

“
At this
moment...
I resolved
to fight...
and as I
did so,
I rose.”

—Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1845

BORN INTO SLAVERY

Born into slavery in Maryland in 1818, **Frederick Douglass** escaped with help from his free-born wife, **Anna Murray**. The couple had five children and remained together until Anna's death, nearly 50 years later. Books like *The Columbian Orator* inspired young Frederick—who taught himself to read—to one day become the most famous black orator of his generation. Douglass authored three books, including *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, telling of his life in slavery, the day he rose up, and his escape.

**Frederick
Douglass**



Daguerreotype of Frederick Douglass by Samuel J. Miller, ca. 1850. The Art Institute of Chicago.

“They met at the base of a mountain of wrong and oppression.... The story of Frederick Douglass...was made possible by the unswerving loyalty of Anna Murray.”

—Rosetta Douglass Sprague, *Anna Murray-Douglass: My Mother, As I Recall Her*, 1900

**Anna
Murray**



Photograph of Anna Murray-Douglass, circa 1860. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

Frederick Douglass

1818

Born into slavery

1826

Sent to Baltimore, learns to read

1838

Escapes to freedom, marries Anna Murray, changes last name

1845

Publishes *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, begins lecture tour through Britain and Ireland

1847

Begins publishing *The North Star*

1848

Attends the First Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls

1858

Meets with John Brown

1864

Attends Lincoln's Second Inauguration

1884

Marries Helen Pitts

1889

Appointed U.S. Minister to Haiti

1895

Dies in Washington, DC

Frederick Douglass

FREEDOM

Once free, Frederick Bailey took the last name Douglass, inspired by a character in a popular Sir Walter Scott poem. Changing his name was symbolic, as it cut connections to being enslaved and to those who had once held him as property. It was also practical, a means of avoiding recapture. Once free, Douglass became a fierce advocate for the abolition of slavery. He published a letter to the man who had enslaved him, declaring himself the man's equal, and spoke out against the system of slavery at lecture halls and churches throughout the country. At times, he directed his critique to other free African Americans, like the pastor William Douglass at Philadelphia's **St. Thomas African Episcopal Church**, whom he criticized for not doing enough to advance the anti-slavery cause.



Just as Douglass used the press to advocate for abolition, many owners used newspaper ads, such as this one, to recapture those they enslaved.

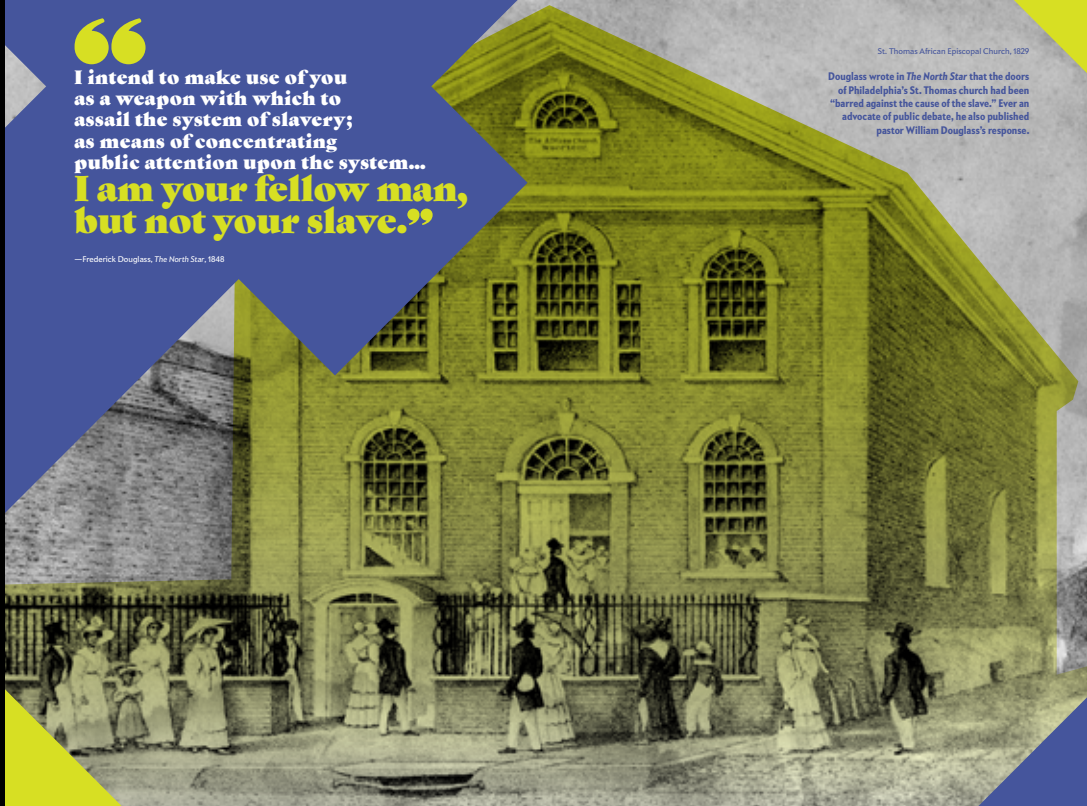
Runaway ad, 1838.
Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection.

“

I intend to make use of you as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery; as means of concentrating public attention upon the system...

I am your fellow man, but not your slave.”

—Frederick Douglass, *The North Star*, 1848



St. Thomas African Episcopal Church, 1829

Douglass wrote in *The North Star* that the doors of Philadelphia's St. Thomas church had been "barred against the cause of the slave." Ever an advocate of public debate, he also published pastor William Douglass's response.

