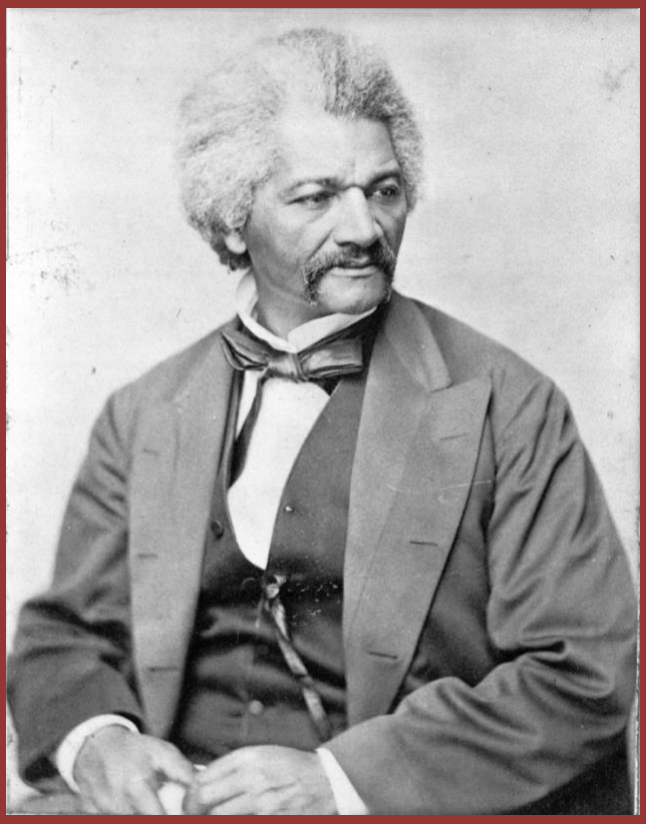
NEW NORTH STAR

Volume 3: 2021



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NEW NORTH STAR

John R. McKivigan and Jeffery A. Duvall, Editors

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Our Aims and Scope

The ***New North Star*** is an open-access online journal featuring new scholarship on the activities and ideas of nineteenth century African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass and the world with which he interacted. Articles also are desired that assess Douglass's impact on events following his lifetime, including current events. The journal is looking for articles in a broad range of disciplines, from history to literature, communications to anthropology. As in the spirit of its namesake, works of fiction and poetry on topics pertinent to Douglass also will be considered for publication. The *New North Star* will feature interviews with authors of new scholarship on Douglass as well as reviews of that recently published literature. The journal is intended for teachers and students as well as scholars, hoping to help bridge the gap between new scholarship and the classroom. Articles describing new techniques on teaching about Douglass and his world are welcomed. The *New North Star* will be maintained by the staff of the Frederick Douglass Papers at IUPUI and hosted on that project's website. Instructions for submitting articles to the *New North Star* can be found on the journal's website.

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CONTENTS

Articles

Research Notes

Documents

New North Star, 2021; 3:1–12

From "the Black O'Connell" to "the Black Douglas"

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Independent Scholar

Like many other touring performers, Frederick Douglass connected with his audiences by declaring some kind of affiliation with the places he visited. He usually did this by demonstrating his knowledge of figures of local or national importance whom he had reason to admire. In this article I will consider some examples from his speaking engagements in Ireland and Scotland in 1845–46. My particular interest here is the ways in which Douglass not only paid tribute to certain historical and contemporary Irishmen and Scotsmen (such as Daniel O'Connell and Robert Burns) but came to be endowed with their names—whether he liked it or not—as if he were no more than an African American version of themselves. That he was dubbed "the Black O'Connell" has become almost proverbial. Cornered by such moves, Douglass tended to respond with a diplomatic silence. But they may also have alerted him to the possibility of exploiting the historical resonance of his own adopted name by tentatively identifying himself as "the Black Douglas" after the medieval Scottish warlord. In following the choices Douglass makes, we can see him experimenting with different rhetorical alter egos that serve his emerging ambition to be seen as a representative or leader of a people.

I

In his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, Douglass writes of the importance to him as a young man of reading the *Columbian Orator*, a widely reprinted primer in the "arts of eloquence," singling out two texts in particular, including "one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation."[1] As it happens, he confuses Richard Brinsley Sheridan with another Irishman, Arthur O'Connor, who is correctly identified as the author of the speech by the editor of the *Orator*, Caleb Bingham.[2] Douglass only once referred to O'Connor's speech in his lectures in Ireland.[3] But he did take care on at least two occasions, when giving an account of the disturbances on his voyage departing from Boston, to let audiences know that one of those who defended him against the physical threats of a pro-slavery passenger was a "noble hearted Irishman. A Mr Gough, who told the reckless trafficker in human flesh and bones that 'Two could play at that work.' "[4] This was Captain Thomas Bunbury Gough, returning home on leave from his infantry regiment in Canada. There is a memorial to him in St

[1] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* [1845], in John W. Blassingame, John R. McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 2: *Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 1:35.

[2] For a detailed discussion of O'Connor's speech and Douglass's response to it, see Ann Coughlan, "Frederick Douglass and Ireland, 1845: The 'Vertiginous Twist(s) of an Irish Encounter' " (PhD diss., University College Cork, 2015), 17–71.

[3] *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1 October 1845 and London *Standard*, 1 October 1845. Douglass makes no other reference to Sheridan or O'Connor in any of the newspaper reports of his speeches in Ireland in 1845–46, usefully collected in Christine Kinealy, ed., *Frederick Douglass and Ireland: In His Own Words*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 2018).

[4] *Freeman's Journal*, 13 September 1845. See also John W. Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 5 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 1:91.

Columb's Cathedral in Derry, commemorating his death in battle in the Crimean War ten years later.[5]

Much more important, though, are Douglass's expressions of praise for Daniel O'Connell. Within a month of his arrival in Dublin, Douglass got the chance to hear the elderly politician speak at the Repeal movement's new headquarters, Conciliation Hall. The account of the occasion Douglass sent to William Lloyd Garrison dwells on the impact of his oratory: "I have never heard one, by whom I was more completely captivated than by Mr O'Connell," he writes.[6] Douglass in 1845 represents his own formation as an orator as if one Irishman, O'Connor, gave him his first lessons in public speaking on the printed page, while another, O'Connell, followed it with a practical demonstration from the lecture platform.

But it is O'Connell's bold stance against slavery that animates most of Douglass's invocations in his subsequent speeches. In Cork, for example, he says, "I feel grateful to him, for his voice has made American slavery shake to its centre.—I am determined wherever I go, and whatever position I may fill, to speak with grateful emotions of Mr O'Connell's labours."[7] And indeed, he honored his pledge, continuing to praise the man and inviting others to follow his example throughout the rest of his tour. For instance, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he applauds O'Connell's commitment to refuse the "blood-stained offerings" from pro-slavery supporters in the United States.[8] In Exeter, Douglass repeats his conviction that "O'Connell was the friend of the negro."[9] And he cites O'Connell—"no matter for my illustration, how truly or falsely"—employing the image of "the track of a wounded man through a crowd" in his farewell address in London in March 1847.[10]

Still, despite his immense popularity, O'Connell was a controversial figure. If Douglass was happy to praise his abolitionism, he tended to avoid directly endorsing his stance on Repeal.[11] Even at Conciliation Hall, he realizes "he would not be expected to speak of Repeal as a political question." And if Douglass goes on to break his own rule, he takes care to avoid doing so in his own name: "The spirit that animated those whom he then addressed had a kindred spirit in America, and thousands there who hated slavery were devoted to the cause of Ireland (cheers).

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[5] "Colonel Thomas Bunbury Gough," War Memorials Online, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/245094.

[6] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, Dublin, 29 September 1845, in John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 3: *Correspondence*, 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009–), 1:57.

[7] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:45.

[8] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:337–38. In April 1844 a letter from the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to the Free Church of Scotland cited O'Connell's refusal in their condemnation of that Church's fund-raising trip to the United States: *Letter from the Executive Committee of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to the Commissioners of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, Scot.: Myles Macphail, [1844]), 8. This suggests that he may have inspired the "Send Back the Money" campaign in Scotland, started, almost single-handedly, by Henry Clarke Wright, who coined the slogan at a meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society in November 1844 and lectured frequently on the issue from March 1845, until Douglass, James Buffum and George Thompson joined him in early 1846. See also Douglas C. Riach, "Daniel O'Connell and American Anti-Slavery," *Irish Historical Studies* 20, no. 77 (1976): 15n; Alasdair Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland, 1846: Living an Antislavery Life* (Edinburgh, Scot.: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 50–51, 62n19.

[9] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:352.

[10] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 2:27.

[11] Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool, Eng.: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 28n24; Tom Chaffin, *Giant's Causeway: Frederick Douglass's Irish Odyssey and the Making of an American Visionary* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 105, 189; Laurence Fenton, *Frederick Douglass in Ireland: "The Black O'Connell"* (Cork, Ire.: The Collins Press, 2014), 165.

They said that they would be Repealers if they were in Ireland (hear).”[12] Douglass would have known that some of his audiences, especially in Belfast, would have been decidedly hostile to Repeal, but his host in Dublin, Richard Webb, who did not support Repeal, may have advised him to steer clear of the matter in any case.[13]

Furthermore, within the Repeal movement, O’Connell was increasingly under fire from a younger, more radical generation (“Young Ireland”) who were to break away the following year.[14] Douglass may also have been aware of Chartists’ hostility to O’Connell, especially in the West of Scotland, after his denunciation of the Glasgow cotton spinners’ strike in 1837.[15] Even as an abolitionist, O’Connell’s reputation was not unsullied; Garrison thought that his support of antislavery wavered in the face of the levels of support for Repeal among the pro-slavery Irish in the United States.[16] It was only under pressure from James Haughton that O’Connell took the stand against their “blood-stained” donations, and there is little evidence that he afterwards actually returned those he received.[17] If Douglass held firm to an antislavery O’Connell well after his departure from Ireland, he must have found his public affiliation with “The Liberator” awkward and requiring some tact, given that not all those who were warm to his abolitionist message shared Douglass’s enthusiasm for the man.

In Cork he pauses in a lecture to remark: “I cannot proceed without alluding to the man who did much to abolish slavery. I mean Daniel O’Connell.”[18] A few months later in Ayr, needing a Scottish hero to draw to his side, Douglass rewinds the tape, as it were, and begins again, this time choosing someone more locally connected. Using an almost identical formulation (allowing for the shift to indirect speech in the newspaper report), he declares that “he was proud of having been in the land of him who had spoken out so nobly against the oppressions and wrongs of slavery—he alluded, of course, to Robert Burns.”[19]

Douglass spoke and wrote about Burns much more often than he did about O’Connell. The first book he purchased after his flight from Maryland was James Currie’s *The Works of Robert Burns*, which he later passed on to his eldest son, Lewis.[20] He regularly cited the poet, most extensively in a letter he wrote from Ayr about his visit to Burns’s sister Isabella, who still lived

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[12] *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 September 1845. In Newcastle, he similarly tempered his praise for O’Connell, warning that “I am not here to indorse Mr. O’Connell or his agitation.” Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:337.

[13] On Webb’s attitude to O’Connell and Repeal see Fenton, *Frederick Douglass in Ireland*, 92; Christine Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement: “The Saddest People the Sun Sees”* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 125; Riach, “Daniel O’Connell,” 9; Douglas C. Riach, “Richard Davis Webb and Antislavery in Ireland,” in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 164–65.

[14] See Chaffin, *Giant’s Causeway*, 58–60; Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell*, 130–33, 137–38.

[15] See Alexander Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1970), 143; W. Hamish Fraser, *Chartism in Scotland* (Pontypool, Wales: Merlin Press, 2001), 30, 95, 194.

[16] See esp. Riach, “Daniel O’Connell,” 3–25; also Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell*, 114–15, 124–25; Chaffin, *Giant’s Causeway*, 66; John F. Quinn, “ ‘Safe in Old Ireland’: Frederick Douglass’s Tour, 1845–1846,” *The Historian* 64, no. 3/4: 539–40.

[17] Lee Jenkins, “ ‘The Black O’Connell’: Frederick Douglass and Ireland,” *Nineteenth Century Studies* no. 13 (1999): 40n14; Fenton, *Frederick Douglass*, 94; Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell*, 113–15.

[18] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:45.

[19] *Ayr Observer*, 31 March 1846.

[20] The University of Rochester River Campus Libraries’ Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservations has Douglass’s copy of this edition, which is inscribed: “This book was the first bought by me after my escape from slavery. I have owned it nearly thirty one years and now give it to my oldest son as a keep sake. F.D.” www.rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4646.

nearby.[21] Three years later he addressed a Burns Supper in Rochester, New York, defending his right to do so, "though I am not a Scotchman and have a coloured skin": "but if a warm love of Scotch character—a high appreciation of Scotch genius—constitutes any of the qualities of a true Scotch heart, then indeed does a Scotch heart throb beneath these ribs."[22] In both Cork and Ayr the attribution of abolitionist sympathies is extravagant, given that the priorities of both O'Connell and Burns lay elsewhere. It has proven difficult to find from Burns any unqualified statement in support of the antislavery agitation that flourished during his final years, and much has been made of his plans (seriously entertained or not) to take on a job as overseer on a Jamaican plantation before the success of his first volume of poems persuaded him to stay in Scotland.[23] But Burns, in addition to being conveniently dead, was venerated more universally by his compatriots than O'Connell. Political divisions in Ireland were expressed as for or against O'Connell. In Scotland, by contrast, everyone claimed Burns; they just adapted him to suit their various, and often opposed, purposes. There was a Tory Burns, a Whig Burns, a Chartist Burns and so on.

II

If Douglass himself took the initiative to affirm a kind of intellectual or political affiliation to local heroes through a shrewd invocation of their names, others made similar connections on his behalf. For example, the church minister who welcomed him to Dundee, George Gilfillan, later referred to Douglass as "the Burns of the African race."[24] Gilfillan himself might have felt justified in doing so, as merely echoing Douglass's own admiration for Burns, but such a move, made in Douglass's absence and without his consent, figures the relationship between them in quite a different way. More significantly, while Douglass expresses a certain connection with Burns, as one among many other famous figures who impress or inspire him, Gilfillan identifies Douglass *as* Burns, inviting his readers to consider certain implied attributes of the poet (his command of language, perhaps, or his rise from rural obscurity to international renown) as those which uniquely define the antislavery campaigner's whole being.

"The Burns of the African race" is an example of what students of rhetoric call *antonomasia*, the substitution of a proper noun for a common noun denoting qualities associated with the historic bearer of that name. Thus, someone might be referred to as "a little Hitler" or "some modern Robespierre" or "the next Einstein."[25] The figure relies heavily on a shared understanding with the audience, who is assumed to not only know who the named person is, but also which of their characteristics are being brought into play. But this does not prevent it from being controversial, for antonomasia is especially vulnerable to criticism that it relies on a comparison that is inappropriate or even offensive. In particular, structures of power dictate who gets compared to whom, and to what extent the relationship is reversible. For antonomasia frequently reinforces dominant standards of description and assessment, a point well made by

[21] Frederick Douglass to Abigail Mott, Ayr, 23 March 1846, in McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 3, 1:111–12. For further discussion of the letter see Pettinger, *Frederick Douglas and Scotland*, 151–55.
[22] J[ohn] D[ick], "Burns' Anniversary Festival," *North Star*, 2 February 1849. For further discussion of the event see Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland*, 156–64.
[23] See Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland*, 135–50.
[24] *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, 24 January 1851.
[25] Antonomasia can also refer to the substitution of a common noun for a proper, as when Daniel O'Connell is called "The Liberator," but it is the other form that largely concerns us here. For a good discussion of antonomasia of the proper noun see Sarah Leroy, "Quels fonctionnements discursifs pour l'antonomase du nom propre?" *Cahiers de praxématique* no. 35 (2000): 87–113.

Mona Eltahawy, responding to a phrase that appeared in several tributes to Nawal El Saadawi after her death in 2021: “I am enraged that some refer to Nawal as the “Simone de Beauvoir of the Arab world.” Do not call her that. She is the Nawal El Saadawi of the world. We are not local versions of white feminists.”[26] Such a figurative use of a proper name may be fuelled by good intentions—the speaker implying that A is worthy of comparison to B, perhaps even destined to surpass them in fame. Sometimes, though, the comparison may be seen as excessive—perhaps deliberately so—and signify rather that A could never match the ideal represented by B. Either way, prevailing norms—such as Whiteness—are often reinforced, as Eltahawy underscores.

Among African American contemporaries of Douglass who also toured Europe, the actor Mary Webb, for example, was known as the “coloured Siddons,” after the better-known White performer Sarah Siddons.[27] And in a slightly more convoluted form of antonomasia that makes the substitution in two steps, the singer Elizabeth Greenfield was dubbed the “black Swan” in a revision of Jenny Lind’s nickname, “the Swedish nightingale.”[28] Later, Harriet Tubman became known as “the Moses of her people,” one of many leaders of African descent to earn the moniker “Black Moses,” including Marcus Garvey and Jomo Kenyatta.[29] The subjects of such renamings rarely have any say over the matter. Gilfillan’s remark was made several years after Douglass’s departure from Scotland in an article he may never have read. But in Dublin in 1845 Douglass actively invited an association between himself and another figure at an event in which he spoke. The circumstances bear examination.

When O’Connell invited Douglass to address the audience at Conciliation Hall, Douglass told them: “The poor trampled slave of Carolina had heard the name of the Liberator with joy and hope, and he himself had heard the wish that some black O’Connell would yet rise up amongst his countrymen, and cry, ‘Agitate, agitate, agitate.’ ”[30] He was referring to a public meeting in Glasgow ten years earlier at which O’Connell famously expressed (to great cheers) the hope that one day “some black O’Connell might rise among his fellow slaves, who would cry, agitate, agitate, agitate.”[31] Douglass’s testimony suggests that O’Connell’s words travelled far and wide. But he would have known that in quoting them he was not only paying tribute to the transatlantic reach of O’Connell’s reputation, stretching beyond the Irish diaspora, he was also tempting the audience to imagine that Douglass himself was—or one day would be—the leader O’Connell had wished for. Many years later Douglass recalled that O’Connell himself spelled it out for them, claiming that at the meeting he “playfully called me the ‘Black O’Connell of the United States.’ ”[32] Whether this was true or not—and newspaper reports of the occasion simply noted that he “introduced to the meeting Mr. Douglas, who had been an American slave” (a more striking introduction would surely have been mentioned)—Douglass did nothing at the time to repudiate the fantasy of himself as a redeemer formed in the Irish leader’s image.[33]

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[26] Mona Eltahawy, “A Savage and Dangerous Woman: Nawal El Saadawi,” *Feminist Giant* no. 28, March 2021. www.feministgiant.com/p/essay-nawal-el-saadawis-savage-and.

[27] Lisa Merrill, “ ‘Most Fitting Companions’: Making Mixed-Race Bodies Visible in Antebellum Public Spaces,” *Theatre Survey* 56, no. 2 (2015): 156.

[28] Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Colour Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 112.

[29] Sarah H. Bradford, *Harriet: The Moses of her People* (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Son, 1886).

[30] *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 September 1845.

[31] *Glasgow Chronicle*, 25 September 1835.

[32] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself* [1892] in McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 3:185.

[33] This wording was used in the *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 September 1845; *Dublin Evening Post*, 30 September 1845; *Dublin Weekly Register*, 4 October 1845; and *The Pilot*, 1 October 1845. Other reports were equally matter-of-fact:

As Douglass undoubtedly recognized, O'Connell's rhetorical flourish in Glasgow riffed on the oft-told story of how, during the revolution in colonial Saint-Domingue, the French general Étienne Laveaux claimed that the rebel leader Toussaint Louverture was the "black Spartacus" predicted by the Enlightenment *philosophe* Abbé Raynal two decades before.[34] The story circulated widely in nineteenth-century abolitionist discourse, popularized by Marcus Rainsford in 1805.[35] George Pitt's play *Toussaint L'Ouverture, or the Black Spartacus* was staged in London in June 1846, suggesting the parallel was still compelling, although there is no evidence that Douglass went to see it.[36] In her historical romance *The Hour and the Man* (1839), Harriet Martineau speculated that Toussaint "heard these words and in his heart also were they glowing."[37] According to C. L. R. James, "He came in the end to believe in himself as the black Spartacus foretold by Raynal."[38] But Toussaint did not go so far as to adopt the designation applied to him by others. Douglass likewise resisted the temptation. He was happy to remind his audience at Conciliation Hall of O'Connell's famous invocation of a hypothetical Black counterpart. But to call himself "the Black O'Connell"—even as "playfully" as O'Connell may have applied it to him—would have trapped him within the terms of a contemporary whose agenda he must have realized was not always congruent with his own.

This would not have been Douglass's only reservation. If Raynal and Laveaux looked to ancient Rome for their model of Black leadership, O'Connell narcissistically looked in the mirror. And—if we are to trust Douglass's later recollection—O'Connell not only compared Douglass to himself, but bestowed on him his own name. This must have been more unsettling than flattering. It positions O'Connell as the figurative—or adoptive—father of Douglass, and the gesture is uncomfortably close to the convention of enslavers naming the enslaved after themselves—a mark of ownership, as well as of paternity, which was often the case, too.

Would Douglass never adopt a name like "the Black O'Connell," bestowed by another? The tragedian, Ira Aldridge—who was touring the West of Scotland when Douglass arrived in Glasgow in January 1846—did. In 1825 the London *Times* had dubbed him, sarcastically, "the African Roscius" (after the Roman actor, Quintus Roscius Gallus) in a way that was meant to suggest that he fell far short of the comparison. (A good example of a deliberately offensive use of antonomasia.) But Aldridge turned the nickname to his advantage and used it to advertise his shows, and even spun an increasingly elaborate and fictitious biography to fit.[39]

Douglass was presented with several opportunities to follow suit. In a newspaper report of one of his earliest speeches in Massachusetts, the writer "could not help thinking of Spartacus," specifically Edwin Forrest's performance in Robert Montgomery Bird's drama *The Gladiator*

"Mr O'Connell requested the meeting not to separate for a moment, as there was a person of the name of Mr. Douglas, one who had been a slave, and who would address them" (*Waterford Chronicle*, 1 October 1845; *Tipperary Free Press*, 1 October 1845); "Frederick Douglas, who was recently a slave in the United States, having been introduced to the meeting" (*Dublin Evening Mail*, 1 October 1845; *Cork Examiner*, 1 October 1845); "Mr O'Connell next introduced a black gentleman, named Douglas, who had been a slave" (London *Standard*, 1 October 1845; London *Morning Herald*, 1 October 1845).

[34] [Louis] Dubroca, *La vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Dubroca, 1802), 16.

[35] Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* (London: James Dundee, 1805), 247.

[36] Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 214–66.

[37] Harriet Martineau, *The Hour and the Man*, 3 vols. (London: Edward Moxon, 1841), 1:191.

[38] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, rev. ed. (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 250.

[39] Bernth Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: The Early Years, 1807–33* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 83–85.

