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## Our Greatest Want: An Examination of the Rhetorical Tendencies Employed by African American Female Abolitionist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911)

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### Recommended Citation

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Our Greatest Want:  
An Examination of the Rhetorical Tendencies Employed by  
African American Female Abolitionist  
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper  
(1825-1911)

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Submitted for Honors in English  
University at Albany, SUNY  
Directed By: Stephen North  
May 8, 2009

## Acknowledgements

To Stephen North: for the careful readings, patience, and emoticon smiley faces that kept me motivated throughout this grueling process.

To Jill Hannifan: for her constant support and dedication toward making sure I succeeded in my writing process.

To Helene Sheck: for helping me establish this project, and her motivation throughout.

To my brave army of English Honors Thesis Writers: for continually providing me with emotional support, comradery, and of course, entertainment.

To my parents: for always supporting me fully in any endeavor I commit myself too, and of course, for their constant love.

To my little sister: for coming to the library on days I thought I would never escape from behind the keyboard, to tell me a funny story, and let me know that I could do this.

To my best friend Rachel: for always listening, giving me hope, and showing me that with some determination—one can have her peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and eat it too.

And lastly, too all my friends, who will now know what it *means* to *hang!*



## Introduction: My Recovery Project

*“If silence and slavery are linked, so are freedom and rhetoric”  
Jacqueline Bacon (The Humblest May Stand Forth 14)*

You are standing at the doorway of a church in Philadelphia. Looking in, you see a mass of heads, all turned toward the podium, waiting for someone to get behind that podium. Then you see her. She is an attractive African American with “a fair figure, long, lustrous hair, and facial features pleasant to behold” (Logan 49). You overhear one person comment that she looks like “a bronze muse” (Logan 31). A reporter will later write that she has “a strong face, with a shadowed glow upon it, indicative of thoughtful fervor, and of a nature most femininely sensitive, but not in the least morbid. Her form is delicate, her hands daintily small” (Still 779). There is a “captivating eloquence” about her, which tells you she will “hold her audience in rapt attention from the beginning to the close” (Still 779). And, as you soon find out, she does. A man standing by you, who has seen her lecture before, explains: “She is a lady of much talent, and always speaks well, particularly when her subject relates to the condition of her own people, in whose welfare, before and since the war, she has taken the deepest interest. As a lecturer Mrs. Harper is more effective than most of those who come before our lyceums; with a natural eloquence that is very moving” (Still 779). Excited and interested to hear *this* abolitionist orator for the first time, you enter the hot and stuffy room curious about whether you, too, might become an abolitionist.

You have found your seat, and the fascinating woman takes her place at the podium—signaling that she is about to begin her speech. “She stands quietly beside her desk” (Still 779), and as you wait for her to speak, you notice she has no notes—she is

prepared to speak from her brain and her heart—not from a piece of paper. As she calmly begins her speech, you notice that she is “marked by dignity and composure,” her “gestures few and fitting,” her performance “never theatrical” (Still 779). Like thousands of people in hundreds of audiences before and after the one you are in, just in hearing her first few words, you find yourself utterly captivated by this woman: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911).

Frances Harper was, among other accomplishments, an orator during the nineteenth century who devoted her skills to speaking out against injustices of equality. Like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, her more famous counterparts in the abolitionist movement, Harper was a passionate and highly regarded lecturer on abolition. Further, she was one of the select prominent African-American women to undertake this work in such a highly public way. I believe it is important for us to recognize, celebrate and, as far as possible recapture the rhetorical abilities that made Harper and her work as influential as they were.

To that end, my first section is dedicated to defining some of the key abolitionist rhetorical tendencies as exemplified by Douglass and Garrison, most notably, allusion to America’s Declaration of Independence and Revolution, hyperbolic language, and reference to God. After exploring these rhetorical tendencies in Garrison and Douglass, I use my second section to introduce Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, providing biographical information that shows how she came onto the abolitionist circuit. In my third section, I show how Harper follows abolitionist orators like Garrison and Douglass. The fourth and final section, then, is dedicated to exploring the ways that Harper develops her own unique rhetorical tendencies. My aim is to reveal what afforded Harper the ability to

capture her audiences, what made her such an interesting orator, and what legacies she has passed on to those who take the public platform in hopes of achieving social or political change today.

## Part One: Trends in the Rhetoric of Abolition from 1830-1860

*“Through rhetoric, then, those who are oppressed can fight the unjust conditions under which they must live”  
Jacqueline Bacon (The Humblest May Stand Forth 3).*

As mentioned in my introduction, this section focuses on outlining the rhetorical trends of William Lloyd Garrison and Fredrick Douglass, allowing us to assemble some key rhetorical devices used during this period. A rhetorical analysis of a couple of their representative abolitionist works will help us set up a basic understanding on how abolition was discussed on the public platform. With this in mind, I have chosen the following texts: “To the Public,” “The American Union,” “Address to the Slaves of the United States” (editorials by Garrison); and, “The Church and Prejudice,” “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” (speeches by Douglass).

### **William Lloyd Garrison**

William Lloyd Garrison is acknowledged as one of the earliest activists in the abolitionist movement. He edited and published *The Liberator* for over thirty-five years, and was also a prominent member in the American Anti-Slavery Society (Selby 53). Garrison firmly believed the American government was inherently built to support the institution of slavery; as a result he called for radical changes both in the abolition of slavery and the system of government that supported it. Indeed, as Gary Selby reveals, one of the grounding arguments in Garrison’s movement held that “the Constitution was an inherently pro-slavery document” (52). Both Garrison and his supporters were looking for a drastic shift in the way American society functioned; they were arguing for an entirely new society, actually built on the kind of equality the Constitution nominally

guarantees. In keeping with this ideology, Garrison and his followers believed drastic language was necessary to bring about this new society. This drastic language was wielded in his newspaper, *The Liberator*.

Garrison's *Liberator* was first published New Years Day 1831. His paper brought about a more involved, serious, and energized discussion on the abolitionist movement (Arkin 76). It was a part of the "radical views, radical actions, and radical language" of 1831 that was "exposed by men and women committed to lifelong careers of social reform," (Arkin 75).

In order to grasp how Garrison used this medium to talk about abolition, what his "strong language" actually sounded like, we will begin by analyzing his first editorial "To the Public." A first editorial in a newspaper sets up the foundations for how the newspaper will function and what its goals are. This is the space where editors can declare *their* mission and the vision *they* hold for the newspaper—as we see through Garrison's first editorial, his mission seems to be portrayed as quite individualized. His first editorial, marked throughout by an "I" (and not a "we"), sets himself up within this medium as the self-proclaimed prophet on abolition. Indeed, he promises:

*I* determined...*I* shall...*I* seize... *I* am in earnest— *I* will not equivocate—

*I* will not excuse— *I* will not retreat a single inch—AND *I* WILL BE

HEARD. ... posterity will bear testimony that *I* was right. (Garrison 1831)

(Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

He is using the space of *The Liberator* to define his active role in the abolitionist movement—shaper of the "greater revolution" through his words. Although he is within the abolitionist movement, *The Liberator* is a place for *him* to battle abolition in *an*

*individualized* way. This is not a space created for “we” to “determine...seize” or “not retreat a single inch,” rather it seems *he* is the one committed to those verbs. He will be the one taking action so that others can see where they should place themselves within the abolitionist movement. It is important to keep this distinction of the “I” in mind, because among other things, as we continue our analyses of this editorial we see him set himself up in opposition to specific persons.

Garrison is unabashed in his first editorial—he comes right out and claims specific people his paper is meant to make “tremble.” In his introductory remarks he targets “southern oppressors... their secret abettors ... their northern apologists...the enemies of the persecuted blacks.” This list more or less blames specific persons/groups for the problem of slavery in America; conversely it allows others in America to not “tremble” about this fatal problem afflicting America. Those clearly enforcing slavery are the ones Garrison is after, the ones at fault for the continued prevalence of the slave system. For Garrison there are no shades of gray in the situation of America—one is either on the right side or the wrong side—and through his self-proclaimed ethos (which allows him to decipher these sides) he will let you know which side you are on. Specific people created slavery and are sustaining slavery; by exposing them in his paper he hopes to make them “tremble,” he hopes to defeat them. Observing Garrison’s treatment of where he places the blame for slavery will be important for our later discussion on how Harper deals rhetorically with blame placement.

In sync with his outright claims of whom should receive blame for the presence of slavery in America, in his first editorial we exerts a conspicuously “loud” voice. As a self-proclaimed abolitionist prophet, Garrison relies heavily upon vivid, strong, often

hyperbolic language in order to get his audience excited about their own involvement in the abolitionist movement. We see him claim for an entire paragraph:

I am aware, that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; —but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest— I will not equivocate— I will not excuse— I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead. (Garrison 1831) (Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

As a pacifist hoping to achieve the abolishment of slavery through his words, Garrison believed his radical language was necessary for making the movement effective.

Although there were people in society who (like Garrison) did not wish to be moderated in their speech or writing, Garrison created *The Liberator* as an uncensored space to help propel the abolitionist movement—an intense topic not usually allowed that freedom.

Indeed, this extreme rhetoric was different from the way people had talked about slavery (or other taboo topics) previously, yet Garrison believed that his position within the abolitionist movement demanded this language to move people to take action. As Truman Nelson comments, Garrison:

really could not understand why people complained about his harshness of language. Compared to some of the orthodox preachers, condemning everyone in the congregation for eternal damnation for some doctrinal fault, some variation of belief for which they would be burned in lakes of fire, pinched by red-hot tongs, and this for eternity, he was quite mild. The rub was that he was talking about a real sin, a clear and present sin, a sin as tangible as sweaty chains and bloody backs, a sin, moreover that could be redeemed quite easily. So his ministry and his prophecy was one of embarrassing reality in the world of pain and wrong. (Nelson, xvi-xvii)

Undeniably Garrison's recognizable rhetorical strategy was to be as loud as possible, just like those who used radical language to talk about not so "real ... clear and present" sins; for Garrison, both sins deserved to be talked about loudly.

Another important function of his opening editorial is the incorporation of the Declaration and references to the Revolution. In order to prove to his reader that the cause this paper has been created to represent is a valid and necessary one, he uses allusions to these historically important events. These serve as a way to harp on the notion that what they are fighting for is no different from what America was fighting for not long before. He strives to evoke the same sentiments held by the colonists against Great Britain in order to support abolitionists in their actions. He capitalizes on the emotions associated with revolutionary sites like "Bunker Hill" in order to expose slavery as a mockery of the liberty that was fought for on this revolutionary site. He exclaims, "I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, *within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty*" (Garrison 1831)

[emphasis in original]. Here we see that he not only incorporates “Bunker Hill” to show that our fight for liberty is not over, but to also draw logical parallels between the emotions he feels and the actions he is committed to, to those of the Revolutionaries who procured our own nation’s freedom and gave us the right to these freedoms. While referencing the Declaration, he argues:

Assenting to the ‘self-evident truth’ maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, ‘that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. (Garrison 1831)

(Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

Using the language already created in the Declaration, he is able to amplify the need to take action (as the Revolutionaries did), to procure the *real* security of all men being “created equal.” This is an important feature in his editorial (as well as a common trait of other abolitionist prose), which helps abolitionists achieve a stronger pathos and to a certain degree logos; we will see both Douglass and Harper also relying on this rhetorical abolitionist convention.

In order to gain a more robust understanding of the type of uncensored rhetoric that Garrison favors, the next piece I have chosen to analyze is “The American Union,” published in January of 1845. Aside from seeing an additional example of Garrison’s uncensored rhetoric, his second representative editorial will help us to see further his self-proclaimed ethos, the way he deals with talking about who is the cause of slavery, and his

hyperbolic language. His introduction is emblematic of his entire speech, relying upon name calling and hyperbolic language:

Tyrants of the old world! contemners of the rights of man! disbelievers in human freedom and equality! enemies of mankind! console not yourselves with the delusion, that REPUBLICANISM and the AMERICAN UNION are synonymous terms—or that the downfall of the latter will be the extinction of the former, and, consequently, a proof of the incapacity of the people for self-government, and a confirmation of your own despotic claims! Your thrones must crumble to dust; your sceptre of dominion drop from your powerless hands; your rod of oppression be broken. (Garrison 1845) (*Italics Placed for Emphasis*) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

His introduction proves that once again he will target groups (even if they are in a general sense) and thus create a dichotomy in America between who is good and who should be considered “Tyrants,” “contemners,” “disbelievers,” and “enemies.” His editorial at large relies upon the repetition of “tyrants” to drill into his audience that there is a specific group of people who are responsible for letting slavery corrupt America. Although he is using the term “tyrant,” we can assume that he is referring to the slave owners of the South, and not the American Union at large. Indeed, his ending quote in all capital letters proclaiming loudly “NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS!,” implicitly makes the slave holders the “tyrants.” As discussed earlier, this makes his position conveniently ‘good’ within the American Union, while it makes the slave holders ‘bad.’ In conjunction with this formulation, he parallels the “tyrannical” slave holders to the tyrannical British. This

association incorporates both allusions to the Revolution, and hyperbolic language to amplify the similarities.

Talking to the “tyrants”—the slave owners—he demands that their “thrones must crumble to dust.” Garrison affirms that the slave owners have effectively returned America to pre-Revolutionary relations. Further playing upon his audience’s emotions, he makes an appeal through the use of pathos, claiming that the slave owner’s “oppression” (still pervading American society like the British government’s oppression did) needs to be defeated. He makes this appeal, and then uses hyperbolic language to heighten his demands all the more. Garrison uses hyperbolic allusions to their past state of government. We see this clearly in the above demand, as the slave owners had no tangible throne; however, the allusion to the slave owners sitting on a throne like the British did before the Revolution helps to amplify the slave owners “despotic” nature. He is playing upon the strings of the audience’s emotions to evoke in them the same sentiments that the American revolutionaries had toward Great Britain and in addition parallel those sentiments with the actions the revolutionaries took.

Throughout his editorial, we once again get a great look at his outspoken language. As we discussed earlier, he believed America was flawed ultimately from slavery and that the Constitution fostered slavery; in this speech he offers his opinion that we should “let the American Union perish.” Indeed, he declares:

Tyrants! know that the rights of man are inherent and unalienable, and therefore, not to be forfeited by the failure of any form of government, however democratic. Let the American Union perish; let these allied States be torn with faction, or drenched in blood; let this republic realize

the fate of Rome and Carthage, of Babylon and Tyre; still those rights would remain undiminished in strength, unsullied in purity, unaffected in value, and sacred as their Divine Author. If nations perish, it is not because of their devotion to liberty, but for their disregard of its requirements.... Know that its subversion is essential to the triumph of justice, the deliverance of the oppressed, the vindication of the **BROTHERHOOD OF THE RACE**. (Garrison 1845) (Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

A rather blunt and brutal description, Garrison is screaming for “liberty.” His preference to “let these allied States be torn with faction, or drenched in blood,” seems rather severe, yet for Garrison, “blood” is better than deceptive commitments to “liberty.” As Marc M. Arkin argues:

Whether or not William Lloyd Garrison and the Liberator actually precipitated this ‘new antislavery era,’ historians agree that *Garrison crystallized a new antislavery rhetoric: vivid, sentimental, aggressive, graphic, and, at times, overwhelmingly physical*. Following Garrison’s lead, after 1830 abolitionist literature demonstrated a major thematic shift. The dangers presented by power, luxury, and unchecked will to dominate, always a staple of antislavery writing, became increasingly intertwined with images of sexual exploitation and actual physical suffering on the part of the slave. (Arkin, 76) [Italics placed for emphasis]

As we see, this radically loud way Garrison wrote about the taboo topic of abolition came to powerfully influence the ways that nineteenth-century orators talked about the subject.

