# Frederick Douglass

## Talbot County's Native Son and International Hero

Community Reading

*"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"*

by Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey Douglass

**Saturday, July 5, 2025 at 10am**

Talbot County Courthouse, 11 North Washington St. Easton, MD

Presented by the Frederick Douglass Honor Society

***FrederickDouglassHonorSociety.com***

# Background History of the Occasion

*"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"* was the question Frederick Douglass posed to a gathering of 500-600 abolitionists in Rochester, N.Y., on July 5, 1852. At the invitation of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, it was noted by a local newspaper that when Douglass finished and sat down, "there was a universal burst of applause." This speech, receiving an overwhelming endorsement, sold over 700 copies and would be remembered as one of most poignant addresses by Douglass, a former slave turned statesman.

Samuel J. Miller, Frederick Douglass, 1852, Daguerreotype. Art Institute of Chicago.

Refusing to celebrate the Fourth of July until all slaves were emancipated, in his speech, Douglass acknowledged that the Fourth of July, a commemoration to the birth of our nation and anniversary of the Declaration of Independence should be celebrated and the Founding Father be honored. The dilemma he faced; however, was that the ideals of liberty and equal rights for all remained unfulfilled for blacks enslaved in the South. In his article, "Frederick Douglass: A Life and Times," James Colaiaco writes:

"Frederick Douglass inspired, converted, and provoked. He mesmerized his audiences. No speaker was more impassioned, more devoted to the advancement of human rights. No person understood better the meaning of the American creed as embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the United States Constitution, and no one was more eloquent in summoning the nation to fulfill this creed for all, regardless of race".

*"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"* awakened the conscience of the nation, and Douglass's speech is as much a piercing accounting of national hypocrisy on what he referred to as a day of "tumultuous joy" as it is a call to action.

Colaiaco, James A. "Frederick Douglass: A Life and Times." *The History Reader*, 1 Feb. 2016, www.thehistoryreader.com/modern-history/life-and-times-of-frederick-douglass

Introduction by Master of Ceremonies
**Walter Black**
Blake-Blackston American Legion Post 77

Soloist **Dana Bowser** will sing *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

## THE MEANING OF THE FOURTH OF JULY FOR THE NEGRO

Abridged*

**Frederick Douglass - July 5, 1852**

**1 - read by Edward Boots Robinson, FDHS President:**
Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th [of] July oration. The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable—and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight. That I am here to-day is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude.

**2 - read by Megan Cook, Mayor of Easton:**
This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. You are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon.

**3 - read by Childlene Brooks, FDHS Past President:**
Fellow-citizens, 76 years ago, the people of this country were British subjects. The style and title of your 'sovereign people' (in which you now glory) was not then born. You were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government. England as the fatherland, although a considerable distance from your home, impose, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgment, it deemed wise, right and proper.

**4 - read by Annie Mewborn, Educator:**
But your fathers, who had not adopted the idea of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to.

**5 - read by Maia Bailey- Descendant of Frederick Douglass:**
I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered.

**6 - read by Marshall Bailey, IV, - Descendant of Frederick Douglass:**
Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers became restive under this treatment. They felt themselves the victims of grievous wrongs, wholly incurable in their colonial capacity. With brave men there is always a remedy for oppression. Just here, the idea of a total separation of the colonies from the crown was born! It was a startling idea, much more so, than we, at this distance of time, regard it. The timid and the prudent of that day, were, of course, shocked and alarmed by it. Their opposition to the then-dangerous thought was earnest and powerful; but, amid all their terror and affrighted vociferations against it, the alarming and revolutionary idea moved on, and the country with it.

**7 - read by Sharon Pepukayi, TCPS Superintendent:**
On the 2d of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshipers of property, clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution. We seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day, whose transparency is at all equal it: 'Resolved, 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.'