(1831), which premiered in New York in the wake of Nat Turner’s insurrection in Virginia.[40] In 1846 a reporter for the *Manchester Examiner* ventured to remark of Douglass: “He is tall, and of great muscular strength; indeed, he might serve as a model for a negro Hercules.”[41] Spartacus and Hercules were classical prototypes, polished by the centuries in a way the contentious O’Connell was not. But Douglass himself had no wish to take their names, perhaps partly because they were uncomfortably close to those like Caesar, Scipio, and Pompey, names commonly assigned by enslavers to mock the powerlessness of the enslaved rather than as a sign of respect. In any case, in 1845 Douglass already bore the name of an ancient forebear. He did not have to wait for a theatre critic, newspaper reporter, or political leader to make the first move.

III

After slipping out of Baltimore in 1838, Douglass changed his name several times to keep pursuers off his track.[42] When he arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a few months later, Nathan Johnson encouraged him to adopt the patronymic “Douglass” (after the hero of Walter Scott’s *Lady of the Lake*) several years before he took to the public stage. In his account of the renaming in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Douglass generously compares Johnson to the character in the poem:

> Considering the noble hospitality and manly character of Nathan Johnson, I have felt that he, better than I, illustrated the virtues of the great Scottish chief. Sure I am, that had any slave-catcher entered his domicile, with a view to molest any one of his household, he would have shown himself like him of the “stalwart hand.”[43]

But he must have seen parallels with himself, too. The couplet he quotes in part more fully reads: “Douglas of the stalwart hand / Was exiled from his native land.”[44] Like the fugitive slave, James Douglas is an outlaw and an exile. At one point in the poem he is compared to a “hunted stag.”[45] This must have had some resonance for the author of the 1845 *Narrative* who recounted his escape from “the hunters of men.”[46]

Later, he would be pleased to discover that he shared the name with another James Douglas, the legendary, ferocious commander who fought alongside Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), commonly known as “the Black Douglas.” Many Scots would have known of his exploits from Walter Scott’s popular *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828–30), dashing stories from history designed to entertain his sick grandson. In his *Tales*, Scott suggests that the Black Douglas was so-called because of his “swarthy complexion” and “dark hair.”[47] But for his enemies, the epithet was less likely to refer to his appearance than to his ruthless cruelty. “You must know,” writes Scott,

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[40] *Liberator*, 3 December 1841.
[41] *Manchester Examiner*, 11 July 1846. In a private letter of 13 May 1847, James Alexander described Douglass as “a black Demosthenes” after seeing him the previous day. John Hall, ed., *Forty Years’ Familiar Letters of James W. Alexander, D.D.*, 2 vols (New York: Charles Scribner, 1860), 2:69.
[42] Douglass, *Narrative* [1845], in Blassingame, McKivigan, and Hinks, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 1:77.
[43] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, in Blassingame, McKivigan, and Hinks, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 2:197.
[44] Walter Scott, *Lady of the Lake* [1810], v, xxiv, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. J. Logie Robertson, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), 259.
[45] Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, II, xxxvii, in *Poetical Works*, 229.
[46] Douglass, *Narrative* [1845], in Blassingame, McKivigan, and Hinks, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 1:78.
[47] Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, Scot.: Robert Cadell, 1836), 1:174.

"that the name of Douglas had become so terrible to the English, that the women used to frighten their children with it, and say to them when they behave ill, that they 'would make the Black Douglas take them.' "[48]

The whole line of Sir James's descendants were known as the Black Douglases, starting with William, the first earl of Douglas, whose son was killed by English forces commanded by Sir Henry "Hotspur" Percy at the Battle of Otterburn (1388). The third earl, Archibald the Grim, also fell foul of Percy, who took him prisoner at the Battle of Homildon Hill (1402), commemorated in a poem Douglass published in his newspaper in 1855.[49] Forty years later it was not the English but King James II of Scotland who arranged—at the so-called "Black Dinner"—the murder of the sixth earl, concerned that the family was rivaling the Crown in wealth and military power.[50]

In Scotland, these legends were well known, and the briefest reference and a metaphorical wink to the audience was all the abolitionist needed to exploit the "heroic" and literary associations of his name. And from his hotel in Perth on 27 January 1846 in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, he composed a response to the public accusation made by A.C.C. Thompson, a Marylander, alleging that his *Narrative* was a "catalogue of lies" and the Frederick Bailey he had known as a boy could not possibly have been its author:

> I feel myself almost a new man—freedom has given me new life. I fancy you would scarcely know me. I think I have altered very much in my general appearance, and know that I have in my manners. You remember when I used to meet you on the road to St Michaels, or near Mr Covey's lane gate, I hardly dared to lift my head, and look up at you. If I should meet you now, amid the free hills of old Scotland, where the ancient "black Douglass" once met his foes, I presume I might summon sufficient fortitude to look you full in the face; and were you to attempt to make a slave of me, it is possible you might find me almost as disagreeable a subject, as was the Douglass to whom I have just referred. Of one thing, I am certain—you would see a great change in me![51]

Spelling the name of James Douglas the way he spelled his own, whether intentional or not, reinforces the implication here that the abolitionist is—"playfully," no doubt—claiming common cause with an old and revered Scottish dynasty. He presents himself to Thompson as one who has acquired a "fortitude" akin to that of a medieval warlord.[52]

That the feudal Douglases were not only famous but famous for their violence, however, poses a problem to the abolitionist who at the time was still, for the most part, a dutiful advocate of Garrison's doctrine of non-resistance. The story of the Douglases is littered with acts of

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[48] Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather*, 1:142.

[49] Luke Lichen, "A Lady's Tear," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 6 April 1855.

[50] The best modern history of the family during this period is Michael Brown, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300–1455* (East Linton, Scot.: Tuckwell Press, 1998). For further discussion of the representation of the Douglas dynasty in Scottish literature see Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland*, 108–114.

[51] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, Perth, 27 January 1846, in McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 3, 1:85.

[52] This move was perhaps the most audacious of what Tavia Nyong'o describes as a series of "perverse and unexpected affiliations" or "disidentifications" enacted by Douglass in relation to Scottish history and culture. Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 131. George Shepperson, who quotes the passage about the "ancient 'black Douglass' " at the head of his essay on "Frederick Douglass and Scotland," admits Douglass "seems to have found some peculiar fascination and destiny in the Scottish associations of his name" without pursuing the matter further. George Shepperson, "Frederick Douglass and Scotland," *Journal of Negro History* 38, no. 3 (1953): 307.

unwarranted savagery arising from struggles with rival Scottish nobles as well as invading English armies. As he worked on his *Tales*, Scott wrote:

> The morning was damp, dripping and unpleasant; so I even made a work of necessity, and set to the *Tales* like a dragon. I murdered McLellan of Bomby at Thrieve Castle; stabbed the Black Douglas in the town of Stirling; astonished King James before Roxburgh; and stifled the Earl of Mar in his bath in the Canongate. A wild world, my masters, this Scotland of ours must have been.[53]

With these events long past, Scott can relish the bloodshed as if he were writing fiction. One who could not appreciate this violent history was the pacifist Henry Clarke Wright, Douglass’s fellow campaigner who had joined up with him in Perth. In his letters from the Scottish Borders two months later, Wright finds it impossible to withhold his solemn judgement of a different age: “It has been a golgotha and a field of blood,” he wrote from Jedburgh, while in Berwick he is reminded of “Wallace, Bruce, Edward, Northumberland, and Douglass, and many other of the butchers and tigers of mankind.”[54]

As a nonresistant, Douglass might have wanted to avoid being identified with such butchers and tigers. And in January 1846, as I will show, we can see him wrestling with the moral and political ramifications of choosing such a violent man as a role model. Alternately pushing against the limits of moral suasion and retreating, sometimes within the space of a few lines, it is as if Douglass was rehearsing his eventual break with Garrison, perhaps without fully realizing it.

In his response to Thompson, in order to make the reversal of their relationship as dramatic as possible, Douglass contrasts their former encounters in Maryland, in which the young slave “hardly dared to lift my head, and look up at you,” with a hypothetical one in Scotland, in which Thompson is the one quaking before a powerful man capable of awesome retribution should he be wronged. Some readers of the letter might have been reminded of the episode known bleakly as “Douglass’s Larder,” in which the Good Sir James recaptured his fortress from the English, “and, putting the garrison to the sword, mingled the mangled bodies with a large stock of provisions which the English had amassed, and set fire to the castle.”[55] But Douglass, who hints at a possible justification for ancient violence by implying that it was in the cause of freedom, can only refer to this threat euphemistically as “disagreeable.” He may have chosen the word carefully to spare the

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[53] Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 2:39 (entry for 29 September 1827).

[54] Henry Clarke Wright to William Lloyd Garrison, Jedburgh, 19 March 1846 and Berwick, 22 March 1846, *Liberator*, 1 May 1846. Nathaniel Rogers provided a vivid account of exploring Melrose Abbey with Garrison en route to Scotland after attending the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. Nathaniel P. Rogers, “Ride into Edinburgh,” in *A Collection from the Newspaper Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers* (Concord, Mass.: John R. French, 1847), 113–15; see also James Mott, *Three Months in Great Britain* (Philadelphia: J. Miller M’Kim, 1841), 73; Lucretia Mott, *Slavery and “The Woman Question”: Lucretia Mott’s Diary of Her Visit to Great Britain to Attend the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840*, ed. Frederick B. Tolles (Haverford, Pa.: Friends’ Historical Association, 1952), 72–73. For later accounts by abolitionists of their visits to such historic Scottish sites see William Wells Brown, *Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), 186–93; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, 2 vols. (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co., 1854), 1:128–68; Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (London: John Snow, 1855), 344–47; Julia Griffiths, “Letters from the Old World—Number XXI,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 27 June 1856 and “Letters from the Old World—Number XXII,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 4 July 1856. For a useful discussion that bears on these accounts, see Elisa Tamarkin, “Black Anglophilia; or, the Sociability of Antislavery,” *American Literary History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 444–78.

[55] Walter Scott, *The History of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, & Green, 1830), 1:96.

blushes of the Garrisonians, but, like many euphemisms, it may also represent a sly avowal that knows all too well what terrors lie behind it.

Two days later, in Dundee, the free hills of Scotland once more make their way into a letter, this time to Francis Jackson, an abolitionist colleague of Garrison's. Not intended for publication, as the letter from Perth was, it may have offered Douglass the opportunity to express himself more honestly, although he would still have been tailoring his views to match those of his addressee:

> I am now as you will perceive by the date of this letter in old Scotland—almost every hill, river, mountain and lake of which has been made classic by the heroic deeds of her noble sons. Scarcely has a stream but what has been poured into song, or a hill that is not associated with some force and bloody conflict between liberty and slavery. I had a view the other day of what are called the Grampion mountains that divide east Scotland from the west. I was told that here ancient crowned heads use to meet, contend and struggle in deadly conflict for supremacy, causing those grand old hills to run blood, each warming cold steal in the others heart.[56]

In this passage, Douglass's namesake disappears into the more generic "noble sons," but their cause, at least initially, is defined as "heroic" and implicitly in defence of "liberty" against "slavery" (Douglass on this occasion finding it advantageous to deploy the term "slavery" metaphorically, to weld the cause of the "noble sons" to his own abolitionism, a usage he normally strongly criticized). The violence, though, is more openly acknowledged: blood runs freely in Douglass's prose here. At the same time, the noble cause becomes more ambiguous, less a struggle for freedom from foreign rule than a "deadly conflict for supremacy." Douglass seems to be admitting here that the foes of his illustrious forebears were not just the English invaders but rivals competing for personal power and wealth. Having gone much further than his earlier letter in recognizing what this ancient violence entailed, he now feels compelled to reflect on what it means for him to celebrate it:

> My soul sickens at the thought yet I see in myself all those elements of character which were I to yield to their promptings might lead me to deeds as blood as those at which my soul now sickens, and from which I now turn with disgust and shame. Thank God liberty is no longer to be contended for and gained by instruments of death. A higher, a nobler a mightier than carnal weapon is placed into our hands—one which hurls defiance at all the improvements of carnal warfare. It is the righteous appeal to the understanding and the heart—with this we can withstand the most fiery of all the darts of perdition itself. I see that America is boasting of her naval, and military power—let her boast. She may build her walls and her forts, making them proof against ball and bomb. But while there is a single voice in her midst to charge home upon her the duty of emancipation neither her army, nor her navy can protect her from the knawing of a guilty conscience.[57]

Douglass here—with his reference to "carnal weapons"—echoes the defiantly pacifist language of Garrison's "Declaration of Sentiments."[58] And yet in the speech he made the following day these

[56] Frederick Douglass to Francis Jackson, Dundee, 29 January 1846, in McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 3, 1:89.
[57] Douglass to Jackson, Dundee, 29 January 1846, in McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 3, 1:89–90.
[58] William Lloyd Garrison, "Declaration of Sentiments," *Liberator*, 14 December 1833, which speaks of the need to reject "the use of all carnal weapons."

misgivings seem to be cast aside. Douglass is pleased to stand before his audience at the Bell Street Chapel and recycle the phrases that had caused him such disgust and shame the night before in order to massage his listeners’ patriotism. In that standard ritual of the touring performer, Douglass declares himself happy to be in “a land whose every hill has been made classic by heroic deeds performed by her noble sons—a land whose every brook and river carry the songs of freedom as they pass to the ocean—a land whose hills have nearly all been watered with blood in behalf of freedom.”[59] Although Douglass is quick to qualify the bloodshed as “heroic” and “in behalf of freedom,” he risks blunting the force of his argument against the Free Church, which he condemns immediately afterwards for striking “hands in good Christian fellowship with men whose hands are full of blood.” The blood of slavery and the blood of freedom are uncomfortably close together.[60]

A week later he was back in Glasgow, preparing the text of his *Narrative* for the second Irish edition, writing a new preface, and inserting his letter to Garrison (and its enclosed response to Thompson) as an appendix. His publisher in Dublin, Richard Webb, characteristically thought the insertion was “clever but swaggering.”[61] But Douglass clearly set much store by it, substantially revised the text for publication, and reworked several passages from it in speeches he made in Scotland in the weeks and months that followed. Here is how he refashions his invitation to Thompson to picture him as he is now:

> I feel myself a new man. Freedom has given me a new life. The change wrought in me is truly amazing. If you should meet me now, you would scarcely know me. You know when I used to meet you near Covey’s wood-gate, I hardly dared to look up at you. If I should meet you where I now am, amid the free hills of Old Scotland, where the ancient “Black Douglass” once met his foes, I presume I might summon sufficient fortitude to look you full in the face. It may be that, wearing the brave name which I have assumed, might lead me to deeds which would render our meeting not the most agreeable. Especially might this be the case, if you should attempt to enslave me. You would see a wonderful difference in me.[62]

No sentence survives unchanged. If the first version celebrates a “great change in me” (referred to once), the second twice takes it up an adjectival notch, intensifying it first as “amazing” and then as a “wonderful difference.” Cautious qualifications (“almost” and “I fancy”) and redundant phrases (“lift up my head”) are deleted and a rather pedantic distinction between how certain he is of his alteration of “manners” as opposed to his “general appearance” is dropped, making his tone more assertive. But the revision also makes more of the way this “change” in Douglass is wrought by movement in space as well as the passage of time, marked by a “where” as well as a “when.” “If I should meet you now” becomes “If I should meet you *where I now am*,” emphasizing the symbolic importance of his location in “Old Scotland.” And, as the passage builds to its climax—the hypothetical encounter between the author and his adversary on Scottish ground, which symbolizes the new relation of power between them—Douglass’s retaliation, previously rendered

[59] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:148.
[60] Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 1:149.
[61] Richard Webb to Edmund Quincy, Dublin, 2 February 1846, in *British and American Abolitionists*, ed. Clare Taylor (Edinburgh, Scot.: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 250.
[62] Douglass, *Narrative* [1846], in Blassingame, McKivigan, and Hinks, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 1:158–59.

as “disagreeable” is amended to “not the most agreeable,” a use of litotes that mischievously draws even more attention to the violence of the retribution he has in store for his opponent.

But perhaps the most significant revision is that here, the author of the *Narrative*, rather than simply comparing the power of his retaliation to that of the Black Douglas, implies that this power is somehow *derived* from the “brave name which I have assumed.” A statement that at once reaffirms the appropriateness of the name he chose in New Bedford and allows him to lay claim to a fictive ancestry through which he has—supernaturally, as it were—inherited physical strength and courage. An “amazing” and “wonderful” change indeed, that, taking on an almost mythic quality, releases him from the trap of being no more than a copy of a flawed living politician. No wonder then that it was as a “Black Douglas” and not a “Black O’Connell” that he first declares his independence.

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Frederick Douglass's Gradual and Sincere Shift on the U.S. Constitution

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Prologue: Radical Shift or Refinement?

Frederick Douglass "hated the Constitution until the moment he decided to worship it," historian James Oakes tersely states.[1] This is true regarding his public work, so it is initially a tempting conclusion. However, it is an oversimplification. Paul Finkelman claims that Douglass changed his view primarily out of expediency rather than some sort of inconsistency, but this is also not a sound interpretation.[2] Douglass's changing assessment of the Constitution is accounted for within many scholarly books and articles, but the reasons for his shift are either misunderstood or not examined in sufficient detail. Douglass initially subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's claim that the Constitution was a proslavery compact with the devil. A decade after first meeting Garrison, however, he would become a staunch defender of the Constitution by utilizing a strictly textual interpretation of the document. Though he attained a prominent reputation when joining with Garrison, Douglass remained in a subservient position under his wing, a key point that must be examined when accounting for his shift of opinion. There is evidence that Douglass's faithfulness to Garrisonian orthodoxy regarding the Constitution was not as rigid as his public statements suggest, specifically as seen in his recounting of his time with the Garrisonians. This article will explain the motivations for Douglass changing his view and describe the content of his constitutional thought during and after the break with Garrison to convey the gradual and sincere nature of his change of opinion.

Douglass's turn from rejection to support of the Constitution occurred over several years. Initially, his perspective was primarily shaped by his personal experience, and his visceral hatred of America was amenable with the Garrisonian conception of a proslavery Constitution. America had legally permitted slavery, so the founders and the regime they devised must have supported slavery, too. Douglass's 1851 "Change of Opinion Announced" editorial would be the first time he publicly endorsed the Constitution as antislavery. This pro-Constitution stance became a cornerstone of Douglass's political thought for most of the remainder of his public life, and it is the position he took in many of his most enduring speeches and writings. As James Colaiaco notes, "His acceptance of the political process was not opportunism, as the Garrisonians charged. Douglass never abandoned his moral goals. He merely altered the means by which they might be implemented."[3] In other words, Douglass saw that the anti-political methods of the Garrisonians were ill-suited to attain his goal of abolition. Philip S. Foner further explains, "Step by step

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[1] James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 92. Oakes includes this line as part of a general description of Douglass as inconsistent and emotional in contrast to the more stolid Abraham Lincoln.

[2] Paul Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution: From Garrisonian Abolitionist to Lincoln Republican," *Missouri Law Review* 81, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 64.

[3] James A. Colaiaco, *Frederick Douglass and the Fourth of July* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 77.

Douglass arrived at the conclusion that there was no need to dissolve the Union. He saw clearly that disunion would isolate the slaves and leave them at the mercy of their masters."[4] Foner accurately describes Douglass's change as gradual and does not question his sincerity, but he offers an incomplete account of how the natural rights philosophy of the American Founding furthered Douglass's shift. Douglass's end always remained the same, but he came to see the Constitution and Union as key to attaining the abolition of slavery, for reasons both practical and principled.

Scholarship that depicts the change of opinion tends to relegate it to a section within a larger treatment, but it is my contention that Douglass's political thought cannot be understood without making the nature and content of his shift clear. Without explaining the break with Garrison first, one may select texts from earlier or later in Douglass's career that align with their own views, rendering a correct interpretation of Douglass's political thought unlikely. Nick Bromell offers one of the more extended treatments of Douglass's shift in a chapter from his book *The Powers of Dignity*, but his representation of the content of Douglass's political philosophy is somewhat mistaken. The core of Bromell's depiction is encapsulated in this line: "On the one hand, he insisted on the intellectual and ethical legitimacy of changing his mind, so long as such seeming inconsistency was actually guided by a 'fixed principle of honesty.' "[5] Bromell uses Douglass's own words here to show that he was not simply inconsistent, even explaining that historians are mistaken in depicting his ideological shift as such. He explains that Douglass believed "citizens should regard their democracy as never fully achieved and always open to revision." The problem with Bromell's treatment is that he depicts Douglass as akin to a philosophic Progressive with respect to this notion of change and historical contingency. He claims that Douglass believed in a higher law, but also that individual people inevitably are self-interested, and thus incapable of ascertaining this law without bias rooted in their own historical circumstances. Rather, this essay argues that Douglass understood the unchanging nature of justice and believed that natural rights could be ascertained by rational human beings. This means that, while perhaps flexible in approach, he foresaw a fixed end with human interests directed toward a more noble existence. Bromell concludes this chapter: "Therefore, while the citizens of democracy must be guided by fixed and eternal truths, the only secure foundation of their polity is a principle of flexibility and openness to difference; only such a principle can welcome and harmonize the contingency and pluralism that any flourishing democracy rightly produces."[6] Douglass believed that there were fixed principles of justice that could be attained, so this notion of flexibility must be taken in light of this fact.[7] Douglass was a reformer in the pursuit of the realization of natural rights of self-governing human beings that transcend time and place but have been uniquely engrained within the American Founding, specifically in its principles and republican institutions.

[4] Philip S. Foner, "Frederick Douglass" in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Volume 2, Pre–Civil War Decade*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 53.
[5] Nick Bromell, *The Powers of Dignity: The Black Political Philosophy of Frederick Douglass* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021), 118.
[6] Bromell, *The Powers of Dignity*, 123.
[7] This will be discussed in greater detail later. Douglass's response to the *Dred Scott* case is especially illuminating regarding the importance of Founding principles and constitutional provisions.

Frederick Douglass, Garrisonian Purist

Frederick Douglass's initial Garrisonianism resulted in large part from his experience under the institution of slavery during his formative years. Following his time in bondage, he thoroughly acquainted himself with the work of William Lloyd Garrison as an avid reader of the *Liberator*. Garrison's impassioned hatred of slavery and the country that legalized it appealed to Douglass. It was under Garrison's wing that Douglass rose to prominence in public life. Douglass's entrance into the Garrisonian fold provided Garrison with a new opportunity to advance the cause of "moral suasion," a rhetorical strategy that amounted to stirring up the emotions of audiences with righteous anger against the inhumanity of slavery. Douglass's rousing personal tale describing the institution's brutality was clearly useful for this purpose, and he earned a reputation as a great orator while under the tutelage of Garrison.

The profound effects that Garrison and his acolytes had on Douglass as he entered public life cannot be overstated. In a eulogy for Garrison, Douglass described his mindset upon hearing Garrison for the first time. He exclaimed, "I shall never forget the feeling with which I went to hear this man: I was only a few months from the house of bondage. . . . In him I saw the resurrection and life of the dead and buried hopes of my long enslaved people."[8] Garrison was a savior figure to Douglass, and he did his best to advance the Garrisonian cause. David Blight's exhaustive biography of Douglass provides a thorough account of this time with the Garrisonians. Blight astutely notes the way Douglass was perceived at the time: "He was the ornament, the object, the former piece of property who could speak and write, who could match wits and logic with even his most determined critics, a youthful, beautiful brown man who made people think."[9] He further explains that this superior intellect was supplemented by the fervor of a preacher seeking repentance from a nation that had permitted the evil of slavery. Douglass's natural talents and religious zeal were shaped, in part, by Garrison's influence. "In the early 1840s," writes Blight, "Douglass did swallow whole the cluster of ideas and strategies the prophetic Garrison had honed into rigid orthodoxy. . . . Garrison took abolitionism into the realm of Christian anarchy, human moral perfectionism, and rejection of virtually all governmental authority."[10] Yet, this adherence to orthodoxy would prove to be ephemeral. The tenet of the Garrisonian platform that forbade political involvement became untenable to Douglass over time, to such an extent that the man who had been a zealous fan of the *Liberator* would cross over to the ranks of the political abolitionists.

