 1864. Today, that document (located in the Lincoln Papers at the Library of Cognress) is known as the "Blind Memorandum."

SOURCE FORMAT: Private memorandum // WORD COUNT: 60 words

Executive Mansion

Washington, Aug. 23, 1864.

This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President elect, as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards.

A. LINCOLN

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln, Blind Memorandum, August 23, 1864, FULL TEXT via *Lincoln's Writings: The Multi-Media Edition*

Lincoln's Second Inaugural (1865)

INTRODUCTION

Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address from the east portico of the US Capitol building on Saturday, March 4, 1865. When Lincoln had delivered his first inaugural speech in March 1861, the dome of the capitol building was still encased in scaffolding and the nation was on the precipice of disaster. Seven states had seceded from the union. The new president had little Washington experience. Everything about the country seemed unfinished and uncertain. Four years later, the scaffolding was gone, Lincoln had been reelected in a landslide, and the "slaveholding rebellion" as Frederick Douglass had called it, was nearly suppressed. Douglass happily attended Lincoln's second inaugural, proud not only of the Union victory, but also of the impending abolition of slavery. When it came to slavery, Lincoln did not mince words in this brief speech –one of the shortest inaugural addresses in American history. He said, everyone "knew" that slavery "was, somehow, the cause of the war." More ominously, he warned Americans that they should be prepared to continue "this terrible war … until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword." Yet by March 1865, the Confederacy was clearly in a state of collapse. Union armies had captured Atlanta and Savannah and were marching up the Carolinas. After months of combat and siege, General Ulysses Grant and his men were poised to take the Confederate capital of Richmond. With the end in sight, Lincoln did manage to offer the prospect of reconciliation and "malice toward none." Yet even while invoking the spirit of "a just, and a lasting peace," the president still urged "firmness in the right" and a national determination "to finish the work we are in."

SOURCE FORMAT: Published speech (full) // **WORD COUNT: 701 words**

Fellow Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugeral address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war

rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him?

Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

CITATION: Abraham Lincoln, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (1953)

Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, 15th) (1865-70)

INTRODUCTION

Today, many historians prefer to describe the Reconstruction Amendments as the "Second Founding" of the country, a period following the Civil War when there was conscious and radical efforts to reframe the American constitutional order. The Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, adopted by Congress in January 1865 and ratified by the states in December 1865, marked the first time that the word "slavery" appeared in the Constitution itself. Republicans intentionally derived the wording abolishing the institution from the Northwest Ordinance (1787) as a way to help vindicate their position that the original intent of the 1787 framers had always been to secure the "ultimate extinction" of slavery in the United States. President Lincoln eagerly supported the amendment –even signing it though his signature was not required– but his assassination in April 1865 prevented him from seeing through the radical change which the amendment seemed to promise. In fact, Lincoln's death and the elevation of his anti-black successor, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, was what propelled Republicans in Congress to push for a more sweeping guarantee of civil and political rights for the formerly enslaved in the Fourteenth Amendment, which they adopted in 1866 and which the states ratified in 1868. The Reconstruction-era battles between more radical and egalitarian Republicans in Congress and the more conservative-minded President Johnson were fierce and unrelenting between 1866 and 1868, when Johnson barely survived an impeachment trial. He escaped removal from office by Congress, but the election of 1868 elevated Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to the presidency. It was during the lame duck period between the two figures that congressional Republicans pushed through one last radical amendment, a voting rights measure designed to protect black men. The exclusion of women from this amendment, adopted in 1869 and ratified in 1870, proved disastrous for the women's suffrage movement. Over the years, a growing number states authorized female voting in various elections, but it was not until 1920 and the Nineteenth Amendment that American women finally gained constitutional protection for their right to vote.

SOURCE FORMAT: Government documents // WORD COUNT: 535 words

Thirteenth Amendment (JAN 1865 / DEC 1865)

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

ORIGINS: Northwest Ordinance (1787) Art. 6: There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted…

Fourteenth Amendment (1866 / 1868)

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each state, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a state, or the members of the legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such state, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such state.

