

WEEKLY READING # 22
ARTICLE 1:
FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement, which fought to end slavery within the United States in the decades prior to the Civil War.

A brilliant speaker, Douglass was asked by the American Anti-Slavery Society to engage in a tour of lectures, and so became recognized as one of America's first great black speakers. He won world fame when his autobiography was publicized in 1845. Two years later he began publishing an antislavery paper called the North Star.

Douglass served as an adviser to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and fought for the adoption of constitutional amendments that guaranteed voting rights and other civil liberties for blacks. Douglass provided a powerful voice for human rights during this period of American history and is still revered today for his contributions against racial injustice. The following is an account of Douglass's early life as a slave.



Frederick Douglass was born a slave in February 1818 on Holmes Hill Farm, near the town of Easton on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The farm was part of an estate owned by Aaron Anthony.

Frederick's mother, Harriet Baily, worked the cornfields surrounding Holmes Hill. He knew little of his father except that the man was white. As a child, he had heard rumors that the master, Aaron Anthony, was his father. He spent his childhood playing in the woods near his grandmother's cabin. He did not think of himself as a slave during these years. Only gradually did Frederick learn about a person his grandmother would refer to as Old Master and when she spoke of Old Master it was with certain fear.

At age six, Frederick's grandmother had told him that they were taking a long journey. They set out westward, with Frederick clinging to his grandmother's skirt with fear and uncertainty. They had approached a large elegant home, the Lloyd Plantation, where several children were playing on the grounds. Betsy Baily had pointed out three children which were his brother Perry, and his sisters Sara and Eliza. His grandmother had told him to join his siblings and he did so reluctantly. After a while one of the children yelled out to Frederick that his grandmother was gone. Frederick fell to the ground and wept, he was about to learn the harsh realities of the slave system.

The slave children of Aaron Anthony's were fed cornmeal mush that was placed in a trough, to which they were called. Frederick later wrote "like so many pigs." The children made homemade spoons from oyster shells to eat with and competed with each other for every last bite of food. The only clothing that they were provided with was one linen shirt which hung to their knees. The children were provided no beds or warm blankets. On cold winter nights they would huddle together in the kitchen of the Anthony house to keep each other warm.

Because Frederick had a natural charm that many people found engaging, he was chosen to be the companion of Daniel Lloyd, the youngest son of the plantation's owner. Frederick's chief friend and protector was Lucretia Auld, Aaron Anthony's daughter, who was recently married to a ship's captain named Thomas Auld. One day in 1826 Lucretia told Frederick that he was being sent to live with her brother-in-law, Hugh Auld, who managed a ship building firm in Baltimore, Maryland. She told him that if he scrubbed himself clean, she would give him a pair of pants to wear to Baltimore. Frederick was elated at this chance to escape the life of a field hand. He cleaned himself up and received his first pair of pants. Within three days he was on his way to Baltimore.

Upon Frederick's arrival at the Auld Home, his only duties were to run errands and care for the Auld's infant son, Tommy. Frederick enjoyed the work and grew to love the child. Sophia Auld was a religious woman and frequently read aloud from the Bible. Frederick asked his mistress to teach him to read and she readily consented. He soon learned the alphabet and a few simple words. Sophia Auld was very excited about Frederick's progress and told her husband what she had done. Hugh Auld became furious at this because it was unlawful to teach a slave to read. Hugh Auld believed that if a slave knew how to read and write that it would make him unfit for a slave. A slave that could read and write would no longer obey his master without question or thought, or even worse could forge papers that said he was free and thus escape to a northern state where slavery was outlawed. Hugh Auld then instructed Sophia to stop the lessons at once!