Written by Himself: Independence Expanded, Orthodoxy Questioned

To be clear, Garrison provided Douglass the opportunity to utilize his rhetorical skill at a time in which few believed a former slave could speak as eloquently as he did. In 1845, Douglass published his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, in part to disprove the notion that he had not in fact been a slave. Reflecting back on this time in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he writes, "People doubted if I had ever been a slave. They said I did not talk like a slave, look like a slave, nor act like a slave, and that they believed I had never

[8] Frederick Douglass, "Eulogy for William Lloyd Garrison" in *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection*, eds. Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor (Edinburgh, Scot.: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 452–53.
[9] David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 104.
[10] Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 104–05.

been south of Mason and Dixon's line."[11] *Narrative* reveals the quality of writer and thinker that Douglass was even early in his public career. Concurrently, it also conveys the harsh reality of his life as a slave, thus disproving the notions of his critics. He expresses a similar sentiment in an 1846 letter to the editor of the *Liberator*: "But for you, sir, the pro-slavery people in the North might have persisted . . . in representing me as an imposter—a free negro who had never been South of Mason & Dixon's line—one whom the abolitionists, acting on jesuitical principle, that the end justifies the means, had educated and sent forth to attract to their faltering cause."[12] *Narrative* showed in unflinching detail that he had indeed been a slave, not a free Black assuming the identity of a runaway slave simply to further the Garrisonian agenda.

The way Douglass was treated by the Garrisonians helps explain, in part, why he abandoned their ranks. While he may not have been the imposter that critics charged him to be, Douglass did serve as an instrument for Garrison to display the horrors of slavery. However, he would not tolerate such a limiting position in perpetuity. Douglass relates a telling anecdote in *My Bondage and My Freedom*: "It was said to me, 'Better have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned.' "[13] While he ascribed the best motivations to his Garrisonian friends in giving such advice, this clearly was not the man Douglass sought to be. He was neither expected nor permitted to fully utilize his intellect and share his own views of how to solve the problem of slavery.

Douglass looked back upon his time with Garrison in *My Bondage and My Freedom* and *Life and Times*, sharing similar accounts in both: "My first opinions," he writes in the latter, "were naturally derived and honestly entertained . . . finding their views supported by the united and entire history of every department of the government."[14] Slavery was legally sanctioned within the Constitution, so he could revere neither the document nor the regime that it devised. He held on to his Garrisonian views when he first encountered ex-Garrisonian Gerrit Smith.[15] It was Smith who would help fund Douglass's endeavors as a publisher, and it would be in his paper that Douglass could explicate his own thoughts on how to address the end of slavery, unfettered by the limitations of serving in the Garrisonian ranks.[16]

The break with William Lloyd Garrison had been all but finalized with the foundation of Douglass's own newspaper, the *North Star*, and the turn toward independence that it represented. John R. McKivigan and Rebecca A. Pattillo note that Douglass selected Rochester, New York, as the location to publish the paper, a decision they call "a calculated maneuver by Douglass to get

[11] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* in John W. Blassingame and Peter P. Hinks, eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 2: *Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 2:208.

[12] Frederick Douglass to William Lloyd Garrison, 27 January 1846, in John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 3: *Correspondence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 1:83. Douglass is referring to A. C. C. Thompson here in a letter to the editor of the *Liberator*. While he will offer criticisms of the extract by Thompson published in the paper, Douglass thanks him for confirming the veracity of his *Narrative*.

[13] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 208.

[14] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* in John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 2: *Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), 3:204. See also *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 203–205.

[15] John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Twelve, 2008), 145.

[16] David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 30.

outside the Garrisonian orbit."[17] Blight explains, "The *Liberator*'s founder had opposed Douglass's independent venture, which the young editor called the *North Star*, from the very inception of the idea."[18] McKivigan aptly describes the arguments the Garrisonians made in opposition. For instance, they said there were other newspapers with Black editors, so it would not be financially viable. "Most significantly," he emphasizes, "some white Garrisonians advised Douglass that he lacked the prerequisite education to be an editor and should stick to lecturing. Underlying all of these arguments was a belief that Douglass, only a few years removed from slavery, still required close tutelage."[19] Douglass famously had to teach himself in unorthodox ways due to being prohibited from a formal education while enslaved. This critique was a continuation of the paternalistic position Garrison and his acolytes held over Douglass. They believed he ought to continue lecturing and tell his story in a manner befitting a formerly enslaved person.

The impending break with Garrison was precipitated by the founding of his own newspaper not only because Garrison himself had been in opposition, but also because of the active approach Douglass took regarding politics in his work, even before making the public break in 1851. "Organized political abolitionism was nearly a decade old on June 14, 1848," Blight writes, "when Douglass attended his first official political gathering, a meeting of the National Liberty party in Buffalo."[20] The person at the head of this meeting was Gerrit Smith. Smith would serve as a key figure in Douglass's life; beyond encouraging him to attend his first political meeting, Smith also helped fund Douglass's publications and became a good friend. However, Douglass maintained the Garrisonian view of the Constitution at this meeting. As McKivigan describes, "Called on by the delegates to address them, Douglass had disappointed them when he declared his loyalty to the Garrisonian view that the Constitution supported slavery and his refusal to vote under it."[21] Douglass had entered political life in a new way by attending this convention centered on electoral engagement, but he demurred on voting himself, maintaining that the Constitution was irredeemably corrupted.

Two months later, Douglass attended the convention of the Free Soil Party, which represented a different approach to countering slavery. Waldo E. Martin Jr, raises an intriguing point about the contradiction between Douglass's Garrisonianism and his practical turn: "Interestingly enough, however, Douglass's increasing involvement with political abolitionists and in their activities, all the while vowing his firm commitment to Garrisonian political and constitutional principles, disclosed his growing awareness that political means might just assist abolitionism."[22] This is indicative of the fact that Douglass did indeed change his political alliances, but he remained steadfast in his principles. Rather than engage in acts of moral piety, Douglass did intend for the reforms he sought to be implemented, and he would join with those who would help the cause. While the Liberty Party was more ideologically aligned with Douglass

[17] John R. McKivigan and Rebecca A. Pattillo, "*Autographs for Freedom* and Reaching for a New Abolitionist Audience," *The Journal of African American History* 102 no. 1 (Winter 2017), 36.
[18] Blight, *Prophet of Freedom*, 188.
[19] John R. McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass–Gerrit Smith Friendship and Political Abolition in the 1850s," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 207.
[20] McKivigan, "Frederick Douglass–Gerrit Smith Friendship," 28.
[21] John R. McKivigan, "Frederick Douglass and the Abolitionist Response to the 1860 Election," in *The Election of 1860 Reconsidered*, ed. A. James Fuller (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2013), 147.
[22] Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33.

on the need for national abolition, he believed that the Free Soil Party had a better chance of success.[23] The Free Soil Party sought to limit the growth of slavery into western territories, which Douglass, and even Garrison, thought to be compromised in principle but politically possible. Gerrit Smith and the Liberty Party maintained that slavery was unconstitutional. Although the Liberty Party was deemed by Douglass to have poor prospects for victory in this cycle, Douglass would find Smith's constitutional theory to be persuasive over time. What he had deemed as an exercise of ideological purity on Smith's part at the time, almost paradoxically given his own refusal to vote, he would later interpret as correct and useful for practical success.

Smith's role in Douglass's conversion to independent political abolitionist cannot be overstated. His support of Douglass as a newspaper editor is simply one example of Smith's continual faith in Douglass, the man who had retained the Garrisonian line on the Constitution during the Liberty Party convention just a few years prior. McKivigan describes Smith's role in founding *Frederick Douglass' Paper* through his proposal of a merger between the *North Star* and the *Liberty Party Paper* in 1851.[24] Smith sought to revitalize the Liberty Party, believing that having Douglass as editor of the combined entity would benefit the party greatly by converting more Free Soilers to his position on national abolition. It would also help to solidify Douglass's turn toward political abolitionism following his public break with Garrison. McKivigan explains, "Smith deferred to Douglass in arranging the merger. The final terms of these negotiations made it clear that that Douglass intended to make the new newspaper unmistakably his own."[25] Smith, ever the supporter of Douglass, consented to this arrangement. The financial support and merger of papers represented the extent to which Smith held Douglass in esteem and the lofty role he thought Douglass ought to occupy in the fight for abolition throughout the country.

Douglass's relationships with Garrison and Smith stand in sharp contrast. While the former operated from a paternalistic position of superiority, employing Douglass as a means for the end of moral suasion, the latter showed Douglass great respect, even when they disagreed. Diana Schaub describes Douglass's growing dissatisfaction under Garrison: "He wanted not only to retell his story, but to assess and explain it, to speak to the larger meaning of slavery, and the proper course and tactics of the fight against it."[26] Smith was willing to debate Douglass, and they did so with mutual respect and cordial disagreement. "While Garrison had treated Douglass like a son," John Stauffer concludes, "Smith became a friend and ideal colleague. Douglass found that he could argue with and oppose Smith on important issues without recrimination."[27] They had intense arguments over the place of slavery in the Constitution and the intentions of the founders. The Garrisonians were outraged when Douglass aligned with Smith. As McKivigan explains, "His former Garrisonian friends denounced Douglass's apostasy and accused him of being bought out by the wealthy Smith."[28] Nevertheless, despite these charges, Smith never coerced Douglass to join his side on this issue, in public or private writings alike.

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[23] McKivigan, "Abolitionist Response to the 1860 Election," 147.
[24] McKivigan, "Abolitionist Response to the 1860 Election," 215.
[25] McKivigan, "Abolitionist Response to the 1860 Election," 215.
[26] Diana J. Schaub, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," in *The American Experiment: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Liberty*, eds. Peter Augustine Lawler and Robert Martin Schaefer (Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield, 1994), 460.
[27] John Stauffer, "Douglass's Self-Making and Abolitionism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.
[28] McKivigan, "Abolitionist Response to the Election of 1860," 150.

Instead of compromising with slaveholders by interpreting the Constitution in light of the framers' original intentions,[29] Smith concentrated on the meaning of the words and how they could be applied to the abolitionist cause.[30] Four months prior to his conversion from Garrisonianism, Douglass wrote Smith explaining why he could not follow his example: "I am sick and tired of arguing on the slaveholders' side of the question, although they are *doubtless right so far as the intentions of the framers* of the Constitution are concerned. But these intentions you fling to the winds."[31] Douglass already believed that the Garrisonian view was the same as the slaveholders' interpretation. The framers intended for the Constitution to support slavery, according to members of both the Garrisonian and proslavery factions. Douglass maintained that understanding the intent of the framers was the critical point to interpreting the Constitution, while Smith sought a close examination of the text itself. Finkelman claims that "Douglass was easily drawn to Gerrit Smith's brand of political activism and his willingness to confront slavery directly."[32] The evidence shows that there was a protracted debate between the two before Douglass publicly changed his mind.[33] According to Finkelman, "By 1851, Douglass was committed to practical attacks on slavery, rather than historically accurate theoretical discussions of the Constitution."[34] The problem with Finkelman's account is that it implies that Douglass was either disingenuous[35] or willing to simply ignore historical fact, but Douglass's refined views on the Constitution both acknowledge harsh realities of slavery while also providing a comprehensive philosophical interpretation of the American regime. Douglass knew the atrocities of which he spoke, but he also believed that the principles upon which this nation was based were diametrically opposed to slavery, an institution incompatible with civil society itself.

Douglass's time with the Garrisonians was prolonged by his feeling unable to refute their arguments. In *Life and Times*, he describes his state of mind leading up to his break with Garrison: "I was bound not only by their superior knowledge to take their opinions in respect to this subject, as the true ones, but also because I had no means of showing their unsoundness."[36] Douglass here indicates he had his doubts even while remaining aligned with the Garrisonians. Given his time under slavery and his position as storyteller to the White audience, this reluctance to fully commit to his own thought is understandable. Though his eulogy for Garrison was generally positive, there was an implicit criticism made most clear in his handwritten manuscript from the Walter O. Evans Collection: "This is not the time and the place for a critical, and ~~in every sense, an~~ accurate measurement of William Lloyd Garrison, but no friend of his, has need to fear the application to

[29] See Willam M. Wiecek, "Radical Constitutional Antislavery: The Imagined Past, the Remembered Future," in *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism in America, 1760–1848*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 249–275. Douglass cites William Goodell, Lysander Spooner, and Gerrit Smith as influences in his "Change of Opinion Announced" editorial. Smith is the focus of this article because of his unique connection to Douglass both as a friend and benefactor. Goodell, Spooner, and other radical constitutionalists are given an extended treatment by Wiecek.

[30] Stauffer, *Giants*, 146.

[31] Frederick Douglass to Gerrit Smith, 21 January 1851, in John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 3: *Correspondence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 1:438 (emphasis added).

[32] Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," 58.

[33] See Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 32–33.

[34] Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," 58.

[35] Finkelman implicitly endorses the Garrisonian line that Douglass sacrificed principle in abandoning their ranks. While he does not quite allege that Douglass was a sellout, the criticism is similar in depicting Douglass as an opportunist.

[36] Douglass, *Life and Times*, 204.

him [of] the severest tests of honest and truthful criticism."[37] This more critical view of Garrison shows the posture of a post-Garrison Douglass. Just as his desire for physical freedom had been kindled upon learning the alphabet as a child, his break with Garrison came when he educated himself and formulated his own conclusions on how to best combat slavery.[38]

"Change of Opinion Announced" and "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Four months after his refutation of Smith's pro-Constitution view in the previously cited letter, Douglass made a public proclamation of his reformed interpretation of the Constitution. No longer would he focus on original intent outside of the text or apply his personal experience to constitutional interpretation, he would examine the text of the document itself, following the example of Smith. Blight explains, "By early 1849, he had stepped beyond the hardened Garrisonian conception of the Constitution as a proslavery compact with evil."[39] Blight examines an 1849 letter to Salmon P. Chase in which Douglass admits that a textual reading of the document would render it antislavery, "although the 'original intent' of the founders and the meaning given it to the Supreme Court had made it so."[40] Douglass arrives at a different conclusion in the 1851 editorial. Speaking for himself and the stance of his paper, Douglass declares, "We found, in our former position, that, when debating the question, we were compelled to go behind the letter of the Constitution, and to seek its meaning in the history and practice of the nation under it."[41] He would now be able to assume a more active role in shaping political opinion after accepting the Constitution as antislavery and worthy of praise, rather than proslavery in original intent and historical practice. Intent would be derived from the text itself.

While Garrison decried the basis for this nation, Douglass's positive interpretation of the Founding permitted him to counter the institution of slavery through the legitimate realm of politics, which the Garrisonians had eschewed. As a pro-Constitution political abolitionist, Douglass explained that the "first duty of every American citizen, whose conscience permits him so to do, to use his *political* as well as his *moral* power for its [slavery's] overthrow."[42] In his former position, he focused on the moral depravity of slavery that transforms men into inhuman beasts. Douglass maintained this perspective on the nature of slavery in his second autobiography, published after the shift, writing that the "grand aim of slavery" is "always and everywhere . . . to reduce man to a level with a brute."[43] Slavery has a deleterious effect on both master and slave. The Constitution and Union were meant to protect the rights of all men as human beings, so the institution was in contradiction to the guiding principles of the regime. It must necessarily be abolished for the nation to endure. He not only instructed his readers to understand the immorality of slavery but also encouraged them to advocate for slavery's elimination at the ballot box. "Once he rejected the proslavery reading of the Constitution accepted by the Garrisonians," writes

[37] Frederick Douglass, "Eulogy for William Lloyd Garrison," in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh, Scot.: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 450–451 (strikethrough in original manuscript).
[38] See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* in John W. Blassingame and Peter P. Hinks, eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 2: *Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 1:33–34.
[39] Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 32.
[40] Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 32.
[41] Frederick Douglass, "Change of Opinion Announced," *North Star*, 23 May 1851.
[42] Douglass, "Change of Opinion" (original emphasis.)
[43] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 23.

Nicholas Buccola, "he began to view the Constitution as an important statement about the aims of the American union."[44] In other words, Douglass concluded that the ends of the Union were just, so he could appeal to what he deemed to be worthwhile aims in the pursuit of abolition.

Slavery could not be reconciled with the text of the Constitution, in Douglass's estimation. Douglass wrote to Smith after his "conversion editorial" was published with a different view of how to understand the framers' intentions: "I had not made up my mind then," Douglass described, "as I have now, that I am only in reason and in conscience bound to learn the intentions of those who framed the Constitution *in the Constitution itself*."[45] Douglass had previously evaluated the intentions of the framers based on his experience with slavery and his time with the Garrisonians. Finkelman changes this formulation: "Douglass acknowledged he had learned much from Smith's constitutional analysis and was ready to endorse Smith's constitutional theory, which allowed him 'fling to the winds' the 'intentions' of the framers."[46] Finkelman quotes Douglass's criticism of Smith to describe why Douglass no longer cared about original intent, but Douglass himself explained that intent is manifested in the content of the text. Douglass assessed the framers' intentions through the words they wrote in the Constitution rather than the implementation of the document or the personal conduct of those framers, a consistent view he held publicly from 1851 until the end of his life.

Douglass had stressed political involvement as the crucial action necessary to actualize abolition in his "Change of Opinion Announced" editorial, and he expands on this in the year following in perhaps his most famous speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" In this speech, Douglass articulates how America strayed from its Founding, but it could be redeemed by upholding the principles that formed the basis of its political institutions. Douglass exclaims, "Your fathers have lived, died, and done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work."[47] Throughout this speech Douglass rhetorically divides his audience by referring directly to White listeners as "you." For Douglass, the anniversary of the Founding revealed that the country had not always sufficiently included the Black man in practice, but that does not mean this was by design. On the contrary, he exhorts his White audience to take action in order to fully realize the principle of equality espoused by the founders in the Declaration. He offers them a criticism and a warning: "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 is the] only thing that seriously endangers your *Union*."[48] Since the principles of the Union's Founding were not proslavery in design, the institution of slavery had corrupted the country to such an extent that it constituted an existential threat to the Union. Charles W. Mills, like Finkelman, rejects the post-1851 Douglass in his analysis of the speech; Mills writes, "Douglass was obviously mistaken about his own time and a century after his death his prognosis has yet to be fulfilled. In short, everything Douglass said is wrong."[49] Mills believes that Douglass was right

[44] Nicholas Buccola, *The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass: In Pursuit of American Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 134.
[45] Frederick Douglass to Gerrit Smith, 21 May 1845, in John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 3: *Correspondence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 1:448 (original emphasis).
[46] Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," 58.
[47] Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852," in John W. Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 2:366.
[48] Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," 383 (original emphasis).
[49] Charles W. Mills, "Whose Fourth of July? Frederick Douglass and 'Original Intent'," in *Frederick Douglass: A Critical Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 134.

when he said the holiday belonged to the White man, but every argument Douglass made that suggested this could be transcended was wrong. Douglass expressing an independent Black will is more significant than his mistaken opinions, according to Mills.[50] However, the arguments Douglass provides are thoughtful and worthy of a more thorough explication.

Douglass divides his audience between "you" and "us" in this speech, which initially appears to firmly separate him from his White listeners.[51] However, he also makes clear that his linguistic separation does not mean that this split was inherent in the design of the regime, nor must it remain in perpetuity. The Founding was based on equal natural rights as espoused in both the Declaration of Independence and Preamble of the Constitution, and the work of the founders was noble in principle, according to Douglass. Thus, he saw himself as an advocate for the equitable application of the principles of the Founding. An example of his view is shown in his description of the founders as peaceful men except when questions of justice arose: "They showed forbearance; but that 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."[52] The founders were not satisfied with any injustice. Accordingly, slavery was a major obstacle to achieving the justice enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. To that end, Douglass believed the American Founding would only be fully realized when man's fundamental natural rights were equally protected for all, regardless of race. It was the task of the people to carry on the good, although incomplete, work of the authors and signers of the Declaration and Constitution by furthering the conception of equality enshrined in the former and the republican self-government established in the latter.[53]

The Evolution of Douglassian Constitutionalism: Interpreting the Slavery Clauses

In his final autobiography, Douglass reflects on how he fundamentally shifted his view and rejected Garrisonianism: "This radical change in my opinions produced a corresponding change in my action. To those with whom I had been in agreement and sympathy," Douglass explains, "I came to be in opposition. What they held to be a great and important truth I now looked upon as a dangerous error."[54] He was opposed to the Garrisonians' singular focus on abolition, denunciation of the Union, and refusal of active political involvement. Douglass proclaimed that this was hazardous and to clamor for the destruction of the Union was to forsake the possibility of abolition being realized. The Constitution was not a proslavery document, according to Douglass, in an 1860 speech delivered in Glasgow, and to portray it as such was to destroy any hope for abolition: "I, on the other hand, deny that the Constitution guarantees the right to hold property in men, and believe the way, the true way, to abolish slavery in America is to vote such men into power as will

[50] Mills, "Whose Fourth of July?," 135.
[51] See Sarah Meer, "Douglass as Orator and Editor," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, 52–54. Meer gives a good treatment of the rhetorical power of the speech. Most importantly, she describes how the audience would have expected a more celebratory address in recognition of Independence Day.
[52] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," 364–365 (original emphasis.)
[53] See Peter C. Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas), 93–95. Myers explains how and why Douglass appealed to the Preamble to draw a connection between the positive law of the Constitution and the natural law contained in the Declaration of Independence.
[54] Douglass, *Life and Times*, 204.

exert their moral and political influence for the abolition of slavery."[55] This emphasis on voting antislavery men into office was demonstrative of Douglass's positive view of the Constitution because he not only saw that it was antislavery, but also that active civic engagement within the republican form of government it established was the means by which to end slavery. As he explained in his Fourth of July address, the work of the founders was good, and the succeeding generations must assume their civic duty to vote good antislavery men into office who would continue the work of the founders.

An examination of an 1849 essay from the *North Star* contrasted with the 1860 Glasgow speech[56] is useful to better understand the content of Douglass's thought on specific provisions in the Constitution and to demonstrate the extent of his change in opinion.[57] In 1849's "The Constitution and Slavery," Douglass provides detailed analyses of several clauses of the Constitution and shows why each is proslavery in a Garrisonian fashion. In his 1860 Glasgow speech he takes the opposite approach and gives detailed reasons as to why the clauses were antislavery. The Glasgow speech took place after his conversion to Smith's brand of political abolitionism, and, in fact, it was Smith whom he had been refuting in 1849. The Garrisonian Douglass begins his searing critique by describing the state of the slave interest during the writing and ratification of the Constitution. He opines, "Slavery existed before the Constitution, in the very States by whom it was made and adopted.—Slaveholders took a large share in making it. It was made in view of the existence of slavery, and in a manner well calculated to aid and strengthen that heaven-daring crime."[58] Slavery was inherent within the document they produced, and thus it could not be separated. The proslavery faction had a hand in creating the government with the express intent of preserving their "peculiar institution," and they were successful. Slavery existed in the states that ratified the Constitution and there were slaveholders who participated in writing it, so to say the Constitution was anything but proslavery was a grave error, posited the Garrisonian Douglass.