DOUGLASS INSISTED THAT PROTEST WAS THE HIGHEST FORM OF PATRIOTISM.



Am I not a man and a brother? woodcut, 1837. Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

Colin Kaepernick, former San Francisco 49er quarterback, as well as other NFL players, have knelt during the national anthem to protest police violence against African Americans. (The Mercury News, 2017)

QUESTIONS:

HOW DO AMERICANS VIEW PATRIOTISM AND PROTEST TODAY?

HOW MIGHT DOUGLASS HAVE RESPONDED TO FOOTBALL PLAYERS KNEELING DURING "THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER"?

ORATION

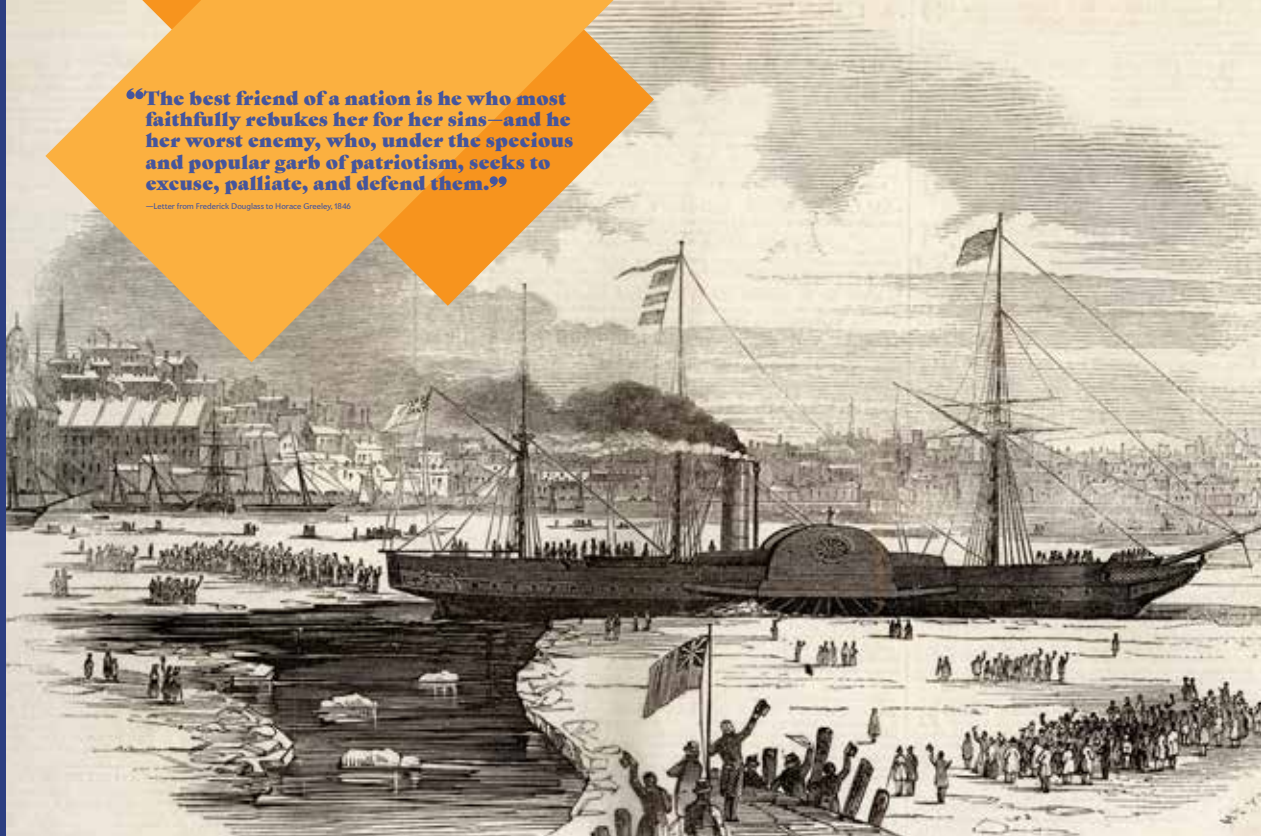
Frederick Douglass's career as an orator began when abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison hired him to tell northern audiences his life story. Sizable crowds of people from all walks of life saw and heard Douglass during his tour of the northern states. A Philadelphia newspaper reported on one occasion, "The entire hall, even including the aisles, were crowded to excess." Douglass spoke for two hours, "during which time the audience was held spell bound." When he visited Great Britain, Douglass was struck by what he saw as a relative lack of racial prejudice there.

The Steamship Britannia in 1847. That same year, Douglass would have sailed a ship like this one as he traveled to Europe.

The Illustrated London News, October 23, 1847. Swarthmore College Libraries.

"The best friend of a nation is he who most faithfully rebukes her for her sins—and he her worst enemy, who, under the specious and popular garb of patriotism, seeks to excuse, palliate, and defend them."

—Letter from Frederick Douglass to Horace Greeley, 1846



“

John Brown's zeal in the cause of my race was far greater than mine—it was as the burning sun to my taper light—mine was bounded by time, his stretched away to the boundless shores of eternity.

I could live for the slave, but he could die for him.”

—Frederick Douglass, "John Brown: An Address," 1881



John Brown

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



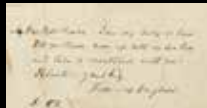
Guilt by Association

In December 1857 Douglass sent a note inviting John Brown to his home—proof enough for those who had it out for the famous orator that he was connected with the irascible abolitionist.

In 1859, a headline in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* named Douglass among Brown's associates. On October 21, the abolitionist William Still wrote to a friend, "...I am very anxious for Frederick Douglass," imploring her to help secret him to safety.