Before we move on to our analysis of Frederick Douglass's work, I would like to look briefly at one last editorial by Garrison, his "Address to the Slaves of the United States." Through this editorial, we can observe his use of a rhetorical tactic we have not seen in the other two pieces we have looked at (but never the less is important to acknowledge for this discussion).

Garrison's "Address" was written a little over ten years after his "First Editorial," in June of 1843. In it, Garrison evokes the sense that he is talking to slaves; however, upon closer observation he is clearly directing his editorial to another audience. Although the title of his editorial suggests he will be focusing on addressing an enslaved audience, we must acknowledge first, that most slaves could not read; second, even if a slave was literate, risking reading *The Liberator* would get them severely beaten or worse, killed. At this time, slaves were still forbidden to read— thus his "Address to the Slaves" was more likely to be read by the readers of *The Liberator* (most of whom were abolitionists.)

He begins his editorial as a fearless leader would, demanding: "Take courage! Be filled with hope and comfort! Your redemption draws nigh, for the Lord is mightily at work in your behalf. Is it not frequently the darkest before day-break? The word has gone forth that you shall be delivered from your chains, and it has not been spoken in vain." These orders are covertly addressed to the abolitionists with two intentions: (1) to beg them not to lose their faith in fighting for the end of slavery (2) to guilt any abolitionist who gives up their faith. He wants his audience (the readers of *The Liberator*) to know that the active battle they are fighting is an important one that cannot diminish. Indeed, watching how he answers his posed question, it becomes apparent that although his "Address" is literally written for the slaves, as we continue on in the editorial we cannot

miss the continual concealed ways in which Garrison actually uses this address to talk to his abolitionist audience.

In the next paragraph, where he seems to be going on to describe the “darkest before day break,” he does not go into the “darkest” events that are occurring in slavery; instead, he cites the “darkest” effects that the abolitionists have faced trying to defeat the institution. It is interesting to see how Garrison draws upon words that would be used to describe the horrible effects one endures in slavery, and pairs them to the horrible effects the abolitionist’s endure:

Although you have many enemies, yet you have also many friends—warm, faithful, sympathizing, devoted friends—who will never abandon your cause; who are pledged to do all in their power to break your chains; who are laboring to effect your emancipation without delay, in a peaceable manner, without the shedding of blood; who regard you as brethren and countrymen, and fear not the frowns or threats of your masters. They call themselves abolitionists. They have already suffered much, in various parts of the country, for rebuking those who keep you in slavery—for demanding your immediate liberation—for revealing to the people the horrors of your situation—for boldly opposing a corrupt public sentiment, by which you are kept in the great southern prison-house of bondage. Some of them have been beaten with stripes; others have been stripped, and covered with tar and feathers; others have had their property taken from them, and burnt in the streets; others have had large rewards offered by your masters for their seizure; others have been cast into jails and

penitentiaries; others have been mobbed and lynched with great violence; others have lost their reputation, and been ruined in their business; others have lost their lives. All these, and many other outrages of an equally grievous kind, they have suffered for your sakes, and because they are your friends. They cannot go to the South, to see and converse with you, face to face; for, so ferocious and bloody-minded are your taskmasters, they would be put to an ignominious death as soon as discovered. Besides, it is not yet necessary that they should incur this peril; for it is solely by the aid of the people of the North, that you are held in bondage, and, therefore, they find enough to do at home, to make the people here your friends, and to break up all connexion with the slave system. They have proved themselves to be truly courageous, insensible to danger, superior to adversity, strong in principle, invincible in argument, animated by the spirit of impartial benevolence, unwearied in devising ways and means for your deliverance, the best friends of the whole country, the noblest champions of the human race. (Garrison 1843) (Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

Throughout this section his use of repetition with “they,” enforces the numbers and actions that the abolitionists have taken; the “they” does not address the slaves. He spends his entire second paragraph of his editorial not actually doing what he set out to do—perform an “address to the slaves”—because he is instead addressing the “they” who have been fighting hard for abolition. In conjunction with the repetition of “they,” when he used emotionally stimulating words and phrases like “suffered,” “burnt,” “beaten,”

“mobbed,” “lynched,” “lost their lives,” he paired them with abolitionist work. Words that might appear like a description of what the slave goes through are actually linked to the abolitionists. Like we saw in his opening command, he not only uses these charged and uncensored words to show the extreme battle that the abolitionists are fighting, but also to (once again) praise those who continue on in that battle and to make those who are not striving in this same manner to feel guilty. Using these intense words, he is able to draw similar parallels between the slave and the abolitionist; he is able to prove that both parties endure innumerable challenges through slavery. Laying out this ground work he is able to put forth the argument that abolishing slavery liberates both the slaves and those who are struggling to procure the freedom of the slaves.

Continuing his editorial, he claims:

*Ten years ago*, they were so few and feeble as only to excite universal contempt; *now* they number in their ranks, hundreds of thousands of the people. —*Then*, they had scarcely a single anti-slavery society in operation; *now* they have thousands. *Then*, they had only one or two presses to plead your cause; *now* they have multitudes. They are scattering all over the land their newspapers, books, pamphlets, tracts, and other publications, to hold up to infamy the conduct of your oppressors, and to awaken sympathy in your behalf. They are continually holding anti-slavery meetings in all parts of the free States, to tell the people the story of your wrongs. (Garrison 1843) (Italics Placed for Emphasis) [For full version of editorial, see appendix A]

The use of “then” and “now” in the passage quoted above helps the audience see the great feats that have been achieved since the publication of *The Liberator*, and since the opening of the discussion on slavery. Through his “address to the slaves” about the great accomplishments the abolitionists have made (pretending the abolitionists who subscribe to his paper will only accidentally see the address), he covertly uses this editorial to recharge the tired abolitionists who have been fighting with him for the last ten years.

Through our quick and by no means complete rhetorical analysis of Garrison, along with his basic argument for abolition, we are able to begin forming our view of how one of the most prominent abolitionists talked about abolishing slavery in America. Through his publications in *The Liberator*, Garrison sets up a distinct tone for how one should discuss his or her views on abolishing the institution of slavery in America. *His* paper stands as a reassurance to *his* abolitionist readers that by following *his* advice, each reader can make an effective contribution to the abolitionist movement.

### **Frederick Douglass**

Former slave Frederick Douglass is often considered to be another exemplary abolitionist orator. Douglass had an unquestionable authority in his right to speak on this topic, combined with a widely recognized ability to appeal to his audience through strategic rhetorical moves. Douglass believed in equality for all, and after obtaining his own freedom, devoted his life toward establishing equality in America through his speeches and actions. Within the abolitionist movement, Douglass was further along the spectrum of “active” abolitionists than Garrison was; he both spoke and *acted* against

slavery in forceful ways. Douglass believed that everyone committed to abolishing the institution had an obligation, in any way possible, to resist the institution; this included himself.

We will begin looking at Douglass as we did at Garrison: create an understanding of his ethos, then outline his signature rhetorical moves.

As the many biographies of Douglass agree, the speech that brought him onto the anti-slave lecture circuit was given in 1841 at a convention of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, held on Nantucket Island (Selby 54). Douglass captivated his abolitionist audience with his powerful speech, “The Church and Prejudice,” thereby establishing connections that would allow him to begin traveling and delivering speeches on abolition. Using his opening to the speech we can gain a brief understanding of the way he talked, as well as his persona.

The first distinction we must make on Douglass’s persona, is that he seems to build his argument grounded in actual (non-exaggerated) circumstances. Although he uses the metaphor “the kingdom of heaven is like a net,” and follows that like fish they are segregated within the church, his speech seems to be grounded within the real—thus without the need to heighten the situation using hyperbolic language. Differing from how we saw Garrison talk about abolition in his editorials, Douglass is concerned with showing the consequence of slavery—the facts of the matter at hand—in order to promote his abolitionist cause. Indeed, he provides his firsthand account with segregation in churches both in the North and in the South, and then includes two additional stories of prejudice in the church to support his evidence (logos):

At the South I was a member of the Methodist Church. When I came north,

I thought one Sunday I would attend communion, at one of the churches of my denomination, in the town I was staying... the good minister had served out the bread and wine to one portion of those near him...till all the white members had been served. Then he took a long breath, and looking out towards the door, exclaimed, "Come up, colored friends, come up! for you know God is no respecter of persons!" I haven't been there to see the sacraments taken since.

But among those who experienced religion at this time was a colored girl; she was baptized in the same water as the rest...The deacon handed round the cup, and when he came to the black girl, he could not pass her, for there was the minister looking right at him, and as he was a kind of abolitionist, the deacon was rather afraid of giving him offense; so he handed the girl the cup, and she tasted... next to her sat a young lady who had been converted at the same time, baptized in the same water, and put her trust in the same blessed Saviour; yet when the cup containing the precious blood which had been shed for all, came to her, she rose in disdain, and walked out of the church.

Another young lady fell into a trance. When she awoke, she declared she had been to heaven. Her friends were all anxious to know what and whom she had seen there; so she told the whole story. But there was one good old lady whose curiosity went beyond that of all the others--and she inquired

of the girl that had the vision, if she saw any black folks in heaven? After some hesitation, the reply was, "*Oh! I didn't go into the kitchen!*"

(Douglass 1841) (Italics in Original) [For full version of speech, see appendix B]

A more in-depth look at Douglass's works shows that, as Logan argues, "as Douglass matures as a speaker, he began to want to do more than describe his experience; he wanted to present reasoned arguments against the institution of slavery, to move away from the specific to its compelling implications" (Logan 73). This desire to stay away from relying solely on "his experience" connects to his persona—one that seems more in tune with the "real life circumstances" and the "we" involved in the abolitionist movement, than Garrison's was.

In order to persuade his audience to adopt his argument, Douglass creates an ethos not rigidly confined to an "I," but one that draws upon an "us." Recounting the three different stories helps to not limit his speech by telling only his experience; it helps to not limit his ethos (as Garrison tended to do) to an all knowing prophet whose own experience was enough to justify why abolition was just. Douglass seems to see that a more opened persona, not firmly distinguished in one specific way, allows you more access to your audience. Indeed, he was not concerned with building an ethos that concentrated on him being a former slave; he did not want to rely heavily on his past experience, but instead to incorporate his past as a slave in subtle ways to prove his validity in speaking, while also showing that he was much more than just a former slave.

From this speech, we must also take note of his stance on who is at fault for slavery and its prevalence; unlike Garrison who was concerned with making the "tyrants"

“tremble” (because they were clearly the ones who enslave African Americans), Douglass demands that anyone anywhere not embracing fully their fellow citizens must be changed by the abolitionist movement. Contending that both the South and the North separate blacks from partaking in the same religious traditions, he shows that it is not as simple as blaming the people who clearly sustain slavery. Although he “thought” that he “would attend communion, at one of the churches of my denomination” when he “came north,” after his experience in the Northern church, he declares “I haven’t been there to see the sacraments taken since.” While Garrison held the belief that he could help show everyone what was right and what was wrong, Douglass has a more opened understanding that this institution pervades American society not just through the slave holders or openly racist persons, but also in more subtle ways. Douglass was determined to show that making the division between good and bad is not clean cut and further, cannot be decided by one person’s experiences. As we will eventually discuss with Harper, where and on whom one placed the blame is an important consideration in speeches that are meant to enact wide-spread social change.

After this speech, Douglass was hired by Garrison as an anti-slave lecturer, thus becoming a leading figure in the New England anti-slavery movement. Although he gave many important speeches during this time that helped advance the abolitionist movement, one of the most beneficial for rhetorical analysis and representative of his work is “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July.”

In July of 1852, the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society sponsored Douglass to give a speech for their Fourth of July celebration. As the title of their society suggests, the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society was concerned with abolition and equal rights.

With this said, we must understand that Douglass was not there with the primary goal of persuading the audience in attendance; rather he is delivering this speech to the larger metaphysical audience of all Americans who celebrate the Fourth of July without thinking about the holiday's blatant hypocrisy. In asking him to give this speech, the society is hoping he will use this platform to address those who may not be aware that celebrating the Fourth of July when millions in your nation are enslaved is wrong.

Using a mediated ethos that positions him as a former slave and a member of American society, he lays out the hypocrisies inherent to this celebration which makes him simultaneously a "fellow-citizen" and an "I" that is not a part of the "you" who forms the nation. Although by the end of the speech his combined ethos becomes rather strong, he begins with a timid introduction:

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability... my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th [of] July oration.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by

no means slight. That I am here to-day is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say. I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium. With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you. (Douglass 1852)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

Douglass begins his lengthy speech with the disclaimer that he may not articulate properly what he is being called to speak on because the occasion is intimidating. He uses the rhetorical device apologia, to defend himself in case he does not suffice as a speaker on this occasion. Indeed, his claim that he does “not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker...with greater distrust of my ability,” shows the use of apologia to excuse him for any faults that might occur in this speech. Unlike Garrison’s self-proclaimed ethos, which would be able to speak in any situation about abolition because he was such a solid speaker, Douglass introduces himself to the audience with the claim that his subject matter is extremely difficult, and combined with the occasion in which he is to discuss it, he is going to have an extremely difficult time. With his assertion that “the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight,” he reminds his audience that as a former slave now trying to include himself within the celebration of America’s independence, he finds this task a complex one. Note,

however, that he does not go in to how far that “distance” is, as per our earlier assertion that Douglass did not want to too heavily rely on his own past slave experience.

He continues his speech with an in-depth, descriptive reminder of how this celebration came to be, relying upon the rhetorical device of repetition. Most noticeably, his use of repeating the phrases “you/r,” “I” and “fellow-citizens,” helps to show that he is both within the nation and without our nation. He strategically uses “fellow-citizens” to bridge the gap between “you” and “I”—to show that although there is a recognizable difference between “you” and “I,” the common denominator of “fellow-citizens” that links “you” and “I” together, proves the two terms cannot be separated from one another:

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July... the birthday of *your* National Independence, and of *your* political freedom. This, to *you*, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries *your* minds back to the day, and to the act of *your* great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of *your* national life; and reminds *you* that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, *fellow-citizens*, that *your* nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time for individual men; but nations number their years by thousands. According to this fact, *you* are, even now, only in the beginning of *your* national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. *I* repeat, *I* am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower

above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressible stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot's heart might be sadder, and the reformer's brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in the thought that America is young.

(Douglass 1852) (Italics Placed for Emphasis)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

His moves between “you,” “I,” and “fellow-citizen,” allow him throughout the speech to highlight his alienation from being a complete fellow citizen. As Jacqueline Bacon says, this move “positions him as the representative of America’s failure. Douglass offers no direct argument for equal rights, instead drawing on the indirect power of language to highlight the exclusion of African Americans from America’s promise of freedom and equality” (Bacon 89). Indeed, the rhetorical effect of Douglass’s repetition allows him to invoke his argument for “equal rights” without having to literally claim this argument.

Douglass also repeats the word “fathers” throughout the speech to help show the audience the way of life necessary for bringing about the type of ideals America was built on. Intertwining the story of “your fathers” throughout the speech, Douglass strongly implies that the audience should similarly follow in their footsteps. In this sense (just as Garrison invokes the slaves to talk to his abolitionist audience) Douglass invokes the “fathers” who built America to talk to his audience, and then lingers upon the struggle

that the “fathers” went through with the hopes of similarly fostering those ideals in his audience:

But, *your fathers*, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government...presumed to differ from the home government... *They* went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of *your fathers*... *They* who did so were... dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! here lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the *deeds of your fathers*. But, to proceed.

Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, *your fathers*, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. *They* petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. *Their* conduct was wholly unexceptionable...*They* saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet *they* persevered. *They were not the men to look back.* (Douglass 1852)(Italics Placed for Emphasis)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

Like the rhetorical effect of his repetition “you/r,” “I” and “fellow-citizens,” which evoked an argument on equal rights, the rhetorical effect of relying upon the ideals of “your fathers” allows Douglass again to indirectly evoke the actual argument on the actions needed at present. Further, what makes the rhetorical effect of this evocation all the more worthwhile is his strategic exclusion of the fact that “your fathers” were not actually concerned with African American equality. Indeed, he engrains in his audience the way that “your fathers” were able to see wrong and correct it at any cost—that they were willing to take action and go against a stronger force when others were not as strong—while excluding information on how these “fathers” felt about slavery. Bacon puts it this way:

Avoiding the implications of Founding Fathers’ views of African Americans, Douglass recreates them by emphasizing their revolutionary struggle. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca indicate that this strategy depends upon the ‘construction’ of a particular perception of a person that distinguished between aspects of his or her identity that are ‘important’ and those that are ‘transitory.’ Douglass’s construction of the Founding Fathers implies that their resistance to oppression is their enduring legacy, not their prejudicial views of their tolerance of slavery. (Bacon 90)

Although the situation Douglass retells to his audience is real, by “emphasizing their revolutionary struggle” he is able to heighten the real experience; in this sense his use of the “fathers” relied upon the rhetorical device of hyperbole. Although we noted earlier in our analysis of “The Church and Prejudice” that Douglass does not seem to be as

hyperbolic in his language as Garrison is, and further that Douglass does not seem to be using abstract circumstances, here we see that Douglass combined both hyperbole and the real to create his argument. Indeed, Douglass does use hyperbolic language; however, unlike Garrison, Douglass uses hyperbolic language to heighten the effect of a real situation—thus heightening his argument on the need for freedom. He does not use hyperbole for abstract notions.

With almost one-third of his speech already completed, we find the first detailed incorporation of God. In his incorporation of religion he compares “your fathers” to “Abraham” and his audience to “the Children of Jacob.” He contends:

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future... Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work.... You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. Sydney Smith tells us that men seldom eulogize the wisdom and virtues of their fathers, but to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own. This truth is not a doubtful one. There are illustrations of it near and remote, ancient and modern. It was fashionable, hundreds of years ago, for the children of Jacob to boast, we have "Abraham to our father," when they had long lost Abraham's faith and spirit. That people contented themselves under the shadow of Abraham's great name, while they repudiated the deeds which made his name great. Need I remind you that a similar thing is being done all over this country to-day? Need I tell you that the Jews are not the only people

who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous? Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in the bodies and souls of men, shout - "We have Washington to our father." Alas! that it should be so; yet so it is. (Douglass 1852)(Italics Placed for Emphasis)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

His invocation of religion is used to compare stories and place his audience within the same circumstances as stories they are familiar with; he is elevating their project of abolishing slavery to the status of an epic religious one. To argue why this generation of men must follow the path that their fathers laid out, he frames their present day situation in biblical terms—thus heightening the significance of their present situation. Just as the Jews had “Abraham’s great name,” he argues that "We have Washington to our father," and thus in the same manner we must pursue our struggle to abolish slavery. Similar to our discussion above on his use of hyperbolic language to heighten the story of “your fathers,” he uses religion to heighten the story of abolition.

Tracing Douglass’s incorporation of God throughout the speech, we see although God is readily incorporated, he relies less on the uses of God and religion than on the Constitution and the sentiments related to the Revolution. This speech relies heavily upon the laws set up by the Declaration and the Revolution, yet we must understand that he is performing his speech is on the Fourth of July, and thus it seems natural that he would emphasize our Constitution. Indeed, if we look at the places where he invokes both God and the Constitution, it appears that that for Douglass, both are declarations we must maintain as ‘laws’ in America. One example of this comes as Douglass writes:

Standing with *God* and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in *the name of humanity* which is outraged, in the *name of liberty* which is fettered, in the name of the *constitution* and the *Bible*, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery-the great sin and shame of America! [Italics Placed for Emphasis]

Due respect is given to both the ideals of God and this Nation; the placement of “the constitution” right next to “the bible” helps us see that.

Another common rhetorical tendency that Douglass exhibits is parallelism between America and other Empires. He lists other countries to create balanced constructions between America’s supposed sentimental values for freedoms, and their response to judging other nations values for freedom. Using the construction of “you” do this, “but”/ “yet” then turn around to do something contradictory, helps parallel America’s false commitment to liberty and freedom:

*You* boast of *your* love of *liberty*, *your* superior *civilization*, and *your* pure *Christianity*, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. *You* hurl *your* anathemas at the crowned headed *tyrants of Russia and Austria*, and pride *yourselves* on *your* *Democratic institutions*, while *you* *yourselves* consent to be the mere tools and bodyguards of the tyrants of *Virginia and Carolina*. *You* invite to *your* shores *fugitives of oppression* from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast

them, salute them, protect them, and pour out *your* money to them like water; *but* the fugitives from *your* own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. *You* glory in *your* refinement and *your* universal education *yet* you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation - a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. *You* shed tears over fallen *Hungary*, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of *your* poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; *but*, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, *you* would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! *You* are all on fire at the mention of liberty for *France* or for *Ireland*; *but* are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. *You* discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; *yet*, *you* sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. *You* can bare *your* bosom to the storm of *British* artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea; and *yet* wring the last hard-earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. (Douglass 1852) (Italics Placed for Emphasis)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

Through his parallelisms, he exposes the shallow representations of freedom that we champion as being true markers of freedom. For Douglass, we are unaware of the critical and fatal flaws that control our “superior civilization,” while we are willing to help other nations that seem to be failing to support freedom and liberty. He uses this ironic tone

throughout his speech to help prove that America's inherent contradictions are what make the present situation of our country dismal.

In a later section of his speech, Douglass develops his use of irony as he explains to his "fellow-citizens" why the abolitionist movement is in motion. As Jacqueline Bacon shows, he ironically criticizes his 'fellow-citizens' for not understanding the natural rights of man:

Where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? ... Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it ...when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave...What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded...

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? ... You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans? ... How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? (Douglass 1852) (*Italics Placed for Emphasis*)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

Bacon concludes from this portion of his speech, "Presenting antislavery beliefs as self-evident conclusions—so obvious that even the opposition endorses them—Douglass again established claims through his ironic exploitation of a pervasive stereotype (Logan

65). Indeed, throughout the speech, Douglass uses irony in order to expose to his audience the failure in America's commitment to freedom.

As mentioned earlier in this section, when Douglass gets to the conclusion of his speech he does not describe a situation where America is irreparable; he has hope in our nation:

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened," and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference. (Douglass 1852) (Italics Placed for Emphasis)[For full version of speech, see appendix B]

Douglass does not end his speech on a somber note; rather, after recognizing the legacy that the forefathers left behind, and that the abolitionists (and hopefully soon those who hear his speech), are actively trying to bring about once more—he is “with hope.” Former slave Douglass has “hope” in America, and “hope” in the world. Interconnectedness between our nation and “the surrounding world” will help to bring about a brighter day; this brighter day was something that Harper similarly looked forward to.

## Part Two: Frances Harper's place in the Abolitionist Movement

*“As a participant in the abolitionist, suffrage and temperance, peace, civil and woman's rights movements, between 1854 and 1890 she was one of the few African American women present at conferences and meetings dominated by the black male leadership and, prior to 1890, with few exceptions, was the only woman of her race to consistently hold positions of leadership in the national organizations controlled by white female reformers”*

*Bettye Collier-Thomas, Essay on Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (43).*

Biographies written on Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) are limited. Although information on her orations and her travels have been documented in various newspapers and recorded in various dictionaries honoring African American orators and notable women, the most inclusive and revealing biography of Harper comes from her friend William Still. In the introduction to Harper's collected works *A Brighter Day Coming*, Frances Smith Foster explains:

Despite the extraordinary attention, most of the bibliographical data in twentieth-century references are derived from one source, a chapter in William Still's *The Underground Railroad*, published in 1871. A prominent abolitionist and Harper's long-time friend, Still devoted thirty pages of his history of the underground railroad to her biography because, as he noted, “There is not to be found in any written work portraying the Anti-slave struggle, (except in the form for narratives) as we are aware of, a sketch of the labors of any eminent colored woman” (783). Since Still recognized that Harper was “the leading colored poet in the United States: and “one of the most liberal contributors as well as one of the ablest advocates of the Underground Rail Road and of the slave” (783), he chose to reject the sexism that created essentially male histories, in which

references to women were confined primarily to footnotes... Thus, despite the fact that Harper was a public figure for over a half century, details about her life are limited. (Foster 5)

Although I have relied on other sources of information on Harper within this section (so as not to have too biased a history of her), in order for us create an understanding of her life, we will rely heavily on Still's dedicated section on Harper to outline her life and emergence as a figure in the abolitionist movement.

Harper had no strict obligation to join the abolitionist movement. She could have easily chosen to live her life uninvolved with abolition, instead working as a teacher:

Having been born into an articulate and well-respected free-black family, Harper could have chosen to avoid many of the distressing realities that controlled the lives of the less fortunate members of her race. She chose not to do so. Harper decided that her personal survival and well-being of the larger society and that confrontation, not silence, was the way to mental, if not physical, health. She gave up her small but real claim to a life of relative leisure and privacy. (Foster 3)

Indeed, as we will come to see, Harper was concerned with the greater good of "the larger society," and thus found it necessary to take an active role within the abolitionist movement. Her ultimate decision to break that "silence" and come to live a life in the public eye as an abolitionist orator was influenced greatly by her upbringing.

Frances Harper was born in Baltimore, Maryland on September 24, 1825 to two free African Americans. Unfortunately, little is known about her parents; records do not even indicate their names. However, we do know that both her mother and her father

passed away when Harper was young, leaving her, at the age of three, to be raised by her aunt and her uncle, the latter being Reverend Williams Watkins, who also lived in Baltimore. Although understandably the loss of both her parents affected Harper deeply (as it would any child who lost their parents at such a young age), she was placed in hands that would provide her with the tools that would later help her define who she was.

Harper's adoption into her uncle's family afforded her access to education and exposure to the abolitionist movement. Harper's uncle, as Smith Foster shows, was highly involved in improving his community: he "was a fervent abolitionist, a community leader, and a highly regarded teacher" (Foster 7). Indeed, her uncle was not only an advocate for equality, but he acted upon his beliefs as well. As several commentaries note, her uncle worked directly with Frederick Douglass to promote the abolitionist cause, and he "frequently contributed to papers such as the *Liberator*" (Foster 7). Harper's uncle was also the founder of the esteemed William Watkins Academy for Negro Youth.

The institution was "prestigious... noted for its emphasis upon biblical studies, the classics, and elocution as well as for the political leadership and social service of its graduates" ("Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins" 533). Further, Foster remarks that:

Watkins held every student to high standards...Watkins' academy was so well regarded that slaveholders from neighboring states enrolled their favorite children, and among its graduates were many of the most prominent and highly regarded public servants and speakers in the nation.

(7)

As his niece, Harper was privileged to attend this educational institution, and as William Still comments in his book, while enrolled she showed “an ardent thirst for knowledge” (Still 756). Harper attended her Uncle’s academy until around the age of thirteen, and during this time, she “frequented abolitionist circles and gained renown for ... oratorical skills and social leadership” (Foster 7). Jacqueline Bacon comments that this adoption into the abolitionist movement through your family was a typical process: “women with family ties to the abolitionist movement ... joined the anti slavery crusade” (Bacon 167). Indeed, as we can see from this glimpse at Harper’s early childhood, her uncle was a major influence in leading her on the path toward using language as a means toward enacting social change—giving her both access to an education and information on the abolitionist movement.

As recorded in one of her biographies, “by the age of fourteen she had acquired an education superior to that of most nineteenth-century women of any color or class in the United States” (“Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins” 533). Specifically, her talent as a writer was recognized early, not only by her uncle, but by other people in Harper’s life as well (including herself). Her uncle encouraged her while she was in school, and as we will see, when she left and went to work as a domestic she continued to expand and develop her writing.

After finishing her uncle’s Academy, Harper went on to earn her own living as a domestic in a Quaker household (Grohsmeyer). While working there, she was encouraged continually to build upon her knowledge of rhetoric and language. Her employer permitted her access to the books in her library, and with that permission Still describes that she “was noted for her industry, rarely trifling away time as most girls are

wont to do in similar circumstances” (756). Although it would be difficult to tell what other girls at that time would have done “in similar circumstances,” we must acknowledge from this inclusion in Still’s biography of Harper, that she was dedicated toward advancing her knowledge of writing. As a result of her continued efforts—building upon the skills she had acquired from her Uncle through the resources she was granted during her time as a domestic—her poetry eventually began to be published in newspapers. As Foster documents, “Harper continued to write and to publish her pieces in various periodicals,” and eventually by 1845 she had enough publications to publish her own first small volume of poetry, *Forest Leaves* (Foster 8).

In 1851, Harper left her job as a domestic in Baltimore, and went to find a home in a Free State. Ending up in Ohio, she took to the job of teaching. Although Ohio was a Free State, she did not like it, and moved again—this time relocating in Little York, Pennsylvania. Still says that for Harper, Pennsylvania was “a last resort” (although he does not seem to explain why she felt this way) (756); however, it seems she tried to make this “last resort” work as she began teaching and becoming more aware of the abolitionist movement in her area.

While in York, Harper became more exposed to abolitionists and to the Underground Railroad. There, she gained tools that would further help propel her into lecturing on social uplift. As Still reasons, “Thus, whilst filling her vocation as a teacher in Little York, was she deeply engrossed in thought as to how she could best promote the welfare of her race, she was further moved to enter the Anti-Slavery field as a lecturer” (Still 757). Continually intertwining in and exposing herself to the Abolitionist movement

in York, a decision made in her home state pushed Harper even more so toward her career as an abolitionist rhetor.

In 1853, Harper's home state of Maryland passed a law forbidding free blacks from the North to enter the state. Blacks who did could be enslaved by government officials. As many of her biographers conclude, it was this law that brought Harper into her active battle against slavery. Foster explains that, soon after the law was passed, "a man who had unsuspectingly violated that ordinance was arrested, enslaved, and sent to Georgia. The desperate man escaped, only to be recaptured" (Foster 10). And as such, Still adds that, "In a letter to a friend referring to this outrage, Mrs. Harper thus wrote: 'Upon that grave I pledged myself to the Anti-Slavery cause.'" (Still 757-758).

With this "pledge," Harper moved once again—this time to Philadelphia—in order to work more closely and actively with the abolitionist movement. Although her biographies lack a solid list of specific names and actions she subscribed to while in Philadelphia, Forester provides us with the information that:

There she lived at an Underground Railroad Station where she was able to experience first-hand the comings and goings of fugitive slaves. To prepare herself for an active abolitionist role, Watkins frequented the office of the local antislavery society, and read avidly on the subject. Although Still does not state this, Watkins may have been living in his household, for his home was the most important Underground Railroad Station in Philadelphia and a favorite residence of many visiting abolitionists. Her move to Philadelphia also stimulated Watkins' literary productivity by bringing her into contact with groups of educated black

activists, many of whom were writers or editors, and by providing her with publishing contacts. Along with Mary Still (William's daughter), Sarah Douglass, and others, Watkins became a contributor to the Philadelphia-based *Christian Recorder*. (10)

Harper's move to Philadelphia was one of the last pieces that would combine to propel Harper to travel as a rhetor for the abolitionist movement. While there we see her expanding her collection of works, even her genre of works, and moreover focusing those works more so on abolition.

Following her time in Pennsylvania, Still traces her movement:

After spending some weeks in Philadelphia, she concluded to visit Boston. Here she was treated with the kindness characteristic of the friends in the Anti-Slavery Office whom she visited, but only made a brief stay, after which she proceeded to New Bedford, the 'hot-bed of the fugitives' in Massachusetts, where by invitation she addressed a public meeting on the subject of Education and the Elevation of the Colored Race. (758)

It was this public speech which launched her career as an abolitionist orator. Indeed, this speech started her journey to different churches and town halls, where she would eloquently, powerfully and persuasively talk about abolishing the system of slavery from America.