He proceeds to examine the clauses the slaveholding authors conceived. The clauses he addresses include the Three-Fifths Clause, the Importation Clause, the Fugitive Slave Clause, Congress's power to "suppress insurrections," and the Full Faith and Credit Clause, which includes a reference to protection from invasion within the states.[59] On the Three-Fifths Clause Douglass writes, "A diversity of persons are here described—*persons* bound to service for a *term of years*, Indians not taxed, and three-fifths of *all other persons*. Now, we ask, in the name of common sense, can there be an honest doubt that, in States where there are slaves, that they are included in this basis of representation?"[60] This clause is straightforward, according to Douglass. It was designed to bolster the representation of those who held slaves. The "all other persons" meant slaves, and this was made clearer by separating "free" from "all other persons." Not only did this clause give more representation to the South but it could also stand to benefit the North through

[55] Frederick Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave: An Address Delivered in Glasgow, Scotland, on March 26, 1860," in John W. Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 3:346.

[56] See Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth*, 91. It is important to note that Douglass gave this speech in response to George Thompson, the most prominent British Garrisonian, who had criticized him for being ideologically inconsistent.

[57] In reading several treatments of Douglass's shift, the evident points of contrast in the 1849 essay and the Glasgow speech have not been described.

[58] Frederick Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery," *North Star*, 16 March 1849.

[59] U.S. Constitution: Art. 1, Sec. 2; Art. 5, Sec. 8; Art. 1, Sect. 2; Art. 4, Sec. 2; Art. 4, Sec. 4.

[60] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery" (original emphasis.)

the provision allowing them to levy a ten-dollar tax on each imported slave. The Importation Clause was "a full, complete and broad sanction of the slavetrade for twenty years" that served to appease slaveholders, including Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina, whom Douglass quotes as saying, "If the Convention thinks that North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, will ever agree to the plan, *unless their right to import slaves be untouched*, the expectation is vain."[61] The Importation Clause was designed to appeal to these proslavery forces by guaranteeing their right to import slaves, as Rutledge explained. It was clearly intended to be a proslavery measure that the "doughface North" succumbed to "just as they have been ever since on all questions touching the subject of slavery."[62] The Fugitive Slave Clause was "adopted with a view to restoring fugitive slaves to their masters—ambiguous, to be sure, but sufficiently explicit to answer the end sought to be attained."[63] The power of Congress to suppress insurrections was meant to address the possibility of slave revolts, Douglass claims. The Full Faith and Credit Clause "pledges the national arm to protect the slaveholder from *domestic violence*, and is the safeguard of the Southern tyrant against the vengeance of the outraged and plundered slave."[64] Protection of inhuman bondage was the pervasive feature of the Constitution. He believed the Union was not worth engaging with politically because its foundation was intrinsically corrupt.

The rights and privileges of the Constitution were only granted to the Whites who were responsible for its ratification. "The parties that made the Constitution," Douglass explains, "aimed to cheat and defraud the slave, who was not himself a party to the compact or agreement. It was entered into understandingly on both sides."[65] The slave was not a party in the formation of the Constitution, so he was never meant to share in its rights and privileges. The proslavery men had sapped the morality out of the Founding to serve their own ends by affording such extensive protections to the slave interest. Slaves were treated as property and not party to the compact. Consequently, it should not be viewed as binding to them. The slave was included within the text only in the context of perpetuating his servitude. It preserved the importation of slaves, gave the slaveholding states more representation, prevented slaves from escaping to freedom, and it even provided a financial benefit to the North through the ability to tax imported slaves as articles of property, argued Douglass.

His early Garrisonianism was on full display in this 1849 editorial, but his pro-Constitution views subsequently led him to systematically counter these earlier claims. While he had come to view the words of the text as sufficient to show the intentions of the framers, he also described the context in which they operated in a way that bolstered an antislavery interpretation of the Constitution. One example is seen in his reformed reading of the infamous Three-Fifths Clause—which Douglass previously described as a means to boost slave state representation—as "a downright disability upon the slave system of America, *one which deprives the slaveholding States of at least two-fifths of their natural basis of representation*."[66] The Constitution acknowledged the humanity of the slave by using the description "all other persons" in this system for determining population, thus demonstrating that the South was prohibited from having full representation of all the people within its borders, not that the slave counted as less than a person.

[61] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[62] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[63] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[64] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[65] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[66] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery" (original emphasis.)

The Importation Clause is one of the more infamous provisions in the Constitution because it was held by proslavery men (and the Garrisonians) to be a twenty-year protection for the importation of slaves through its prohibiting the abolition of importation until 1808. However, Douglass now interpreted this clause as foretelling future restrictions. It indicated to the proslavery men that importing slaves would cease after they joined the Union. No longer did he believe that this clause was a blanket protection for importation, but rather that it "looked to the abolition of slavery rather than to its perpetuity."[67] The framers looked forward to the end of slavery, and this clause was indicative of this perspective, not a protection of the South's beloved institution, posited Douglass. "At the time the constitution was adopted, the slave trade was regarded as the jugular vein of slavery itself," he continues, "and it was thought that slavery would die with the death of the slave trade."[68] Considering his argument that the Constitution looked to the end of the slave trade, it follows that the framers also were looking forward to the end of slavery.

Contrary to post-Garrison Douglass, Finkelman suggests that William Lloyd Garrison was correct: "On a theoretical level, and on the basis of the actual history of the Founding," writes Finkelman, "it is clear that Garrison always had the better argument. The Constitution of 1787 was overwhelmingly proslavery. It protected slavery at every turn, and it created a slaveholder's Union."[69] Frederick Douglass effectively countered this view in both his textualist interpretation of the document and in his reflections on the historical events of his day, perhaps most notably the *Dred Scott* decision. For Douglass, the Constitution was not proslavery, so it was clear that the Garrisonians (and Finkelman) were wrong about the nature of the American Founding. Finkelman disputes the authenticity of Douglass's pro-Constitution views. He believes that Douglass's pro-Constitution theory was merely a practical construct: "The new Douglass—the politically active Douglass—had to develop a new theory of the Constitution that was consistent with his evolving understanding of the best way to fight slavery."[70] Finkelman does not take Douglass at his word because he finds Garrison's argument more compelling. Peter Myers offers a fairer treatment: "For Douglass, the true meaning of the U.S. Constitution, as of constitutions in general, was fully intelligible only in light of first principles of political life. . . . Douglass, along with other political abolitionists, drew upon a venerable tradition of natural-law jurisprudence in fashioning their novel constitutional arguments."[71] There is no reason to question Douglass's sincerity, at least none that is clear when reading Douglass's speeches and writings during his post-Garrison years. He examined the Constitution on both a practical and theoretical level and appealed to a natural law tradition he believed was encapsulated in the principles and institutions of the American Founding.

Guiding the intent of the individual clauses of the Constitution is its Preamble. Douglass traces the intentions of the Constitution as described in the Preamble to show that protection of slavery was not a guiding purpose of the document. Douglass explains, "Union is one, not slavery; union is named as one of the objects for which the constitution was framed, and it is one that is very excellent; it is quite incompatible with slavery. . . . Slavery is not among them; the objects are union, defence, welfare, tranquility, justice, and liberty."[72] According to Douglass, slavery was seen as a dying institution by the framers and they wrote clauses that were antislavery in nature; the purpose of the document stood against slavery, which was unjust and antithetical to republican

[67] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[68] Douglass, "The Constitution and Slavery."
[69] Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," 13–14.
[70] Finkelman, "Frederick Douglass's Constitution," 64.
[71] Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth*, 89.
[72] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 361.

self-government. Again, according to Douglass, Garrison is incorrect because he does not understand that the framers believed slavery would end gradually. The circumstances that followed simply were not foreseen at the time in which the Constitution was ratified. Finkelman has the benefit of hindsight in his support of the Garrison argument, but he misunderstands the framers' political theory, at least according to later Douglass. Douglass effectively refutes the Garrison-Finkelman mode of interpretation: "This, I undertake to say, is the conclusion of the whole matter—that *the constitutionality of slavery can be made only by discrediting the plain, common sense reading of the constitution itself* . . . by disregarding the written constitution, and interpreting it in the light of a secret understanding."[73] Douglass appeals to the fundamental purposes of the Constitution by examining the text and assesses these purposes in light of the nature of slavery. As he explained in his account at Glasgow, slavery was unjust, antithetical to liberty, and the major existential crisis to the Union.

To claim that the Constitution is proslavery is to say that it provides the means for its own demise, which made no logical sense to Douglass. "The Constitution says 'We the people;' the language is 'we the people;' not we the privileged class," Douglass proclaims, "not we the high, not we the low . . . but we the human inhabitants; and unless you deny that negroes are people, they are included within the purposes of this government."[74] While in his 1849 editorial he had disparaged the Constitution for excluding his race, he now applied his textualist interpretation to promote this view of "we the people" as including all people in this country without distinction based on color, class, or creed. The Founding included "we the people" and it was the duty of Americans to act in their political capacity to bring about change. Douglass summarized his reformed reading of the Constitution:

> The constitution declares no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; it secures to every man the right of trial by jury; it also declares that the writ of *habeas corpus* shall never be suppressed—that great and noble writ—that writ by which England was made free soil . . . We have the same writ, and let the people in Britain and the United States stand as true to liberty as the constitution is true to liberty, and we shall have no need of a dissolution of the Union.[75]

Douglass believed that the protections afforded by the Constitution not only were designed to include all men but could be used to abolish slavery. This portion of the speech echoes the call to political action he gave in 1851. Utilizing the clauses of the Constitution as written, slavery could and must be ended within the political realm, beginning with a citizenry that would support abolition and political leaders who would put this sentiment into practice.

Douglass did not deny the difficulty of his grand vision for abolition. He understood that, although he could show why the Constitution was antislavery, Americans had failed to end slavery up to that point. "But to all this," Douglass declares, "it is said that the practice of the American people is against my view. I admit it. They have given the constitution a proslavery interpretation."[76] Yet, this misinterpretation does not mean the document is proslavery. Douglass then uses the example of the Bible being interpreted against liberty in the United States by the proslavery faction to makes clear that one must not abandon the truth it contained simply because

[73] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 361–362 (original emphasis.)
[74] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 361.
[75] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 362.
[76] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 362.

it has been misused by devious forces: "What do you do when you are told by the slaveholders in America that the Bible sanctions slavery? Do you go and throw your Bible into the fire? Do you sing out, 'No Union with the Bible!'?"[77] Certainly not, Douglass concludes in this thinly veiled allusion to Garrison's famous public burning of the Constitution. The political means provided by the Constitution would permit the end of slavery only if the country supported it through the election of sincere antislavery men to the high offices of government. They have failed thus far, but this does not mean it must be this way. The rights protected by the text of the Constitution make slavery an anathema that must be destroyed to preserve the integrity of the country. The writ of habeas corpus had served to abolish slavery in England, so it could also be used in America for the same purpose as it was enshrined by the Constitution. The Constitution included the republican system in which good men could be elected to end slavery and the provisions therein were designed to restrict slavery, so slavery would certainly end, Douglass thought.

The framers believed that slavery was fading, and they provided a Preamble addressing all men along with antislavery clauses to ensure slavery's demise. Claims to moral purity invoked by the Garrisonians proved to be temporary. Basic tenets of the Founding were still engrained within the mores of the people that could be directed against slavery, and this allowed Douglass to describe a remedy for slavery that was in harmony with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As Colaiaco notes, "Douglass's ethical interpretation of the Constitution based upon the document's fundamental liberal principles, made possible political action consistent with the demands of conscience."[78] Douglass utilized these principles to interpret the American Founding in a way that he believed was both true and useful for the cause of abolition.

The connection between the Declaration and Constitution made logical sense and proved to be a powerful tool for Douglass's oratory. The "all men" of the Declaration did not discriminate based on race and neither did "we the people" in the Preamble because their purposes are intertwined: the Declaration provided the ideals while the Constitution developed the governing form and institutions to bring the ideals into practice. "Douglass always garnered hope from America's founding creeds," writes Blight, "and in his view the Constitution—its republicanism and protection of individual rights—provided a legal foundation for the earlier promise in the Declaration of Independence. Without this promise and foundation, Douglass' vision of a future for blacks in America would have crumbled."[79] Douglass's hope for America to atone for the sin of slavery depended on the promise of the Declaration of Independence, and this atonement had to be brought about by the American citizenry, as he had described in "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" In that speech, he said of the Constitution: "In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. Is slavery among them?"[80] He consistently concludes it is not, at least in his public work beginning in 1851.

The occasion of the Fourth of July speech was Independence Day, so Douglass's appealing to the Constitution demonstrated his belief that it and the Declaration of Independence must be connected to be understood properly. Near the end of the speech, he exclaims, "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

[77] Douglass, "The American Constitution and the Slave," 363.
[78] Colaiaco, *Frederick Douglass and the Fourth of July*, 93.
[79] Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*, 33.
[80] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," 385 (original emphasis.)

is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age."[81] This is a hope he maintained even when circumstances were especially dire, as seen in his response to the *Dred Scott* decision: "In conclusion, let me say, all I ask of the American people is, that they live up to their Constitution, adopt its principles, imbibe its spirit, and enforce its provisions."[82] The Constitution's text was just and applicable to all Americans, regardless of race, in Douglass's estimation. The principles contained in the Declaration and Constitution would provide the solution he sought, if only the American people would live up to those principles through both their personal conduct and those they selected for office. Douglass maintained his hope that the people could be elevated to pursue the goodness of the country's unique foundation centered around God-given equality.

Frederick Douglass, Prudent American Patriot

While Douglass's changing his conception of the Constitution, and of America more broadly, may seem abrupt, it was not so much a sudden change but rather a significant refinement of how to best apply his principles over time. Douglass was consistent in his assessments of the dehumanizing effects of slavery. The Declaration of Independence provided a foundation in natural rights, which the Constitution built upon. Thus, Douglass's conversion from the views of Garrison to Smith is not as surprising as it initially appears. The Garrisonians were opposed to political involvement because they believed the regime was illegitimate, so they had no real power to bring about the end of slavery within a republican regime. Abolitionists could not effectively help bring slavery to an end while allied with the Garrisonians. Gerrit Smith and others showed Douglass a more effective model for pursuing abolition through political means. If America did not have the Declaration or Constitution, in Douglass's view, then the end of slavery would have been impossible because of the corrosive effects it had on the people's character, both North and South. The principles of the Founding supplied Douglass with the necessary resources to utilize his natural talents as an orator to unite Americans against the unjust, inhumane, and un-American institution of slavery. His Garrisonian beliefs were sincerely held, but, as he reveals when recounting that period in his latter two autobiographies, he thought for himself and arrived at a different conclusion than the people with whom he initially allied.

[81] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," 387.
[82] Frederick Douglass, "The Dred Scott Decision: An Address Delivered, in Part, in New York, New York, in May 1857," in John W. Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 3:183.

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"Gems of Negro Eloquence": Memorializing the African American Rhetoric of the 1895 South Carolina Constitutional Convention

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In his study of Booker T. Washington's 1895 Cotton States Exposition Address, Bradford Vivian discusses the contextual features at play in the orator's decision to present the South's past in a manner that pleased his White audience while erasing many of the memories of the Black population. "Washington's appeals for black citizens to disavow substantial portions of their own historical experience," Vivian writes, "functioned as a mode of roseate remembrance for white listeners, the further effect of which was to enshrine in public lore a warrant for prolonged forgetfulness of past and present African American history and culture in the post–Civil War South." In making this case, Vivian seeks not to vilify the orator, but to better understand the causes and consequences of his choices, including the ways in which "norms of rhetorical invention (based on prudential judgments regarding the constraints of decorum) fundamentally condition one's status and agency as a public witness."[1]

Yet there were other, bolder ways African American rhetors sought to create public memory in the mid-1890s South. This essay features the discourse of two such figures from South Carolina's Sea Islands: Mary J. Miller and Sarah V. Smalls. Diverging from Washington's response to "norms of rhetorical invention," Miller's *The Suffrage: Speeches by Negroes in the Constitutional Convention. The Part Taken by Colored Orators in Their Fight for a Fair and Impartial Ballot* and Smalls's *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention, by Gen. Robt. Smalls. With the Right of Suffrage Passed by the Constitutional Convention* memorialize key deliberative discourse of the Beaufort County delegation to the 1895 South Carolina Constitutional Convention, in which African Americans pleaded unsuccessfully to defend Black suffrage in the face of the White majority's publicly espoused doctrine of White supremacy. I investigate how collections of discursive texts produced by understudied marginalized figures can function as sophisticated sites of public memory, transforming stinging deliberative defeat into consolation, productive defiance, race pride, and dedication to a more egalitarian future. Embracing the creative, artistic essence of rhetorical scholarship, I seek both to illuminate and celebrate these bold acts of commemoration.[2]

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[1] Bradford Vivian, *Commonplace Witnessing: Rhetorical Invention, Historical Remembrance, and Public Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 39, 41. Vivian's portrayal of Washington as an accommodationist is contested by Paul Stob ("The Rhetoric of Work and the Work of Rhetoric: Booker T. Washington's Campaign for Tuskegee and the Black South," in *Nineteenth-Century American Activist Rhetorics*, Patricia Bizzell and Lisa Zimmerelli, eds. [New York: Modern Language Association, 2021], 76–88; "Black Hands Push Back: Reconsidering the Rhetoric of Booker T. Washington," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 2 [2018], 145–65.)

[2] See, for example, Bonnie J. Dow, "Criticism and Authority in the Artistic Mode," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001), 336–48; Cara A. Finnegan, "The Critic as Curator," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2018), 405–10.

The Rhetorical Situation

Before taking up the scholarship of public memory and Miller's and Smalls's pamphlets, I will introduce the complex context of the texts' publication, which includes the African American rhetors who produced the arguments memorialized, the venue in which they spoke, and the chilling response they received from their Southern White audience. The 1895 South Carolina Constitutional Convention, held in the state capital, Columbia, began 10 September and concluded 4 December with the adoption of a new state constitution. Although many issues were debated at the convention, the elimination of the Black franchise was the White majority's "primary goal."[3] The meeting was attended by 160 delegates: 42 White Democrat "Conservatives"; 112 White populist Democrat "Reformers"; and six African American Republicans. Five of the latter party represented Beaufort County: Thomas E. Miller, a freeborn native of the Sea Islands who later served as the first president of the Colored Normal, Industrial, Agricultural, and Mechanical College of South Carolina at Orangeburg (now known as South Carolina State University); William J. Whipper, nephew of noted activist William Whipper, who moved from the North to Beaufort after the Civil War; Robert Smalls, a former slave from the Beaufort area whose Civil War heroics helped launch his considerable political career; James Wigg, a former slave and farmer; and Isaiah R. Reed, an attorney.[4]

As Andrew Billingsley notes, the members of the Beaufort delegation at the 1895 convention "fought fiercely, ably, and honorably, earning the reluctant admiration of the whites" and "demonstrated a mastery of rhetorical and forensic skills as well as constitutional history, illustrating the important lesson that excellence in rhetoric, persuasion, and deportment knows no race, creed, or previous condition of servitude."[5] Philip Foner and Robert Branham, who consider Miller's 26 October speech "the most eloquent" of the contingent's rhetorical efforts, anthologize it in *Lift Every Voice: African America Oratory, 1787–1900*[6]—thus canonizing the oration within Black rhetoric—and a number of other scholars have called attention to the orators' prowess.[7]

Yet despite the rhetorical strength of the Beaufort delegation's speeches, the convention's White delegates voted virtually unanimously to dismantle African American suffrage. In terms of the immediate White audience addressed, Delegates Miller, Wigg, Reed, Smalls, and Whipper

[3] Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 445. For further discussion of the convention, see 443–48; George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes: 1877–1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 76–89; Andrew Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free: Robert Smalls of South Carolina and His Families* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 165–79.

[4] In addition to the five African American delegates from Beaufort, Robert B. Anderson, a Black teacher, represented Georgetown at the convention.

[5] Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 167, 179.

[6] Philip S. Foner and Robert. J. Branham, eds., *Lift Every Voice and Sing: African American Oratory, 1787–1900* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 805–15.

[7] See Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 83–87, 298–99; Okon Edet Uya, *From Slavery to Public Service: Robert Smalls, 1839–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 142–48; William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Gift of Black Folk: The Negroes in the Making of America* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 243–48; Asa H. Gordon, *Sketches of Negro Life and History in South Carolina*, 2nd ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 65–68; Edgar, *South Carolina*, 445; Edward A. Miller, Jr., *Gullah Statesman: Robert Smalls from Slavery to Congress, 1839–1915* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 206–14; Lawrence S. Rowland and Stephen R. Wise, *Bridging the Sea Islands' Past and Present, 1893–2006: The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina*, vol. 3 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 76–79; Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disenfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 112–14; Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 404–05.

suffered what Billingsley labels a "historic" loss. Michael Perman concurs: "Despite the efforts of such experienced politicians and superb speakers to provoke them, the white delegates did not confront their fears and prejudices or start a fight among themselves." Billingsley's optimistic assertion, quoted above, that "excellence in rhetoric, persuasion, and deportment knows no race, creed, or previous condition of servitude" is true only in the abstract.[8]

White Southerners' reflections on this failure form a critical element of the rhetorical context for Mary Miller's and Sarah Smalls's pamphlets. Tellingly, such commentary, even when published in the unsympathetic Democratic press, acknowledges that the African Americans' defeat results from factors beyond the influence of a rhetoric of good reasons, particularly preordained, intractable disagreement. A revealing admission of the trumping power of White supremacy at the convention is found in a brief piece published in the *South Carolina State*. Although the column officially addresses arguments advocating women's suffrage—which were defeated by the White delegates—it applies to other well-argued losing causes: "One of the delegates to the Constitutional convention was telling us of the debate yesterday morning on the question of granting the suffrage to property-owning women. . . . The logic, the merit, the advantage were all on one side, but the convention voted the other way. Why? . . . Most probably it was a sort of blind instinct that 'Those should take who have the power. And those should keep who can.' "[9] For the writer, the crux of the matter is power and privilege, which will be maintained by dominant South Carolinian White men, despite the strength of the arguments arrayed against them.

Additional White responses included trumpeting a perceived "fallacy" or disparaging the Beaufort delegation's eloquence as derivative of White teaching, as demonstrated in a convention speech by Darlington delegate Henry Castles Burn. He begins in complimentary fashion: "[The Beaufort delegates] have, with consummate ability, given the history, marshaled the facts and statistics favorable to their side. They have displayed splendid argumentative abilities, keen sarcasm and telling humor, which does credit to them individually and as representatives of their race." Burn then undermines their rhetorical achievement by accusing them of proving "too much," thus committing the flawed argumentative strategy now referred to as "kettle logic." To explain, he refers to "an anecdote of an old colored man" who tells three contradictory stories about a borrowed pot, indicating that the fallacy is particular to African Americans.[10] "Between the lines the truth begins to shine," Burn declares, suggesting the deceptive nature of the African American's ostensibly strong argument. Then, after marking the Beaufort delegation's positive "deportment," "powers of reasoning," "rhetorical ability," and their "knowledge of the laws of the land, the common law, the statutory law and the constitutional law, both State and national," he undermines his praise by suggesting that African Americans' rhetorical skills are not of their own making, but are derived from the influence of "refined and cultured white people," who have "led them to become good citizens."[11]

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[8] Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 178; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 114; Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 179.