PRELUDE TO WAR

In the 1850s, Frederick Douglass met with abolitionist **John Brown** several times and approved of his plan to raid the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in an attempt to incite a rebellion among enslaved people. When Brown was captured and tried in 1859, authorities searched for his accomplices. Douglass's friends warned him to go into hiding, and he received help from **William Still** of Philadelphia, a leading abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad.



Douglass note to John Brown, 1857.
Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



William Still letter to Amy Post, 1859.
Post Family Papers, courtesy of Rare Books,
Special Collections, and Preservation,
River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



William Still

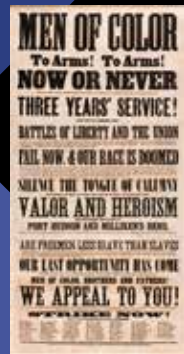
X
11,000
black soldiers
were trained in
Philadelphia
during the war.

Camp William Penn, located near Philadelphia, was the first training ground for African American soldiers in the Union Army. Douglass visited the city often to encourage men to enlist. On July 6, 1863, he gave a speech at National Hall in Philadelphia:

"Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on the earth...which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship..."

—Frederick Douglass, reprinted in *Douglass' Monthly*, 1863

Recruitment broadside written by Frederick Douglass, 1863. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.



SINCE 2008, THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES HAS OFFERED A FAST-TRACK TO CITIZENSHIP FOR IMMIGRANTS WHO ENLIST IN THE MILITARY.



U.S. troops sworn in as naturalized citizens on Nov. 2, 2012, at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. (State Department)

CIVIL WAR

At the start of the Civil War, Douglass worked to convince President Lincoln to let black men enlist. Frederick Douglass's sons Charles and Lewis enlisted to fight against the Confederacy. Lewis Douglass served with the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, which suffered heavy casualties at the Battle of Fort Wagner in South Carolina.

"Storming Fort Wagner," Kurz & Allison, chromolithograph, Chicago, 1890. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Camp William Penn, L. N. Rosenthal, chromolithograph, Philadelphia, 1864. Free Library of Philadelphia, Print and Picture Collection.

QUESTION:
HOW DO YOU THINK DOUGLASS WOULD VIEW THIS CURRENT PROGRAM TO REWARD MILITARY SERVICE WITH CITIZENSHIP?



Undated photograph of black soldiers in the U. S. Army. The National Archives.

SOLDIERS BETRAYED

The 180,000 African American men who served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War were kept in segregated units, denied promotion to officer, and paid less than whites for most of the war. The Confederacy treated them as rebels against slavery, a crime punishable by death. In a letter to a major in the Union Army, Frederick Douglass detailed examples of black soldiers being captured, sold into slavery, mutilated, and killed. He decried the fact that “colored soldiers had been betrayed into bloody hands by the very government in whose defense they were heroically fighting.”

“Will you see that the colored men fighting now, are fairly treated. You ought to do this, and do it at once.”

—Letter from Hannah Johnson to President Abraham Lincoln, 1863



A Call for Justice



President Lincoln's proclamation protecting black soldiers.

Echoing Douglass's strong critique, the mother of a 54th Regiment soldier, **Hannah Johnson**, confronted President Lincoln about the treatment of black soldiers.

In response to such critiques, President Lincoln issued a proclamation, threatening to treat captured Confederate soldiers just as the Confederacy treated African American soldiers fighting for the Union. In spite of Lincoln's proclamation, black soldiers were massacred by Confederates—in violation of the laws of war—in atrocities at Fort Wagner in 1863, Fort Pillow in 1864, and elsewhere.



“The war in Tennessee - rebel massacre of the Union troops after the surrender at Fort Pillow, April 12,” Charles E. H. Bonwell, print from wood engraving, May 7, 1864. Library of Congress, prints and Photographs.



“Come and Join Us Brothers,” Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments, lithograph, 1864. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

VOTING RIGHTS

Douglass knew that without the vote the freedom African Americans earned during the Civil War would be lost as the sharecropping system and Jim Crow laws revived slave-like conditions in the South and northern racism continued unabated. After black men gained the right to vote in 1870, Douglass believed that they should and would remain loyal to the party of Abraham Lincoln. Strongly supportive of the Republican Party throughout his life, he stumped for Republican presidential candidates like Benjamin Harrison, hoping they would endorse equal rights. In Philadelphia, biracial elections turned violent, foreshadowing trouble that was to come in the South as black men went to the polls for the first time.



"The First Vote," drawing by A. R. Waud. Harper's Weekly, Nov. 1867. Free Library of Philadelphia Newspapers Collection.



"Scene of the Shooting of Octavius V. Catto, on October 10, 1871." Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

