Knowledge for Freedom Seminar

2024 Course Book

Compiled by Matthew Pinsker

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Knowledge for Freedom Seminar
2024 Source Book

Featured Texts

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

Thomas 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

Constitutional Debates Over Slavery (1787)

INTRODUCTION

These excerpts cover the secret debates at the 1787 constitutional convention in Philadelphia from different sources, including a published collection with John Dickinson's notes for a speech in July and James Madison's notes from a day in August where the delegates discussed the African slave trade. What is critical about examining such behind-the-scenes arguments over the future of slavery in America is considering how candid some of the constitutional framers were in confronting the hypocrisy at the heart of their revolution. Some argued for purifying the American founding in the name of universal freedom and equality. Others claimed they could easily justify African slavery as essential to that experiment in self-government for white people. The rest seemed uncertain but determined to be practical as they sought to reunify the country during a period of crisis following independence.

SOURCE FORMAT: Manuscript notes (excerpt) // WORD COUNT: 2,000 words

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John Dickinson, Notes for a speech, July 9, 1787

Acting before the World. What will be said of this new principle of founding a Right to govern Freemen on a power derived from Slaves in preference to other property themselves incapable of governing yet giving to others what they have not. The omitting the *Word* will be regarded as an Endeavour to conceal a principle of which we are ashamed.

Every Importation of Slaves will increase the power of the state over others. This principle I wish to avoid. A Calculation of the Value of Property I acknowledge to be impractical. Why not admit *actual Contribution* as the Rule. Objection from Massachusetts.

Is it to be taken for granted that no other Imposition is to be laid by the national Legislature. It is next to impossible. England and Holland with their vast Commerce and their Imposts and Excises have land taxes. Tis true their Laws extend to the Affairs and Expenses of the whole Nation. Here divided with the particular Legislatures but this national Legislature will certainly comprehend especially in Time allmost the whole Expenses of the Nation. The rest will be but a Drop in the Bucket.

National Debt and arrears of Expenses committees Proposition Objection from Massachusetts holds not in that Case if even Imposts and Excises were to be computed, yet the Inconvenience apprehended might be totally removed by a provision that the Representation of no state should rise beyond a certain proportion to its Neighbors. Emotion shall submit Half a Slave if adopted Ruinous to the whole system. Former jointments the same. 3 arguments only used.

1. Equality of Representation

2. England and Holland.

3. Resolution of Sept. 1774.

As to the first. It subtracts the only Reason on which our Objection is founded. Attention to Interests of particular states. Dependencies not parts. Government of Republics over their Dependencies. As to second they are selected by the same King equal to all his subjects. Despotism will be thought better than such a Dominion of fellow Citizens. As to the 3 absolutely perpetually confirmed afterwards by the Confederation. Having endeavoured to remove these Objections I now pass to the Consideration of the System on Policy and Justice.

CITATION: John Dickinson, Notes for a Speech, July 9, 1787, Reproduced from ConSource

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James Madison's Notes, August 22, 1787

Mr. SHERMAN was for leaving the clause as it stands. He disapproved of the slave trade; yet as the States were now possessed of the right to import slaves, as the public good did not require it to be taken from them, & as it was expedient to have as few objections as possible to the proposed scheme of Government, he thought it best to leave the matter as we find it. He observed that the abolition of Slavery seemed to be going on in the U. S. & that the good sense of the several States would probably by degrees compleat it. He urged on the Convention the necessity of despatching its business.

Col. MASON. This infernal trafic originated in the avarice of British Merchants. The British Govt. constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone but the whole Union. The evil of having slaves was experienced during the late war. Had slaves been treated as they might have been by the Enemy, they would have proved dangerous instruments in their hands. But their folly dealt by the slaves, as it did by the Tories. He mentioned the dangerous insurrections of the slaves in Greece and Sicily; and the instructions given by Cromwell to the Commissioners sent to Virginia, to arm the servants & slaves, in case other means of obtaining its submission should fail. Maryland & Virginia he said had already prohibited the importation of slaves expressly. N. Carolina had done the same in substance. All this would be in vain if S. Carolina & Georgia be at liberty to import. The Western people are already calling out for slaves for their new lands, and will fill that Country with slaves if they can be got thro' S. Carolina & Georgia. Slavery discourages arts & manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich & strengthen a Country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country. As nations can not be rewarded or punished in the next world they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities. He lamented that some of our Eastern brethren had from a lust of gain embarked in this nefarious traffic. As to the States being in possession of the Right to import, this was the case with many other rights, now to be properly given up. He held it essential in every point of view that the Genl. Govt. should have power to prevent the increase of slavery.

Mr. ELSWORTH. As he had never owned a slave could not judge of the effects of slavery on character: He said however that if it was to be considered in a moral light we ought to go farther and free those already in the Country. -As slaves also multiply so fast in Virginia & & Maryland that it is cheaper to raise than import them, whilst in the sickly rice swamps foreign supplies are necessary, if we go no farther than is urged, we shall be unjust towards S. Carolina & Georgia. Let us not intermeddle. As population increases poor laborers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless. Slavery in time will not be a speck in our Country. Provision is already made in Connecticut for abolishing it. And the abolition has already taken place in Massachusetts. As to the danger of insurrections from foreign influence, that will become a motive to kind treatment of the slaves.