[9] "One of the Delegates," *South Carolina State*, 30 October 1895, 4.

[10] "Women's Suffrage. The Issue Presented Squarely to the Constitutional Convention," *South Carolina State*, 29 October 1895, 2. Burn's racist analogy suggests that using stories of borrowed vessels to reveal flaws in argumentation is not unique to Sigmund Freud (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey [New York: Harper Collins, 1955], 119–120) and, subsequently, Jacques Derrida (*Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998], 6), the usual sources for the concept of kettle logic.

[11] "Women's Suffrage," 2.

Paradoxically, at least one White Southerner, David Duncan Wallace of Vanderbilt University, disparages the Beaufort contingent's rhetoric for the opposite limitation, concluding, condescendingly, that "several of the negro delegates well made good the claim of their race to being natural orators." Wallace concludes his *Sewanee Review* article with this remarkable statement, which sacrifices to the primacy of local White power all arguments based on general principles: "Justice is not a theory that can be expounded from professorial and editorial chairs in distant localities with equal applicability to all quarters of the globe, but a practical matter, which can be secured only on the spot and by men who are wise and brave and strong."[12]

The African American press's treatment of the convention also contributes to the larger context for Miller's and Smalls's pamphlets. Stories from White papers were excerpted and commentary offered in Black publications such as the *Cleveland Gazette*, the *Indianapolis Freeman*, and the *Washington Bee*. The *Gazette* offered a brief but telling note declaring that the African American convention delegates "have advocated for the race's cause in a manner that will redound to their everlasting credit. They are honors to the race, too." Articulating the exigence for the pamphlets, the commentator adds, "The suggestion of a South Carolina contemporary, that their speeches be compiled and published, is a good one. We hope it is acted upon." The *Freeman* published a column by David Augustus Straker, the prominent African American attorney and civic figure, lauding the "masterly efforts" of the Black delegates to the convention, who warrant "the meed of praise as heroes." Such coverage demonstrates that across the country, African Americans were tuned to the Beaufort contingent's eloquence.[13]

Public Memory Scholarship as a Frame for Reading Miller and Smalls

"In its broadest sense," write Matthew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips, "public memory entails the acts and processes, through which memories move beyond the remembering individual and become shared, passed on, and in this way, form a broader network through which people gather a sense of collectivity." Although scholars from several disciplines have contributed meaningfully to public memory research, those representing rhetoric and communication have occupied a central position. Their stake in public memory studies stems principally from the understanding that collective remembrance is both constructed and contested. "Memory," elaborates Barbie Zelizer, "becomes not only the construction of social, historical, and cultural circumstances but a reflection of why one construction has more staying power than its rivals."[14]

As David Tell reminds us, public memory study—since its beginning in the latter decades of the twentieth century—has been focused on "concepts of site and place," with influential early scholarship featuring "museums, memorials, coffee shops, shopping centers, and suburbs." Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott also emphasize the importance of physical locations in memory studies with their concept of "memory places," which they explain "enjoy a significance seemingly unmatched by other material supports of public memory." The "signifier" of a memory place "is an object of *special* attention because of its self-nomination as a site of significant

[12] David Duncan Wallace, "The South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895," *Sewanee Review* 4, no. 3 (1896), 351, 360.

[13] "The six Afro-American members," *Cleveland Gazette*, 16 November 1895, 2; D. Augustus Straker, "Colored Heroes," *Indianapolis Freeman*, 21 December 1895, 7.

[14] Matthew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips, "Public Memory," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 2, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.181; Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 2 (1995), 217.

memory of and for a collective. This signifier commands attention, because it announces itself as a marker of collective identity." Or, as Tell characterizes the role of place in the formation of public memory, "Site secures memory, anchors memory, modifies memory, intensifies memory, and even performs memory."[15]

Because public memory scholarship hones in on the contested nature of corporate remembrance, it is not surprising that issues of marginalization, ideology, and hegemonic control are central concerns, as is, correspondingly, commemorative work of and about oppressed peoples, including African Americans. Vivian's analysis of Washington's speech stands as a prominent example of this emphasis, as is Tell's work on sites dedicated to the preservation of Emmett Till's memory, both referenced above. Also representing this important research strand are Megan Eatman's study of the annual reenactment of the 1946 Moore's Ford lynching near Monroe, Georgia, which suggests how this "space of loss also becomes a site of community building and resilience," and Thavolia Glymph's exploration of how the memory work of former slaves steeled them to confront the oppressive conditions of the postbellum South. Glymph's work articulates the pressing need for African American memorializing in the late nineteenth-century South: "The reconstitution of the power of white southerners after the Civil War was accomplished by segregation, disfranchisement, rampant violence against black southerners, and *memory-work*. . . . Language and contesting memories lay at the heart of postbellum struggles."[16]

In a recent study that in a number of ways forms a backdrop for this one, Shevaun Watson explores the memory work of marginalized nineteenth-century African American residents of Charleston, South Carolina, following the Civil War. She demonstrates that their vandalism and mockery of that city's statue of antebellum White icon John Calhoun can be viewed as improvised rhetorical practice intended to communally reject idyllic White supremacist myths of the old South. Watson suggests that these acts of protest "served not just as unflagging resistance to white supremacy but as deliberate memory-creation and memory-sharing practices in their own right." Furthermore, by marshaling Vivian's principle of "public forgetting," she employs her exploration of monument defacement to argue that the rhetorical study of memory, in addition to "fill[ing] in historical gaps to counter collective amnesia or historiographical neglect," can also help society "find a way to forget some things, to 'strategically excise' (Vivian 9) parts of our collective past that have become hindrances to beginning again," such as the racist White Southern narrative of the Lost Cause.[17]

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[15] David Tell, "Remembering Emmett Till: Reflections of Geography, Race, and Memory," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 20, no. 2 (2017), 123; Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, "Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, eds. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 24–25; Tell, "Remembering Emmett Till," 123. See also Edward S. Casey's use of *stabilitas loci* ("Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 28), which Tell specifically references.

[16] Megan Eatman, "Loss and Lived Memory at the Moore's Ford Lynching Reenactment," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 20, no. 2 (2017), 164; Thavolia Glymph, " 'Liberty Dearly Bought': The Making of Civil War Memory in Afro-American Communities in the South," in *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850–1950*, Charles M. Payne and Adam Green, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 127 (emphasis added).

[17] Shevaun E. Watson, "Beginning Again, Again: Monument Protest and Rhetorics of African American Memory Work," in *Nineteenth-Century American Activist Rhetorics*, Patricia Bizzell and Lisa Zimmerelli, eds. (New York: Modern Language Association, 2021), 228, 222. Watson draws Vivian's concept of "public forgetting" from *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

Within this scholarly context, I approach Mary Miller's and Sarah Smalls's pamphlets—comprising introductory remarks, texts of the Beaufort contingent's rhetoric gleaned from local newspapers, and compilations of commentary on the speeches—as sophisticated repositories of eloquence and civic engagement, crafted to contribute positively to American public memory. Curating the arguments employed by the Beaufort delegation, Miller and Smalls create discursive sites of remembrance for African Americans, as well as—to borrow Delegate Wigg's characterizations—for "enlightened public opinion" beyond the Black population and "the arbitrament of a Christian civilization."[18] Establishing alternative sites from Southern White accounts such as Wallace's *Sewanee Review* article and the *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of South Carolina*, which for the most part elide the African American oratory that distinguished the Beaufort delegation, they memorialize the Beaufort contingent's eloquence, accounting for its power despite its failure to persuade fellow White delegates.

Wesley Hansen and George Dionisopoulos's rhetorical framework concerning the commemoration of loss adds further depth to this interpretative approach. In their study of the aftermath of the passage of Proposition 8 in the California general election of 2008, which temporarily suspended gay marriage in the state, Hansen and Dionisopoulos argue that because "political loss can be felt on a deep emotional level analogous to death," it often stimulates "a concomitant coping mechanism," including strategies such as "eulogistic rhetoric." Examining gay-rights discourse in the wake of the passage of Proposition 8, Hansen and Dionisopoulos show how "the postelection dialogue aimed at consoling and unifying those most devastated by the loss while motivating them toward the recommitment necessary to continue the political struggle to enact positive change in the future." Writing more generally about responses to such loss, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian posit that "attention to remains generates a politics of mourning that might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary."[19]

Viewed from this perspective, the devastating rout of the Beaufort delegation could function for the South Carolinian African Americans as a kind of collective death that invites corresponding rhetorical action, which will, ideally, lead sympathetic audiences to rededicate to the cause. Responding to this exigence, Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls can be seen to produce their pamphlets as epideictic rhetoric, sophisticated eulogies of the Beaufort contingent's rhetorical campaign. Like the activists studied by Hansen and Dionisopoulos, Miller and Smalls perceive the political defeat of their group "as not only a devastating loss of their collective rights, but a public devaluation of their humanity" that calls not for "ceas[ing] hostilities or restor[ing] peace," but for a fundamental reframing of the state of affairs.[20] Hansen and Dionisopoulos's perspective on political loss and the function of eulogy, when applied to the pamphlets produced by Miller and Smalls, helps to deepen our understanding of the exigence they faced and the specific memory work they sought to accomplish.

[18] "Now on the Suffrage. The Convention at Last Takes Up the Vitally Important Problem. Negro Members Speak. Miller and Wigg Both Make Strong Speeches Before the Convention," *South Carolina State*, 26 October 1895, 8.
[19] Wesley D. Hansen and George Dionisopoulos, "Eulogy Rhetoric as Political Coping Mechanism: The Aftermath of Proposition 8," *Western Journal of Communication* 76, no. 1 (2012), 25, 40; David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, "Introduction: Mourning Remains," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, Kazanjian and Eng, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.
[20] Hansen and Dionisopoulos, "Eulogy Rhetoric," 40.

Mary Miller's *The Suffrage: Speeches by Negroes in the Constitutional Convention*

There is scant information extant about Mary Miller. Billingsley identifies her as Thomas Miller's wife, but she may have been his mother or daughter.[21] Modestly produced, her twenty-three-page pamphlet, which Foner and Branham note was "published at her own expense," lists neither a publisher nor a place or date of publication.[22] But despite its very basic format, the document contains ample textual evidence of Miller's rhetorical skill as an editor and memorialist. Relying on the coverage of the convention from White South Carolina newspapers, Miller features speeches advocating African American suffrage and civil rights produced by her relation, Thomas Miller, as well as Delegates Wigg and Reed. To a considerable extent, she follows the White editors' decisions concerning these speeches, but alters their texts in several places to suit her purposes.

To augment these oratorical selections, which occupy most of the pamphlet (pp. 5–23), Mary Miller includes a dense preface comprising her own commentary and a compilation of published White responses to the speeches (pp. 3–4). She also provides a photograph of Thomas Miller, which furthers her epideictic intentions. In ominous tones, her preface emphasizes the gravity of the outcome of the Constitutional Convention: "Nothing that has transpired since the days of Succession has so thoroughly awakened this nation to the sense of its great danger from a legalized fraudulent ballot." "In the name of white supremacy," she continues, authoritatively, "the editors and orators of the south (and the north in part) have taught the nation to believe that the presence of the negroes in the south means the destruction of progress and pure government." Nonetheless, Miller confidently informs her reader that although the African American convention delegates lost the vote, they achieved a major victory in the process. Despite the racist efforts of the White majority, "by their acts and speeches," the Beaufort delegation "taught the nation the true object of the majority of the late convention," namely, "legalized, fraudulent election machinery." Demonstrating the profoundly constructed nature of public memory, Miller responds to the position perpetuated by the dominant Whites of South Carolina by setting forth an affirming perspective on the rhetorical work of the Beaufort delegates. She is bold to construct a shared account of dignity, truth, patriotism, worthiness, and eloquence in the face of systematic oppression.[23]

Notably, Miller draws published commentary about the Beaufort delegation's oratory exclusively from White Southerners whom she identifies as members of "an opposing press and the delegates of the convention" to demonstrate "how well these six negroes played the part of statesmen and patriots." She focuses on the predisposition of White delegates to unfairly discount the arguments of the Beaufort contingent—despite their acknowledgment of its undeniable eloquence. Miller's treatment of the testimony of Henry Castles Burn, discussed above, is telltale. She features his comment about the "consummate ability" with which the Beaufort delegation has "given the history" and "marshaled the facts and statistics favorable to their side," as well as his remark about their "splendid argumentative abilities, keen sarcasm and telling humor, which does credit to them individually and as representatives of their race." Then, after silently eliding by ellipsis (* * *) Burn's charge of kettle logic, she repeats his comment "Between the lines the truth begins to shine," which, within the rhetorical context she creates, suggests not deception but the

[21] Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 167.
[22] Foner and Branham, *Lift Every Voice*, 806.
[23] Mary J. Miller, *The Suffrage: Speeches by Negroes in the Constitutional Convention. The Part Taken by Colored Orators in Their Fight for a Fair and Impartial Ballot* (n.p., n.d.), 3.

strength of the Beaufort delegation's rhetoric, particularly since she also reprints Burn's praise concerning their "deportment," "powers of reasoning," "rhetorical ability," and their "knowledge of the laws of the land, the common law, the statutory law and the constitutional law, both State and national," considered by the White author to be unprecedented among "oppressed people." Tacitly, she also omits Burn's charge that Black oratorical skill is imitative.[24]

Next, Miller reproduces commentary from the *South Carolina State* reporting that the "very strong delegation" from Beaufort was "amply able to present the cause of their race with logic and eloquence." She quotes the article's claim that Delegates Miller and Wigg are "exceptionally good debaters and on more than one occasion have impressed the convention by their ability. Their speeches last night were full of telling hits and adroit reasoning which moved the admiration of many opponents." The excerpt goes on to praise Delegate Miller's rhetoric, which "commanded a close attention which was the highest tribute to its force that could have been given." His "extemporaneous" pieces, "sandwiched into the set speech he had prepared," were considered by the White writer to be "some of the best passages" of his performance. Delegate Miller is particularly commended by the excerpted commentator for his strategy of pleading "the cause of the 'poor white man,' " which strengthens his ethos as an impartial advocate of disadvantaged people, regardless of race. Mary Miller continues quoting, however, to show how the *South Carolina State* commentator attempts to undercut the ultimate persuasiveness of Delegate Miller's strategy by declaring—without providing reasons or evidence—that it "compels our admission of its cleverness, although we do not agree with the conclusions he drew."[25] By including these comments, which originate directly from unsympathetic Whites, Mary Miller reveals the strength of the Beaufort delegation's rhetoric while simultaneously exposing the moral weakness of White Southerners, who are able to recognize good rhetoric when exposed to it, yet allow their prejudices to override their reason.

An excerpted article from the *Columbia Register* further documents the powerful predisposition of White delegates to reject the arguments of the Beaufort contingent, despite their undeniable eloquence. The unnamed writer allows that "abler representatives the colored race could not have had if the State had been raked over with a fine tooth comb," but suggests that they were "wholly unable to arrest the relentless movement in the direction of the accomplishment of the object of the calling of the convention," namely the destruction of the Black franchise. The excerpt goes on to further elaborate the point in a manner that vividly demonstrates the author's belief in the inevitable superiority of naked self-interest over righteous eloquence: "Miller's speech Friday was an eloquent appeal on behalf of the negro. While listening to his soaring flights, many of the delegates regretted that they felt an inexorable determination not to accede to his plea, a determination born of stern necessity."[26]

Finally, Miller includes an editorial note from the *Sumter Watchman and Southron* that offers an overwhelmingly positive assessment of the Beaufort contingent's rhetoric, demonstrating their ability to gain the moral high ground, whence they look down with some degree of condescension upon their rhetorical adversaries. "The way Miller, Smalls, Wigg, and Whipper . . . have been bullyragging the constitutional convention for the last few days on the suffrage question," she quotes, "is too ludicrous for anything. These negroes have decidedly the best of the situation, and so far have had altogether the best of the argument. . . . [T]here is no dignified way

[24] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 3. Miller's artful elisions have been overlooked by several historians of the convention.
[25] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 3.
[26] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 3–4. Tellingly, many decades earlier Frederick Douglass dubs the *topos* of "necessity" "the tyrant's plea" ("The Haytian Emigration Movement," *Douglass' Monthly*, July 1861, 484).

out of the dilemma into which the majority of the convention has been forced. . . . Is all the talk about the rule of the intelligent and superior race all buncombe?" The excerpt reproduced by Miller goes on to actually endorse the Beaufort delegation's argument that an across-the-board "educational and property qualification" for suffrage would justly settle the matter by "eliminating the votes of the ignorant and irresponsible of both races."[27]

By grafting previously published commentary concerning the speeches produced by begrudgingly complimentary, yet unmoved Southerners to her prefatory remarks, Mary Miller practices rhetorical accretion, an art employed by African American rhetors since the eighteenth century to create complex, multifaceted texts.[28] Suzanne Bordelon notes that feminist scholarship on rhetorical accretion has exposed instances of "men overlaying or 'respeaking' a woman's text" in order to gain control over it, yet rhetorically savvy White and African American women of the late nineteenth-century such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Miller employ rhetorical accretion with discursive artifacts produced by men, who typically exercise the power over them, to strengthen—rather than to diminish—the arguments of marginalized people.[29] Rhetorical accretion, in effect, enables Miller to recontextualize Southern Whites' frank admissions about African American arguments. By marshaling these unlikely, often conflicted White male witnesses in support of the Beaufort contingent, she subversively crosses lines of race *and* gender to provide powerful evidence of the value of African American eloquence. Secondarily, she strengthens her ethos as a compiler of a variety of texts, including White men's words. In the late nineteenth-century context, her role as the authoritative editor of the Beaufort contingent's eloquence—who writes confidently in the first person—suggests a strong public character.

Miller closes her preface by reminding her readers that all the excerpted comments concerning the featured oratory were produced by Democrats. Resisting "quoting one expression from any paper that is politically friendly to these delegates or a single word from any Republican," she suggests *a fortiori* the power of the Beaufort delegation's oratory. "That the country may read these speeches and learn to know these brave and true men," Miller concludes, "I have edited a few of their arguments and prepared this pamphlet. I regard them as gems of negro eloquence."[30] Thus, she self-assuredly emphasizes the memorializing function of her text, race pride, and—more specifically—her goal of delivering a corrective, restorative commemoration of the Beaufort delegation's role in the convention to an enlightened national audience.

Thorough analysis of the outstanding oratorical excerpts Miller includes in her pamphlet would be the subject of another study, but I will reflect on one particularly powerful moment in a speech by her relative Thomas Miller that suggests the kind of "public forgetting" Vivian and Watson both explicate and endorse. In order to dismantle the defense of slavery set forth by Delegate H. Cowper Patton of Richland—explicitly characterized by Thomas Miller as "a very feeble shoot of the lost cause"—who suggests "that God intended and did make one race inferior to the other races for the sole purpose of sustaining a slave-holding class," the featured speaker reviews periods in European history in which White people held other White people in bondage. Having established this counter evidence to Patton's claim, he drives his refutation decisively home by reminding his audience that White women—some of whom were the likely ancestors of

[27] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 4.
[28] See, e.g., Glen McClish and Jacqueline Bacon, "Taking Agency, Constituting Community: The Activist Rhetoric of Richard Allen," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 11–12 (2008), 1–34.
[29] Suzanne Bordelon, "Embodied *Ethos* and Rhetorical Accretion: Genevieve Stebbins and the *Delsarte System of Expression*," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2016), 106; Glen McClish, "Ethos, Agency, and Pathos in Ida B. Wells's 'Lynch Law in All Its Phases,' " *New North Star* 2 (2020), 12.
[30] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 4.

his fellow White delegates—were sold as slaves by White men in old Charleston. Through this rebuttal, which exposes "this curse of slavery, inflicted upon all the races in every stage of the existence of the human family," orator Thomas Miller (and, subsequently, editor Mary Miller) constructs an implicit case for "public forgetting" the Lost Cause narrative of an idyllic, divinely inspired, slavery-based antebellum South that continued to block racial progress thirty years after the close of the Civil War.[31]

Speeches at the Constitutional Convention, by Gen. Robt. Smalls

Sarah Voorhees Smalls (Williams), Robert Smalls's daughter, left a more substantial biographical record than Mary Miller. She attended both the Miner Normal School in Washington, D.C., and the Boston Conservatory of Music. After marrying and moving to Colorado, she soon returned to Beaufort, where she took care of her father and other family members. She would go on to teach music at the Colored Normal, Industrial, Agricultural, and Mechanical College of South Carolina. Smalls's twenty-nine-page pamphlet, which provides a printer and place and date of publication on its title page, has a more professional look about it than Mary Miller's. Whereas Miller features the discourse of three of the Beaufort rhetors, Smalls focuses exclusively on her father's rhetoric (pp. 5–11, 16–19). In addition, she contextualizes her father's oratory by reproducing his proposal for suffrage (pp. 4–5) along with the objectionable version eventually adopted by the convention (pp. 11–16). Included, as well, is a brief narrative of Delegate Smalls's principled refusal to sign the final draft of the constitution (p. 20).

Like Miller, Smalls interprets the convention's ill-fated African American discourse—with which the Beaufort delegation seems to win the arguments, yet lose the votes—as worth preserving because of the vital memory work it enables. In the spirit of her father's blunt, confrontational rhetoric, Sarah Smalls approaches this project of public commemoration more defiantly than Miller. "Indeed," she writes in her brief, forthright introduction to the pamphlet, the convention "may have been, an object lesson, planned by the All-wise God, to teach the haughty, boastful sons of Carolina that there are Negroes capable and amply qualified in every respect to protect themselves whenever it becomes necessary to do so; that those few representatives of the race were but a *very small* part of the rising host that time and education are bringing forward day by day in spite of lynching, caste prejudice or any methods used against them."[32] She also touts "the manly spirit displayed by [Robert Smalls] and the other colored delegates, whenever the rights of their race were in jeopardy." Her memorial to her father's oratory refutes dominant White accounts of the loss of the African American franchise in South Carolina. The drawing of Robert Smalls she includes, like the photograph provided by Mary Miller, indicates this memorializing function.

Particularly powerful is Smalls's inclusion of her father's response to Article 34 of the proposed Constitution, which strictly forbade interracial marriage, but was silent about White men's sexual relations with Black women outside of legally sanctioned relationships. In order to expose the South's discriminatory sexual code, which enabled the summary lynching of African American men if sexual impropriety was suspected, yet looked the other way as White men routinely sexually assaulted and cohabitated with African American women, Smalls intrepidly moves that "any white person who lives and cohabits with a Negro, mulatto, or person who shall have one-eighth or more of Negro blood, shall be disqualified from holding any office of

[31] Mary Miller, *The Suffrage*, 10.