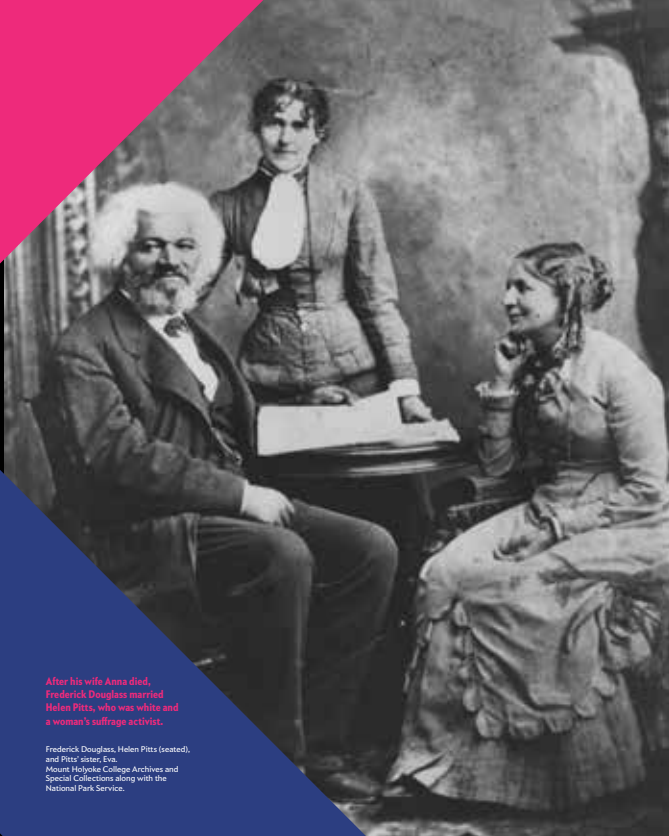
“
The colored people are spontaneously and instinctively Republican...The Republican Party originated in the Free States. It represents free schools, the free speech, the free institutions and the humane sentiments.
”

—Frederick Douglass, "Address to the Colored Citizens of the United States," 1888



"First Colored Senator and Representatives in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States." Currier and Ives, 1872. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

THE FIRST COLORED SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES,
In the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States.



After his wife Anna died, Frederick Douglass married Helen Pitts, who was white and a woman's suffrage activist.

Frederick Douglass, Helen Pitts (seated), and Pitts' sister, Eva. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections along with the National Park Service.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Frederick Douglass was a strong advocate of women's rights; he was among the first men to sign petitions demanding women's suffrage—the right to vote. His early newspapers endorsed equal rights for women years before the 1848 Seneca Falls convention. After the Civil War, when the women's suffrage movement began race-baiting and arguing against black enfranchisement, Douglass put some distance between himself and the movement. He focused his attention on speaking out against rising racial violence and attaining the vote for black men in order to protect the black community from racist violence. Douglass believed that women's work fighting slavery proved they were men's equals, but they could also equal white men in their racism.

“**Observing woman's agency, devotion, and efficiency in pleading the cause of the slave...caused me to be denominated a woman's-rights man. I am glad to say that I have never been ashamed to be thus designated.**”

—Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 1881



A Life of Advocacy

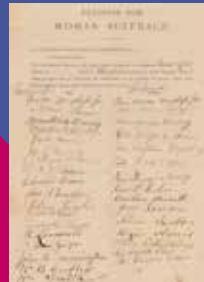
Douglass endorsed and advertised for women's rights in his newspaper, *The North Star*, and attended the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848.

Decades later, in 1878, Douglass' son Frederick Douglass Jr., his daughter Rosetta Douglass Sprague, and their spouses signed the Petition for Woman Suffrage.



Seneca Falls Historical Society.

Library of Congress, Books and Printed Material Collection.



Collection of the U. S. House of Representatives

At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, an international exhibition presenting the culture and achievements of 46 nations, Douglass was moved by a black audience to go off script, speaking about the insidiousness of American racism.

“

Men talk of the Negro problem.

There is no Negro problem.

The problem is whether the American people have honesty enough, loyalty enough, honor enough, patriotism enough to live up to their own Constitution. We Negroes love our country. We fought for it. We ask only that we be treated as well as those who fought against it...”

—Frederick Douglass, off-script remarks at Chicago World's Fair, 1893



VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH

Frederick Douglass's patriotism was tested as black Americans were murdered in great numbers in a wave of lynchings that spread across the South. Republicans and Douglass's other white allies refused to speak out. A young activist and newspaperwoman named **Ida B. Wells** pushed Douglass to condemn lynching as racial terrorism. Wells counted 242 lynchings in 1892 alone. Reflecting Wells's influence, one of Douglass's last speeches, "Lessons of the Hour," called on Americans to come together and stop the killing of unarmed black men.



Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells Barnett by Mary Gerrity, ca. 1893. Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.



Exposing Injustice

In 1892, **Ida B. Wells** wrote *Southern Horrors*, a brave and damning expose of lynching, which included a letter from Douglass. Compelled to write this pamphlet after a friend was murdered by a white mob, Wells herself was targeted and her newspaper office was burned. She went on to lecture internationally and joined the women's rights movement, confronting her white suffragist peers for ignoring race-driven murder. Later in life, she helped co-found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and worked for urban reform in Chicago.

“

The mob spirit has grown.

It has left the out-of-the-way places where ignorance prevails, has thrown off the mask and stalks in broad daylight in large cities, and is encouraged by the 'leading citizens' and the press.

”

—Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors*, 1892



Prejudice in the Press

Throughout the 19th century, newspapers reported on the lynching of black Americans as a means of "subduing" and "exterminating" a military foe.

The Philadelphia Inquirer.

FLOGGED AND KILLED

Masked White Men Attack and Kill Negroes.

HOW SOUTHERNERS SUBDUED THE BLACK MEN.

It Was Reported That the Colored Folk Were Preparing for War and the Whites Charged on the Frightened Men.

RECALC TO OUR READERS.
NEW ORLEANS, June 25.—It has just been discovered that there is a great deal of truth in the reports that the negroes and whites of Tangipahoa parish, recently told us, have been, are engaged in a race war. First white, prevalence to become very serious, and so far as race, he learned it has been thought about by several white men who

Santo Domingo City

This 1911 photograph and 1871 watercolor depict Santo Domingo City, one of the largest cities on the island, during the years before and after Frederick Douglass served as U.S. Minister to Haiti.