Mr. PINKNEY. If slavery be wrong, it is justified by the example of all the world. He cited the case of Greece Rome & other antient States; the sanction given by France England, Holland & other modern States. In all ages one half of mankind have been slaves. If the S. States were let alone they will probably of themselves stop importations. He wd. himself as a Citizen of S. Carolina vote for it. An attempt to take away the right as proposed will produce serious objections to the Constitution which he wished to see adopted.

General PINKNEY declared it to be his firm opinion that if himself & all his colleagues were to sign the Constitution & use their personal influence, it would be of no avail towards obtaining the assent of their Constituents. S. Carolina & Georgia cannot do without slaves. As to Virginia she will gain by stopping the importations. Her slaves will rise in value, & she has more than she wants. It would be unequal to require S. C. & Georgia to confederate on such unequal terms. He said the Royal assent before the Revolution had never been refused to S. Carolina as to Virginia. He contended that the importation of slaves would be for the interest of the whole Union. The more slaves, the more produce to employ the carrying trade; The more consumption also, and the more of this, the more of revenue for the common treasury. He admitted it to be reasonable that slaves should be dutied like other imports, but should consider a rejection of the clause as an exclusion of S. Carola. from the Union.

Mr. BALDWIN had conceived national objects alone to be before the Convention, not such as like the present were of a local nature. Georgia was decided on this point. That State has always hitherto supposed a Genl. Governmt. to be the pursuit of the central States who wished to have a vortex for every thing- that her distance would preclude her from equal advantage-& that she could not prudently purchase it by yielding national powers. From this it might be understood in what light she would view an attempt to abridge one of her favorite prerogatives. If left to herself, she may probably put a stop to the evil. As one ground for this conjecture, he took notice of the sect of ——— which he said was a respectable class of people, who carried their ethics beyond the mere equality of men, extending their humanity to the claims of the whole animal creation.

Mr. WILSON observed that if S. C. & Georgia were themselves disposed to get rid of the importation of slaves in a short time as had been suggested, they would never refuse to Unite because the importation might be prohibited. As the Section now stands all articles imported are to be taxed. Slaves alone are exempt. This is in fact a bounty on that article.

Mr. GERRY thought we had nothing to do with the conduct of the States as to Slaves, but ought to be careful not to give any sanction to it.

Mr. DICKENSON considered it as inadmissible on every principle of honor & safety that the importation of slaves should be authorised to the States by the Constitution. The true question was whether the national happiness would be promoted or impeded by the importation, and this question ought to be left to the National Govt. not to the States particularly interested. If Engd. & France permit slavery, slaves are at the same time excluded from both those Kingdoms. Greece and Rome were made unhappy by their slaves. He could not believe that the Southn. States would refuse to confederate on the account apprehended; especially as the power was not likely to be immediately exercised by the Genl. Government.

Mr. WILLIAMSON stated the law of N. Carolina on the subject, to wit that it did not directly prohibit the importation of slaves. It imposed a duty of 5. on each slave imported from Africa. 10 on each from elsewhere, & 50 on each from a State licensing manumission. He thought the S. States could not be members of the Union if the clause shd. be rejected, and that it was wrong to force any thing down, not absolutely necessary, and which any State must disagree to.

Mr. KING thought the subject should be considered in a political light only. If two States will not agree to the Constitution as stated on one side, he could affirm with equal belief on the other, that great & equal opposition would be experienced from the other States. He remarked on the exemption of slaves from duty whilst every other import was subjected to it, as an inequality that could not fail to strike the commercial sagacity of the Northn. & middle States.

Mr. LANGDON was strenuous for giving the power to the Genl. Govt. He cd. not with a good conscience leave it with the States who could then go on with the traffic, without being restrained by the opinions here given that they will themselves cease to import slaves.

Genl. PINKNEY thought himself bound to declare candidly that he did not think S. Carolina would stop her importations of slaves in any short time, but only stop them occasionally as she now does. He moved to commit the clause that slaves might be made liable to an equal tax with other imports which he he thought right & wch. wd. remove one difficulty that had been started.

Mr. RUTLIDGE. If the Convention thinks that N. C. S. C. & Georgia will ever agree to the plan, unless their right to import slaves be untouched, the expectation is vain. The people of those States will never be such fools as to give up so important an interest. He was strenuous agst. striking out the Section, and seconded the motion of Genl. Pinkney for a commitment.

CITATION: James Madison, Notes on Debates in the Federal Convention, August 22, 1787, FULL TEXT via Avalon Project at Yale Law School

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

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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

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

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

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, 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

Abraham Lincoln, private letters on sectionalism (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 that 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

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)

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)

Abraham Lincoln, 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 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 to try to explain why Douglas and his controversial doctrine of settling the fate 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

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*

Abraham Lincoln, 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

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…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)

Abraham Lincoln, 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 speech (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

…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 speech (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 become a celebrity orator, well known for her effective support of Unionist and 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 Unionist 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

…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)

Abraham Lincoln, 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 Unionists 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 Congress) 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*

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 were 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 of 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

Frederick Douglas, Emancipation memorial speech (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

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 several 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 now well-known response, dated April 16, 1963, made the case for nonviolent confrontation. King also expressed sharp disappointment with white moderates, whom he called "the Negro's great stumbling block" in the fight for racial equality. This was not a sentiment that he repeated in his even more famous "I Have a Dream Speech" during the March on Washington just four months later. 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

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…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 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