[32] Sarah Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention, by Gen. Robt. Smalls. With the Right of Suffrage Passed by the Constitutional Convention* (Charleston, S.C.: Enquirer Print, 1896), 3.

emolument or trust in this State, and the offspring of any such living or cohabitation shall bear the name of the father, and shall be entitled to inherit and acquire property the same as if they were legitimate." Mary Smalls also features her father's cogent case for his amendment, which directly exposes the myths of White moral purity and an idyllic antebellum South. Addressing the reality of the large number of mixed-race people in the South, a phenomenon Southern Whites condemn, as Article 34 suggests, while ignoring its principal cause, Smalls declares, "We have, sir, as pure colored women in South Carolina and in this country, as any race upon this earth. Sir, that evil, known as slavery caused all of this [miscegenation]. This wrong was done by you all, owning them as your slaves." By featuring her father's trenchant exposure of standard lies about racial purity and Southern sexual relations, Sarah Smalls not only commemorates her father's rhetoric, but—like Mary Miller—contributes to an implicit case for "public forgetting" the mythologies essential to the narrative of the Lost Cause.[33]

In alignment with Mary Miller, Sarah Smalls practices rhetorical accretion, but whereas Miller exclusively appends the conflicted voices of White Southerners in order to expose the hypocrisy of Southern Whites—who recognize yet refuse to accept the better argument—Smalls primarily features sympathetic commentary (in the form of editorials, a telegram, and letters) from writers beyond the South (pp. 20–26). Thus, she includes a column from the *New York Press*, a Republican organ, which is highly favorable of the Beaufort contingent's oratory while ironically acknowledging its heroic ineffectiveness. "We can recall no more brilliant moral victory of a parliamentary minority," the article declares, "than that gained on Thursday in the South Carolina Constitutional Convention by the representatives of the race about to be disfranchised for lack of intelligence wherewith to vote." The reproduced text suggests that the Beaufort delegation's inability to persuade their audience stems from the pernicious double bind inevitably faced by the African American orators, who are doomed to fail whether or not they exhibit civic excellence. Weak speech demonstrates a lack of the intellectual and moral capacities necessary for participation in public life, yet rhetorical prowess, which intimidates ruling Whites and disrupts their centuries-old prejudices, is even worse: "And in no one other way could the Negroes have so convincingly proved to the world their right to the ballot than by this victory of black mind over white matter. . . . It is not Negro ignorance, but Negro intelligence, that is feared." With the publication of the pamphlet, however, an audience beyond racist White South Carolinians, namely "the world," can memorialize—and eventually act upon—the worth and dignity of these African American orators.[34]

Highlighting the disruptive power of Robert Smalls's proposed amendment to Article 34, discussed above, the *New York Press* column marshals a martial metaphor to suggest the Beaufort delegate's strategic superiority over his White foes: "In this case the white majority laid themselves open to the flank movement, which Robert Smalls had evidently meditated throughout the session, by introducing a quite supererogatory article for the amendment of mixed marriages." Concerning Smalls's quip that if White men's sexual practices were policed in the same manner as their African American counterparts, "this Convention would have to be adjourned for lack of a quorum," the writer declares, "The 'burst of laughter' which followed this threw an interesting light on the morals and manners of South Carolina. It showed the state of civilization depicted in 'Tom Jones.' " Yet even though, in the writer's words, Smalls's "seizure of a parliamentary advantage in so sudden and effective a manner . . . cause[d] the majority leader to abandon his forces and leave them to expose their moral nakedness to the world," the Beaufort delegate fails to move his

[33] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 16, 18.
[34] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 20–22.

audience to embrace a more consistent approach toward anti-miscegenation. Continuing with the allusion to Henry Fielding's portrayal of eighteenth-century immorality and hypocrisy among the English gentry, the writer pronounces the inevitable fate of Smalls's trenchant argument: "A Convention composed entirely of Squire Westerns would have met such an impeachment in a precisely similar way. Having satisfied their sense of humor the delegates killed the amendment and passed the mixed marriages article."[35]

Sarah Smalls also reproduces a glowing letter from an E. C. Bossett of Philadelphia—who, Okon Uya reports, represents an African American congregation—declaring that "the dignity, courage and signal ability with which you and your Republican colleagues at Columbia, have asserted and maintained manhood rights and the just claims of all citizens to fair play under the supreme law of the land as well as under the civilization of our times, have touched the heart of the great North and called forth its soberest approval and its high admiration." The implication, of course, is that although the Beaufort delegation failed to persuade the entrenched White delegates, their arguments appealed to a more enlightened national audience beyond the South, thus constituting a "moral victory," to borrow the phrase from the *New York Press* article cited above. Bossett's explicit request for a printed copy of the speeches Smalls delivered at the convention articulates the exigence for Smalls's (and Miller's) commemorative work. He concludes by comparing the Black delegation to the great warriors of the ancient Greek world: "Indeed, it is felt here that, in your statements, your arguments and warnings, you have covered the whole case and done lasting honor to the Negro race and to American patriotism. All hail to you and your noble band of Spartans at Columbia!"[36]

Sarah Smalls does provide evidence of the Beaufort delegate's rhetorical prowess from a more local, less sympathetic source in the form of an editorial published in the *News and Courier*, which she describes as "the Leading Democratic Paper of Charleston, S. C." Addressing his primary attention to the anti-miscegenation portion of the convention, the unnamed editorialist declares that the decision to ignore Smalls's controversial amendment "was a mistake" because "the addition was a proper corollary to the section adopted, and should have been extended to disqualify from voting, as well as holding office, the class of offenders at which it was aimed," thus demonstrating her father's superiority in the debate.[37]

The final letter of support included in Smalls's pamphlet, produced by Englishman Horace J. Smith, once again extolls Smalls's proposed amendment to the anti-miscegenation law. "We have read over here the telegraphic report about the metaphorical bomb you threw into the Constitutional Convention, with the greatest glee," Smith begins, expressing his delight in Smalls's defiance by recirculating an ordnance-based metaphor already popular in the press.[38] Smith continues to praise Smalls's rhetoric, suggesting that it "will do more to make the scales drop from people's eyes than even Douglass' admirable tract 'Why is the Negro Lynched' "—the address Douglass's biographer David Blight dubs "the last great speech of the orator's life."[39] Smith also

[35] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 21–22. Squire Western, the father of central protagonist Tom Jones's love interest, Sophia, is a hard-drinking country gentleman more concerned with his hounds, his horses, and his bottle than moral reasoning.
[36] Uya, *From Slavery to Public Service*, 145; Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 24.
[37] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 22–23.
[38] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 25. For an example of the martial metaphor in the popular press, see "No Mixed Marriages. Decisive Action of the Constitutional Convention," *Charleston Daily News and Courier*, 4 October 1895, 1.
[39] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 25; David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 736.

compares Smalls's argument favorably to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[40] Although hyperbolic, it is difficult to doubt the sincerity of Smith's assessment of Robert Smalls's rhetorical prowess, which is included by his daughter to demonstrate the international favor bestowed upon him. In Sarah Smalls's hands, such supportive reviews recast the bitter convention defeat, commemorating this discourse for the broad audience of sympathetic Whites, as well as "the rising host that time and education are bringing forward day by day."[41] Smalls concludes her pamphlet by reprinting a detailed open letter the Beaufort contingent sent to the Democratic-leaning *New York World* exposing the White delegates' fraud, thus amplifying their commitment to reach a broad audience (pp. 26–29).[42]

Employing complementary, yet individualized strategies, Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls—who did not enjoy reputations as editors or significant public figures in either the Black or White communities of South Carolina—produced repositories of eloquence and commentary, artfully curated to shape progressive American memory. In addition to marshaling African American rhetoric, they applied the strategy of rhetorical accretion, intrepidly reaching across lines of race and gender to contextualize Black oratory with public responses and to further establish their ethē as skilled editors of multiple, conflicting voices. *The Suffrage: Speeches by Negroes in the Constitutional Convention* and *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention, by Gen. Robt. Smalls* constitute early exemplars of published discourse crafted by rhetorically sophisticated women of color not only to present powerful arguments concerning civil rights—which Ida B. Wells accomplishes so brilliantly a few years earlier by publishing *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892), *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature* (1893), and *The Red Record* (1895)—but also to commemorate eloquent, if initially ineffective rhetoric in order to motivate present and future action.

Practicing a multifaceted eulogistic rhetoric, Miller and Smalls draw inspiration from a kind of civic death to continue the struggle. Beyond acts of familial devotion, their pamphlets were intended to console, to defy and even taunt, to celebrate, to rededicate, and—in some instances—to deliberately forget, as well as to constitute character and fortitude for African Americans suffering through what has often been referred to as the nadir of the African American experience. As Billingsley notes, Miller and Smalls "captured" for their readership the enhanced "reputation" the speeches of the Beaufort delegation gained for African Americans. Of the nineteenth-century memory work of former slaves, Glymph writes, "It could not prevent lynching, restore the vote to black men, or of itself establish equitable educational and economic opportunities. This did not, however, make it nothing," since "it helped steady them for the fight for freedom and civil rights and helped arm them to live with as much dignity as possible."[43] Miller's and Smalls's pamphlets, themselves "gems of negro eloquence," to borrow Miller's characterization of the Beaufort delegations' oratory, contribute to these efforts.

[40] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 25–26.
[41] Smalls, *Speeches at the Constitutional Convention*, 3.
[42] The letter to the *New York World* was subsequently reprinted in the South Carolina press ("Negroes to the North," *Columbia Daily Register*, 4 October 1895, 2).
[43] Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 179; Glymph, "Liberty Dearly Bought," 130.

Conclusion

This essay, a study of rhetorical loss and renewal, began with the eloquence of the Beaufort delegation at the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895. Second, I scrutinized the contingent's inability to persuade their fellow White delegates to preserve African American suffrage, demonstrating the inevitable failure of convincing rhetoric in circumstances in which political power trumps civic deliberation. Principally, though, I have sought to elucidate and celebrate the memory work of Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls, the pamphleteers who reframed and commemorated this failed deliberative rhetoric. Resisting "the constraints of decorum" that Vivian argues dominated Washington's contemporaneous speech, these pioneering women of color celebrate powerful civil rights arguments, ably contextualized in order to motivate present and future action.

As noted above, Thomas Miller, Robert Smalls, and their colleagues have garnered some praise from historians of the period (although little from rhetorical scholars), yet Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls, despite their significant rhetorical achievement, have been for the most part relegated to footnotes. As Billingsley notes, their "important and personal perspectives on the participation of these black delegates have long been buried in obscurity."[44] This negligence may have something to do with the fact that as strictly written works of public memory, they were not connected to specific "memory places," discussed above. In this sense, perhaps, Miller's and Smalls's pamphlets align with the initial Jewish memorials to the Holocaust, which, as James Young explains, "came not in stone, glass, or steel—but in narrative. The Yizkor Bikher—memorial books—remembered both the lives and destruction of European Jewish communities according to the most ancient of Jewish memorial media: words on paper."[45] Miller and Smalls's medium, of course, was dictated not by ancient tradition, but necessity. As Southern African American women, they exerted little control over public spaces and thus resorted to the resources they commanded, namely words. Students of public memory should continue to scrutinize the material and cultural requirements for establishing physical commemorative sites, the gatekeeping function such requirements perform, and the innovative strategies disempowered groups call upon to create alternative acts of commemoration.

However, if Miller's and Smalls's roles in public memory work have not received adequate recognition in historical and rhetorical scholarship, the pamphlets themselves have borne fruit from the remains of the initial failures of the featured rhetors. Scholars and anthologists of the stony road traveled by African Americans in post-Reconstruction South Carolina have relied on the pamphlets as sources, and traces of Mary Miller's and Sarah Smalls's rhetorical work appear in later writings.[46] Subtly yet significantly, these two nineteenth-century African American women shape the modern historical narrative of the convention and its aftermath.

Notably, a few twenty-first-century writers cite the speeches featured in the pamphlets in a manner that explicitly extends the public memory work of Miller and Smalls. Foner and Branham, who, as noted above, anthologize Miller's principal speech, identify Mary Miller's pamphlet as the source of their text for the oration and specifically quote from its preface. Billingsley (a sociologist), who pronounces the pamphlets "an important contribution to

[44] Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 167.
[45] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 7.
[46] See, for example, Uya, *From Slavery to Public Service*; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*; Edward Miller, *Gullah Statesman*.

scholarship," directly echoes their work, quoting generously from the speeches and White commentary selected by Miller and Smalls, as well as their introductory comments. (The pamphlets are, in fact, the principal sources for his quotations.) By retracing Miller's and Smalls's work, Billingsley pays tribute to the pamphlets as he places this late-nineteenth-century eloquence within the context of twenty-first-century race relations.[47]

Furthermore, in his chapter on the 1895 convention in *Voices of Black South Carolina: Legends and Legacy*, historian Damon L. Fordham celebrates the oratory of Thomas Miller and Robert Smalls (as well as the rhetoric of Whipper, which is not included in either pamphlet) by excerpting significant sections of their convention speeches, not simply for the purpose of close analysis or for supporting a detailed historical narrative, but as deliberate acts of commemoration. Furthermore, following the strategy practiced by the pamphleteers, he reproduces praise for the speeches featured in White Southern papers. Writing for an audience of interested citizens, rather than scholars, Fordham transfers the essential memory work of the nineteenth-century pamphlets into a twenty-first-century context. After quoting from Sarah Smalls and her father's intrepid proposal to amend the anti-miscegenation code, discussed above, Fordham calls attention to the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court ruling that overturned such hypocritical bans on interracial marriage, thus demonstrating the slow arc of racial progress. He notes that although the ban on miscegenation in the state constitution survived *Loving*, "On November 3, 1998, exactly 103 years, one month and one day after Robert Smalls's speech, South Carolina voters voted to remove Section 34, banning interracial marriage . . . with a majority of 62 percent of the votes cast." Fordham closes this chapter by stating, very much in the spirit expressed by Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls over one hundred years earlier, that despite the loss of rights experienced by African Americans following the convention, "the speeches of Robert Smalls, Thomas Miller, and William Whipper and their colleagues show that these developments were not met unchallenged." Fordham extends the public memory work of his activist female predecessors, not merely reporting, but celebrating past oratory wielded in support of causes that continue to require attention. The final words of Fordham's epilogue directly challenge the reader to translate memory to action: "Will people learn from these mistakes? Will the events of recent times lead to an age of increased understanding and better relationships between different races? The answer, just as this book, is in your hands."[48]

Finally, I note that the *Zinn Education Project*, which, as described on its website, "promotes and supports the teaching of people's history in classrooms across the country," provides a page titled "This Day in History: Sept. 10, 1895: South Carolina Constitutional Convention Convened" featuring information about both Robert Smalls and Thomas Miller, as well as brief explanations of the import of their contributions to the convention. Also on this page, links to Sarah Smalls's pamphlet place her public memory work into the hands of legions of digitally savvy twenty-first-century students.[49]

Billingsley, Fordham, and the *Zinn Education Project* merge public commemoration of past discourse with partisan discussion of present issues. Along with their rhetorical predecessors Mary Miller and Sarah Smalls, they vivify Young's exhortation that "the shape of memory cannot

[47] Foner and Branham, *Lift Every Voice*, 806–07; Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 167.
[48] Damon L. Fordham, *Voices of Black South Carolina: Legend and Legacy* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2009), 74, 85, 154.
[49] "About the Zinn Education Project," "This Day in History: Sept. 10, 1895: South Carolina Constitutional Convention Convened," *Zinn Education Project* (Washington, D.C.: 2021), https://www.zinnedproject.org/about/, https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/sc-constitutional-convention.

be divorced from the actions taken in its behalf. . . . For were we to passively remark only the contours of these memorials, were we to leave unexplored their genesis and remain unchanged by the recollective act, it could be said that we have not remembered at all."[50]

[50] Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 15.

New North Star, 2021; 3:45–58

Lesser Glory: The Civil War Military Career of Charles Remond Douglass

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Charles Douglass in Uniform, c. 1864. Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Almost immediately after having been appointed a recruiter for the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, the prominent African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass enlisted two of his own sons, Lewis and Charles, into the first regiment of African Americans in the Union Army.[1] The older brother, Lewis, had a brief but highly meritorious military career, rising to become the sergeant major of the Fifty-Fourth, which became nationally famous for its courageous fighting at the Battle of Fort Wagner outside Charleston, South Carolina, in July 1863. Lewis was seriously wounded in that engagement and soon after ended his military career. When *Glory*, a film about the history of the Fifty-Fourth, was made in 1989, the filmmakers decided to cast a more mature character than the twenty-three-year-old Lewis as the unit's sergeant major, and chose fifty-two-year-old African American actor Morgan Freeman.[2] While slighted by modern-day Hollywood, Lewis's military career accumulated far more glory than that of his younger brother Charles, whose experiences proved much more typical of the African American Union recruit in the Civil War.

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[1] David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 292, 385.
[2] Kevin M. Levin, "Why 'Glory' Still Resonates More Than Three Decades Later," Smithsonian Magazine, 14 September 2020, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-glory-still-resonates-more-three-decades-later-180975794/.

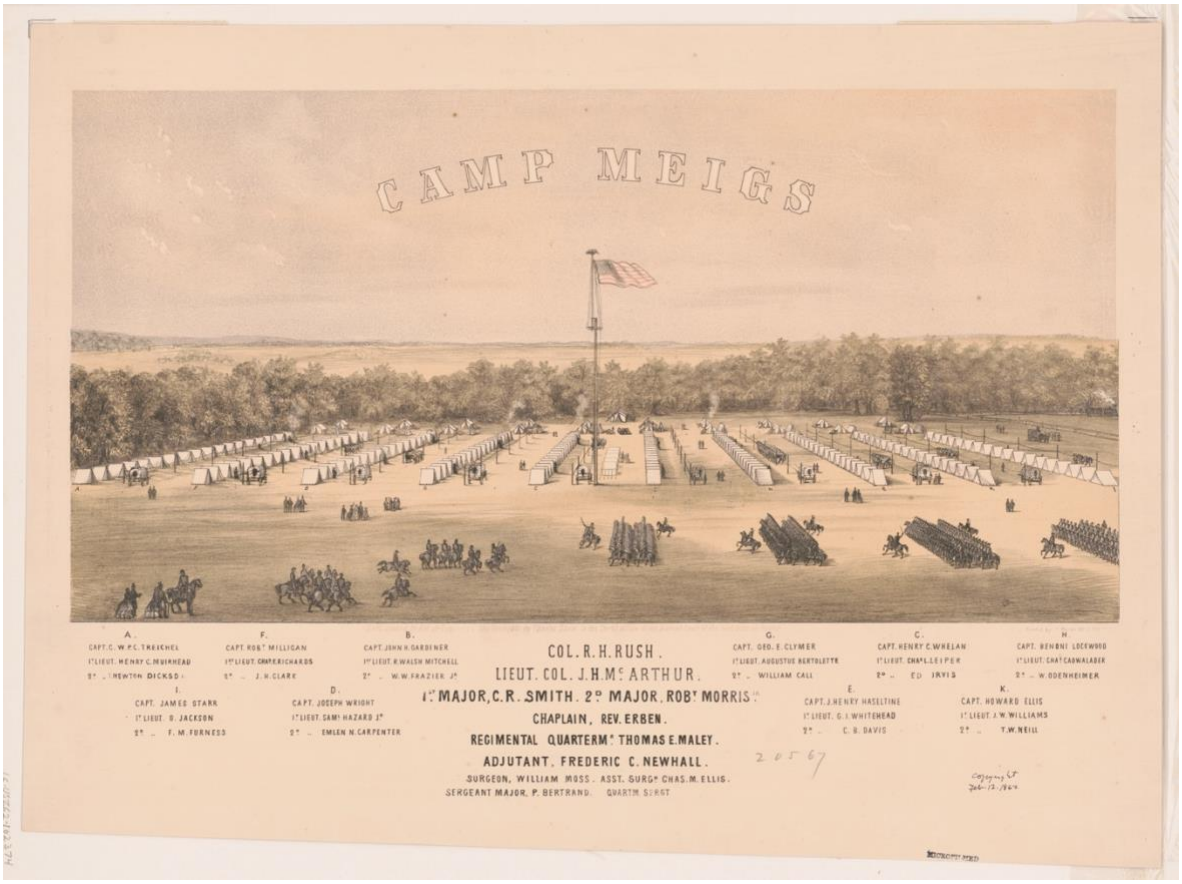
Glory poster. Courtesy of AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo.

Charles (born 1844) and Lewis (born 1840) were both mustered into service at Camp Meigs in Readville, Massachusetts, in early April 1863. Camp Meigs was named in honor of Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs and was located only a few miles from Boston's outskirts. Thousands of Union troops received their training there before moving on to join the war.[3] The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry and its sister regiment, the Fifty-Fifth, were among the very first African American units raised after Lincoln authorized their recruitment when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863. The strongly antislavery Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew had assembled a group of former abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, to raise the needed two thousand enlisted men for these units. Douglass had recruited his own sons Lewis and Charles for these units.[4] The Fifty-Fourth completed its training in mid-May 1854. After a grand review through the streets of Boston, which Frederick Douglass came to watch, the regiment shipped out to South Carolina on 28 May 1863.[5] Charles became ill with a congestive disorder during training and was unable to accompany the Fifty-Fourth when it shipped south.

[3] Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 110, 248; Steven M. LaBarre, *The Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry in the Civil War* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2016), 26.

[4] Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867; Selected from the Holdings of the National Archives of the United States*, Series 2: *The Black Military Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 75–76; Luis F. Emilio, *A Brave Black Regiment: The History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863–1865*, 2nd ed. (1894; New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 8–14; Cornish, *Sable Arm*, 197–210.

[5] *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War*, 8 vols. (Norwood, Mass: Norwood Press, 1932), 4:656–57.



Camp Meigs. Lithograph by F. Moras, c. 1861–62. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. https://www.loc.gov/item/91727588/.

In early September, Charles wrote his father to thank him for sending five dollars. Charles reported that fellow soldiers at Readville were so underfed that they were stealing chickens from neighboring farmers and that many more were hospitalized for various camp ailments, including dysentery. One reason Charles was glad to receive money from his father was that he was still participating in the boycott by members of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts against the discriminatory pay offered to Black soldiers.[6] The Union Army paid African American soldiers just $10 a month but deducted $3 for rations and uniforms. At the same time, White soldiers received $13.50 in pay plus a $3.50 clothing allowance per month.[7] Charles told his father, "I hope our boys wont except of any less than what they enlisted for."[8] Even passage of the Army Enrollment Act of 1864 the following June only partially eradicated such inequalities.[9]

[6] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 6 July 1863, in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, eds., *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh, Scot.: University of Edinburgh Press, 2018), 203–08.
[7] John David Smith, *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois State University Press, 2013), 68–69,
[8] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 8 September 1863, General Correspondence File, reel 1, frames 847-49, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 412. Charles Douglass mistakenly substitutes "except" for "accept."
[9] James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 197–203; Cornish, *Sable Arm*, 184–95.