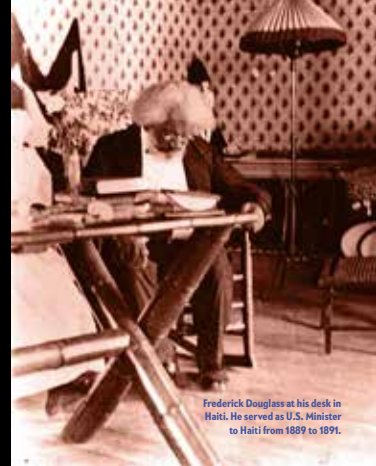


Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Like W. E. B. Du Bois and other black leaders, Frederick Douglass condemned the racism that informed U.S. foreign policy and saw Americans' disregard for African-descended people in the Caribbean as related to white racial violence in the American South. Serving as U.S. Minister to Haiti, he protested against U.S. expansionists who wanted to seize the island for use as a U.S. Navy base—which was built in 1915, after his death. In his final years, Douglass criticized U.S. policy in an essay in the *North American Review* and in speeches such as the one described in the *Daily Inter Ocean*, a Chicago newspaper. W. E. B. Du Bois heard Douglass give that same speech in Boston before he left to study in Europe.



Frederick Douglass at his desk in Haiti. He served as U.S. Minister to Haiti from 1889 to 1891.

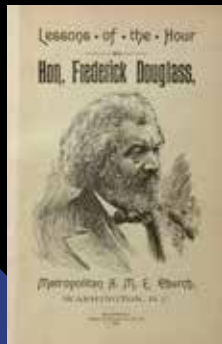
“

The reason we have dealt so hardly with Hayti is because Hayti is black, we have yet forgiven her for being black, we have not yet forgiven the Almighty for making her black.”

—Frederick Douglass, *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*, 1893

Lessons of the Hour, Douglass's last speech, was delivered in 1894 and later printed as a pamphlet. Douglass left the audience with these words: "Based upon eternal principles of truth, justice, and humanity... your Republic will stand and flourish forever."

Library of Congress, Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection.



LEGACY

Frederick Douglass died in his home in Washington, DC, on February 20, 1895, from a massive heart attack. When news of his death reached Ohio, a professor at Wilberforce University, **W. E. B. Du Bois**, wrote a poem to capture the memory of a man he had never met. The following summer, Du Bois accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where he interviewed the city's African American residents, many of them refugees fleeing racial violence in the American South.

*Live, warm and wondrous memory, my Douglass
Live, all men do love thee.*

*Rest, dark and tired soul, my Douglass,
Thy God receive thee
Amen
and
Amen!*

W.E. Burghardt DuBois.

“
Live, warm and wondrous memory, my Douglass.

Live, all men do love thee...

Rest, dark and tired soul, my Douglass,

Thy God receive thee Amen and Amen!

—W. E. B. Du Bois, "On the Passing of Frederick Douglass," 1895

The Philadelphia Inquirer.

FRED DOUGLASS' FUNERAL.

Impressive Services Will Be Held in Washington on Monday.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—The arrangements for the funeral of the late Frederick Douglass have been practically completed and it is expected it will be a notable demonstration of the respect and esteem felt for the man. Early Monday morning the remains will be removed from the Douglass residence in Anacostia to the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church, in this city. There the remains will lie in state from 9 A. M. until 2 P. M.

The services will be conducted by the pastor of the church, Rev. J. C. Smith, assisted by other clergymen.



A Country in Mourning

Douglass's funeral was attended by thousands and mentioned in newspapers across the country.

Free Library of Philadelphia, Newspaper Collection.

The New-York Times.

HONORS TO FREDERICK DOUGLASS

His Body to Lie in State Tuesday in the City Hall by Permission of Mayor Strong.

The body of Frederick Douglass, the distinguished negro leader, will lie in state in the City Hall Tuesday forenoon, from 9 until 10 o'clock.

A committee of five colored men, appointed at a meeting of the members of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church, 222 West Forty-eighth Street, on Friday night, last, consisting of William B. Davis, and members of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 110 West 11th Street, will take

PUBLIC LEDGER

THE LATE FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Funeral Services to be Held in the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church—The Public to be Given an Opportunity to View the Remains—The Secretary Will Be Present. WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—The funeral services over the late Frederick Douglass will be held to-morrow in Metropolitan A. M. E. Church, the largest of the denomination in the city, and the demonstration on that occasion is expected to be one of the greatest ever seen in Washington. The body will be taken to the church from his late residence in Anacostia, early in the morning, and will lie in the church, for view by the public until 2 o'clock, at which hour the services will begin. These will be conducted by Rev. J. C. Smith, Pastor.

W. E. B.
Du Bois



Photograph of W. E. B. Du Bois as a young man.
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
New York Public Library.

BORN UNDER A VEIL

William Edward Burghard (W. E. B.) Du Bois was born in **Great Barrington, Massachusetts** in 1868. His Haitian-born father, Alfred, a Civil War veteran who served with the United States Colored Troops, left the family when William was two. Du Bois wrote about growing up black in a mostly white town in *The Souls of Black Folk*, often portraying his early life as idyllic. But unlike many of his peers, he worked various jobs from the time he was a boy. Later, Du Bois recalled in *The Souls of Black Folk* the day he first experienced the pinch of racism—at age 10, a classmate refused his friendship because of the color of his skin.