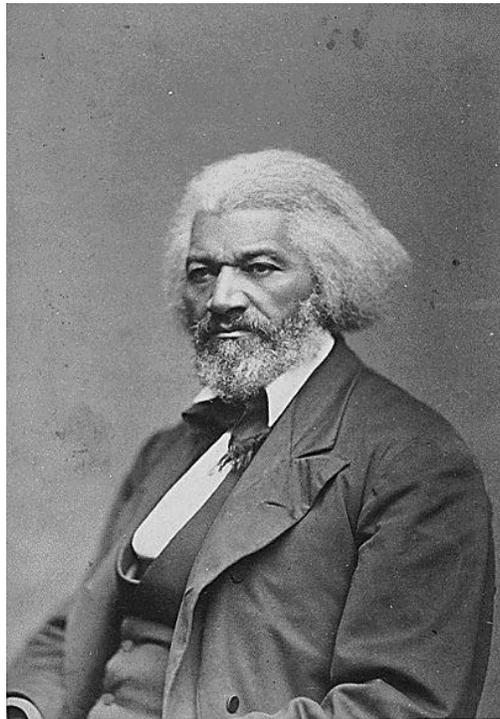
Frederick learned from Hugh Auld's outburst that if learning how to read and write was his pathway to freedom, then gaining this knowledge was to become his goal. Frederick gained command of the alphabet on his own and made friends with poor white children he met on errands and used them as teachers. He paid for his reading lessons with pieces of bread.

Frederick was greatly affected by the speeches on freedom in *The Columbian Orator*, and so began reading local newspapers and began to learn about abolitionists. Not quite 13 years old but enlightened with new ideas that both tormented and inspired him. Frederick began to detest slavery. His dreams of emancipation were encouraged by the example of other blacks in Baltimore, most of whom were free. But new laws passed by southern state legislators made it increasingly difficult for owners to free their slaves.

At eighteen, his owner allowed him to "hire out his time." This meant he would have to take pay his own room and board and pay his master a set amount each week, keeping any extra money for himself. After failing to pay his rent on time, his owner was furious and refused Frederick the opportunity to work. Frederick decided at this point to risk an escape to the North.

With money that he borrowed from a friend, Frederick bought a ticket to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He also had a friend's "sailor's protection," a document that certified that the person named on it was a free seaman. Dressed in a sailor's red shirt and black cravat, Frederick boarded the train. Frederick reached northern Maryland before the conductor made it to the "Negro car" to collect tickets and examine papers. Frederick became very tense when the conductor approached him to look at his papers because he did not fit the description on them. But with only a quick glance, the conductor walked on, and the relieved Frederick sank back in his seat. On a couple of occasions, he thought that he had been recognized by other passengers from Baltimore, but if so they did not turn him in to the authorities.

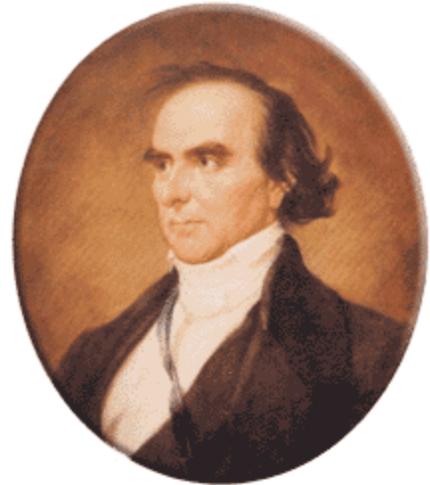
Upon arriving in Wilmington, Delaware, Frederick then boarded a steamboat to Philadelphia. Even after stepping on Pennsylvania's free soil, he knew he was not yet safe from slave catchers. He immediately asked directions to New York City, and that night he took another train north. On September 4, 1838, Frederick arrived in New York City. Frederick could not find the words to express his feelings of leaving behind his life in slavery. He later wrote, "A new world had opened upon me." "Anguish and grief, like darkness and rain, may be depicted, but gladness and joy, like the rainbow, defy the skill of pen or pencil."