In her own letter dated August, 1854 she reveals:

Well, I am out lecturing. I have lectured every night this week; besides addressed a Sunday-school, and I shall speak, if nothing prevent, to-night. My lectures have met with success. Last night I lectured in a white church

in Providence. Mr. Gardener was present, and made the estimate of about six hundred persons. Never, perhaps, was a speaker, old or young, favored with a more attentive audience. My voice is not wanting in strength, as I am aware of, to reach pretty well over the house. The church was the Roger Williams; the pastor, a Mr. Furnell, who appeared to be a kind and Christian man. My maiden lecture was Monday night in New Bedford on the Elevation and Education of our People. Perhaps as intellectual a place as any I was ever at of its size. (Harper 1854) [For full version of letter, see appendix C]

Thus, with her first lecture she received a warm welcome, and within a month, the State Anti-Slavery Society of Maine approached Harper, asking her to be the representative for their state (as part of the larger American Anti-Slavery Society). Harper accepted, and began to lecture along the Eastern coast on abolition.

Harper's lecturing was by all accounts extensive and effective. She aggressively traveled throughout different towns delivering speeches on abolition and calling for more than moral suasion:

Once launched into the circuit, however, Watkins lost no time in establishing herself as a popular and sought-after speaker. Her schedule was grueling. From September 5 until October 20, 1854, for example, Watkins gave at least thirty-three lectures in twenty-one New England cities and villages. To further complicate matters, her work did not end when she left the podium. Watkins' position as an employee of the Maine Anti-Slavery Society not only required that she lecture against slavery, but

also forced her, and her white counterparts, to experiment with new social relationships. In a society that was segregated, sometimes by law and almost always by convention, Watkins quite often traveled, visited, worked, and rested in integrated situations. (Foster 13)

Until 1865, when the abolitionist cause finally acquired complete success, Watkins constantly showed her commitment to the abolitionist cause both on the public platform and off.

### Part Three: Frances Harper's Common Rhetorical Tendencies

*We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the negro. You pressed him down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country.*

*Frances Harper, Speech "We are all Bound up"*

In this section I consider selected abolitionist texts by Frances Harper that strongly coincide with some of the common rhetorical tendencies we have been discussing. Focusing mainly on her speeches, but incorporating representative letters and poems as well, I show that Garrison, Douglass and Harper all follow common rhetorical tendencies: allusions, parallelisms, religious references, and hyperbolic language. The pieces I have chosen for this section to represent Garrison and Douglass are the same as I used in my first section; however, for Harper the texts that I use to represent her (in this section and my next section) are as follows: "The Colored People in America," "Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart," and "Our Greatest Want" (speeches); "The Slave Mother" and the "Slave Auction" (poems); "Breathing the Air of Freedom," and "Miss Watkins and the Constitution" (letters).

Throughout her abolitionist works, Harper, like both Douglass and Garrison, uses references to the Revolution and Declaration of Independence. A prime example of her use of allusions is portrayed in her speech "Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart," where she spends a great deal of time creating the comparison between America's Revolution and that process in other nations:

But a few months since a man escaped from bondage and found a temporary shelter almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill. Had that

man stood upon the deck of an Austrian ship, beneath the shadow of the house of the Hapsburgs, he would have found protection. Had he been wrecked upon an island or colony of Great Britain, the waves of the tempest-lashed ocean would have washed him deliverance. Had he landed upon the territory of vine-encircled France and a Frenchman had reduced him to a thing and brought him here beneath the protection of our institutions and our laws, for such a nefarious deed that Frenchman would have lost his citizenship in France. Beneath the feebler light which glimmers from the Koran, the Bey of Tunis would have granted him freedom in his own dominions. Beside the ancient pyramids of Egypt he would have found liberty, for the soil laved by the glorious Nile is now consecrated to freedom. But from Boston harbour, made memorable by the infusion of threepenny taxed tea, Boston in its proximity to the plains of Lexington and Concord, Boston almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill and almost in sight of Plymouth Rock, he is thrust back from liberty and manhood and reconverted into a chattel. You have heard that, down South, they keep bloodhounds to hunt slaves. Ye bloodhounds, go back to your kennels; when you fail to catch the flying fugitive, when his stealthy tread is heard in the place where the bones of the revolutionary sires repose, the ready North is base enough to do your shameful service.

(Harper 1857) [For full version of letter, see appendix C]

Here she begins by using our Revolutionary landmark “Bunker Hill,” and then compares this American site to comparable sites in Countries where the oppressed might have

found a safe haven. As we recall, in Garrison's first editorial, "To the Public" he wrote: "I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, *within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty.*" Indeed, both are interested in exposing the false protection that "Bunker Hill" provides. Harper uses this reference to Bunker Hill again in a letter we will later analyze in this section, "Breathing the Air of Freedom," when she claims "whatever he was in the land of Washington, beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument, or even Plymouth Rock, *here* he becomes "a man and a brother." There are similar connections between her and Douglass, as both mark revolutionary ideals upon which America was founded, then parallels them with those of other nations. In this speech Harper recalls Austria, Great Britain, France, Tunisia, and Egypt; in Douglass's Fourth of July speech, as we saw he cites Russia, Austria, France, and Ireland.

The next similarity we see throughout all three orators are references to God and religion. In Harper's speech "The Colored People in America" she claims "But there is hope; yes, blessed be God! For our down-trodden and despised race." In her speech "Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart" she claims, "The law of liberty is the law of God, and is antecedent to all human legislation." And, later on in the speech she remarks:

But I will not dwell on the dark side of the picture. God is on the side of freedom; and any cause that has God on its side, I care not how much it may be trailed in the dust, is sure to triumph. The message of Jesus Christ is on the side of Freedom." I come to preach deliverance of the captives, the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." The truest and

noblest hearts in the land are on the side of freedom. (Harper 1857) [For full version of letter, see appendix C]

In her letter, “Miss. Watkins and the Constitution,” she writes “Rest assured that, as nations and individuals, God will do right by us, and we should not ask of either God or man to do less than that.” Similar to Douglass who claims that he is “Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion” and Garrison who claims that he will “seize this opportunity ... publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves” and claims the “defiance of the omniscience and omnipotence of God,” we see that all three orators take God’s presence into account. Undoubtedly, like Douglass and Garrison, we see that she too composes speeches with the use of God and religion; however, as we will later discuss, *how* she integrates both God and religion differs from Garrison and Douglass.

The last abolitionist rhetorical tendency that we will trace among all three rhetors is the use of hyperbolic language. In her letter “Breathing the Air of Freedom,” hyperbolic language is included to heighten the sense of Canada being a harbinger of freedom and brotherhood, while America is concerned with oppression:

I had gazed on Harper’s Ferry, or rather the Rock at the Ferry, towering up in simple grandeur with the gentle Potomac gliding peacefully by its feet, and felt that that was God’s Masonry; and my soul had expanded in gazing on its sublimity. I had seen the Ocean, singing its wild chorus of sounding waves, and ecstasy had thrilled upon the living chords of my heart. I have since then seen the rainbow-crowned Niagara, girdled with grandeur, and robbed with glory, chanting the choral hymn of Omnipotence, but none of

the sights have melted me as the first sight of Free Land. (Harper 1856)[For full version of letter, see appendix C]

For an entire paragraph she lists her reactions to some of the most sublime things she has experienced: her “soul had expanded” while looking at the Potomac; “ecstasy had thrilled upon the living chords of my heart” when she saw the ocean; she saw Niagara falls which was “chanting the choral hymn of Omnipotence;” however, above all these reactions, “none of the sights have melted me as the first sight of Free Land.” Her descriptions that lead to this conclusion clearly over-exaggerate her reactions to those sites, with the hopes of confirming a hearty sense that “free land” is what everyone should strive for—it is the most sublime above all. In this sense, we can draw parallels between the use of hyperbole for Harper, Douglass and Garrison.

Recalling our rhetorical analysis of Garrison, in his “Address to the Slaves of the United States” we cited his formulation: “Ten years ago, they were *so few and feeble* as only to excite universal contempt; now they number in their ranks, *hundreds of thousands of the people*. —Then, they had *scarcely a single* anti-slavery society in operation; now they have *thousands*. Then, they had *only one or two* presses to plead your cause; now they have *multitudes*,” as hyperbolic. For Douglass, we noted that he used hyperbolic language to heighten the actions of the nations “fathers,” and consequently the need for freedom. Although their hyperbolic language all seems different in what they are heightening, again just to begin unpacking Harper’s rhetorical tendencies—we see that they both rely upon hyperbolic language.

The common rhetorical tendencies of allusions (combined often with parallelism), religious references, and hyperbolic language helped all three rhetors shape their anti-

slavery appeals. This said, there were variations within these tendencies that set them apart from each other, distinguishable trademarks from each that the other two did not share. For example, we mentioned that Garrison was rather severe in his abolitionist talk and called for a new Constitution that did not foster slavery, and that Douglass's experience as a former slave (which made him a "fellow-citizen" that was simultaneously a part of the "we" that built the nation and one left out of that nation) allowed him to talk about the national crisis in a unique way. Harper's rhetoric, as we shall see, had some features of her own.

## Part Four: Frances Harper's Contribution to Abolitionist Rhetoric

*We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the negro. You pressed him down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country.*  
*Frances Harper, Speech "We are all Bound up"*

This section finally allows us to indulge in Harper's work, allowing an intense examination of how she differentiates herself from other abolitionist orators. To show what rhetorical tendencies Harper used to gain her spot on the abolitionist lecture circuit, we will analyze her works by highlighting the variations Harper made to some of the common rhetorical tendencies, then move on to show what made her uniquely different. Specifically, we will follow how she formed her ethos, her use of irony, how/who she addressed as her audience, and how she talked about the 'circumstances.'

Although the previous section already discussed some of Harper's work, and the introduction also gave us a glimpse at Harper's stage presence, grasping a better sense of how Harper sounded as well as what she looked like on stage will allow us to (1) better hear and visualize her as we interpret her texts and (2) allow us to see how she handled her ethos and persona.

Harper formed her ethos as a strong capable female, resolute in her mission to have her message heard effectively. Journalist Grace Greenwood reports:

Her manner is marked by dignity and composure. In the first part of her lecture she was most impressive in her pleading for the race with whom her lot is cast. There was something touching in her attitude as their representative. The woe of two hundred years sighed through her tones.

Every glance of her sad eyes was a mournful remonstrance against  
injustice and wrong. (Still 779)

From Greenwood's description, we infer that Harper's rhetoric was feminized to a certain extent; Harper's ethos was "touching." One way we see Harper as "touching" comes from how she talks to her audience—her presence is strikingly similar to a mother teaching her child a lesson. Greenwood's comment that "every glance of her sad eyes was a mournful remonstrance against injustice and wrong," evokes the image that, like a mother teaching and explaining to her child why an action is intolerable or unacceptable, Harper compassionately guides her audience to understand why the denunciation of slavery and action against slavery are a necessity. We see that she has internalized the "woe of two hundred years" of oppression of her peoples, and was, as a result, hoping to persuade her audience to help America expel that "woe."

Shirley Wilson Logan extends this categorization of how Harper handles her femininity on stage, citing various sources of the time who commented on Harper's diction and body language:

The *Portland Daily Press* described Harper as having 'splendid articulation,' using 'chaste, pure, language,' having 'a pleasant voice,' and allowing 'no one to tire of hearing her. Peterson argues that such reviews of Harper's delivery represent an 'attempt to eliminate the public presence of the black female body perceived as sexualized or grotesque and to promote the voice as pure melody, insubstantial sound, a negotiation of presence.' (Logan 49)

From both Greenwood's and Logan's summaries, it is important we see that she exhibits "a negotiation of presence" (Logan 49). Harper recognizes that she must cautiously build her ethos: not too 'female' and sentimental, or too 'un-female' and severe (like Garrison). In order to talk effectively about the severe topic of abolishing slavery, she would rely upon her female voice that was "pure melody." Indeed, in an attempt to not be "perceived as sexualized or grotesque"—using too much of what would be perceived as a "feminized" ethos (as compared to other mostly male orators of the time)—she relies upon her female "pleasant voice" to cautiously talk about an unpleasant issue in a way that her audience would not "tire of hearing her."

Through this mediated ethos, Harper, like her male counterparts was "marked by dignity and composure" (Still 779). Indeed, Harper was able to match the power of her male counterparts rhetoric, Douglass and Garrison, through her subtle feminine persona. Unlike Garrison, who was accepted into the abolitionist movement with his "severe" language (his overly masculine ethos), Harper was willing to "negotiate" her ethos. This negotiation was similar to how we saw Douglass create his ethos.

Returning to our understanding of Douglass's ethos from my first section, where we saw that he did not want to flaunt his experiences as a former slave, we can draw a parallel between Harper and him. Both orators were trying to "eliminate" being "perceived as...grotesque" because of their distinct difference to other orators of that time; they achieved this through a strategic balancing of their differentiating characteristic. Both did not completely detach themselves from their distinguishing difference (Douglass as a former slave and Harper as a female), but rather used it to create a more attractive ethos. Indeed, as we recall, Douglass incorporated his

background as a former slave subtly in order to attract his audience to come to terms with his argument; similarly Harper used her female persona to a certain degree in order to attract her audience into her argument. Although the balance of ethos in both orators is parallel, we cannot forget that at the same time (1) Douglass has been freed; (2) he was a man; (3) women in society still had few rights; and (4) African American women especially had almost no rights at all. And so, although we do see that Douglass and Harper were more circumspect in how they formed their stage presence, Harper had to be all the more cautious.

With our basic understanding of how Harper distinguished herself as a speaker, we can now begin to develop a better understanding of Harper's other rhetorical abilities. As mentioned in my second section, Harper wrote the letter "Well, I Am out Lecturing" in August 1854, declaring the commencement of her career as an orator. We now know this speech as "The Colored People in America." Advancing our understanding of the ethos Harper formed, in this speech we see her use terms typically associated with mothering to describe the distressing relationship between dominance and oppressed in America:

*Born* into an inheritance of misery, *nurtured* in degradation, and *cradled* in oppression... what can be expected from their *offspring*, but a mournful reaction of that cursed system which spreads its baneful influence over *body and soul; which dwarfs the intellect, stuns its development, debases the spirit, and degrades the soul?* ... *debase their sons* and corrupt their *daughters* (Harper 1854) [Italics Placed for Emphasis] [For full version of speech, see appendix C]

Words like “born,” “nurtured,” “cradled,” “offspring,” all terms allude to a mother raising her child. Although Harper did not have children at this point in her life, we can understand her invoking these terms as a way to highlight how perverse slavery was as a “cursed system” of domination and subordination, one which fostered and bred a “mournful reaction.” Unlike a functional mother/child relationship where being “born,” “nurtured,” “cradled,” by the mother leads to positive social conditions for the child, the effects of being “born,” “nurtured,” “cradled,” by the dominant figures in this relationship are “baneful.” As we further delve into her texts we will see her referencing of this relationship heighten; while still incorporating a female persona, she progresses into daring and charged abolitionist rhetoric.

From this speech, it is also important that we comprehend Harper’s argument for abolition: eliminating the social conditions that foster dominant and subordinate relationships. Through her speech, which traces her trope of the effects of oppression and domination, we see Harper question how, in any nation which “fetter[s] ... limbs and degrade[s] ... souls” of persons, and then extends to affect the “children” of these persons—the same effects” could not be seen as wrong. Harper shows how the process of oppression, which starts by controlling a small object (like a “limb”), but then extends throughout the nation and throughout generations, has massive cumulative detrimental implications:

Place any nation in the same condition which has been our hapless lot, fetter their limbs and degrade their souls, debase their sons and corrupt their daughters, and when the *restless yearnings for liberty shall burn through heart and brain*—when, tortured by wrong and goaded by

oppression, the hearts that would *madden with misery, or break in despair*.  
 (Harper 1854) [Italics Placed for Emphasis] [For full version of speech,  
 see appendix C]

Further, as she describes this relationship, the subordinate ground is a result of social conditions; they “have no control” over their place in society: “Having *been placed by a dominant race* in circumstances over which we have no control, we have been the butt of ridicule and the *mark of oppression*.” Logan similarly agrees that Harper’s speech uses the term “race” as a way to describe how the subordinate group is in its position as a result of social conditions that the dominant group in society has enforced. “She addressed the ways in which those conditions shaped the group consciousness of those people, resulting in ‘hearts that would madden with misery, or break in despair’” (Logan 52). Harper is concerned with figuring out how to change “those conditions” in society so that the effects of oppression and suppression will not continue, and this is something we see Harper continue to argue throughout her works.