Charles credited Captain Eric Wulff for watching out for the men left behind when the Fifty-Fourth had shipped South, declaring that the officer was "a man every inch of him he is a Swede by birth but he is my friend."[10] When that unit had departed for South Carolina, Wulff had been detailed to remain at Fort Meigs to conduct additional recruiting and hunt down deserters from the Fifty-Fourth. Subsequently, he was assigned to the staff of Brigadier General Richard A. Pierce, the commandant of Camp Meigs, and Charles assisted Wulff in those assignments over the winter of 1863–64.[11]

Not all Bostonians were pleased with the presence of a training camp for African American soldiers so close to the city. Charles reported to his father that shortly after learning of the Union victory at Gettysburg, he got into a fist fight with an Irish American for declaring that George Meade was a better general than George McClellan. A police officer had arrested the other brawler and Charles bragged, "I got my mind made to shoot the first Irishman that strikes me they may talk but keep their paws to themselves."[12]

Meanwhile in South Carolina in July of 1863, the Fifty-Fourth had participated in a heroic but unsuccessful assault on the Confederates' Fort Wagner, which guarded the city of Charleston. Almost half of the unit's men were killed or wounded in that attack. The regiment's White colonel, Robert Gould Shaw, was killed, and its sergeant major, Lewis H. Douglass, was seriously wounded. Official reports of the battle portrayed the Black regiment's performance as courageous and disciplined, dispelling widespread doubt about the efficacy of Black soldiers in combat.[13] Rumors reached Charles at Readville that he and the recent recruits would soon be sent to South Carolina to help replenish the ranks of the Fifty-Fourth. He also heard that Governor Andrew was planning to have Lewis promoted to a commissioned officer's rank.[14] Frederick Douglass wrote friends that he was planning to travel to Boston to see off Charles and added that he was sorry that the Union Army was still hesitating to promote African Americans to officer's rank.[15] While a contingent of soldiers was sent from Readville to reinforce the Fifty-Fourth, Captain Wulff apparently pulled strings and had Charles ordered to stay behind in Boston to assist him.[16] In fall of 1863, the Fifty-Fourth in South Carolina lost track of Charles's whereabouts and erroneously reported him as a deserter on its muster rolls and demoted him from a corporal to a private, but that was later corrected.[17]

[10] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 8 September 1863, General Correspondence File, reel 1, frames 847-49, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress.
[11] Emilio, *Brave Black Regiment*, 334; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 51.
[12] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 8 July 1863, in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 207–09; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 396.
[13] Emilio, *Brave Black Regiment*, 90–91, 105; Cornish, *Sable Arm*, 152–56; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 13–17; Donald Yacovone, *A Voice of Thunder: A Black Soldier's Civil War* (Champaign, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 256.
[14] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 18 September 1863, General Correspondence File, reel 1, frames 849–50, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 217.
[15] Frederick Douglass to Louise Tobias Dorsey, 21 November 1863, Frederick Douglass Collection, Sterling Library, Yale University.
[16] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 18 September 1863, General Correspondence File, reel 1, frames 849–50, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 217.
[17] Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 139–41.

Storming Fort Wagner. Chromolithograph, c. 5 July 1890. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012647346/.

After having raised two infantry regiments of African Americans for the Union Army, Governor Andrew wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in September 1863, requesting permission to recruit a Black cavalry regiment.[18] Not receiving an answer, Andrew wrote Stanton's aides to ask him "if he does not think it worthwhile to have this experiment tried of a Colored Cavalry enough to accept four companies to be mustered in at the minimum one by one."[19] On 23 November 1863, Andrew received the War Department's approval to raise the regiment but with permission to pay enlistment bounties only to officers.[20] After much protest from enlisted African Americans and their supporters like Frederick Douglass, Congress finally removed this discrepancy in June 1864.[21] The Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment would be the only all-Black cavalry unit raised by a state during the Civil War.

Charles spent the summer and fall months doing clerking and housekeeping work at Fort Meigs before finally being assigned to the newly authorized Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment. All of the new regiment's officers would be White, as was typical of military practices at the time, and most had prior experience serving in other units at lower ranks. Their colonel was Henry Sturgis Russell, a twenty-five-year-old Harvard graduate who had seen combat and been

[18] Only the state governments of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Louisiana raised regiments under their own banner. Other Blacks served in the U.S Colored Troops, organized directly by the federal government. Smith, *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops*, 47–49.
[19] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 21.
[20] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 21–23.
[21] The African American enlisted men of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry and its sister regiment, the Fifty-Fifth, both refused to accept either their reduced pay or the supplement offered by Massachusetts to make up the difference. Smith, *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops*, 68–69, 71; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 15.

captured in action in Virginia and then paroled the previous year. He was a first cousin of Robert Gould Shaw, the commander of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts. Several other recent Harvard graduates were found among the regiment's officers.[22]

Like its predecessors, the Fifty-Fourth and Fifty-Fifth Massachusetts Infantry Regiments, soldiers were recruited for the Fifth by agents who crisscrossed the Northern states seeking able-bodied African Americans. Andrew issued a proclamation, acknowledging the discriminatory pay the federal government offered enlisted African Americans but offering each recruit a bounty of $3.25 a month from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.[23] The state's adjutant general added a more ideological appeal: by joining the Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry, African Americans "will illustrate their capacity for that dashing and brilliant arm of the military service . . . at a time when they hold the destiny of their race in their own grasp; and when its certain emancipation from prejudice, as well as slavery, is in the hands of those now invited to unite in the final blow which will annihilate the rebel power, let no brave and strong man hesitate."[24] As James McPherson observed, African American soldiers had a strong ideological motivation for their military service.[25]

The Massachusetts government's efforts drew fruit by attracting recruits from widely different locales. The new soldiers reported their civilian residences from such faraway places as France and Hawaii, most likely from the ranks of seamen then ashore in Massachusetts. Every Northern state and several Southern states supplied men for the cavalry regiment. An analysis of one company (D) in the Fifth revealed that 53 percent of its privates were born into slavery. [26]

Nineteen-year-old Charles Remond Douglass was assigned to Company I of the Fifth. Governor Andrew wrote Stanton requesting that Charles be reassigned from the already deployed Fifty-Fourth to the Fifth. On account of his "valuable assistance in recruiting the 5th Mass. Cavalry," Andrew requested a promotion for Charles to the rank of "First Sergeant," the top enlisted man in his company. Andrew also based this recommendation to Stanton "by reason of the influential position of his father among the colored people of the U.S. and the important aid and influence he has exerted in promoting colored military organization."[27] Stanton concurred and approved Charles's transfer and promotion.[28] Company I would be commanded by Charles's friend Captain Eric Wulff.

The Fifth began training over the winter of 1863–64. Drilling with their horses for hours daily, they mastered the basic formations needed to maneuver on the battlefield. A problem occurred in that only enough horses were provided for four of the regiment's twelve companies to be trained at a time. Recruits were issued sabers and carbines and learned to use them in combat situations. In their off-duty time, men from the unit organized a "debating club," and were reported as "discussing the important questions of the day with signal ability."[29] On 1 May 1864, Governor

[22] Cornish, *The Sable Arm*, 204; Smith, *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops*, 52–54; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 27–34.
[23] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 34–35.
[24] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 35.
[25] James M. McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 15–17, 90–91, 100, 117.
[26] Noah Andre Trudeau, "Proven Themselves in Every Respect to Be Men: Black Cavalry in the Civil War," in *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, ed. John David Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 283; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 36–40.
[27] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 40–41.
[28] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 41.
[29] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 44.

Andrew visited the regiment and gave an address, complaining about the injustice of the federal government's discriminatory pay policy. The governor already had received protest letters signed by a dozen men in the Fifth complaining that the state had still not paid them their promised enlistment bounties. Recruiters in the field also reported complaints about unpaid bounties. In response to the problem, Massachusetts abolitionists and other sympathizers had raised money to help support the families of the men of the Fifth and two earlier African American regiments raised in Massachusetts. Despite these disappointments, the soldiers gave Andrew "nine rousing cheers as he walked down the line."[30]

John Albion Andrew (1818–1867). Photograph by Mathew Brady, c. 1860–70. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Frederick Hill Meserve Collection. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.81.M3907.

Andrew's address turned out to be an informal farewell to the Fifth, which received orders to depart by train to Camp Casey outside Washington, D.C., in early May. On the way, Captain Wulff was involved in a distressing incident that Charles witnessed. Wulff was addressing his company during a stop in Baltimore when a tipsy sergeant, Amos Jackson of Connecticut, fell out of line. When Wulff reprimanded the soldier, the latter cursed him. Wulff demanded the sergeant's stripes, which he refused to give up. Wulff then drew his gun and shot at the sergeant, but the bullet instead struck and killed a nearby private. The Army investigated the incident and six of the unit's enlisted men, but not Charles, complained that Wulff had been the person who was intoxicated. In a letter to his father, Charles seems to have placed the blame on Sergeant Jackson because he "was a little drunk but not drunk enough to not know what was right."[31] Although not

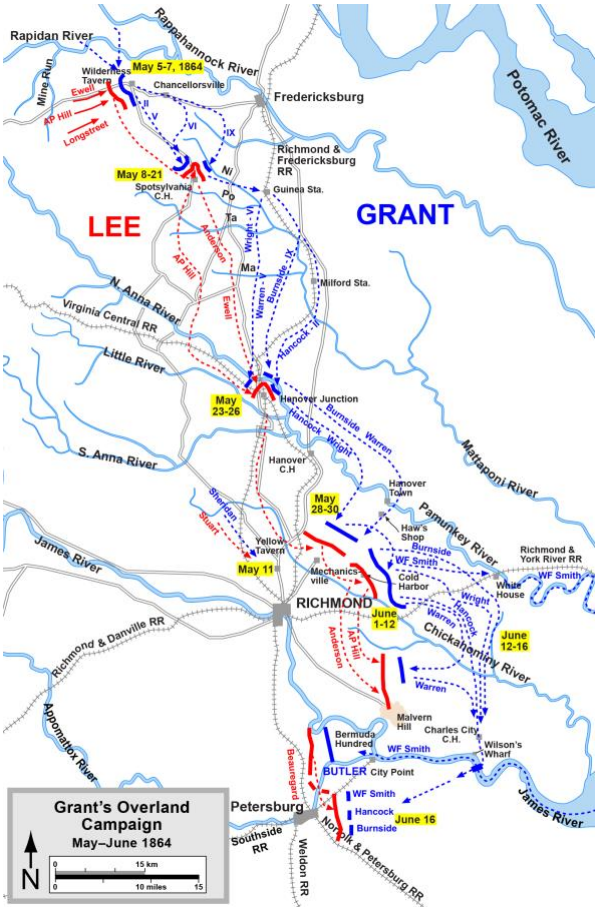
[30] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 47.

[31] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 31 May 1864, General Correspondence File, reel 2, frames 32–34, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 225–26.

charged by military authorities, within a few weeks Wulff resigned his commission and left the army.[32]

Arriving in Washington, D.C, the unit suffered the indignity of having been converted from a cavalry into an infantry regiment. They turned in their cavalry weapons and were issued rifles. Colonel Russell was placed in charge of a brigade that included the Fifth and two other African American infantry regiments and all were ordered to report to Fortress Monroe in Virginia via steamships. A war correspondent with a Massachusetts newspaper reported: "It is hard to convince the men that the government has not broken faith in enlisting them for cavalry and then making infantry of them; it does appear like injustice at first thought, but few moment's reflection of the emergency in so doing." The reporter noted worries that neither the officers nor men of the regiment had received infantry training but hoped that the unit would be converted back to cavalry once "the emergency" was over.[33]

The emergency in question was the multi-pronged offensive that Union Army General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant was launching against the Confederates in Virginia that spring. Grant hoped that by attacking the outnumbered Southerners from several directions simultaneously, he could overwhelm his opponent Robert E. Lee, capture the Confederate capital, and bring the war to a successful conclusion for the Union side.

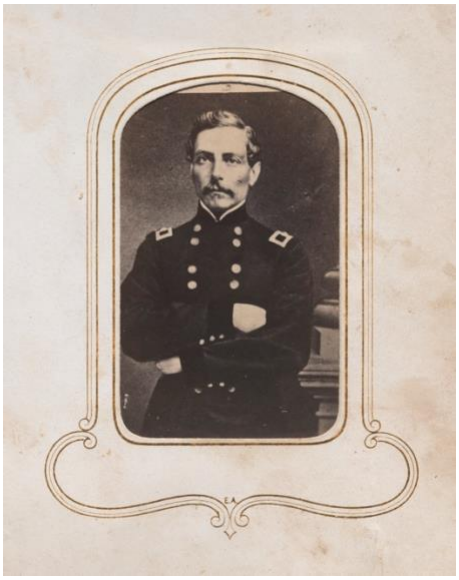


Overland Campaign. Courtesy of Hal Jespersen. https://www.cwmaps.com/freemaps/Overland-Richmond.png.

[32] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 57–60.
[33] As quoted in LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 64.

One key component of Grant's offensive was an attack on Richmond from the southeast, along the peninsula between the James and Appomattox Rivers, by two army corps under the command of Major General Benjamin F. Butler, an influential "political general" from Massachusetts. Butler made an initial advance to within five miles of Richmond, and Grant authorized the dispatch of reinforcements to capitalize on this success.[34] The Fifth Massachusetts and a regiment of heavy artillery from Connecticut were ordered to catch up with Butler's command.[35] When disembarking from steamers at City Point only twenty-two miles from Richmond, the Fifth was assigned to the Third Division of the Eightieth Corps—infantry units.[36] This unit was composed of six regiments of African American soldiers under the command of Brigadier General Edward W. Hincks.

Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818–1893). Photograph by Mathew Brady, 1864. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Francis James Dallett. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.88.7.



Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (1818–1893). Photograph by unidentified artist, c. 1861–65. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of the Totten family. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2012.6.3.

Before attacking Richmond directly, Butler moved his force of thirty-three thousand men eastward to capture Petersburg, an important industrial center twenty miles to the south, to cut off key supply lines to the capital. Butler advanced so cautiously that the Confederates had time to dig fortifications between his forces and Petersburg. The Confederates blocking Butler were mainly young boys recently called up, old men previously deemed unfit to fight, hospital convalescents discharged on account of the emergency, and parolees from local prisons, under the command of Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard. Beauregard so quickly constructed fortifications that he effectively "bottled up" Butler and then was able to send part of his force to help Lee fend off attacks by Grant on Richmond to the north.[37]

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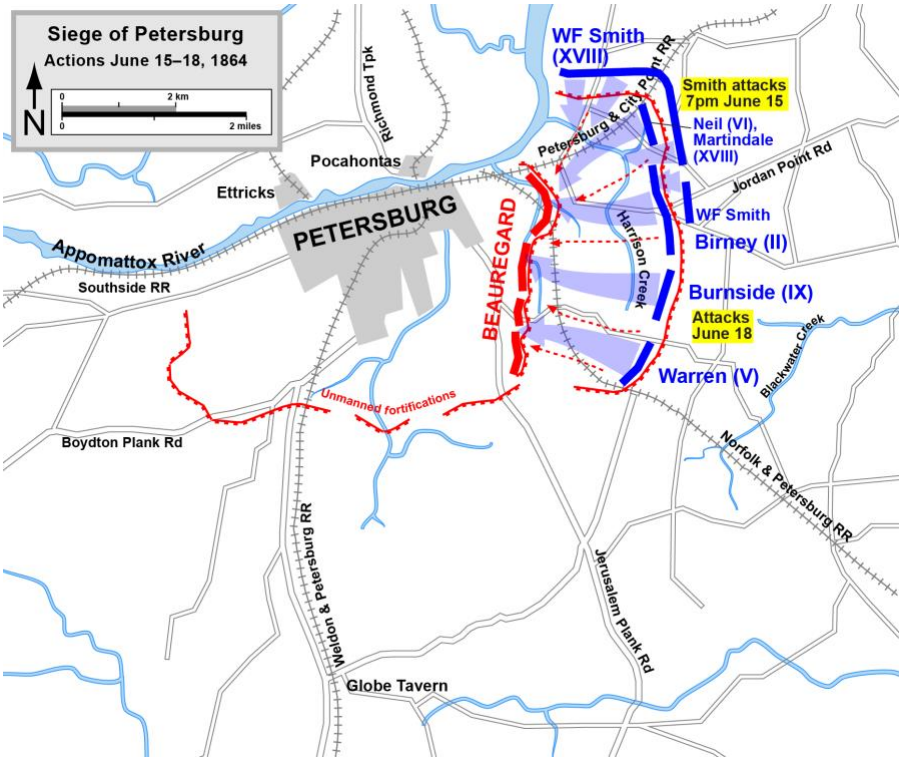
[34] Gordon C. Rhea, *To the North Anna River, Grant and Lee, May 13–25, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 2–13, 16

[35] Rhea, *North Anna River*, 96.

[36] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 64–66.

[37] William Glenn Robertson, *Backdoor to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April–June 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 53–130; Richard S. West, Jr., *Lincoln's Scapegoat General: A Life*



Siege of Petersburg, 15–18 June 1864. Courtesy of Hal Jespersen. https://www.cwmaps.com/freemaps/Petersburg_June15-16.png.

The Fifth was placed into the line where Butler's "offensive" had stalled out a week earlier. It engaged in typical picket duty, where light skirmishing occurred with patrols sent out by the Confederate Army. Charles wrote his father, "Our boys are very anxious for a fight I think their wishes will be complied with shortly as for myself I am not over anxious but willing to meet the devils at any moment and take no prisoners remember Fort Pillow [where Confederates had massacred Black Union soldiers attempting to surrender] will be the battle cry of the fifth Mass Cavalry."[38] General Butler visited the Fifth and promised its officers that the regiment would soon be mounted.[39] Although a pre-war Democrat, after joining the army Butler became a firm believer in the fighting capacity of the African American.[40]

Under pressure from Grant to resume his advance, Butler ordered Hincks's division and another division commanded by Major General Quincy Adams Gillmore, coincidentally the same officer who had ordered the famous attack of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts at Fort Wagner in South Carolina the previous year, to test the strength of Confederate fortifications.[41] In charge of the thinly held Confederate line was Brigadier General Henry A. Wise, a former governor of Virginia and one of the South's "political generals."

of Benjamin F. Butler, 1818–1893 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 232–39; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 75.

[38] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 31 May 1864, General Correspondence File, reel 2, frames 32–34, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 225–26; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 422–23.

[39] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 66–69; Rhea, *North Anna River*, 18, 126–27.

[40] West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 112–15.

[41] Robertson, *Backdoor to Richmond*, 239–40.

Captain Wulff had finally been discharged from the unit and both of its lieutenants were absent when word came to Company I to prepare for action the next morning. In temporary command, Charles had each man carry a cartridge box of forty rounds, a backpack with blankets and two day's rations, a canteen, and a musket. The regiment was on the march at two in the morning.[42]

Hincks formed his six regiments shortly before sunup on 9 June 1864, with the Fifth in the second line. As the division moved through a heavy thicket toward the Confederate entrenchments a mile away, a Union cavalry division ordered to support Hincks got lost and rode away from the battlefield. When the attackers were within a quarter mile of the enemy fortifications, Confederate artillery opened fire. The charge of Hincks's first line was driven back, so the Fifth and another regiment waded through their retreating colleagues, fixed bayonets, and charged. Charles Douglass noted a phenomenon that historian James McPherson describes: only about twenty of the one hundred-man company actually engaged in real fighting.[43] The African American soldiers overran the first line of Confederate trenches and captured one piece of enemy artillery. In the attack, four men were killed and nineteen were wounded. Two of the dead were from Charles's Company I. The regiment's colonel and major both received serious wounds. Charles was part of a detachment of fifty men sent to escort the wounded and the captured artillery piece back to camp. He later led the group back to recover the bodies of the regiment killed on the battlefield. Buoyant, Charles wrote a letter to his father, later reprinted in both Rochester and New York City newspapers, predicting that "before you receive this, you will, no doubt, hear of the fall of Petersburg, for our forces are at the last line of entrenchments, a quarter of a mile from the city." Charles predicted that credit for the victory would be given to the African American troops.[44]

This engagement became known as the Battle of Baylor's Farm, though what occurred on the battlefield is disputed in reports. Early in the fighting, Hincks had been wounded and field command fell to Colonel Samuel Duncan, commander of one of the African American regiments; Duncan had directed the poorly managed attack on the Confederate lines. After capturing the enemy's forward trenches, the Union soldiers came under heavy fire from the main Confederate trenches. One by one, the Union regiments had been broken and fled the field in disorder. General Hincks recovered soon enough to file a damning report on the Fifth's part in the engagement. He blamed the Fifth's "awkwardness in maneuvering" for delaying the division's initial attack by forty-five minutes. When they did advance, Hincks described them as "little other than an armed mob." Following the wounding of many of the Fifth's officers, Hincks concluded that "considering its inefficiency . . . [it] would be a reckless and useless exposure of life to no purpose" and ordered the Fifth withdrawn from the battle.[45] General Gillmore allowed his other division to just "simulate" an attack and then withdraw. Overall, the battle was an embarrassing Union defeat. Butler placed the blame on Gillmore and had him relieved of his command.[46] Butler never was

[42] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 16 June 1864, in *Rochester Express*, n.d., reprinted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 2 July 1864.
[43] McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades*, 6.
[44] *Rochester Express*, n.d., reprinted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 2 July 1864.
[45] United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1st ser., 1:555–57.
[46] Robertson, *Backdoor to Richmond*, 240, 254; West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 242–43; William Glenn Robertson, "From the Crater to New Market Heights: A Tale of Two Divisions," in *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, ed. John David Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 173.

able to capture Petersburg in order to assist Grant's main thrust on the Confederate capital.[47] One contemporary observer described the campaign's outcome: "Butler has just bottled himself up in Bermuda Hundred and indeed made a nice mess to it."[48] The poor performance of Black units in these early engagement around Petersburg, while largely attributable to White commanders, probably helped persuade Generals Ulysses S. Grant and George Meade to override the initial plan to allow another all-Black regiment lead the assault in the Battle of the Crater a month later, which had disastrous consequences.[49]

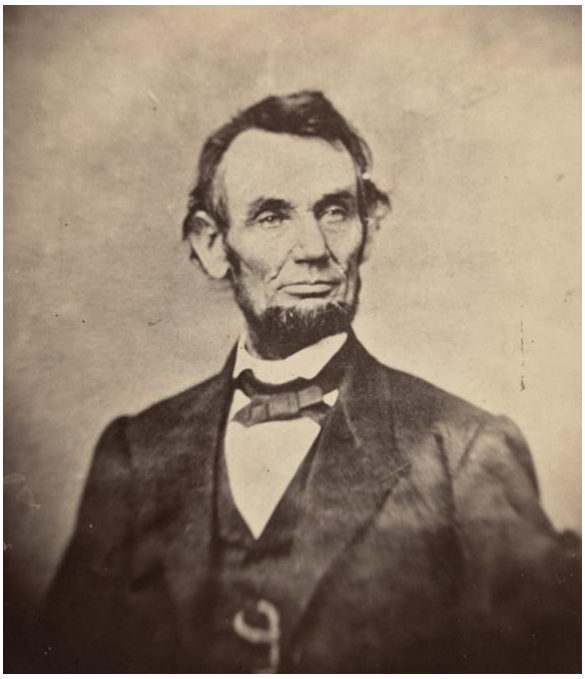
Point Lookout, Md – View of Hammond Genl. Hospital & U.S. Genl. Depot for prisoners of war. Print, c. 2 March 1864. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. https://www.loc.gov/item/2003656672/.