Section 3. No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any state, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any state legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any state, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Section 4. The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any state shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

ORIGINS: Civil Rights Act of 1866 SEC. 1: That all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States;

Fifteenth Amendment (1869 / 1870)

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

ORIGINS: Reconstruction Act (1867) SEC. 5: And be it further enacted, That when the people of any one of said rebel States shall have formed a constitution of government in conformity with the Constitution of the United States in all respects, framed by a convention of delegates elected by the male citizens of said State, twenty-one years old and upward, of whatever race, color, or previous condition

Frances Harper, We Are All Bound Up Together (1866)

INTRODUCTION

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) was one of the most prolific black writers, poets and activists of nineteenth-century America. She was born free in Maryland in 1825 but orphaned at a young age and raised by her aunt and uncle. Harper began publishing poetry in her early 20s. By the 1850s, she had become a leading abolitionist poet and lecturer., based mostly in Philadelphia. During the Civil War, Harper married and raised a family in Ohio. After the war, she became involved in a number of reform movements and continued her career as a writer. In May 1866, Harper spoke at the National Woman's Rights Convention in New York, the eleventh in a series of national woman's rights gatherings which had been first launched in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850. This was the movement primarily organized and presided over by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Harper's speech electrified the convention, calling out as it did both sexism and racism and contributing to the creation of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) a few weeks later. The AERA helped lead several suffrage fights in places like Kansas in 1867 before it disbanded over disagreements among the reformers about whether they needed to prioritize the struggles ex-slaves about the general call for more women's rights. "We are all bound up together," Harper had wisely observed in 1866, but the spirit of that admonition proved difficult to sustain.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech // WORD COUNT: 1,314 words

I FEEL I AM SOMETHING of a novice upon this platform. Born of a race whose inheritance has been outrage and wrong, most of my life had been spent in battling against those wrongs. But I did not feel as keenly as others, that I had these rights, in common with other women, which are now demanded. About two years ago, I stood within the shadows of my home. A great sorrow had fallen upon my life. My husband had died suddenly, leaving me a widow, with four children, one my own, and the others stepchildren. I tried to keep my children together. But my husband died in debt; and before he had been in his grave three months, the administrator had swept the very milk-crocks and wash tubs from my hands. I was a farmer's wife and made butter for the Columbus market; but what could I do, when they had swept all away? They left me one thing- and that was a looking glass! Had I died instead of my husband, how different would have been the result! By this time he would have had another wife, it is likely; and no administrator would have gone into his house, broken up his home, and sold his bed, and taken away his means of support.

I took my children in my arms, and went out to seek my living. While I was gone, a neighbor to whom I had once lent five dollars, went before a magistrate and Swore that he believed I was a non-resident, and laid an attachment on my very bed. And I went back to Ohio with my orphan children in my arms, without a single feather bed in this wide world, that was not in the custody of the law. I say, then, that justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law.

We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the Negro. You pressed him down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the

moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country. When the hands of the black were fettered, white men were deprived of the liberty of speech and the freedom of the press. Society cannot afford to neglect the enlightenment of any class of its members. At the South, the legislation of the country was in behalf of the rich slaveholders, while the poor white man was neglected. What is the consequence today? From that very class of neglected poor white men, comes the man who stands to-day, with his hand upon the helm of the nation. He fails to catch the watchword of the hour, and throws himself, the incarnation of meanness, across the pathway of the nation. My objection to Andrew Johnson is not that he has been a poor white man; my objection is that he keeps "poor whits" all the way through. That is the trouble with him.

This grand and glorious revolution which has commenced, will fail to reach its climax of success, until throughout the length and brea[d]th of the American Republic, the nation shall be so color-blind, as to know no man by the color of his skin or the curl of his hair. It will then have no privileged class, trampling upon and outraging the unprivileged classes, but will be then one great privileged nation, whose privilege will be to produce the loftiest manhood and womanhood that humanity can attain.

I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dew-drops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by preju[d]ice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party.

You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel as if I were in the situation of Ishmael, my hand against every man, and every man's hand against me. Let me go to-morrow morning and take my seat in one of your street cars-I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia-and the conductor will put up his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride.