The year that Harper began lecturing was also the year her second collection of poems, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, was published; from this compilation we get the two powerful abolitionist poems, “The Slave Mother” and the “Slave Auction.” Although not composed with the same level of rhetorical consciousness as her speeches were, analyzing these poems will help compliment and expand our understanding of Harper’s unique uses of rhetoric.

Focusing first on her poem, “The Slave Mother,” we see Harper traces a mother’s process of losing her son to slavery. We see Harper focusing in on a human being—on the slave. She uses terms like, “heart,” “hands,” “eye,” “brain,” “fear,” “blood,” “veins,”

“arms,” and “face” to emphasize the personhood of both the slave’s Mother and the slave. In many of Harper’s poems we see her use this humanization to show that the slave is as much of a person as the slave holder is. Her humanization works to level the playing ground and juxtapose the slave’s autonomy with the slave owner’s. As such, she highlights the ‘sameness’ in all Americans. Her humanization of the slave also works to both amplify and detail the devastation in losing one’s family member to slavery, in a way that Garrison did not seem to do.

Although Garrison did focus on specific persons in his speeches—he constantly blames the slave holders, and tells them how evil they are—he does not go into such detail as Harper does in her poetry to describe what exactly is at stake for the abolitionists: freeing a human with a “heart,” “hands,” “eye,” “brain,” “fear,” “blood,” “veins,” “arms,” and “face.” Making the same connections with Douglass, although we do see him tell the occasional story about his personal experience with slavery or a singular story about a slave, he does not have the poetic voice that Harper does to describe the human turned into slave. Comparing the line we analyzed in Douglass’s “What to the Slave,” “the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion,” with Harper’s poetic description “Saw you those hands so sadly clasped- / The bowed and feeble heart- / The suddering of that fragile form- / That look of grief and dread? / Saw you the sad, imploring eye? / Its every glance was pain / As if a storm of agony / Were sweeping through the brain,” shows that although he did make efforts to have his audience visualize the human who was the slave, Harper’s abilities as a poet gave her a fuller repertoire for helping the audience feel what they were fighting to abolish.

In “The Slave Auction” we again see Harper’s well equipped voice detailing the human aspects of a slave, and further showing familial detachment caused by the slave trade. In this poem Harper extends her argument about the humanness of the slave (like we saw in “The Slave Mother”); however, this time the rhyme scheme helps to highlight the circumstance that have made Americans forget the slave is a human. Through her rhyme scheme she highlights the difference between being concerned with money instead of humanity, so that the slave is a form of money—not a human, and where as such the slave system can continue. Although the rhyme scheme is simple, it effectively expresses the difference between the slave as human instead of commodity.

Within stanza two we find a key example of her rhyme scheme:

And mothers stood, with streaming *eyes*  
 And saw their dearest children *sold*;  
 Unheeded rose their bitter *cries*,  
 While tyrants bartered them for *gold*.

Through the rhyme scheme she couples “eyes” and “cries,” as well as “sold” and “gold.” In making these connections, she highlights the horrifying process of slavery, which is facilitated by one of alchemy. As Logan comments: “Harper frequently focused on the economic aspects of slavery and the irony of owning ‘property that can walk’” (Logan 7). Indeed, from Logan’s observation on Harper, we get commentary on two things important for understanding Harper: that Harper shows the economic circumstances in America that have come to override and displace the human who is the slave; and that Harper incorporates irony even in this early work, as per we will see it develops in power as her career proceeds.

On September 12, 1856 Harper wrote the letter “Breathing the Air of Freedom.” Her letter details her journey to Canada; in it, she defames America’s status as a free nation through her use of irony. Upon observing her use of her repetition and insinuation of “the free land,” we see her ironically undermining America’s status as “*the* free land.” In her first lines we see her exult: “I have gazed for the first time upon Free Land! And would you believe it, tears sprang to my eyes, and I wept.” Although she has been in America (the home of freedom and liberty) for her entire life, traveling to Canada has actually brought her to tears.

Heightening her view of how magnificent being in a “free land” is, she relies upon a remarkably ironic tone. She mocks “flying from our glorious land of liberty;” it is only in Canada where a person “becomes ‘a man and a brother.’” She boldly (and I say boldly, because as a woman, her use of the ironic allusion is even more important to note) uses irony to show that America’s status as the “land of liberty” is not accurate. We must acknowledge that although this is a letter, and thus more confidential than her speeches (but still released publicly—and so not *that* private), her persona seems to be a little more aggressive. Her use of irony pointedly criticizes America for not representing freedom.

On May 13, 1857 Harper delivered her speech, “Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart” to the New York City Anti-Slave Society (Logan 46). Logan further sets the scene in which Harper performs her speech: “This speech, delivered during a period of sectional controversy, is a direct attack against Northern support of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Harper talked tough on this occasion, referring in particular to the plight of the fugitive slave remanded in slavery” (Logan 53). Recalling that Maryland’s 1853 law forbade free blacks from the North to enter the state was what

sparked Harper to speak out against slavery, we can infer that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 would driven her to create an even stronger speech, and it does.

Her speech highlights the natural need for liberty for all individuals, and the need for that liberty to be a part of America. Harper makes a simple appeal:

Could we trace the record of every human heart, the aspirations of every immortal soul, perhaps we would find no man so imbruted and degraded that we could not trace the word liberty either written in living characters upon the soul or hidden away in some nook or corner of the heart (Harper 1857) [For full version of speech, see appendix C].

She makes this appeal because in “every *human* heart” we will always see the need for liberty. From there, she progresses to show her audience the horrible effects of the slave system that have corrupted America’s intended goals. She progresses most effectively through her powerful employment of irony. As “Breathing,” and “The Slave Auction,” Harper here speaks in an ironic manner, mocking America’s handling and understanding of the slave system through her personification of slave states, and her posed rhetorical questions:

Some people say, set the slaves free. Did you ever think, if the slaves were free, they would steal everything they could lay their hands on from now till the day of their death—that they would steal more than two thousand millions of dollars? Ask Maryland, with her tens of thousands of slaves, if she is not prepared for freedom, and hear her answer: “I help supply the cofflegangs of the South.” Ask Virginia, with her hundreds of thousands of slaves, is she is not weary with her merchandise of blood and anxious to

shake the gory traffic from her hands, and hear her reply: “Though fertility has covered my soil, though a genial sky bends over my hills and vales, though I hold in my hand a wealth of water-power enough to turn the spindles to clothe the world, yet, with all these advantages, one of my chief staples has been the sons and daughters I send to the human market and human shambles.” Ask the father South, and all the cotton-growing States chime in, “We have need of fresh supplies to fill the ranks of those whose lives have gone out in unrequited toil on our distant plantations” (Harper 1857) [For full version of speech, see appendix C]

She chastises the American slave owner’s defective assumption that slaves need to be enslaved because they would otherwise corrupt America. Building in her account of how the relationship between dominant and subordinate sustains the American system of slavery, here she ironically mocks that relationship for its faulty logic. Through her sarcastic questions, she instead shows that the slave system and the master/slave relationship is actually what is corrupting America—the circumstances that have made these relationships must be expelled from American society. Her imagined dialogue between her and the slave states—Maryland (her home state), Virginia, and “the father of South”—shows them being too feeble-minded to discern that the system they are involved in is corrupt. Harper’s incorporation of irony throughout this paragraph helps her audience see the inherent problems with slavery.

From this passage we also see her once again argue that slavery is more concerned with the money produced than the *process involved* with making that money; this time she more forcefully characterizes it as a particularly perverted form of alchemy.

Harper's claim is more direct, and thus more of a bold move than she made in her poem. Although she discussed the slave owners who ignore the humanity of the slave in order to gain profit in her poem, she used a rhyme scheme to subtly introduce the idea. Here, unmediated by her rhyme scheme, Harper defines these slave holders as alchemists. Although her use of the metaphoric language of alchemy does reduce her categorization into non-literal terms, it is more direct than a rhyme scheme, which begs the audience to infer the connections she created. Here she (more like Garrison and Douglass, and most all men at the time, do) directly charges that "if men had not found out a fearful alchemy by which this blood can be transformed into gold. Instead of listening to the cry of agony, they listen to the ring of dollars and stoop down to pick up the coin." Harper is more aggressive in this speech, not trying to hide her opinion that the slave owners are ruthless and need to understand the process by which they earn profit.

This speech is marked by a more dynamic ethos, and we see this continuing in the next section. Although we have already acknowledged parts of this speech in the last section—showing that like Garrison and Douglass, she too uses allusions to support and intensify her argument—what is important to note here is her incorporation of irony to heighten her allusions. I am quoting this section at length, for it is one of the more exemplary uses of Harper's use of irony; watch as she chastises America for its supposed landmark places of liberty and freedom. Boston Harbour, Lexington and Concord, Plymouth Rock, and again Bunker Hill are all places where freedom not only fails to inhabit the space, but actually takes the life of those seeking the supposed protection that is supposed to be afforded to them:

But a few months since a man escaped from bondage and found a temporary shelter almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill. Had that man stood upon the deck of an Austrian ship, beneath the shadow of the house of the Hapsburgs, he would have found protection. Had he been wrecked upon an island or colony of Great Britain, the waves of the tempest-lashed ocean would have washed him deliverance. Had he landed upon the territory of vineencircled France and a Frenchman had reduced him to a thing and brought him here beneath the protection of our institutions and our laws, for such a nefarious deed that Frenchman would have lost his citizenship in France. Beneath the feebleness which glimmers from the Koran, the Bey of Tunis would have granted him freedom in his own dominions. Beside the ancient pyramids of Egypt he would have found liberty, for the soil laved by the glorious Nile is now consecrated to freedom. But from Boston harbour, made memorable by the infusion of three penny taxed tea, Boston in its proximity to the plains of Lexington and Concord, Boston almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill and almost in sight of Plymouth Rock, he is thrust back from liberty and manhood and reconverted into a chattel. You have heard that, down South, they keep bloodhounds to hunt slaves. Ye bloodhounds, go back to your kennels; when you fail to catch the flying fugitive, when his stealthy tread is heard in the place where the bones of the revolutionary sires repose, the ready North is base enough to do your shameful service.

(Harper 1857) [For full version of speech, see appendix C]

Juxtaposing allusions of America's freedom to the freedom sites of other nations, Harper also allows herself to indulge in irony to really make her allusions sting. As Jacqueline Bacon argues:

Her description of the events in Boston Harbor—"a conflict over three-penny taxed tea"—undermines traditional epideictic rhetoric of America's founding, recasting it in terms that expose America's shallow commitment to liberty. In contrast to William J. Watkin's use of precedent from the American Revolution to justify abolitionists' resistance to Burn's capture, she offers no explicit call for violence. Yet her withering scorn for America's professed mission as a nation founded on liberty establishes an argument every bit as confrontational as her cousin's, challenging Americans to examine America's patriotic rhetoric in light of slavery's influence in both the North and the South . (214-215)

Indeed, Harper's use of allusions, combined with irony are propelled into a more forceful position than when Garrison, and to some extent Douglass does it.

In addition, Harpers use of the ironic allusion is even more important to note because women, as Bacon suggests were required to work extra hard at their incorporation of irony:

Frances Ellen Watkins's ironic revision of the story of Boston Harbor is a form of signifying, appropriating and recreating a seminal narrative of America's historical mythology in a way that collapses its authority. As we have seen African American female rhetors marshal various strategies related to signifying—irony, indirection, a dual language that explicitly

suggests one meaning while encoding an alternate implicit meaning, and appropriation and revision of white America's texts. Claudia Mitchell-Kernan asserts that although signifying is employed by woman as well as men, highly aggressive forms of signifying are difficult for women to deploy 'because other social norms require more circumspection in their verbal behavior.' (215)

In other words, even if Harper's uses of ironic allusions to America's symbolic harbingers of freedom are not as powerful as Douglass or Garrison, as a female she was taking a bigger risk. Harper gradually developed her bold language, which allowed her audience to adjust to the severe topic and immense task at hand.

And thus, we are brought towards the end of her speech, where she includes her appeals to God, as well as the Constitution. As mentioned in the last section, all three of the orators used here acknowledge God in their works; however, here we will be concerned with *how* Harper uses God to support her argument. While Garrison evoked God to show that God could help the slaves and abolitionists (seemingly quite literally), she evokes God so that she may show that Americans have two laws to follow, the American Constitution and God. This appeal begins with her desire that all Americans do everything possible to abolish the slave system in America; however, if they fail, she acknowledges that there is a still a higher authority she can appeal to for help and guidance:

Had it been my lot to have lived beneath the Crescent instead of the Cross, had injustice violence been heaped upon my head as a Mohammedan woman, as a member of common faith, I might have demanded justice and

been listened to by the Pasha, the Bey or the Vizier; but when I come here to ask justice, men tell me, "We have no higher law than the Constitution."...But I will not dwell on the dark side of the picture. God is on the side of freedom; and any cause that has God on its side, I care not how much it may be trailed in the dust, is sure to triumph. The message of Jesus Christ is on the side of Freedom." I come to preach deliverance of the captives, the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." The truest and noblest hearts in the land are on the side of freedom.

Unlike Garrison, she turns the problem over to the men, "the truest and noblest hearts," while keeping in mind that she can "not dwell on the dark side of the picture" if they do not succeed in fixing this huge crisis. Indeed, she continues on in this speech and appeals to our legal system claiming, "I stand at the threshold of the Supreme Court and ask for justice, simple justice..." but also reminds her audience that ultimately they will all ask God for justice. Not only does she have faith in God, but she has faith in our legal system. Garrison puts a lot more faith in God than Harper does; as a result, he does not seem to be seeking as much action from his audience as Harper is. Although God does have a significant role in helping achieve freedom in America, she is also appealing to the nation itself and believes that the nation has the power to make itself as democratic as it claims to be.

Once again, one of Harper's letters, "Miss Watkins and the Constitution," written in April of 1859, is useful here. She is writing in 1859, five years after she began lecturing, two years before the Civil War, so Harper is now a seasoned speaker, and the tensions that will give rise to the Civil War are heightening. Her title also indicates that

she has created a playing field where both she and the Constitution are equals. Having been exposed to the abolitionist movement for a long time and having established herself as an intellectual on American affairs, Harper claims her stake in the American Constitution; she has the ability to own and interpret it as she likes, and does just that. Unlike her earlier ethos, which mediates between her femininity and her strength, here Harper exerts herself much like Garrison and Douglass. As you recall, we portrayed Garrison to be a self-declared prophet—telling everyone what was right and wrong because *he* knew; here, Harper similarly claims distinctly that she has figured out the Constitution. There is no wavering or room for interpretation in her declaration: “I never saw so clearly the nature and intent of the Constitution before.” She is resolute in blaming those “men fresh... from the baptism of the Revolution,” and those who created “the fugitive clause veiled under words.” She shows the irony of fighting for freedom, and then so conversely restricting that freedom to their “*brother*.” Although the content of this letter is similar in many ways to earlier writing, Harper’s persona seems markedly strong, situating her as an owner in interpreting the Constitution and how slavery has been permitted.