Within a few weeks, the Fifth was reassigned from the Richmond frontlines to Point Lookout, Maryland, to replace another African American regiment as guards at a camp for over twenty thousand Confederate war prisoners. As many in the Fifth correctly suspected, General Butler had ordered the exchange of units to get a better-trained infantry unit for his frontlines.[50] In fact, federal units usually posted to guard prisoners were composed mainly of soldiers deemed too ill for field duty but not ill enough for discharge.[51] The military prison was located on the site of a former health resort on a peninsula jutting into the Chesapeake Bay. The number of prisoners held there had swelled during 1864, as General Grant had ended the previous policy of exchanging captured soldiers with the enemy as part of his ruthless strategy of attrition. The only exciting moments for the Fifth as guards came when a Confederate cavalry unit unsuccessfully attempted a raid to liberate the prisoners in July 1864.[52]

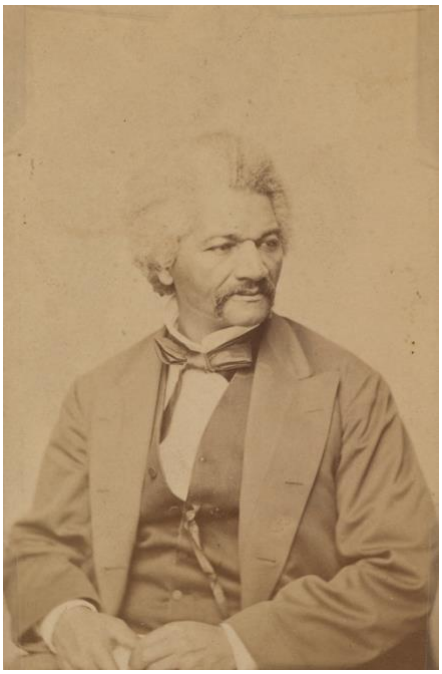
The Point Lookout posting proved a tedious and demoralizing assignment for the regiment. Hope for a return to action came at the end of the summer when command of the Fifth was transferred to Charles Francis Adams Jr., son of the American ambassador to Great Britain and

[47] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 78–90.
[48] Quoted in Rhea, *To the North Anna River*, 276.
[49] Richard Wayne Lykes, *Campaign for Petersburg* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1970), 24–36.
[50] Trudeau, "Black Cavalry in the Civil War," 299; LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 104–05.
[51] Trudeau, "Black Cavalry in the Civil War," 61.
[52] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 107; Trudeau, "Black Cavalry in the Civil War," 281.

grandson and great grandson of earlier U.S. presidents from Massachusetts.[53] Adams used his political connections to try to get the unit reconverted to a cavalry regiment. His efforts finally succeeded in March 1865, only weeks before the war's end. The Fifth would be one of the first Union regiments to enter Richmond when Lee evacuated the Confederate capital on 3 April 1865.[54]



Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865). Photograph by Anthony Berger, 1864. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_S_NPG.78.150.



Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). Photograph by George Francis Schreiber, 1870. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Donald R. Simon. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.82.145.

Months before that, however, Frederick Douglass had intervened and gotten President Lincoln to discharge his son Charles from military service in September 1864 on account of poor health. On 29 August 1864, the older Douglass had written the president directly: "I hope that I will not presume too much upon your kindness . . . but I have a great favor to ask. It is . . . that you will cause my son Charles R. Douglass . . . to be discharged."[55] Lincoln had agreed and issued Special Order 301 on 10 September 1864, authorizing the discharge. The influence of Frederick Douglass dropping his public opposition to Lincoln's re-nomination for the presidency just weeks before the request can only be guessed.[56] On 15 September, Charles wrote his father that he had received his honorable discharge and was on his way home to Rochester; his Civil War was over. He was one month shy of his twentieth birthday.[57]

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[53] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 112–13.
[54] LaBarre, *Fifth Massachusetts*, 122–32; Trudeau, "Black Cavalry in the Civil War," 285, 299–300.
[55] Frederick Douglass to Abraham Lincoln, 29 August 1864, General Correspondence File, reel 2, frames 54–57, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 145; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 423.
[56] William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 230.
[57] Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 15 September 1864, General Correspondence File, reel 2, frames 58, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress; also in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, 228.
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The goal of intensively studying the military career of Charles Remond Douglass was to examine the military experience of African American Union Army soldiers. Douglass's unit was typical in being poorly trained and equipped and then assigned mainly to rear-line "support" duties rather than being trusted to engage in important combat assignments. In the Union service, African American enlisted men faced numerous, assorted acts of racial discrimination. In his one time in combat at the Battle of Baylor's Farm, Charles Douglass had experiences comparable not just to other Black troops but to all soldiers under fire. Although poorly prepared, he and his fellow soldiers fought bravely, only to be scapegoated for the defeat of a badly planned and executed attack on the enemy. Unlike most other African American soldiers, Charles had "connections" that got him rapid promotion and eventually an early release. In later years, his military record always stood in the shadow of his older brother's "glory," but Charles never doubted that he had performed his duty in the Civil War.

New North Star, 2021; 3:59–63

"Why not we endure hardship that our race may be free?" *The Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass Family Papers Volume 1 (1846–1880)* and *Volume 2 (1881–1943)* and *Douglass Family Lives: The Biography*

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Anon., *Anna Murray Douglass*, n.d. National Park Service FRDO246.

"Why not I endure hardship that my race may be free?"[1] These are the inspirational and revolutionary words belonging to Anna Murray Douglass (1813–1882). A trailblazing freedom fighter, fearless liberator, revolutionary thinker, brilliant intellectual, inspirational foodways specialist, outstanding household organizer, exceptionally accomplished business manager, expert seamstress, and pioneering social justice campaigner, among many more lifelong accolades and accomplishments, Anna Murray Douglass dedicated her life to the fight for equal rights for all. And yet, while Frederick Douglass, a world-renowned author, orator, philosopher, liberator, intellectual, editor, journalist, human rights campaigner, and her husband of over forty-four years, left behind thousands of his published and private writings, the revolutionary life and works of Anna Murray Douglass survive only in the "marks, traces, possibles, and probabilities" of the "chattel records" of a White-dominant Western imaginary.[2]

[1] Anna Murray Douglass's powerful social justice declaration is quoted in "Press Release: Local Organization Invites Youth to Created Portraits of Anna Murray Douglass," Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, 8 October 2020, available online here: https://fdfi.org/amd_portrait_contest/.

[2] Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* in Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. Celeste-Marie Bernier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 338, 337.

As Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry (1872–1943), one of the Douglasses' granddaughters, writes in the foreword to the 1923 republication of *My Mother as I Recall Her*—the biography authored in 1900 by Rosetta Douglass Sprague (1839–1906), her mother and the Douglasses' eldest daughter—"Too often are the facts of the great sacrifices and heroic efforts of the wives of renowned men overshadowed by the achievements of the men and the wonderful and beautiful part she has played so well is overlooked."[3] Writing about the inspirational legacy of her own mother, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry confides, "My mother's devotion to her parents was complete and I am publishing this little booklet that the world may learn some thing of the noble woman who was the wife of a great man, well known—and the mother of his children."[4] All too aware of the mind-, body-, and soul-destroying personal tragedies, struggles, and hardships endured by a "noble woman," her grandmother Anna Murray Douglass, during her lifetime, Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry was equally painfully aware of the violences and injustices that were committed against her memory following her death. She was not alone.

In circa 1905, Lewis Henry Douglass (1840–1908), Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry's uncle and the Douglasses' eldest son, wrote an unpublished manuscript in which he powerfully traces "all along the line" of his father's "work" by starting "from the beginning of the first days of his labors." In these unpublished pages, he does justice to "the distresses, the anxieties, and the hardships that he [Frederick Douglass] and his family had to undergo in the struggle for the cause of liberty."[5] Working to safeguard his mother's memory for future generations, he remembers the intensive and unceasing labors of the "wife—the first Mrs. Douglass" who "worked early and late by the sunlight of day and the burning of the midnight oil at her duties of the household." Writing of her very real sacrifices, he shares her experiences "at work binding shoes for the manufacturers of shoes in Lynn, Mass," while he also confirms that she dedicated "her attention and what she could share in money to aid in the cause of Abolition."

In the biography he includes in this manuscript, Lewis Henry Douglass draws attention to Anna Murray Douglass's role as a mother by emphasizing that she undertook all these self-sacrificial activities "at the same time" as "having four children while her husband was away in the labors" of "fighting for the Emancipation of the people of her race."[6] Nearly two decades later in 1917, Charles Remond Douglass (1844–1920), his youngest brother and the Douglasses' youngest son, was equally careful to inform his audience, "My father's home life during my childhood days was not prolonged." "My mother was the head of the house," he remembers, "she was the banker, the baker and general manager of the home. My father was in the field. The home-coming was for a brief season of rest from his labors."[7]

Apart from the powerful testimonies provided by the Douglasses' daughters, granddaughters, and sons, in which they categorically attest to the irrefutable and self-evident power of Anna Murray Douglass's heroism, the painful reality is that her lifelong activism and liberationist work as voiced in her self-sacrificial determination "Why not I endure hardship that my race may be free?" has been willfully disrespected, dismissed, eradicated, and silenced within

[3] Rosetta Douglass Sprague, *My Mother as I Recall Her*, in Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, ed. Celeste-Marie Bernier (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2018), 261.
[4] Sprague, *My Mother as I Recall Her*, 261.
[5] Lewis Henry Douglass, "Undated and Untitled Handwritten Statement" [c. 1905], in Douglass, *Narrative*, 270.
[6] Douglass, "Undated and Untitled Handwritten Statement," 270–271.
[7] Charles Remond Douglass, "Some Incidents of the Home Life of Frederick Douglass" [c. February 1917], in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, *If I Survive: The Frederick Douglass Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 672.

a White-dominant imaginary. As of writing in 2021, it is not only the lifelong activism and liberationist work of Anna Murray Douglass that has been "overshadowed" and "overlooked," but also the social justice campaigns and human rights advocacy that was the life's work of all the Douglass daughters and sons: Rosetta Douglass Sprague (1839–1906); Lewis Henry Douglass (1840–1908); Frederick Douglass Jr. (1842–1892); Charles Remond Douglass (1844–1920); Annie Douglass (1849–1860).

The Douglasses' daughters and sons were pioneering authors, orators, philosophers, intellectuals, historians, educators, freedom fighters, civil rights campaigners, editors, journalists, combat soldiers, printers, typesetters, archivists, household managers, foodways specialists, political commentators, community organizers, and social justice reformers in their own right, among much more. They held themselves accountable to their mother's, no less than their father's, human rights philosophy by dedicating their lives to the shared conviction: "Why not we endure hardship that our race may be free?"

Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry returns to her grandmother's heroism in a 1933 article she published in the pages of *The Afro-American*, a newspaper printed in Baltimore. She begins the public letter she dedicates to Anna Murray Douglass's revolutionary and radical life by declaring, "Steadfastly, uncomplainingly, efficiently, the wife of Frederick Douglass's 'youth' laid the foundation that made possible for the husband and father to carry on." Writing an emotionally unequivocal family biography, she bears powerful witness to the activist labors of the Douglasses' daughters and sons: "Nor were those sacrifices borne *alone*—every one of those five children helped 'father and mother' to carry the load." Throughout her article, she purposefully dispenses with all discussions of the solitary labors of iconic or isolated individuals in the Douglass family. Instead, she makes history by foregrounding the collective, collaborative, and intergenerational heroism of the entire Douglass family. For the first time, she puts on official public record that the Douglasses' daughters and sons "accepted without a murmur their share of burdens—going oft-times supperless to thinly-clad, cold beds, shivering in scanty clothing to hostile school houses, bending over type-setters' desks, proof-reading desks, leaving out of their lives all of those pleasures and sports so dear to the hearts of youth—regardless of 'race, color or creed.' "[8]

Sacrificing their all and sharing immense burdens in their fight for all freedoms in their public lives, the Douglasses' daughters and sons were an unending source of love, support, empathy, generosity, compassion, and strength for each other and for their mother and father in their private lives. As Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry recalls, not only did Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass "not have to listen to the whines and complaints registered against them because their children were forced to occupy adults' places," but they instead "gloried in the fact that those children understood, willingly cooperated and bent their young shoulders to their assigned duties with a will and determination to do all within their united child-power to help."

As the culmination of over two decades of research across international print and digital as well as public and private archival collections and institutional holdings, I am currently in the final stages of completing three volumes: *The Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass Family Papers Volume 1 (1846–1880)* and *Volume 2 (1881–1943)* and *Douglass Family Lives: The Biography*. All three books are in the last stages of completion in readiness for publication in the fall of 2023 with Edinburgh University Press (U.S. co-publisher to be confirmed). They are each dedicated to Harriet Bailey (1792–c. 1825) and in memory of Eric Lowery (1948–2020), president of the Frederick Douglass Honor Society in Easton, Maryland.

[8] Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, "Granddaughter of Frederick Douglass Defends His Colored Wife," *The Afro-American*, 29 April 1933, 22.

The Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass Family Papers Volume 1 (1846–1880) and *Volume 2 (1881–1943)* are each over 350,000 words long and consist of individual timelines, an introduction, and annotated transcriptions of the over 850 published and unpublished speeches, letters, essays, and autobiographies authored by every member of the Douglass family and by their many granddaughters and grandsons. In preparing both volumes, I accompany each transcription with detailed scholarly annotations in which I provide in-depth information regarding directly relevant biographies of individuals, political events, and social, historical, and cultural contexts, as well as over 700 illustrations. *The Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass Family Papers Volume 1 (1846–1880)* and *Volume 2 (1881–1943)* are both dedicated to the lives and works of the Douglass family and of the Black and White liberators, radicals, and activists who were all integral to their world. I am forever grateful to Bill E. Lawson, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of Memphis, for writing an inspirational foreword to the volume and to Nettie Washington Douglass III and Kenneth B. Morris Jr. for authoring their beautiful letters addressed to their current family members and future descendants.

As recently as 2015, Kenneth B. Morris Jr. states, "We need to know where we come from in order to know where we're headed," as he inspirationally informs his listeners, "There's nothing you cannot do in your own lives to effect change."[9] Speaking on the two-hundred year anniversary of Frederick Douglass's birth in 2018, Nettie Washington Douglass III provides a powerful summary of the ongoing activist work of the Douglass family today by declaring, "We want to educate the public, especially young people and students. We want to provide information that may prevent young people themselves from becoming victims and help create global citizens."[10]

Douglass Family Lives: The Biography is 350,000 words long and consists of 350 illustrations and 100 short chapters. In this volume, I share the individual and collective stories of the Douglass family's intergenerational fight for all freedoms over the centuries by foregrounding the voices, testimonies, speeches, and writings of Anna Murray Douglass and Frederick Douglass and of each of their children and grandchildren.

For all three books, I am forever grateful to the inspirational generosity, wonderful support, and beautiful friendship of Dr. Walter O. and Linda Evans of the Walter O. and Linda Evans Foundation: without their permission to reproduce the Douglass family's published and unpublished writings held in their Douglass Collection, and now located in the collections of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, it would not have been possible to complete the research and writing of these volumes.

In her intergenerational biography, *My Mother as I Recall Her*, Rosetta Douglass Sprague celebrates the "two lives" that were "embodied in the personalities of Frederick Douglass and Anna Murray Douglass, his wife." As she writes, "They met at the base of a mountain of wrong and oppression, victims of the slave power as it existed over sixty years ago. One, smarting under the manifold hardships as a slave, the other in many ways suffering from the effects of such a system."[11] Living with the reality that "the story of Frederick Douglass' hopes and aspirations and longing desire for freedom has been told," Rosetta Douglass Sprague writes the history of her

[9] Stephen Magagnini, "Descendant of Douglass, Washington says fight against slavery continues," *The Sacramento Bee*, 1 February 2015. https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article8911028.html (subscription required).
[10] Donna M. Owens, "Frederick Douglass' Descendants Want His Story to Inspire 200 Years After His Birth," 8 March 2018. Available online here: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/frederick-douglass-descendants-want-his-story-inspire-200-years-after-n854826.
[11] Sprague, *My Mother as I Recall Her*, 262.

mother's life only a few years after her father's death out of a heartfelt determination to inform her readers that "it was a story made possible through the unswerving loyalty of Anna Murray."[12]

Over a century later, I have researched, edited, and annotated *The Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass Family Papers Volume 1 (1846–1880)* and *Volume 2 (1881–1943)* and authored *Douglass Family Lives: The Biography* for the political, historical, and social justice purpose of ensuring "that the world may learn something" of the "unswerving loyalty" of Anna Murray Douglass, as well as of every Douglass family member. As we learn in their visionary activist and liberationist writings, they lived their lives by the principles, policies, and practices of their united self-sacrificial conviction "Why not we endure hardship that our race may be free?"

[12] Sprague, *My Mother as I Recall Her*, 263.

New North Star, 2021; 3:64–66

"Is God Dead?": Frederick Douglass's Recollection of a Contentious Moment in Antislavery History

Edited by Alex Schwartz
IUPUI

One of the most dramatic ideological confrontations in the history of Black abolitionism occurred when Sojourner Truth interrupted a speech in which Frederick Douglass advocated violent antislavery tactics by posing the question "Is God dead?" While it is one of the best remembered of Truth's public remarks, historians have found contradictory evidence about where and when this confrontation occurred. An 1885 letter from Douglass to Rhode Island antislavery journalist Elizabeth Chace Wyman (1847–1929), reproduced below, provides his most complete recollection of the event.[1]

Truth's question is memorialized on her gravestone, and it embodies her spiritual and moral courage as an antislavery activist. Truth believed God had a central role in the quest towards the abolition of slavery; she placed God's will over human agency. Truth's question highlights the connection between Christianity and the antislavery movement, her role as a Black female abolitionist, and her ability to question men and figures of authority despite the social consequences of doing so.

Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass were both prominent abolitionists and orators who regularly traveled the country to participate in antislavery gatherings. Early in their careers they both aligned with Garrisonian principles of nonviolence, nonparticipation in politics, and moral suasion. Truth remained with the Garrisonians, while Douglass split from them in the early 1850s. He had come to believe that moral suasion, or appealing to the good consciences of Americans by describing the inhumanity of slavery, was not enough to stop the Slave Power's hold on the government and that it was ineffective when fighting against the violent system of chattel slavery. Events like the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 persuaded Douglass that violent action might be necessary to defeat slavery. Douglass's and Truth's ideologies were in tension, therefore, at their famous confrontation at this antislavery meeting.

In *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (1996), Nell Irvin Painter writes that Truth said, "Is God dead?" when she interrupted a Douglass speech in Boston's Faneuil Hall in 1860. Painter cites accounts from Wendell Phillips that were published by Harriet Beecher Stowe, first in the *New York Independent* in 1860 and later in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863. Painter describes Stowe's articles as fiction rather than fact.[2] Stowe's original article was written to oppose President James Buchanan's belief that the Constitution legalized slavery; he wanted to add an amendment that clarified that slavery was legal and that the abolitionists should stop organizing to end slavery.[3]

Carleton Mabee, author of *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend* (1993), found evidence of the incident from Philadelphia journalist Oliver Johnson (1809–1889), who was in attendance at an Ohio Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1852. Johnson's article in the *Pennsylvania*

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[1] Courtesy of the Department of Psychiatry, Vanderbilt University, Personal Collection of Professor Marc H. Hollender.

[2] Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 161–62; Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The President's Message," *Independent*, 20 December 1860; Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sojourner Truth, Libyan Sibyl," *Atlantic Monthly* 11 (April 1863), 473–481.

[3] Carleton Mabee, *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York: NYU Press, 1993), 83.

Freeman reported that Truth said "Is God gone?" and not "Is God dead?" Mabee also draws from newspaper accounts in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *The Liberator*, the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* to supply fuller details of the event. Also, Mabee could not find any evidence confirming Phillips's attendance at either the 1852 Ohio or 1860 Faneuil Hall antislavery meetings, which discredits Stowe's reporting of the event.[4]

Neither Painter nor Mabee cite the following letter to Elizabeth Chace Wyman from Frederick Douglass, which sheds more light on what one contemporary historian has dubbed the "Douglass-Truth Debate."[5] In Douglass's 1881 autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, he recalls that his exchange with Truth had occurred at an antislavery meeting in Salem, Ohio, but does not supply a date.[6] Wyman wrote Douglass inquiring about more details of his dramatic interaction with Truth for her forthcoming article that was to be published in *The New England Magazine*. She quotes Douglass's recollections of the event (dated 24 March 1885) in her article.[7] In his letter, Douglass recounts the incident as occurring at an 1852 Ohio antislavery convention, when Truth interrupted his address endorsing violence with the question "Is God dead?" Douglass's memory of the event closely matches Johnson's original reporting of it. He recalls the presence of many prominent Garrisonian abolitionists at that meeting who were very unsympathetic toward his changed views on politics and violent tactics. These included Joseph Barker (1806–1875), a political radical, minister, printer, and Garrisonian abolitionist who was active in antislavery agitation in England and the United States; Stephen Symonds Foster (1809–1881), a New Hampshire abolitionist and women's rights activist married to abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster and a prominent member of the Garrisonian American Anti-Slavery Society; and Parker Pillsbury (1809–1898), a Garrisonian abolitionist and Congregational minister from Massachusetts who went on frequent speaking tours with the Fosters and Wendell Phillips.[8] Most significantly, Douglass shared with Wyman the audience's reaction to Truth's interjection. In Douglass's recollection, Truth's "Is God dead?" had brought not just himself but the entire meeting "to a stand still—just as we should have been if some one had thrown a brick through the window." Douglass's letter, reproduced below and prepared for publication in a future volume of *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, helps to clarify important details of an event that historians have long recognized as emblematic of contentious ideological disputes in the antislavery struggle.

[4] Mabee, *Sojourner Truth*, 84.
[5] Tim Bruno, "Rewriting Rebellion: The Douglass-Truth Debate," *ESQ* 65 (2019), 33–72.
[6] John R. McKivigan, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 2: *Autobiographical Writings*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999–2012), 3:215.
[7] Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman, "Sojourner Truth," *The New England Magazine* 24 (March 1901), 63.
[8] Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 132–33, 136, 138, 143; Leslie Stephen, ed., "Joseph Barker," *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: 1885), 206; John R. McKivigan, "The Antislavery 'Comeouter' Sects: A Neglected Dimension of the Abolitionist Movement," *History of the American Abolitionist Movement* (New York: Garland, 1999), 143; Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African Americans during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Wilmington, Del.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 217; Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 139; David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 98, 136; Stacey M. Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 5.

[Washington, D.C.] 24 March 1885[.]

MY DEAR MRS WYMAN:

The incident to which you allude occurred at an antislavery meeting in Salem Ohio: addressed by Parker Pillsbury, Stephen S. Foster, Joseph Barker and others. It was after I had become a voting abolishonist and when therefore, I was not in harmony with the non voters and the meeting there assembled—but I was either called out or called myself out I forget which—In my speech I took the ground that Slavery could only go down in blood—that Slaveholders and the country had sinned too long and too deeply to escape. While describing the power of Slavery in the church and the state in furtherance of my argument, Sojourner in a distant part of the "Hall" startled me and the whole audience with the question "Is God dead?" The suddenness and sharpness together with its impertenence brought me for a moment to a complete halt. I had said nothing that called for such a question but gave it a negative answer and went on with my speech. I have never been able to see why such an incident should be so often referred to. The effect of the question was much in the tone in which it was asked—and the moment in my speech when it came. It has been said I was completely unhorsed and discomfitted by the question. Perhaps I was, but as I remember my condition at the time, I was about as self-possessed as was my audience. We were all for the moment brought to a stand still—just as we should have been if some one had thrown a brick through the window.

I was very glad to receive your letter and hear of your dear Mother—I have often thought of the pleasant time Helen and myself had in your dear circle.

Please remember me kindly to your much respected Mother and Mr Wyman and your curlly headed boy.

Very truly yours

FREDK DOUGLASS

[P.S.] Mrs Douglass has just come in and sends love.