Going from Washington to Baltimore this Spring, they put me in the smoking car. Aye, in the capital of the nation, where the black man consecrated himself to the nation's defence, faithful when the white man was faithless, they put me in the smoking car! They did it once; but the next time they tried it, they failed; for I would not go in. I felt the fight in me; but I don't want to have to fight all the time. Today I am puzzled where to make my home. I would like to make it in Philadelphia, near my own friends and relations. But if I want to ride in the streets of Philadelphia, they send me to ride on the platform with the driver. Have women nothing to do with this? Not long since, a colored woman took her seat in an Eleventh Street car in Philadelphia, and the conductor stopped the car, and told the rest of the passengers to get out, and left the car with her in it alone, when they took it back to the station. One day I took my seat in a car, and the conductor came to me and told me to take another seat. I just screamed "murder." The man said if I was black I ought to behave myself. I knew that if he was white he was not behaving himself. Are there not wrongs to be righted?

In advocating the cause of the colored man, since the Dred Scott decision, I have sometimes said I thought the nation had touched bottom. But let me tell you there is a depth of infamy lower than that. It is when the nation, standing upon the threshold of a great peril, reached out its hands to a feebler race, and asked that race to help it, and when the peril was over, said, You are good enough for soldiers, but not good enough for citizens ….

We have a woman in our country who has received the name of "Moses," not by lying about it, but by acting it out-a woman who has gone down into the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty. The last time I saw that woman, her hands were swollen. That woman who had led one of Montgomery's most successful expeditions, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American army, had her hands all swollen from a conflict with a brutal conductor, who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every black man in the land, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel. Talk of giving women the ballot-box? Go on. It is a normal school, and the white women of this country need it. While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America.

CITATION: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, speech to National Woman's Rights Convention in New York, May 10, 1866, FULL TEXT via Blackpast.org

Douglass's speech at dedication of emancipation memorial (1876)

INTRODUCTION

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) delivered a powerful speech in April 1876 at the dedication of the first public memorial for Abraham Lincoln in Washington, DC –a monument to his role as an emancipator paid for by contributions from ex-slaves. Douglass was then 58 years old, living in the District of Columbia with his family, and widely regarded as one of the country's most distinguished black leaders. During the post-Civil War period, Douglass had been somewhat disappointed in his attempts to obtain high government office, but nonetheless he had received various diplomatic and political appointments, in recognition for his service to the Republican Party. By 1876, however, Douglass was deeply concerned about the rollback of civil rights as the Reconstruction period was ending. It was also a presidential election year, as well as the nation's centennial. The stakes were high. Douglass thus used his dedication speech, on the eleventh anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, to try to mobilize black action and to attempt to rouse greater commitment from white allies. In 1865, Douglass had famously eulogized Lincoln as "emphatically the black man's president," but here he remembered him as "preeminently the white man's President." The full speech put this depressing shift into thoughtful context, but the juxtaposition was still painfully revealing. After the ceremony, Douglass also expressed dissatisfaction with the composition of the statue, urging an additional memorial to black self-emancipation. In 2020, during the explosion of grief following George Floyd's murder, there were multiple Black Lives Matter protests in Washington calling for the removal of the Emancipation Memorial because of its controversial composition. The statue still stands, but the debate continues.

SOURCE FORMAT: Public speech (excerpt) // **WORD COUNT: 880 words**

It must be admitted, truth compels me to admit, even here in the presence of the monument we have erected to his memory, Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man.