The last speech we will look at is “Our Greatest Want.” Also dating from 1859, it deals with the inherent wants of all nations, as well as how a nation defines itself with those wants in mind. It is one of Harper’s last recorded speeches before the start of Civil War, and it brings together elements considering throughout this section: her use of allusions, irony, parallelism, repulsion of circumstances that foster a dominant/subordinate relationship (otherwise developed through her invocation of

alchemy) and above all, her ability to talk to her audience in a way that fosters comradery and places blame on the system that pervades and corrupts America.

She opens this speech using parallelism and allusions in order to set up a sense of great ‘nation forming.’ Topically, she begins her argument using a common event of that ‘nation forming’ (much like we saw Douglass use the simple event of church in his first speech used in our analysis), easing her audience slowly into her argument. She presents her opinion on what makes a nation what it is, and then relies (as we have seen before), on Great Britain and France to help portray how a nation’s ideology reflects and represents who its people are:

A few earnest thinkers, and workers infuse into the mind of Great Britain, a sentiment of human brotherhood... A healthy public opinion dashes and surges against the British throne... Visions of dominion, proud dreams of conquest fill the soul of Napoleon Bonaparte, and he infuses them into the mind of France. (Harper 1859) [For full version of speech, see appendix C]

The term “brotherhood” is used to categorize Great Britain’s “leading idea,” and it may sound familiar because we saw her use it in her letter about “Freedom”—describing Canada as a place where “*here he becomes a man and a brother.*” The term “brotherhood” is what Harper continually struggles for throughout her career; she wants an equal society where freedom is real and a system of oppression does not blind people into misunderstanding that a slave is a person—not a way to make money. She uses other nations to support her argument, and gradually develops her language to directly accuse “The politician,” “The money getter,” and “The minister” who all have turned the formation of America away from its original ideals of freedom and liberty—a “good”

idea that should be “inter-woven with” America’s “mental and moral life.” Her introductory assessment thus becomes that our nation’s values and “mental and moral life” need to be restructured, and as such she spends the rest of her speech trying to settle what exactly that “leading idea” or “Greatest Want” is.

From this speech it is also important that we see that she focuses on nations and societies; she does not focus on the individuals in those Nations or societies. She is concerned with “the masses” that are in charge of creating “their mental and moral life.” This rhetorical move, of not specifically saying the mass of people who reside in the South (the slave holders) are the ones corrupting America’s “leading ideas,” is appealing to her audience because it brings everyone into the picture—working to help develop a great nation.

She continues on in her speech to theorize on what the possible wants for America are:

The idea if I understand it aright, that is interweaving itself with our thoughts, is that the greatest need of our people at present is money, and that as money is a symbol of power, the possession of it will gain for us the rights which power and prejudice now deny us.--And it may be true that the richer we are the nearer we are to social and political equality; but somehow, (and I may not fully comprehend the idea,) it does not seem to me that money, as little as we possess of it, is our greatest want. Neither do I think that the possession of intelligence and talent is our greatest want. If I understand our greatest wants aright they strike deeper than any want that gold or

know-ledge can supply. We want more soul, a higher cultivation of all our spiritual faculties. We need more unselfishness, earnestness and integrity. Our greatest need is not gold or silver, talent or genius, but true men and true women. We have millions of our race in the prison house of slavery, but have we yet a single Moses in freedom. And if we had who among us would be led by him? (Harper 1859)  
[For full version of speech, see appendix C].

From the onset of this paragraph, we see that unlike her outright declaration of authority in “Miss Watkins and the Constitution,” here she bargains: “if I understand it aright.” It seems at first glance that she does not take a similar authority in deciding what America’s “greatest want” is; yet, upon closer observation Harper not only has a declarative ethos, but she also uses irony to form that strong ethos. Harper is ironic in her claims that “if” she “understand[s] it alright” our want “at present is money” and money as “a symbol of power.” She is ironically mocking America’s linking of money to power and thinking that this could possibly be a nation’s “greatest want.” Thus her timid ethos is without a doubt disingenuous; it is resolute in a mission to expose the false “want” America has committed itself too.

In her last two sentences, she addresses her “race.” At first it may seem her “race” is only African American—but on second reading (understanding that her speech is concerned with America), we see her “race” is both free African Americans, as well as her American “race.” As a free African American on the lecture circuit, both speaking and acting on abolishing slavery, Harper is calling on those who are also free and African American to take the position of “Moses” and lead their enslaved to freedom. Although it

may be tempting to indulge in the gold as a free African American, it is necessary to secure everyone's freedom. Everyone has the possibility to heed the abolitionist call, and this is why I argue her use of the term "race" in this speech can also be seen as he want for all of her "brotherhood," for all of America to help. Indeed, in asking what "our greatest want is," she poses the question to the nation at large, begging all of her "race" (of all colors) to recognize the need to take action for the sake of their "brotherhood." She calls upon Moses, asking "who among us would be led by him" challenging her "race" to follow in the same footsteps by which Moses led his people to freedom. She casts their abolitionist story into Moses' story, (like we saw Douglass do in "What to the Slave") with the hopes of heightening her audience's understanding of the urgency needed now.

She explains that Moses brought the Israelites to freedom, ignoring "oriental splendors" and "The magnificence of Pharaoh's throne;" Harper is begging for her audience to be compelled to do the same. Paralleling his story, Harper wants her audience to cherish freedom over gold. Ingeniously, Harper is casting the present situation of slavery into white biblical terms. She is invoking Moses, with the hopes that her audience (free African Americans and those of other races as well), will see that their situation is similar; America has her own Israelites, they are the "millions of our race in the prison house of slavery." She invokes religion to show that her audience, no matter what color, should not be complicit with their nation allowing freedom for all to be suppressed.

Throughout her speech, Harper appeals for "true" men and women, who understand what an actual "want" is and how a "want" can shape ones nation into a great nation. As she comes to her conclusion she begs of her audience to see men and women:

“who are ready and willing to lay time, talent and money on the altar of universal freedom.” As she began the speech “Could We Trace” with the assertion of a common universal want for liberty—here again she claims that “freedom” is the ultimate goal, and “time, talent and money” are subordinate acquisitions that can sub serve the ultimate goal of “freedom.” Her use of the word “altar” is religious, and yet she combines it with “freedom” (a staple of the American tradition—what we fought our Revolution for, and what is meant to be inherent in our Constitution) to show that we need to take action while keeping both of our higher laws in mind. Returning to our previous discussion on Harper and religion, we see that here she again shows her faith in both the higher law of America, and the law of God(like Douglass).

As we get to some of the last lines of her speech, I find myself attracted to the beginning of her sentence that states, “And here I am.” There is a measured calculation in her conclusion as she maps out carefully again what the effects of not assigning a real “greatest want” in America are. These four words remind her audience of her strong, honest, and caring ethos; they remind her audience what is at stake. She is on stage, asking for the simple acknowledgment of why she is there. She continues that she is “not aiming to enlist a fanatical crusade against the desire for riches,” but that she is instead here to show her audience the problem she has with making the greatest want of a nation to be based on achieving a strong economy instead of a strong sense of humanity. As we have seen throughout her abolitionist texts, she wants her message on the wrongfulness of alchemy that propels the slave trade to be internalized; she needs the understanding and resultant action of her audience so that “the greatest idea of the present age, the glorious idea of human brotherhood,” can be enacted within her nation, America.

## Conclusion: Frances Harper's Rhetoric On Today's Public Platform

*"It's up to all rhetoricians and historians, regardless of race or gender, to recognize a richer, more inclusive history. This is not about adding some women or people of color to history, for we all share in a 25-century-old tradition; we have always been there, but we have not been accorded the attention that is due us.  
We must continue to challenge this, to 'remap' history."  
Jami L. Carlacio, Essay "Speaking With and To Me"*

It's March 28, 2008 and you are now standing at the doorway of the Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Looking in, you see a mass of heads, all turned toward the podium, waiting for someone to get behind that podium. Then you see him. He is a young man, known for his proficiency in oration, and with aspirations of becoming America's next president. He is a young man, taking the platform in response to a controversial sermon about race relations in America recently given by his former pastor, Jeremiah Wright. He is a young man, an Illinois senator, hoping to give a speech that would inform the public of his vested interest in repairing the continued racial tensions in America. And, as this young man begins his speech, you find yourself drawn to him. Like thousands of people in hundreds of audiences before and after the one you are in, just in hearing his first few words, you find yourself utterly captivated by this man: Barack Obama.

In his opening remarks, Obama claims that "Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity." He begins with the simple call for unity; a simple call for unity, similar to one heard among abolitionist audience members in the same state over a century and a half ago. Paralleling the rhetoric Obama has become so popular for today, Harper's rhetoric also called for "us" to come together, because as she contends, "We are all bound up together in one great bundle of

humanity.” As Obama continues in his speech, further resonances become apparent—linking the abolitionist rhetoric of Harper to Obama:

But I have asserted a firm conviction — a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people — that, working together, we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

His appeal to lead our nation into “a more perfect union” following both higher laws—God and “the American people” (otherwise represented by the Constitution)—echo the same appeals we watched Harper make to her abolitionist audience. Obama also makes the claim that what America wants right now is “to talk about the men and women of every color and creed who serve together and fight together and bleed together under the same proud flag.” His want sounds strikingly similar to Harper’s portrayal of the men and women seeking and achieving “our greatest want.” Both are looking for true men and women to unite for the greater principles this nation was built on. And finally, the last line we analyzed of Harper’s, which begged her audience to see “And here I am... not aiming to enlist a fanatical crusade,” seems to reverberate in Obama’s speech as he remarks:

Anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity within the African-American community in our condition, and prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change. But the anger is real; it is powerful. And to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only

serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

Both orators understand and feel “anger”—this is why they are out talking about these intense topics—yet, at the same time they also both understand the necessity for their orations to be effective, they cannot indulge to deeply in that anger; instead, they carefully create their orations moderated between that anger and logical appeals that unite instead of divide the audience.

Speaking in Philadelphia, where Harper declared “Upon that grave I pledged myself to the Anti-Slavery cause,” and not far from the various churches and abolitionist houses where Harper performed her orations on the dire need for abolition, it seems that we have might really have come full circle in terms of designed rhetoric determined to repair America’s understanding of racial relations. Echoes of unity, hope in the higher laws of God and our Constitution, and above all, the ability to moderate a controlling rhetoric that does not alienate your audience, seem to have carried on from the abolitionist rhetorical repertoire into today’s first African American President and his discussion on present day race relations. And, in acknowledging this, we must also acknowledge the echoes of one of the great rhetors of that tradition: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

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## Appendix A: Complete Editorials from William Lloyd Garrison

- “To the Public”
- “The American union”
- “Address to the Slaves of the United States”

### “To the Public”

In the month of August, I issued proposals for publishing "THE LIBERATOR" in Washington city; but the enterprise, though hailed in different sections of the country, was palsied by public indifference. Since that time, the removal of the Genius of Universal Emancipation, to the Seat of Government has rendered less imperious the establishment of a similar periodical in that quarter.

During my recent tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in public sentiment was to be effected in the free states—*and particularly in New-England*—than at the south. I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave owners themselves. Of course, there were individual exceptions to the contrary. This state of things afflicted, but did not dishearten me. I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, *within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty*. That standard is now unfurled; and long may it float, unhurt by the spoliation of time or the missiles of a desperate foe—yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let southern oppressors tremble—let their secret abettors tremble—let their northern apologists tremble—let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.

I deem the publication of my original Prospectus unnecessary, as it has obtained a wide circulation. The principles therein inculcated will be steadily pursued in this paper, excepting that I shall not array myself as the political partisan of any man. In defending the great cause of human rights, I wish to derive the assistance of all religions and of all parties.

Assenting to the "self-evident truth" maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park-street Church, on the Fourth of July, 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice and absurdity. A similar recantation, from my pen, was published in the Genius of Universal Emancipation at Baltimore, in September, 1829. My con-science is now satisfied.

I am aware, that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; —but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—**AND I WILL BE HEARD.** The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

It is pretended, that I am retarding the cause of emancipation by the coarseness of my invective, and the precipitancy of my measures. *The charge is not true.* On this question my influence, —humble as it is, —is felt at this moment to a considerable extent, and shall be felt in coming years—not perniciously, but beneficially—not as a curse, but as a blessing; and posterity will bear testimony that I was right. I desire to thank God, that he enables me to disregard "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," and to speak his truth in its simplicity and power. And here I close with this fresh dedication:

Oppression! I have seen thee, face to face,  
 And met thy cruel eye and cloudy brow;  
 But thy soul-withering glance I fear not now—  
 For dread to prouder feelings doth give place  
 Of deep abhorrence! Scorning the disgrace  
 Of slavish knees that at thy footstool bow,  
 I also kneel—but with far other vow  
 Do hail thee and thy hord of hirelings base:—  
 I swear, while life-blood warms my throbbing veins,  
 Still to oppose and thwart, with heart and hand,  
 Thy brutalising sway-till Afric's chains  
 Are burst, and Freedom rules the rescued land,—  
 Trampling Oppression and his iron rod:  
 Such is the vow I take—**SO HELP ME GOD!**

### “The American Union”

Tyrants of the old world! contemners of the rights of man! disbelievers in human freedom and equality! enemies of mankind! console not yourselves with the delusion, that REPUBLICANISM and the AMERICAN UNION are synonymous terms—or that the downfall of the latter will be the extinction of the former, and, consequently, a proof of the incapacity of the people for self-government, and a confirmation of your own despotic claims! Your thrones must crumble to dust; your sceptre of dominion drop from your powerless hands; your rod of oppression be broken; yourselves so vilely abased, that there shall be "none so poor to do you reverence." The will of God, the beneficent Creator of the human family, cannot always be frustrated. It is his will that every form of usurpation, every kind of injustice, every device of tyranny, shall come to nought; that peace, and liberty, and righteousness, shall "reign from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth"; and that, throughout the earth, in the fulness of a sure redemption, there shall be "none to molest or make afraid." Humanity, covered with gore, cries with a voice that pierces the heavens. "His will be done!" Justice, discrowned by the hand of violence, exclaims in tones of deep solemnity, "HIS WILL BE DONE!" Liberty, burdened with chains, and driven into exile, in thunder-tones responds, "HIS WILL BE DONE!"

Tyrants! know that the rights of man are inherent and unalienable, and therefore, not to be forfeited by the failure of any form of government, however democratic. Let the American Union perish; let these allied States be torn with faction, or drenched in blood; let this republic realize the fate of Rome and Carthage, of Babylon and Tyre; still those rights would remain undiminished in strength, unsullied in purity, unaffected in value, and sacred as their Divine Author. If nations perish, it is not because of their devotion to liberty, but for their disregard of its requirements. Man is superior to all political compacts, all governmental arrangements, all religious institutions. As means to an end, these may sometimes be useful, though never indispensable; but that end must always be the freedom and happiness of man, INDIVIDUAL MAN. It can never be true that the public good requires the violent sacrifice of any, even the humblest citizen; for it is absolutely dependent on his preservation, not destruction. To do evil that good may come, is equally absurd and criminal. The time for the overthrow of any government, the abandonment of any alliance, the subversion of any institution, is, whenever it justifies the immolation of the individual to secure the general welfare; for the welfare of the many cannot be hostile to the safety of the few. In all agreements, in all measures, in all political or religious enterprises, in all attempts to redeem the human race, man, as an individual, is to be held paramount: —

"Him first, him last, him midst, and without end."

The doctrine, that the end sanctifies the means, is the maxim of profligates and impostors, of usurpers and tyrants. They who, to promote the cause of truth will sanction the utterance of a falsehood are to be put in the category of liars. So, likewise, they who are for trampling on the rights of the minority, in order to benefit the majority, are to be

registered as the monsters of their race. Might is never right, excepting when it sees in every human being, "a man and a brother," and protects him with a divine fidelity. It is the recognition of these truths, the adoption of these principles, which alone can extirpate tyranny from the earth, perpetuate a free government, and cause the dwellers in every clime, "like kindred drops, to mingle into one."