“
**It dawned upon me
with a certain suddenness
that I was different
from the others...
shut out from their
world by a vast veil.**
”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903



Great Barrington, Massachusetts,
print by Lucien R. Burleigh and Beck & Pauli, 1884.
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

W. E. B. Du Bois

1868

Born in Massachusetts

1885

Attends Fisk University

1895

Earns Ph.D. from Harvard University

1896

Marriage to Nina Gomer

1899

Publishes *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*

1903

Publishes *The Souls of Black Folk*

1907

Begins publishing *The Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line*

1909

Founding of the NAACP

1917

Co-organizes the Silent Parade

1919

Organizes the Pan-African Conference in Paris

1951

Marriage to Shirley Graham

1963

Dies in Ghana



Jubilee Hall at Fisk University, where Du Bois attended college from 1885 to 1888

South Front, Jubilee Hall, undated photograph, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

AN EDUCATION

A gifted student, Du Bois attended **Fisk University** in Tennessee. Historically black colleges and universities like Fisk offered liberal arts and trade educations to African Americans when virtually no other institution of higher education would. During the summers he taught black sharecroppers, which sparked his interest in exploring the causes of their poverty. After he finished graduate school at Harvard and the University of Berlin, Du Bois accepted a teaching position at **Wilberforce University** in Ohio, another historically black institution.



Wilberforce University, Kenia, Ohio, lithograph by Middleton Wallace & Co., ca. 1850-1860, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.



W. E. B. Du Bois, son Burghardt, wife Nina, 1898. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

In 1896, Du Bois married Nina Gomer, who was born in Quincy, Illinois and educated at Wilberforce University. The couple had a son, Burghardt, who died as a child. Their daughter, Yolande, grew up to be a teacher and activist.

Yolande Du Bois, photograph by J.R. Anderson, ca. 1925. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.



“

It is high time that the best conscience of Philadelphia awakened to her duty.

How long can a city teach its black children that the road to success is to have a white face?

How long can a city do this and escape the inevitable penalty?”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 1899

PHILADELPHIA

In the summer of 1896, the **University of Pennsylvania** hired W. E. B. Du Bois to conduct a study of Philadelphia's oldest African American neighborhood—the Seventh Ward. Du Bois walked the neighborhood and talked to many of its nearly 10,000 residents, collecting data on births, deaths, health, occupation, and literacy. He noted how many of the residents were born in slavery, listing how and when they came to Philadelphia.



Frontispiece from *The Philadelphia Negro*, 1899. Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Libraries.

Study of the Seventh Ward

The Philadelphia Negro was published in 1899 and included a map of the Seventh Ward, an historically African American community. Before its publication, Du Bois wrote to Jacob C. White, Jr., a black Philadelphia businessman, educator, and civil rights activist, seeking his review of the manuscript.



Letter from Du Bois to Jacob C. White, Jr., 1898. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Map of the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia. Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Libraries.

DU BOIS STUDIED THE SEVENTH WARD BY TALKING TO MANY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S RESIDENTS.

QUESTION:

IF HE TALKED TO PEOPLE IN PHILADELPHIA'S NEIGHBORHOODS TODAY, WHAT ISSUES WOULD MOST INTEREST OR CONCERN HIM?

“
It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS

W. E. B. Du Bois described the idea of “double-consciousness” as viewing yourself through the eyes of another and measuring your worth by that vision, which will never see you as equal. He and other African American and white activists met in Buffalo, New York in 1905, beginning the Niagara Movement, a series of organizing efforts to achieve national civil rights. Rejecting ideals set forth by black civil rights leader **Booker T. Washington**, they called for full legal, social, economic, and political equality for African Americans and agitated for an end to violence against blacks. In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in part by Du Bois as well as Ida B. Wells, continuing the Niagara Movement's momentum. By 1913, NAACP branches were established in cities across the country and the organization continues to be a leading advocate for civil rights today.

“

**To the real question,
How does it feel to be a problem?
I answer seldom a word...**

**One feels his two-ness —
an American,
a Negro;
two souls,
two thoughts,
two unreconciled strivings;
two warring ideals
in one dark body.**

He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows....”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1897

**Booker T.
Washington**



The Atlanta Compromise

“Cast down your bucket where you are.... No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top.”

At the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, Booker T. Washington urged African Americans to seek work in agriculture, trades, or retail and domestic service, rather than political office or higher-paying professions. Initially favorable to Washington's method of easing race relations, Du Bois later rejected it, derisively calling this address “The Atlanta Compromise.”



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Theatrical release poster for *The Birth of a Nation*, distributed by Epoch Film Co., 1915.

“Without a doubt the increase of lynching in 1915 and later was directly encouraged by this film. We did what we could to stop its showing and thereby probably succeeded in advertising it.... The number of mob murders so increased that nearly one hundred Negroes were lynched.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 1940

PERVASIVE RACISM

As African Americans came to cities during the Great Migration—the period from 1910 to 1970 when six million African Americans moved from the rural South to Northern urban centers—they often traded white racial violence in the South for race riots in the North. Racist attitudes spread through the national press and the rise of Hollywood cinema. One of the first nationwide “blockbusters,” *The Birth of a Nation* was released in 1915 featuring racist portrayals of black characters and celebrating the Ku Klux Klan, an organization founded upon white supremacist beliefs that terrorized and murdered African Americans after the Civil War. The NAACP worked to block *The Birth of a Nation* with protests organized in many cities, including Philadelphia. Du Bois blamed the rise in violence against African Americans in part on racism spread through newspapers and films. Just as he accused the media of furthering racism, Du Bois used the press to combat it. His publication *The Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line*, and *The Crisis*, the NAACP’s monthly magazine for which he served as chief editor, documented and exposed race-driven violence.

Based on the 1905 novel *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, D. W. Griffith’s film *The Birth of a Nation* was screened for President Woodrow Wilson at the White House and later shown at the National Press Club, where all nine justices of the Supreme Court were present.