He was preeminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men. He was ready and willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people to promote the welfare of the white people of this country. In all his education and feeling he was an American of the Americans. He came into the Presidential chair upon one principle alone, namely, opposition to the extension of slavery. His arguments in furtherance of this policy had their motive and mainspring in his patriotic devotion to the interests of his own race. To protect, defend, and perpetuate slavery in the states where it existed Abraham Lincoln was not less ready than any other President to draw the sword of the nation. He was ready to execute all the supposed guarantees of the United States Constitution in favor of the slave system anywhere inside the slave states. He was willing to pursue, recapture, and send back the fugitive slave to his master, and to suppress a slave rising for liberty, though his guilty master were already in arms against the Government. The race to which we belong were not the special objects of his consideration. Knowing this, I concede to

you, my white fellow-citizens, a preeminence in this worship at once full and supreme. First, midst, and last, you and yours were the objects of his deepest affection and his most earnest solicitude. You are the children of Abraham Lincoln. We are at best only his stepchildren; children by adoption, children by forces of circumstances and necessity. To you it especially belongs to sound his praises, to preserve and perpetuate his memory, to multiply his statues, to hang his pictures high upon your walls, and commend his example, for to you he was a great and glorious friend and benefactor. Instead of supplanting you at his altar, we would exhort you to build high his monuments; let them be of the most costly material, of the most cunning workmanship; let their forms be symmetrical, beautiful, and perfect; let their bases be upon solid rocks, and their summits lean against the unchanging blue, overhanging sky, and let them endure forever! But while in the abundance of your wealth, and in the fullness of your just and patriotic devotion, you do all this, we entreat you to despise not the humble offering we this day unveil to view; for while Abraham Lincoln saved for you a country, he delivered us from a bondage, according to Jefferson, one hour of which was worse than ages of the oppression your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose.

...I have said that President Lincoln was a white man, and shared the prejudices common to his countrymen towards the colored race. Looking back to his times and to the condition of his country, we are compelled to admit that this unfriendly feeling on his part may be safely set down as one element of his wonderful success in organizing the loyal American people for the tremendous conflict before them, and bringing them safely through that conflict. His great mission was to accomplish two things: first, to save his country from dismemberment and ruin; and, second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both, he must have the earnest sympathy and the powerful cooperation of his loyal fellow-countrymen. Without this primary and essential condition to success his efforts must have been vain and utterly fruitless. Had he put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined.

Though Mr. Lincoln shared the prejudices of his white fellow-countrymen against the Negro, it is hardly necessary to say that in his heart of hearts he loathed and hated slavery. . . . The man who could say, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war shall soon pass away, yet if God wills it continue till all the wealth piled by two hundred years of bondage shall have been wasted, and each drop of blood drawn by the lash shall have been paid for by one drawn by the sword, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," gives all needed proof of his feeling on the subject of slavery. He was willing, while the South was loyal, that it should have its pound of flesh, because he thought that it was so nominated in the bond; but farther than this no earthly power could make him go.

CITATION: ORATION IN MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, delivered at the unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Memory of Abraham Lincoln, in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C., April 14, 1876, FULL TEXT via University of Rochester

W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903)

INTRODUCTION

W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963) was a famous scholar and activist who fought for civil rights for black people in both the United States and Africa. Born in Massachusetts following the Civil War, he was the first African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard. DuBois then became a noted academic working at several universities, and during the early twentieth century, helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which soon emerged as the nation's premier civil rights organization. For many years, DuBois served as editor of the NAACP journal, *The Crisis.* He later helped expose racism in the US military and supported African nationalist in their quests for independence from European colonial powers. DuBois authored *The Souls of Black Folk* 1903 when he was 35-years-old. This provocative collection of essays helped establish him as a leading progressive critic of the "color line" which was still dividing Americans at the turn of the twentieth century despite the wartime destruction of slavery and the post-war constitutional promise of equality. Specifically, DuBois introduced in this work his well-known concept of "double-consciousness," which characterized the black experience in America as one of "warring" dual identity. DuBois embraced a more radical approach to civil rights activism than some other black leaders of his time, most notably Booker T. Washington, whom he pointedly criticized in one of his more memorable essays. Students should consider, however, how this debate between radical and moderate black strategies for overcoming Jim Crow-era segregation also highlights the depth of the entrenched white resistance to integration and multi-racial democracy that endured in the decades following emancipation.