Tyrants! confident of its overthrow, proclaim not to your vassals that the AMERICAN UNION is an experiment of Freedom, which, if it fail, will forever demonstrate the necessity of whips for the backs, and chains for the limbs of the people. Know that its subversion is essential to the triumph of justice, the deliverance of the oppressed, the vindication of the BROTHERHOOD OF THE RACE. It was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; and its career has been marked by unparalleled hypocrisy, by high-handed tyranny, by a bold defiance of the omniscience and omnipotence of God. Freedom indignantly disowns it, and calls for its extinction; for within its borders are three millions of Slaves, whose blood constitutes its cement, whose flesh forms a large and flourishing branch of its commerce, and who are ranked with four-footed beasts and creeping things. To secure the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, it was agreed, first, that the African slave-trade, —till that time, a feeble, isolated colonial traffic, — should for at least twenty years be prosecuted as a national interest under the American flag, and protected by the national arm; —secondly, that a slaveholding oligarchy, created by allowing three-fifths of the slave population to be represented by their taskmasters, should be allowed a permanent seat in Congress;—thirdly, that the slave system should be secured against internal revolt and external invasion, by the united physical force of the country; —fourthly, that not a foot of national territory should be granted, on which the panting fugitive from Slavery might stand, and be safe from his pursuers—thus making every citizen a slave-hunter and slave-catcher. To say that this "covenant with death" shall not be annulled—that this "agreement with hell" shall continue to stand—that this "refuge of lies" shall not be swept away—is to hurl defiance at the eternal throne, and to give the lie to Him who sits thereon. It is an attempt, alike monstrous and impracticable, to blend the light of heaven with the darkness of the bottomless pit, to unite the living with the dead, to associate the Son of God with the prince of evil.

Accursed be the AMERICAN UNION, as a stupendous republican imposture!

Accursed be it, as the most frightful despotism, with regard to three millions of the people, ever exercised over any portion of the human family!

Accursed be it, as the most subtle and atrocious compromise ever made to gratify power and selfishness!

Accursed be it, as a libel on Democracy, and a bold assault on Christianity!

Accursed be it, as stained with human blood, and supported by human sacrifices!

Accursed be it, for the terrible evils it has inflicted on Africa, by burning her villages, ravaging her coast, and kidnapping her children, at an enormous expense of human life, and for a diabolical purpose!

Accursed be it, for all the crimes it has committed at home—for seeking the utter extermination of the red men of its wildernesses—and for enslaving one-sixth part of its teeming population!

Accursed be it, for its hypocrisy, its falsehood, its impudence, its lust, its cruelty, its oppression!

Accursed be it, as a mighty obstacle in the way of universal freedom and equality!

Accursed be it, from the foundation to the roof, and may there soon not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down!

Henceforth, the watchword of every uncompromising abolitionist, of every friend of God and liberty, must be, both in a religious and political sense—"NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS!"

**“Address to the Slaves of the United States”**

Take courage! Be filled with hope and comfort! Your redemption draws nigh, for the Lord is mightily at work in your behalf. Is it not frequently the darkest before day-break? The word has gone forth that you shall be delivered from your chains, and it has not been spoken in vain.

Although you have many enemies, yet you have also many friends—warm, faithful, sympathizing, devoted friends—who will never abandon your cause; who are pledged to do all in their power to break your chains; who are laboring to effect your emancipation without delay, in a peaceable manner, without the shedding of blood; who regard you as brethren and countrymen, and fear not the frowns or threats of your masters. They call themselves abolitionists. They have already suffered much, in various parts of the country, for rebuking those who keep you in slavery—for demanding your immediate liberation—for revealing to the people the horrors of your situation—for boldly opposing a corrupt public sentiment, by which you are kept in the great southern prison-house of bondage. Some of them have been beaten with stripes; others have been stripped, and covered with tar and feathers; others have had their property taken from them, and burnt in the streets; others have had large rewards offered by your masters for their seizure; others have been cast into jails and penitentiaries; others have been mobbed and lynched with great violence; others have lost their reputation, and been ruined in their business; others have lost their lives. All these, and many other outrages of an equally grievous kind, they have suffered for your sakes, and because they are your friends. They cannot go to the South, to see and converse with you, face to face; for, so ferocious and bloody-minded are your taskmasters, they would be put to an ignominious death as soon as discovered. Besides, it is not yet necessary that they should incur this peril; for it is solely by the aid of the people of the North, that you are held in bondage, and, therefore, they find enough to do at home, to make the people here your friends, and to break up all connexion with the slave system. They have proved themselves to be truly courageous, insensible to danger, superior to adversity, strong in principle, invincible in argument, animated by the spirit of impartial benevolence, unwearied in devising ways and means for your deliverance, the best friends of the whole country, the noblest champions of the human race. Ten years ago, they were so few and feeble as only to excite universal contempt; now they number in their ranks, hundreds of thousands of the people. —Then, they had scarcely a single anti-slavery society in operation; now they have thousands. Then, they had only one or two presses to plead your cause; now they have multitudes. They are scattering all over the land their newspapers, books, pamphlets, tracts, and other publications, to hold up to infamy the conduct of your oppressors, and to awaken sympathy in your behalf. They are continually holding anti-slavery meetings in all parts of the free States, to tell the people the story of your wrongs. Wonderful has been the change effected in public feeling, under God, through their instrumentality. Do not fear that they will grow weary in your service. They are confident of success, in the end. They know that the Lord Almighty is with them—that truth, justice, right, are with them—that you are with them. They know, too, that your masters are cowardly and weak, through conscious wrong doing, and already begin to falter in their course. Lift up your heads, O ye despairing slaves! Yet a little while, and your chains shall snap asunder, and you shall

be tortured and plundered no more! Then, fathers and mothers, your children shall be yours, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Then, husbands and wives, now torn from each other's arms, you shall be reunited in the flesh, and man shall no longer dare to put asunder those whom God has joined together. Then, brothers and sisters, you shall be sold to the remorseless slave speculator no more, but dwell together in unity. "God hasten that joyful day!" is now the daily prayer of millions.

The weapons with which the abolitionists seek to effect your deliverance are not bowie knives, pistols, swords, guns, or any other deadly implements. They consist of appeals, warnings, rebukes, arguments and facts, addressed to the understandings, consciences and hearts of the people. Many of your friends believe that not even those who are oppressed, whether their skins are white or black, can shed the blood of their oppressors in accordance with the will of God; while many others believe that it is right for the oppressed to rise and take their liberty by violence, if they can secure it in no other manner; but they, in common with all your friends, believe that every attempt at insurrection would be attended with disaster and defeat, on your part, because you are not strong enough to contend with the military power of the nation; consequently, their advice to you is, to be patient, long-suffering, and sub-missive, yet awhile longer—trusting that, by the blessing of the Most High on their labors, you will yet be emancipated without shedding a drop of your masters' blood, or losing a drop of your own.

The abolitionists of the North are the only true and unyielding friends on whom you can rely. They will never deceive nor betray you. They have made your cause their own, and they mean to be true to themselves and to you, whatever may be the consequence. They are continually increasing in number, in influence, in enterprise and determination; and, judging from the success which has already attended their measures, they anticipate that, in a comparatively short period, the entire North will receive you with open arms, and give you shelter and protection, as fast as you escape from the South. We, who now address you, are united with them in spirit and design. We glory in the name of abolitionists, for it signifies friendship for all who are pining in servitude. We advise you to seize every opportunity to escape from your masters, and, fixing your eyes on the North star, travel on until you reach a land of liberty. You are not the property of your masters. God never made one human being to be owned by another. Your right to be free, at any moment, is undeniable; and it is your duty, whenever you can, peaceably to escape from the plantations on which you are confined, and assert your manhood.

## Appendix B: Complete Speeches from Frederick Douglass

- “The church and Prejudice”
- “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”

### “The church and Prejudice”

At the South I was a member of the Methodist Church. When I came north, I thought one Sunday I would attend communion, at one of the churches of my denomination, in the town I was staying. The white people gathered round the altar, the blacks clustered by the door. After the good minister had served out the bread and wine to one portion of those near him, he said, "These may withdraw, and others come forward;" thus he proceeded till all the white members had been served. Then he took a long breath, and looking out towards the door, exclaimed, "Come up, colored friends, come up! for you know God is no respecter of persons!" I haven't been there to see the sacraments taken since.

At New Bedford, where I live, there was a great revival of religion not long ago--many were converted and "received" as they said, "into the kingdom of heaven." But it seems, the kingdom of heaven is like a net; at least so it was according to the practice of these pious Christians; and when the net was drawn ashore, they had to set down and cull out the fish. Well, it happened now that some of the fish had rather black scales; so these were sorted out and packed by themselves. But among those who experienced religion at this time was a colored girl; she was baptized in the same water as the rest; so she thought she might sit at the Lord's table and partake of the same sacramental elements with the others. The deacon handed round the cup, and when he came to the black girl, he could not pass her, for there was the minister looking right at him, and as he was a kind of abolitionist, the deacon was rather afraid of giving him offense; so he handed the girl the cup, and she tasted. Now it so happened that next to her sat a young lady who had been converted at the same time, baptized in the same water, and put her trust in the same blessed Saviour; yet when the cup containing the precious blood which had been shed for all, came to her, she rose in disdain, and walked out of the church. Such was the religion she had experienced!

Another young lady fell into a trance. When she awoke, she declared she had been to heaven. Her friends were all anxious to know what and whom she had seen there; so she told the whole story. But there was one good old lady whose curiosity went beyond that of all the others--and she inquired of the girl that had the vision, if she saw any black folks in heaven? After some hesitation, the reply was, "*Oh! I didn't go into the kitchen!*"

Thus you see, my hearers, this prejudice goes even into the church of God. And there are those who carry it so far that it is disagreeable to them even to think of going to heaven, if colored people are going there too. And whence comes it? The grand cause is slavery; but there are others less prominent; one of them is the way in which children in this part of the country are instructed to regard the blacks.

"Yes!" exclaimed an old gentleman, interrupting him--"when they behave wrong, they are told, 'black man come catch you.'"

Yet people in general will say they like colored men as well as any other, but in their

proper place! They assign us that place; they don't let us do it for ourselves, nor will they allow us a voice in the decision. They will not allow that we have a head to think, and a heart to feel, and a soul to aspire. They treat us not as men, but as dogs--they cry "Stu-boy!" and expect us to run and do their bidding. That's the way we are liked. You degrade us, and then ask why we are degraded--you shut our mouths, and then ask why we don't speak--you close our colleges and seminaries against us, and then ask why we don't know more.

But all this prejudice sinks into insignificance in my mind, when compared with the enormous iniquity of the system which is its cause--the system that sold my four sisters and my brothers into bondage--and which calls in its priests to defend it even from the Bible! The slaveholding ministers preach up the divine right of the slaveholders to property in their fellow-men. The southern preachers say to the poor slave, "Oh! if you wish to be happy in time, happy in eternity, you must be obedient to your masters; their interest is yours. God made one portion of men to do the working, and another to do the thinking; how good God is! Now, you have no trouble or anxiety; but ah! you can't imagine how perplexing it is to your masters and mistresses to have so much thinking to do in your behalf! You cannot appreciate your blessings; you know not how happy a thing it is for you, that you were born of that portion of the human family which has the working, instead of the thinking to do! Oh! how grateful and obedient you ought to be to your masters! How beautiful are the arrangements of Providence! Look at your hard, horny hands--see how nicely they are adapted to the labor you have to perform! Look at our delicate fingers, so exactly fitted for our station, and see how manifest it is that God designed us to be His thinkers, and you the workers--Oh! the wisdom of God!"--I used to attend a Methodist church, in which my master was a class leader; he would talk most sanctimoniously about the dear Redeemer, who was sent "to preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised"--he could pray at morning, pray at noon, and pray at night; yet he could lash up my poor cousin by his two thumbs, and inflict stripes and blows upon his bare back, till the blood streamed to the ground! all the time quoting scripture, for his authority, and appealing to that passage of the Holy Bible which says, "He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes!" Such was the amount of this good Methodist's piety.

**“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”**

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me, quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaning. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country schoolhouses, avails me nothing on the present occasion.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th [of] July oration. This certainly sounds large, and out of the common way, for it is true that I have often had the privilege to speak in this beautiful Hall, and to address many who now honor me with their presence. But neither their familiar faces, nor the perfect gage I think I have of Corinthian Hall, seems to free me from embarrassment.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight. That I am here to-day is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say, I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium. With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you.

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time for individual men; but nations number their years by thousands. According to this fact, you are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressible stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot's heart might be sadder, and the reformer's brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in

the thought that America is young. Great streams are not easily turned from channels, worn deep in the course of ages. They may sometimes rise in quiet and stately majesty, and inundate the land, refreshing and fertilizing the earth with their mysterious properties. They may also rise in wrath and fury, and bear away, on their angry waves, the accumulated wealth of years of toil and hardship. They, however, gradually flow back to the same old channel, and flow on as serenely as ever. But, while the river may not be turned aside, it may dry up, and leave nothing behind but the withered branch, and the unsightly rock, to howl in the abyss-sweeping wind, the sad tale of departed glory. As with rivers so with nations.

Fellow-citizens, I shall not presume to dwell at length on the associations that cluster about this day. The simple story of it is that, 76 years ago, the people of this country were British subjects. The style and title of your "sovereign people" (in which you now glory) was not then born. You were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government; and England as the fatherland. This home government, you know, although a considerable distance from your home, did, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgment, it deemed wise, right and proper.

But, your fathers, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Such a declaration of agreement on my part would not be worth much to anybody. It would, certainly, prove nothing, as to what part I might have taken, had I lived during the great controversy of 1776. To say now that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discant on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! here lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers. But, to proceed.

Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. Their conduct was wholly unexceptionable. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered. They were not the men to look back.

As the sheet anchor takes a firmer hold, when the ship is tossed by the storm, so did the cause of your fathers grow stronger, as it breasted the chilling blasts of kingly displeasure. The greatest and best of British statesmen admitted its justice, and the loftiest eloquence of the British Senate came to its support. But, with that blindness which seems to be the unvarying characteristic of tyrants, since Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea, the British Government persisted in the exactions complained of.

The madness of this course, we believe, is admitted now, even by England; but we fear the lesson is wholly lost on our present ruler.

Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers were wise men, and if they did not go mad, they became restive under this treatment. They felt themselves the victims of grievous wrongs, wholly incurable in their colonial capacity. With brave men there is always a remedy for oppression. Just here, the idea of a total separation of the colonies from the crown was born! It was a startling idea, much more so, than we, at this distance of time, regard it. The timid and the prudent (as has been intimated) of that day, were, of course, shocked and alarmed by it.

Such people lived then, had lived before, and will, probably, ever have a place on this planet; and their course, in respect to any great change, (no matter how great the good to be attained, or the wrong to be redressed by it), may be calculated with as much precision as can be the course of the stars. They hate all changes, but silver, gold and copper change! Of this sort of change they are always strongly in favor.

These people were called Tories in the days of your fathers; and the appellation, probably, conveyed the same idea that is meant by a more modern, though a somewhat less euphonious term, which we often find in our papers, applied to some of our old politicians.

Their opposition to the then dangerous thought was earnest and powerful; but, amid all their terror and affrighted vociferations against it, the alarming and revolutionary idea moved on, and the country with it.

On the 2d of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshipers of property, clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution; and as we seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day whose transparency is at all equal to this, it may refresh your minds and help my story if I read it. "Resolved, That these united colonies are, and of right, ought to be free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, dissolved."

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

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

From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen. Heavy billows, like mountains in the distance, disclose to the leeward huge forms of flinty rocks! That bolt drawn, that chain broken, and all is lost. Cling to this day - cling to it, and to its principles, with the grasp of a storm-tossed mariner to a spar at midnight.