**8 - read by Dan Watson- Community Leader:**
Citizens, your fathers made good that resolution. They succeeded; and to-day you reap the fruits of their success. The freedom gained is yours; and you, therefore, may properly celebrate this anniversary. The 4th of July is the first great fact in your nation's history - the very ring-bolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny.

**9 - read by Richard Potter, President, Talbot Branch of NAACP:**
Pride and patriotism, not less than gratitude, prompt you to celebrate and to hold it in perpetual remembrance. I have said that the Declaration of Independence is the ring-bolt to the chain of your nation's destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.

**10 - read by Peggy Ford, Retired Educator:**

Fellow Citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory.

**11 - read by Keasha Haythe, Talbot County Council:**
They loved their country better than their own private interests; and all will concede that it is a rare virtue, that ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty, they lost sight of all other interests.

**12 - read by Joaquin Chaves, Scientist:**
They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but they knew its limits. They believed in order; but not in the order of tyranny. With them, nothing was 'settled' that was not right. With them, justice, liberty and humanity were final; not slavery and oppression. You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times.

**13 - read by Natalie Brooks, Educator:**
How circumspect, exact and proportionate were all their movements! How unlike the politicians of an hour! Their statesmanship looked beyond the passing moment, and stretched away in strength into the distant future. Mark them! Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause , wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, laid the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen and still rises in grandeur around you.

**14 - read by Rose Potter, Trappe Town Commissioner:**
Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. The causes which led to the separation of the colonies from the British crown have never lacked for a tongue. They have all been taught in your common schools, narrated at your firesides, un folded from your pulpits, and thundered from your legislative halls, and are as familiar to you as household words. They form the staple of your national poetry and eloquence. I leave, therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other[s].

**15 - read by Joe Petro, Business Owner:**
MY business, if I have any here to-day, is with the present. The accepted time with God and his cause is the ever-living now. We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. Now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence.

**16 - read by Rev. Elmer Davis, Easton Town Council:**
Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

**17 - read by Timothy Young, Author:**
Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. . . . But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us.

**18 - read by Melanie Young, Educator:**
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?

**19 - read by Pamela Clay, Educator:**
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. 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.

**20 - read by Michele Dappert, Media Supervisor for Planit:**
My subject, then fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day from the slave's point of view. Standing, here, 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.

**21 - read by Andrew Daly, Easton Resident:**
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.

**22 - read by Dana Newman- Talbot County Free Library and FDHS Board Member:**
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?

**23 - read by Charlene DeShields, Educator:**
Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? 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, 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 acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being?

**24 - read by Victoria Gomez Lozano, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center:**
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!

**25 - read by Dr. James Bell, BAAM:**
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.

**26 - read by Ryleigh Bell, Student:**
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 worshiping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

**27 - read by Tara Newman-Bell, Sr. Director, University of Maryland Medical System:**
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 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, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? 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.

**28 - read by Chief Alan Lowrey, Easton Police Department:**
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.

**29 - read by Xavier Rahim, BAAM:**
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? I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

**30 - read by Nancy Andrew, Talbot Family Network:**
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.

**31 - read by Tina Grace Jones, Delmarva Pride Center:**
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.

**32 - read by Yvonne Freeman, Community Leader:**
There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour. Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

**33 - read by Bill Peak, Author:**
Take the American slave-trade, which we are told by the papers, is especially prosperous just now, as the price of men was never higher; and [which is] carried on in all the large towns and cities in onehalf of this confederacy. This trade is one of the peculiarities of American institutions. In several states, this trade is a chief source of wealth. It is called "the internal slave trade," in order to divert from it the horror with which the foreign slave-trade is contemplated.

**34 - read by Jaelon T. Moaney, MD Commission on African Amer.History & Culture:**
[The foreign slave] trade has long since been denounced by this government, as piracy, as an execrable traffic. To arrest it, this nation keeps a squadron, at immense cost, on the coast of Africa. Everywhere, in this country, it is safe to speak of this foreign slave-trade, as a most inhuman traffic, opposed alike to the laws of God and of man. It is, however, a notable fact that, while so much execration is poured out by Americans upon those engaged in the foreign slave-trade, the men engaged in the slave-trade between the states pass without condemnation, and their business is deemed honorable.