SOURCE FORMAT: Book (excerpts) // WORD COUNT: 929 words

SOURCE FORMAT: Non-Fiction Book (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 964 words

From Chapter 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he

wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

FROM CHAPTER 2: Of the Dawn of Freedom

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea. It was a phase of this problem that caused the Civil War; and however much they who marched South and North in 1861 may have fixed on the technical points, of union and local autonomy as a shibboleth, all nevertheless knew, as we know, that the question of Negro slavery was the real cause of the conflict. Curious it was, too, how this deeper question ever forced itself to the surface despite effort and disclaimer. No sooner had Northern armies touched Southern soil than this old question, newly guised, sprang from the earth,—What shall be done with Negroes? Peremptory military commands this way and that, could not answer the query; the Emancipation Proclamation seemed but to broaden and intensify the difficulties; and the War Amendments made the Negro problems of to-day.

FROM CHAPTER 3: Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others:

Among his own people, however, Mr. Washington has encountered the strongest and most lasting opposition, amounting at times to bitterness, and even today continuing strong and insistent even though largely silenced in outward expression by the public opinion of the nation. Some of this opposition is, of course, mere envy; the disappointment of displaced demagogues and the spite of narrow minds. But aside from this, there is among educated and thoughtful colored men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained. These same men admire his sincerity of purpose, and are willing to forgive much to honest endeavor which is doing something worth the doing. They cooperate with Mr. Washington as far as they conscientiously can; and, indeed, it is no ordinary tribute to this man's tact and power that, steering as he must between so many diverse interests and opinions, he so largely retains the respect of all.

But the hushing of the criticism of honest opponents is a dangerous thing. It leads some of the best of the critics to unfortunate silence and paralysis of effort, and others to burst into speech so passionately and intemperately as to lose listeners. Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers,—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society. If the best of the American Negroes receive by outer pressure a leader whom they had not recognized before, manifestly there is here a certain palpable gain. Yet there is also irreparable loss,—a loss of that peculiarly valuable education which a group receives when by search and criticism it finds and commissions its own leaders. The way in which this is done is at once the most elementary and the nicest problem of social growth. History is but the record of such group-leadership; and yet how infinitely changeful is its

type and character! And of all types and kinds, what can be more instructive than the leadership of a group within a group?—that curious double movement where real progress may be negative and actual advance be relative retrogression. All this is the social student's inspiration and despair.

From Chapter 8: Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece

We seldom study the condition of the Negro to-day honestly and carefully. It is so much easier to assume that we know it all. Or perhaps, having already reached conclusions in our own minds, we are loth to have them disturbed by facts. And yet how little we really know of these millions,—of their daily lives and longings, of their homely joys and sorrows, of their real shortcomings and the meaning of their crimes! All this we can only learn by intimate contact with the masses, and not by wholesale arguments covering millions separate in time and space, and differing widely in training and culture. To-day, then, my reader, let us turn our faces to the Black Belt of Georgia and seek simply to know the condition of the black farm-laborers of one county there.

CITATION: W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903), FULL TEXT via Project Gutenberg

Esther Popel, “Flag Salute” (1934)

INTRODUCTION

Harrisburg native Esther Popel became the first black female graduate of Dickinson College in 1919. She later married William Shaw and worked for most of her adult life as a teacher in Washington, DC. But Popel achieved her greatest national renown as poet and writer, often identified as an example of the dynamic “Harlem Renaissance” from the early twentieth century. The country’s leading civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advanced of Colored People (NAACP) often published Popel’s work in its magazine, *The Crisis*. The following poem, “Flag Salute,” actually appeared in *The Crisis* twice, once in 1934, following the lynching of a young black man in Maryland, and then again in November 1940, after the continued threat of filibuster in the US senate seemed to kill off any hopes of passage for a federal anti-lynching bill. Lynching refers to extra-judicial killings, intended as punishment but not authorized by law and usually targeting racial or religious minorities. The US senate did finally pass an anti-lynching measure in 2018, but there was no House action at that time. However, in March 2022, the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act finally became federal law.

SOURCE FORMAT: Published poem (full) // Word Count: 204 words

"I pledge allegiance to the flag"—

They dragged him naked
Through the muddy streets,
A feeble-minded black boy!
And the charge? Supposed assault
Upon an aged woman!