Fanning the Flames

The mainstream press perpetuated racist attitudes, printing salacious and slanderous stories without a presumption of innocence. Reports on African Americans protesting unequal living conditions in Northern cities often played on white fears and led to violent reactions, while baseless accusations of criminal activity were sensationalized as major headlines.

“Riot Mill,” *The Crisis*, Vol. 18, October 1919. Free Library of Philadelphia.

DU BOIS CONDEMNED THE PRESS FOR PROMOTING RACIST ATTITUDES IN REPORTING ON CIVIL UNREST.

QUESTION:

HOW DO THE MEDIA TODAY REPORT ON PROTEST? HOW DO YOU THINK DU BOIS WOULD RESPOND TO COVERAGE OF MORE RECENT UPRISINGS IN BALTIMORE AND FERGUSON, MISSOURI?



The Baltimore Sun front page, April 28, 2015.



WORLD WAR I

Many African Americans saw serving in World War I as an opportunity to win the respect of whites, but surging racial violence at home tested their convictions. Recognizing Du Bois's considerable influence, the War Department offered him a position as Captain of Military Intelligence, which he used to encourage African Americans to enlist to fight for a nation that segregated them, denied them voting rights, and subjected them to racial violence.

“

Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy. We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Crisis*, 1918

Photograph of W. E. B. Du Bois by John W. Mastley.
Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection,
Temple University Libraries.



Our Colored Heroes, lithograph by E. G. Renesch, 1918.
Free Library of Philadelphia, Print and Picture Collection.

Two unidentified African American soldiers in uniforms and campaign hats standing in front of an American flag, ca. 1917-18. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs

SOLDIERS BETRAYED

Between 370,000 and 400,000 African Americans served in the U.S. Army during World War I. Noting that racism in Europe was often less prevalent than at home, men returned to segregated communities and rising racial violence. Riots broke out in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and other cities. African Americans defended themselves and, at times, fought back. The NAACP responded that many African Americans' frustration with inequity in housing, education, and wages factored into the riots. They also condemned local newspapers for feeding racism leading up to and during the riots. Du Bois wrote blistering editorials condemning the nation that sent black men to fight and then hunted them down on the streets of U.S. cities.

“

By the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Crisis*, 1919

NEGRO LEADERS DO NOT FEAR RACE RIOTS HERE

No Formal Discussion of Recent Wars at Meeting of Colored Clubs

Race riots were not mentioned by members of the Allied Negro Civic Club Organization of Philadelphia at a meeting in the Olympic Athletic Club at Broad and Rittenberg streets, yesterday. Informally the leaders of the race expressed the opinion that conditions in Philadelphia are different from those in Washington and Chicago.

Because of the belief that race antagonism here was lacking, it was felt that there is little danger of riot breaking out. While they declared the purpose of the meeting was "to keep Philadelphia free of the crimes that have disgraced Washington and Chicago," it was felt by speakers that there was little need of agitation on this score and they avoided the subject.

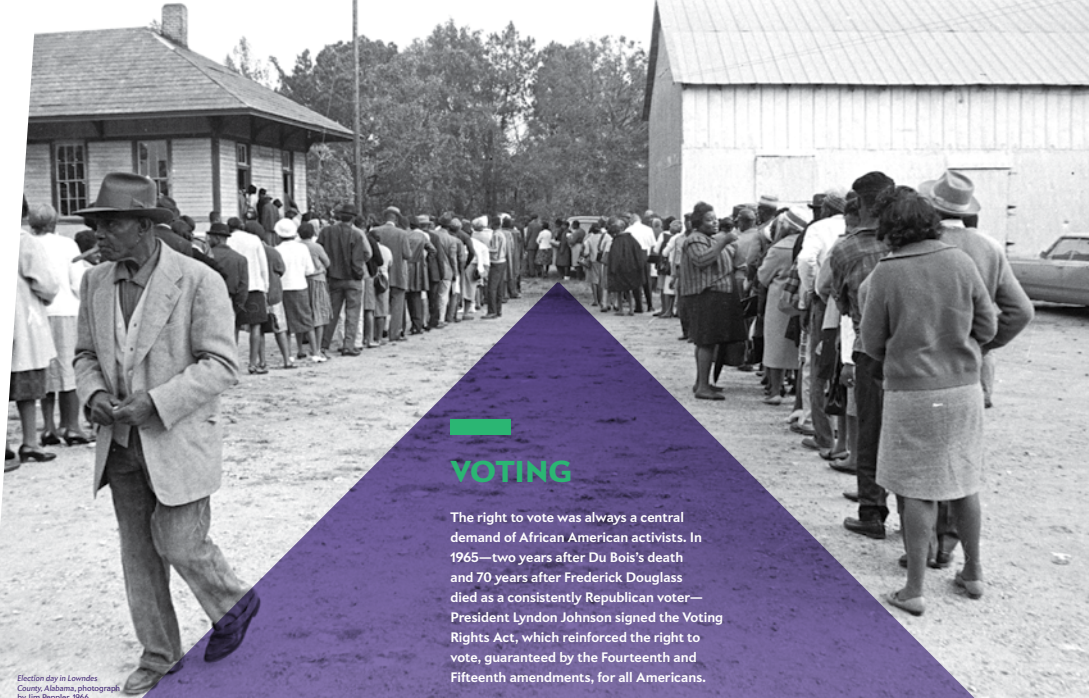
The conference, which is composed of thirty church and civic societies in this city, with the object to educate the negro industrially and politically, was addressed by Warner T. McQuinn, of the Baltimore City Council.

Mr. McQuinn told of his fight in Baltimore to secure a seat for a member of his race in the Baltimore City Council. Rev. John M. Palmer, pastor of the Kimball A. M. E. Church, spoke on present political conditions in Philadelphia, and particularly how those affected the negro.