**35 - read by Robin Stricoff, Community Leader:**
Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and American religion. Here you will see men and women reared like swine for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock.

**36 - read by Pete Lesher, Talbot County Council:**
You will see one of these human flesh-jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowieknife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers. They are food for the cotton-field, and the deadly sugar-mill.

**37 - read by Lois McCoy, Polaris Village Academy:**
Mark the sad procession, as it moves wearily along, and the inhuman wretch who drives them. Hear his savage yells and his blood-chilling oaths, as he hurries on his affrighted captives! There, see the old man, with locks thinned and gray. Cast one glance, if you please, upon that young mother, whose shoulders are bare to the scorching sun, her briny tears falling on the brow of the babe in her arms. See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, yes! weeping, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn!

**38 - read by Jill Ferris, FDHS Board Member and Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum:**
The drove moves tardily. Heat and sorrow have nearly consumed their strength; suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the center of your soul! The crack you heard, was the sound of the slave-whip; the scream you heard, was from the woman you saw with the babe. Her speed had faltered under the weight of her child and her chains! that gash on her shoulder tells her to move on.

**39 - read by Anna Howie, FDHS Board Member:**
Follow this drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, WHERE, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

**40 - read by Teagan Howie, Student:**
I was born amid such sights and scenes. To me, the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number has been collected here, a ship is chartered for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night. In the deep, still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead, heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our door.

**41 - read by KJ Howie, Student:**
Fellow-citizens, this murderous traffic is, to-day, in active operation in this boasted republic. In the solitude of my spirit, I see clouds of dust raised on the highways of the South; I see the bleeding footsteps; I hear the doleful wail of fettered humanity, on the way to the slave-markets, where the victims are to be sold like horses, sheep, and swine, knocked off to the highest bidder. There I see the tenderest ties ruthlessly broken, to gratify the lust, caprice and rapacity of the buyers and sellers of men. My soul sickens at the sight.

**42 - read by Jaylen Howie, Educator:**
But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented. By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form; Mason & Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States.

**43 - read by Kirk Howie- FDHS Board Member:**
The power is co-extensive with the Star-Spangled Banner and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman's gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for men.

**44 - read by Jeff McGuiness, Author, *Bear Me Into Freedom*:**
Your lawmakers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your Secretary of State enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing. Not fewer than forty Americans have, within the past two years, been hunted down and, without a moment's warning, hurried away in chains, and consigned to slavery and excruciating torture. Some of these have had wives and children, dependent on them for bread; but of this, no account was made. The right of the hunter to his prey stands superior to the right of marriage, and to all rights in this republic, the rights of God included!

**45 - read by Linda Harris, Harriet Tubman Museum and Education Center:**
For black men there is neither law nor justice, humanity nor religion. The Fugitive Slave Law makes MERCY TO THEM, A CRIME; and bribes the judge who tries them. An American JUDGE GETS TEN DOLLARS FOR EVERY VICTIM HE CONSIGNS to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so. The oath of any two villains is sufficient, under this hell-black enactment, to send the most pious and exemplary black man into the remorseless jaws of slavery! His own testimony is nothing. He can bring no witnesses for himself. The minister of American justice is bound by the law to hear but one side; and that side, is the side of the oppressor.

**46 - read by Maureen Curry, Easton Town Council:**
Let this damning fact be perpetually told. Let it be thundered around the world, that, in tyrant-killing, king-hating, people-loving, democratic, Christian America, the seats of justice are filled with judges, who hold their offices under an open and palpable bribe, and are bound, in deciding in the case of a man's liberty, to hear only his accusers!