"Of the United States of America"—

One mile they dragged him
Like a sack of meal,
A rope around his neck,
A bloody ear
Left dangling by the patriotic hand
Of Nordic youth! (A boy of seventeen!)

"And to the Republic for which it stands"—

And then they hanged his body to a tree,
Below the window of the county judge
Whose pleadings for that battered human flesh
Were stifled by the brutish, raucous howls
Of men, and boys, and women with their babes,
Brought out to see the bloody spectacle
Of murder in the style of '33!

(Three thousand strong, they were!)

"One Nation, Indivisible"—

To make the tale complete
They built a fire—
What matters that the stuff they burned
Was flesh—and bone—and hair—
And reeking gasoline!

"With Liberty—and Justice"—

They cut the rope in bits
And passed them out,
For souvenirs, among the men and boys!
The teeth no doubt, on golden chains
Will hang
About the favored necks of sweethearts, wives,
And daughters, mothers, sisters, babies, too!

"For ALL!"

CITATION: Esther Popel, "Flag Salute," ***The Crisis,*** November 1940 (orig. pub. 1934), available **FULL TEXT** via Dickinson Archives

Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) was a Baptist minister and world-famous civil rights activist. King grew up in Georgia, the son of a well-known pastor, graduated from Morehouse College as a teenager and then studied theology in Pennsylvania before receiving a doctorate from Boston University. He married Coretta Scott, whom he met in Boston, they started a family, and he began his ministry in Montgomery, Alabama. He became a national celebrity following his public role during the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1963, King's grassroots organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, teamed up with local civil rights groups in nearby Birmingham to initiate a protest campaign against one of the South's most notoriously segregated cities. State and local government officials tried to stop these protests, arresting many campaign organizers. While detained in the Birmingham city jail for leading a march without a permit, King responded to criticism from eight white local clergymen who had denounced "outside" activism, while appealing for patience in what they termed, "A Call for Unity." King's vigorous response, dated April 16, 1963, made the case for nonviolent confrontation. King also expressed sharp disappointment with white moderates, whom he called here "the Negro's great stumbling block" in the fight for racial equality. In 1964, at the age of 35, King became the youngest-ever winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated four years later in Memphis, Tennessee.

SOURCE FORMAT: Published Letter (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 535 words

…You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

…We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with

piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

…I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

–Excerpted from Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963), FULL TEXT via University of Pennsylvania

Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb" (2021)

INTRODUCTION

Amanda Gorman was only 22 years old when she created a sensation by reading the poem, "The Hill We Climb" at Joe Biden's presidential inauguration ceremony on January 20, 2021. Gorman had been publishing her poetry since the age of 16. In 2017, at the age of 19, Gorman became the first National Youth Poet Laureate. Only three presidents before Biden had ever asked poets to recite at their inaugural ceremony: John F. Kennedy (Robert Frost in 1961), Bill Clinton (Maya Angelou in 1993 and Miller Williams in 1997), Barack Obama (Elizabeth Anderson in 2009 and Richard Blanco in 2013). Gorman told interviewers afterward that she was still writing the poem for the Biden inaugural when the January 6th insurrection had erupted. She says stayed up late that night and finished in a frenzy of determination.

SOURCE FORMAT: Poem // WORD COUNT: 715 words

When day comes, we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry. A sea we must wade.
We braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, and the norms and notions of what "just" is isn't always justice.
And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.
We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.
And, yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose.
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gaze, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true.
That even as we grieved, we grew.
That even as we hurt, we hoped.
That even as we tired, we tried.
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.
Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in all the bridges we've made.
That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb, if only we dare.
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit.

It's the past we step into and how we repair it.
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation, rather than share it.
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth, in this faith we trust, for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption.
We feared at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour.
But within it we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
So, while once we asked, how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe, now we assert, how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be: a country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free.
We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation, become the future.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain.
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the golden hills of the West.
We will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states.
We will rise from the sun-baked South.
We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.
When day comes, we step out of the shade of flame and unafraid.
The new dawn balloons as we free it.
For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

CITATION: Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb," (2021), FULL TEXT via CNBC