Philadelphia Inquirer, August 4, 1919.



Detroit Free Press, July 30, 1919.



Election day in Lowndes County, Alabama, photograph by Jim Peopler, 1966. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

VOTING

The right to vote was always a central demand of African American activists. In 1965—two years after Du Bois's death and 70 years after Frederick Douglass died as a consistently Republican voter—President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which reinforced the right to vote, guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, for all Americans.



Party Politics

Du Bois refused to commit to casting his ballot for one political party, arguing in the pages of *The Horizon* that African Americans should vote strategically for candidates committed to black economic prosperity and political equity. Later in his life, Du Bois grew disillusioned with U.S. politics, declaring he would not vote in the 1956 election.



Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Books Department.



Is the refusal to vote in this phony election a counsel of despair?

No, it is dogged hope... this might make the American people ask how much longer this dumb farce can proceed without even a whimper of protest.



—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Nation*, 1956

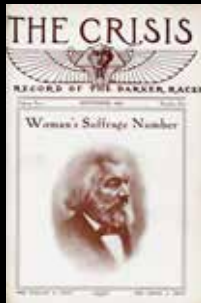
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Du Bois endorsed and supported women's suffrage—the right to vote—and consistently devoted space to the issue and to women authors, artists, and activists in *The Crisis*. He worked to try to convince the biggest suffrage organization to admit African American women fully into their ranks, something that the National American Women's Suffrage Association resisted for fear they would alienate white members in the South. Du Bois spoke often of the double burdens of black womanhood and he reproduced the work of Harlem Renaissance artists, such as Aaron Douglas, whose art celebrated African American women.

“**Women are moving quietly but forcibly toward the intellectual leadership of the race.**

The enfranchisement of these women will not be a mere doubling of our vote and voice in the nation; it will tend to stronger... political life.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Crisis*, 1912



A sketch of Frederick Douglass graced the September 1912 issue of *The Crisis*, which included an article about women's suffrage and profiles of prominent women activists including **Mary Church Terrell**, president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. *The Crisis* frequently featured essays and illustrations by women writers and visual artists such as Laura Wheeler Waring and Du Bois's daughter, Yolande.

Mary Church Terrell



“**For an intelligent colored man to oppose woman suffrage is the most preposterous and ridiculous thing in the world.”**

—Mary Church Terrell, *The Crisis*, 1912

Unknown photographer, ca. 1890.
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

In a letter to President Wilson, Du Bois outlined his concerns for the African-descended people in the U.S. and abroad, ahead of the Paris Peace Conference, a gathering of world leaders that eventually resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, which in part ended World War I.



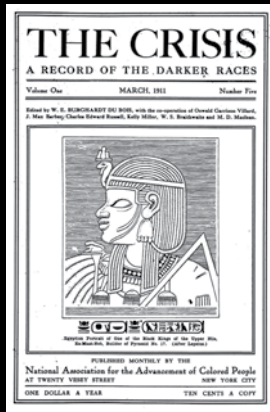
Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson, 1918. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

PAN-AFRICANISM

Du Bois was an early proponent and leader of Pan-Africanism, a movement that encouraged cooperation among African nations and African-descended people against racism, colonialism, and war. He wrote to President Woodrow Wilson on his way to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, urging Wilson to remember the ideals for which Americans fought in World War I and consider how racism and violence against African Americans violated them. His words went unheard. When Kwame Nkrumah became the first president of independent Ghana, Du Bois encouraged him to lead the international effort for racial equality. In 1961, at the age of 93, Du Bois and his new wife, Shirley Graham, traveled to Ghana and, in a move that signaled their support of the effort to unite African peoples, they became Ghanaian citizens.

“More than to the Black race within her borders, America owes to the world the solution of her race problem.”

—Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson, 1918



Celebrating African Art and Culture

In addition to contributions from contemporaries of the Harlem Renaissance, *The Crisis* often featured art and articles celebrating the long history of African civilization.



Shirley Graham at the typewriter. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

After 54 years of marriage, W. E. B. Du Bois's wife, Nina, died in 1950. Du Bois later married playwright, musician, author, and activist Shirley Graham.

“

One thing alone I charge you as you live and believe in life. Always, human beings will live and progress to greater, broader and fuller life.

“The only possible death is to lose belief in this truth.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, “Last Message to the World,” 1957

A LEGACY OF PROTEST

W. E. B. Du Bois died in Ghana on August 27, 1963, the day before the March on Washington. Roy Wilkins, NAACP president, announced Du Bois's death to the crowd of 250,000 gathered at the Lincoln Memorial. Martin Luther King Jr.'s peaceful and dignified march was akin to those that Du Bois helped organized, like the Silent Parade in 1917, in an effort to convince legislators to pass laws to combat lynching.

Before his death, Du Bois expressed his funeral wishes to his wife Shirley, insisting “the good life at present and progress in the future are what I want stressed.” Upon his death, she fulfilled his wish, releasing Du Bois's “Last Message to the World,” in which he expressed optimism that the change he, Douglass, and King fought for was possible—that defeat comes only when we give up hope.

Silent Parade

Unattributed photograph, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.



On July 28, 1917, Du Bois and other members of the NAACP organized the Negro Silent Protest Parade on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The parade was a response to the East St. Louis race riot in which an angry white mob killed over 40 black people.

“

History had taught him it is not enough for people to be angry—the supreme task is to organize and unite people so that their anger becomes a transforming force.”

—Martin Luther King Jr., “Honoring Dr. Du Bois,” 1968



March on Washington

Martin Luther King with leaders at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963.

Photograph by Warren Leffler. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

