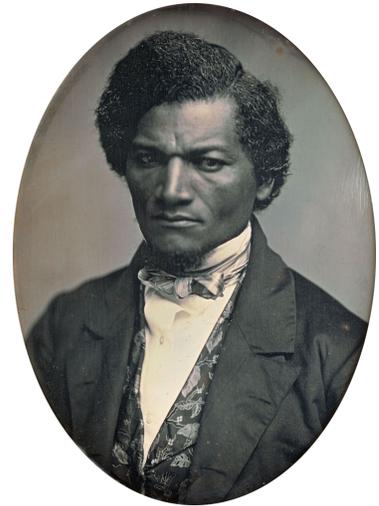


## WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE 4TH OF JULY?

*Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens*

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. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day.



...The simple story of it is that, 76 years ago, the people of this country ... were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government; and England as the fatherland. This home government, did...impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgement, it deemed wise, right and proper.

...Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers petitioned in a...respectful, and loyal manner... This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered.

...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.

...The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too—great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable; and yet 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.

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze...Prayers are made, hymns are sung...Friends and citizens, I need not enter further into the causes which led to this anniversary. Many of you understand them better than I do.

...My business, if I have any here to-day, is with the present.

...We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future.

...Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to (all of) us?

...such is not the case.

This Fourth July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, *I* must mourn.

...Fellow-citizens; above your national joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the shouts that reach them.

...My subject, then fellow-citizens, is American Slavery. I see this day from the slave's point of view (and) 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!

...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 shouts of liberty and equality,...your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, ...are fraud, deception, and hypocrisy.

...Allow me to say, 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,...In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying:

*Until that year, day, hour, arrive,  
With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,  
The spoiler of his prey deprive—  
So witness Heaven!  
And never from my chosen post,  
Whatever the peril or the cost,  
Be driven.*