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ARTICLE 2:
DANIEL WEBSTER

Daniel Webster (1782-1852)

Daniel Webster was born in Salisbury (now Franklin), New Hampshire and educated at Phillips (Exeter) Academy and Dartmouth College. He studied law, taught briefly and was admitted to the New Hampshire bar (admitted to the bar means one is an attorney and can practice law) in 1805. His law practice soon led him into political activities and he represented his home state in Congress from 1813 to 1817. Webster was a dependable ally of the New England shipping interests; he opposed the War of 1812, but did not lend his support to the Hartford Convention. (Federalists who opposed the War of 1812.)



Daniel Webster

In 1816 Webster moved to Boston and became one of the nation's leading attorneys. His participation in the Dartmouth College case, *Gibbons v. Ogden*, and *McCulloch v. Maryland* left an enormous imprint on American constitutional law. Webster also matured into one of the great orators (speakers) of his era, delivering notable speeches at the bicentennial of the founding of Plymouth in 1820 and the dedication of the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825.

New circumstances enabled Webster to become a champion of American nationalism. With the Federalist party dead, he joined the National Republican party, allying himself with westerner Henry Clay and endorsing federal aid for roads in the West. In 1828, the dominant economic interests of Massachusetts having shifted from shipping to manufacturing, Webster backed the high-tariff bill of that year. Angry Southern leaders condemned the tariff, and South Carolina's John C. Calhoun argued that his state had the right to nullify the law. Replying to South Carolina's Robert Hayne in a Senate debate in 1830, Webster triumphantly defended the Union. His words "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" were widely popular.

Webster and other opponents of Jackson, now known as Whigs, battled him on other issues, including his attack on the National Bank. Webster ran for the presidency in 1836 as one of three Whig party candidates but carried (won) only Massachusetts. For the remainder of his career, he aspired vainly to the presidency.

In 1841, President William Henry Harrison named Webster secretary of state. The death of Harrison (April 1841) brought John Tyler to the presidency, and in September, 1841, all the Whigs but Webster resigned from the cabinet. Webster remained to settle a dispute with Great Britain involving the Maine-Canada boundary and successfully concluded the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842). Whig pressure finally forced Webster to leave the cabinet in May 1843.

The annexation of Texas in 1845 and the resulting war with Mexico, both opposed by Webster, forced the country to face the issue of the expansion of slavery. Webster opposed such expansion but feared even more a dissolution (a tearing apart) of the Union over the dispute. In a powerful speech before the Senate on Mar. 7, 1850, he supported the Compromise of 1850, denouncing southern threats of secession, but urging northern support for a stronger law for the recovery of fugitive slaves. Webster was named secretary of state in July, 1850, by President Millard Fillmore and supervised the strict enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Webster's opinion alienated antislavery forces and divided the Whig party, but it helped to preserve the Union.

Whether people hated Webster or admired him--there was little middle ground-- everyone agreed on the majesty of his oratory, the immensity of his intellectual powers, and the primacy of his constitutional knowledge. He was the heroic champion of nationalism and modernization.

Regarded by others as one of the greatest orators (public speakers) of the day, he delivered his speeches with tremendous dramatic impact. Yet in spite of his emotional style and the passionate character of his speeches, he rarely sacrificed logic for effect. His striking appearance contributed to the forcefulness of his delivery. Tall, rather thin, and always clad in black, Webster's face was dominated by deep, luminous black eyes under craggy brows and a shock of black hair combed

straight back which is why he was called "Black Dan".

In private Webster was more approachable. He was fond of gatherings and was a lively talker, although at times given to silent moods. His taste for luxury often led him to live beyond his means. While his admirers worshiped the "Godlike Daniel," his critics thought his constant need for money deprived him of his independence. During the Panic of 1837, a desperate financial crisis resulting from the expansion into western lands, he was in such desperate circumstances as a result of excessive investments in western lands that only loans from business friends saved him from ruin. Again, in 1844, when it seemed financial pressure might force him to leave the Senate, he permitted his friends to raise a fund to provide him with an income. He died just before the Election of 1852.