**47 - read by Carolyn Hayman, FDHS Board Member:**
In glaring violation of justice, in shameless disregard of the forms of administering law, in cunning arrangement to entrap the defenseless, and in diabolical intent, this Fugitive Slave Law stands alone in the annals of tyrannical legislation.

**48 - read by: Bill Ryan, BAAM Board of Directors:**
Americans! Your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria, and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere tools and bodyguards of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina.

**49 - read by Adam Burkhardt, Student:**
You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation-a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty.

**50 - read by JR Burkhardt, Educator:**
You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen, and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against the oppressor; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America.

**51 - read by Evan Caldwell, Student:**
You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard-earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe 'that, of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth, and hath commanded all men, everywhere to love one another'; yet you notoriously hate, (and glory in your hatred), all men whose skins are not colored like your own.

**52 - read by Eugenia Caldwell, Educator:**
You declare, before the world, and are understood by the world to declare, that you 'hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that, among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'; and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, "is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose," a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

**53 - read by Val Cavalheri, Talbot Spy:**
Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a by word to a mocking earth.

**54 - read by Jacqueline Wheatley, St. Matthew United Methodist Church:**
It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your Union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement; the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet you cling to it as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!

**55 - read by Rev. Greg Powell, Trinity Cathedral:**
But it is answered in reply to all this, that precisely what I have now denounced is, in fact, guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States; that, the right to hold, and to hunt slaves is a part of that Constitution framed by the illustrious Fathers of this Republic. Then, I dare to affirm, notwithstanding all I have said before, your fathers, instead of being the honest men I have before declared them to be, were the veriest impostors that ever practiced on mankind.

**56 - read by Blake Blackston American Legion Post 77:**
This is the inevitable conclusion, and from it there is no escape. But I differ from those who charge this baseness on the framers of the Constitution of the United States. It is a slander upon their memory, at least, so I believe. [And others] have, as I think, fully and clearly vindicated the Constitution from any design to support slavery for an hour.

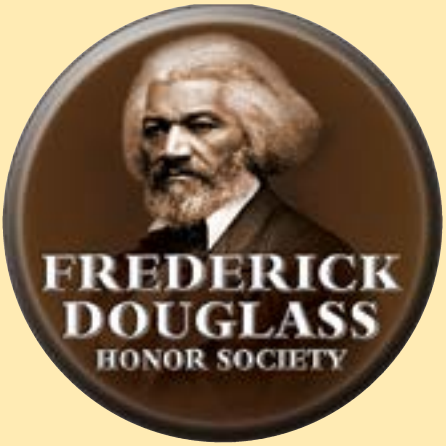
**57 - read by Kayla Weber, Talbot Historical Society:**
Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference.

**58 - read by Mike Starling, Radio Chesapeake News Talk WHCP:**
The time was when such could be done. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are, distinctly heard on the other.

**59 - read by Lance Wilson, Community Leader:**
In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying it:

All God speed the day when human blood
Shall cease to flow!
In every clime be understood,
The claims of human brotherhood,
And each return for evil, good,
Not blow for blow;
That day will come all feuds to end,
And change into a faithful friend
Each foe.

* Abridged to 5,370 words by Pleun Bouricius, Assistant Director, Mass Humanities, based on an edit done by Janet Gillespie, Director of Programming, Community Change. To facilitate reading, portions have been removed without ellipses. The complete text: http://masshumanities.org/files/programs/douglass/speech_complete.pdf

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*The Frederick Douglass Honor Society is dedicated to developing programs that continue the Douglass legacy of human rights, education, personal growth, and involvement of citizens. Our goal is to honor Frederick Douglass here in his birthplace, Talbot County, Maryland, where his experiences in his youth - both positive and negative - helped form his character, intellect, and determination. It became Frederick Douglass' life goal to bring black people and America away from the ancient institution of slavery. It is our hope that all people will long remember him as a true leader and world-renown hero.*

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