The coming into being of a nation, in any circumstances, is an interesting event. But, besides general considerations, there were peculiar circumstances which make the advent of this republic an event of special attractiveness.

The whole scene, as I look back to it, was simple, dignified and sublime.

The population of the country, at the time, stood at the insignificant number of three millions. The country was poor in the munitions of war. The population was weak and scattered, and the country a wilderness unsubdued. There were then no means of concert and combination, such as exist now. Neither steam nor lightning had then been reduced to order and discipline. From the Potomac to the Delaware was a journey of many days. Under these, and innumerable other disadvantages, your fathers declared for liberty and independence and triumphed.

Fellow Citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable; and yet I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory.

They loved their country better than their own private interests; and, though this is not the highest form of human excellence, all will concede that it is a rare virtue, and that when it is exhibited, it ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty, they lost sight of all other interests.

They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but 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. You may well cherish the

memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times.

How circumspect, exact and proportionate were all their movements! How unlike the politicians of an hour! Their statesmanship looked beyond the passing moment, and stretched away in strength into the distant future. They seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defense. Mark them!

Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause, honorably inviting the scrutiny of an on-looking world, reverently appealing to heaven to attest their sincerity, soundly comprehending the solemn responsibility they were about to assume, wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, did, most deliberately, under the inspiration of a glorious patriotism, and with a sublime faith in the great principles of justice and freedom, lay deep the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen and still rises in grandeur around you.

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze. The din of business, too, is hushed. Even Mammon seems to have quitted his grasp on this day. The ear-piercing fife and the stirring drum unite their accents with the ascending peal of a thousand church bells. Prayers are made, hymns are sung, and sermons are preached in honor of this day; while the quick martial tramp of a great and multitudinous nation, echoed back by all the hills, valleys and mountains of a vast continent, bespeak the occasion one of thrilling and universal interests nation's jubilee.

Friends and citizens, I need not enter further into the causes which led to this anniversary. Many of you understand them better than I do. You could instruct me in regard to them. That is a branch of knowledge in which you feel, perhaps, a much deeper interest than your speaker. The causes which led to the separation of the colonies from the British crown have never lacked for a tongue. They have all been taught in your common schools, narrated at your firesides, unfolded from your pulpits, and thundered from your legislative halls, and are as familiar to you as household words. They form the staple of your national poetry and eloquence.

I remember, also, that, as a people, Americans are remarkably familiar with all facts which make in their own favor. This is esteemed by some as a national trait - perhaps a national weakness. It is a fact, that whatever makes for the wealth or for the reputation of Americans, and can be had cheap! will be found by Americans. I shall not be charged with slandering Americans, if I say I think the American side of any question may be safely left in American hands.

I leave, therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other gentlemen whose claim to have been regularly descended will be less likely to be disputed than mine!

THE PRESENT.

My business, if I have any here to-day, is with the present. The accepted time with God and his cause is the ever-living now.

"Trust no future, however pleasant,

Let the dead past bury its dead;

Act, act in the living present,

Heart within, and God overhead."

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome. But now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. Sydney Smith tells us that men seldom eulogize the wisdom and virtues of their fathers, but to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own. This truth is not a doubtful one. There are illustrations of it near and remote, ancient and modern. It was fashionable, hundreds of years ago, for the children of Jacob to boast, we have "Abraham to our father," when they had long lost Abraham's faith and spirit. That people contented themselves under the shadow of Abraham's great name, while they repudiated the deeds which made his name great. Need I remind you that a similar thing is being done all over this country to-day? Need I tell you that the Jews are not the only people who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous? Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in the bodies and souls of men, shout - "We have Washington to our father." Alas! that it should be so; yet so it is.

"The evil that men do, lives after them,  
The good is oft interred with their bones."

"What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence?"

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

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold, that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully

acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the "lame man leap as an hart."

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, lowering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people!

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see, this day, and its popular characteristics, from the slave's point of view. Standing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery-the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;" I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall

escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more, and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write. When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, their will I argue with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively, and positively, negatively, and affirmatively. To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong for him.

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to bum their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with blood, and stained with pollution, is wrong? No! I will not. I have better employments for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! Who can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

#### INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE.

Take the American slave-trade, which, we are told by the papers, is especially prosperous just now. Ex-Senator Benton tells us that the price of men was never higher than now. He mentions the fact to show that slavery is in no danger. This trade is one of the peculiarities of American institutions. It is carried on in all the large towns and cities in

one-half of this confederacy; and millions are pocketed every year, by dealers in this horrid traffic. In several states, this trade is a chief source of wealth. It is called (in contradistinction to the foreign slave-trade) "the internal slave trade." It is, probably, called so, too, in order to divert from it the horror with which the foreign slave-trade is contemplated. That trade has long since been denounced by this government, as piracy. It has been denounced with burning words, from the high places of the nation, as an execrable traffic. To arrest it, to put an end to it, this nation keeps a squadron, at immense cost, on the coast of Africa. Everywhere, in this country, it is safe to speak of this foreign slave-trade, as a most inhuman traffic, opposed alike to the laws of God and of man. The duty to extirpate and destroy it, is admitted even by our DOCTORS OF DIVINITY. In order to put an end to it, some of these last have consented that their colored brethren (nominally free) should leave this country, and establish themselves on the western coast of Africa! It is, however, a notable fact that, while so much execration is poured out by Americans upon those engaged in the foreign slave-trade, the men engaged in the slave-trade between the states pass without condemnation, and their business is deemed honorable.

Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and America religion. Here you will see men and women reared like swine for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human flesh-jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowie-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers. They are food for the cotton-field, and the deadly sugar-mill. Mark the sad procession, as it moves wearily along, and the inhuman wretch who drives them. Hear his savage yells and his blood-chilling oaths, as he hurries on his affrighted captives! There, see the old man, with locks thinned and gray. Cast one glance, if you please, upon that young mother, whose shoulders are bare to the scorching sun, her briny tears falling on the brow of the babe in her arms. See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, yes! weeping, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn! The drove moves tardily. Heat and sorrow have nearly consumed their strength; suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the center of your soul! The crack you heard, was the sound of the slave-whip; the scream you heard, was from the woman you saw with the babe. Her speed had faltered under the weight of her child and her chains! that gash on her shoulder tells her to move on. Follow the drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, WHERE, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

I was born amid such sights and scenes. To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell's Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the Basin, anchored from the shore, with their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. There was, at that time, a grand slave mart kept at the head of Pratt Street, by Austin Woldfolk. His agents were sent into every town and county in Maryland, announcing their arrival, through the papers, and on flaming "hand-bills," headed CASH FOR NEGROES. These men were generally well dressed men, and very captivating in their manners. Ever ready to drink, to treat, and to gamble. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness.

The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number have been collected here, a ship is chartered, for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night; for since the antislavery agitation, a certain caution is observed.

In the deep still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our door. The anguish of my boyish heart was intense; and I was often consoled, when speaking to my mistress in the morning, to hear her say that the custom was very wicked; that she hated to hear the rattle of the chains, and the heart-rending cries. I was glad to find one who sympathized with me in my horror.

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

"Is this the land your Fathers loved,

The freedom which they toiled to win?

Is this the earth whereon they moved?

Are these the graves they slumber in?"

But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented.

By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form. By that act, Mason & Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the Star-Spangled Banner and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman's gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for men. Not for thieves and robbers, enemies of society, merely, but for men guilty of no crime. Your lawmakers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your Secretary of State, your lords, nobles, and ecclesiastics, enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing. Not fewer than forty Americans have, within the past two years, been hunted down and, without a moment's warning, hurried away in chains, and consigned to slavery and excruciating torture. Some of these have had wives and children, dependent on them for bread; but of this, no account was made. The right of the hunter to his prey stands superior to the right of marriage, and to all rights in this republic, the rights of God included! For black men there are neither law, justice, humanity, nor religion. The Fugitive Slave Law makes MERCY TO THEM, A CRIME; and bribes the judge who tries them. An American JUDGE GETS TEN DOLLARS FOR EVERY VICTIM HE CONSIGNS to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so. The oath of any two villains is sufficient, under this hell-black enactment, to send the most pious and exemplary black man into the remorseless jaws of slavery! His own testimony is nothing. He can bring no witnesses for himself. The minister of American justice is bound by the law to hear but one side; and that side, is the side of the oppressor. Let this damning fact be perpetually told. Let it be thundered around the world, that, in tyrant-killing, king-hating, people-loving, democratic, Christian America, the seats of justice are filled with judges, who hold their offices under an open and palpable bribe, and are bound, in deciding in the case of a man's liberty, hear only his accusers!

In glaring violation of justice, in shameless disregard of the forms of administering law, in cunning arrangement to entrap the defenseless, and in diabolical intent, this Fugitive Slave Law stands alone in the annals of tyrannical legislation. I doubt if there be another nation on the globe, having the brass and the baseness to put such a law on the statute-book. If any man in this assembly thinks differently from me in this matter, and feels able to disprove my statements, I will gladly confront him at any suitable time and place he may select.

#### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

I take this law to be one of the grossest infringements of Christian Liberty, and, if the churches and ministers of our country were not stupidly blind, or most wickedly indifferent, they, too, would so regard it.

At the very moment that they are thanking God for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, they are utterly silent in respect to a law which robs religion of its chief significance, and makes it utterly worthless to a world lying in wickedness. Did this law concern the "mint, anise and cummin" abridge the right to sing psalms, to partake of the sacrament, or to engage in any of the ceremonies of religion, it would be smitten by the thunder of a thousand pulpits. A general shout would go up from the church, demanding repeal, repeal, instant repeal! And it would go hard with that politician who presumed to solicit the votes of the people without inscribing this motto on his banner. Further, if this demand were not complied with, another Scotland would be added to the history of religious liberty, and the stern old Covenanters would be thrown into the shade. A John Knox would be seen at every church door, and heard from every pulpit, and Fillmore would have no more quarter than was shown by Knox, to the beautiful, but treacherous queen Mary of Scotland. The fact that the church of our country, (with fractional exceptions), does not esteem "the Fugitive Slave Law" as a declaration of war against religious liberty, implies that that church regards religion simply as a form of worship, an empty ceremony, and not a vital principle, requiring active benevolence, justice, love and good will towards man. It esteems sacrifice above mercy; psalm-singing above right doing; solemn meetings above practical righteousness. A worship that can be conducted by persons who refuse to give shelter to the houseless, to give bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and who enjoin obedience to a law forbidding these acts of mercy, is a curse, not a blessing to mankind. The Bible addresses all such persons as "scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith."

#### THE CHURCH RESPONSIBLE.

But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system. They have taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the relation of master and slave is ordained of God; that to send back an escaped bondman to his master is clearly the duty of all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this horrible blasphemy is palmed off upon the world for Christianity.

For my part, I would say, welcome infidelity! welcome atheism! welcome anything! in preference to the gospel, as preached by those Divines! They convert the very name of religion into an engine of tyranny, and barbarous cruelty, and serve to confirm more infidels, in this age, than all the infidel writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, put together, have done! These ministers make religion a cold and flinty-hearted thing, having neither principles of right action, nor bowels of compassion. They strip the love of God of its beauty, and leave the throng of religion a huge, horrible, repulsive form. It is a religion for oppressors, tyrants, man-stealers, and thugs. It is not that "pure and undefiled religion" which is from above, and which is "first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and

without hypocrisy." But a religion which favors the rich against the poor; which exalts the proud above the humble; which divides mankind into two classes, tyrants and slaves; which says to the man in chains, stay there; and to the oppressor, oppress on; it is a religion which may be professed and enjoyed by all the robbers and enslavers of mankind; it makes God a respecter of persons, denies his fatherhood of the race, and tramples in the dust the great truth of the brotherhood of man. All this we affirm to be true of the popular church, and the popular worship of our land and nation - a religion, a church, and a worship which, on the authority of inspired wisdom, we pronounce to be an abomination in the sight of God. In the language of Isaiah, the American church might be well addressed, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them; and when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea! when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead for the widow."

The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in connection with its ability to abolish slavery. The sin of which it is guilty is one of omission as well as of commission. Albert Barnes but uttered what the common sense of every man at all observant of the actual state of the case will receive as truth, when he declared that "There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it."

Let the religious press, the pulpit, the Sunday school, the conference meeting, the great ecclesiastical, missionary, Bible and tract associations of the land array their immense powers against slavery and slave-holding; and the whole system of crime and blood would be scattered to the winds; and that they do not do this involves them in the most awful responsibility of which the mind can conceive.

In prosecuting the anti-slavery enterprise, we have been asked to spare the church, to spare the ministry; but how, we ask, could such a thing be done? We are met on the threshold of our efforts for the redemption of the slave, by the church and ministry of the country, in battle arrayed against us; and we are compelled to fight or flee. From what quarter, I beg to know, has proceeded a fire so deadly upon our ranks, during the last two years, as from the Northern pulpit? As the champions of oppressors, the chosen men of American theology have appeared-men, honored for their so-called piety, and their real learning. The LORDS of Buffalo, the SPRINGS of New York, the LATHROPS of Auburn, the COXES and SPENCERS of Brooklyn, the GANNETS and SHARPS of Boston, the DEWEYS of Washington, and other great religious lights of the land, have, in utter denial of the authority of Him, by whom they professed to be called to the ministry, deliberately taught us, against the example of the Hebrews and against the remonstrance of the Apostles, they teach "that we ought to obey man's law before the law of God."

My spirit wearies of such blasphemy; and how such men can be supported, as the "standing types and representatives of Jesus Christ," is a mystery which I leave others to penetrate. In speaking of the American church, however, let it be distinctly understood that I mean the great mass of the religious organizations of our land. There are exceptions, and I thank God that there are. Noble men may be found, scattered all over these Northern States, of whom Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, Samuel J. May of Syracuse, and my esteemed friend on the platform, are shining examples; and let me say further, that upon these men lies the duty to inspire our ranks with high religious faith and zeal, and to cheer us on in the great mission of the slave's redemption from his chains.

#### RELIGION IN ENGLAND AND RELIGION IN AMERICA.

One is struck with the difference between the attitude of the American church towards the anti-slavery movement, and that occupied by the churches in England towards a similar movement in that country. There, the church, true to its mission of ameliorating, elevating, and improving the condition of mankind, came forward promptly, bound up the wounds of the West Indian slave, and restored him to his liberty. There, the question of emancipation was a high[ly] religious question. It was demanded, in the name of humanity, and according to the law of the living God. The Sharps, the Clarksons, the Wilberforces, the Buxtons, and Burchells and the Knibbs, were alike famous for their piety, and for their philanthropy. The anti-slavery movement there was not an anti-church movement, for the reason that the church took its full share in prosecuting that movement: and the anti-slavery movement in this country will cease to be an anti-church movement, when the church of this country shall assume a favorable, instead of a hostile position towards that movement. Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria, and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere tools and bodyguards of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation - a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the storm of British

artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard-earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe "that, of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth," and hath commanded all men, everywhere to love one another; yet you notoriously hate, (and glory in your hatred), all men whose skins are not colored like your own. You declare, before the world, and are understood by the world to declare, that you "hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that, among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;" and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, "is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose," a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a by word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your Union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!

#### THE CONSTITUTION.

But it is answered in reply to all this, that precisely what I have now denounced is, in fact, guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States; that the right to hold and to hunt slaves is a part of that Constitution framed by the illustrious Fathers of this Republic.

Then, I dare to affirm, notwithstanding all I have said before, your fathers stooped, basely stooped "To palter with us in a double sense: And keep the word of promise to the ear, But break it to the heart."

And instead of being the honest men I have before declared them to be, they were the veriest imposters that ever practiced on mankind. This is the inevitable conclusion, and from it there is no escape. But I differ from those who charge this baseness on the framers of the Constitution of the United States. It is a slander upon their memory, at least, so I believe. There is not time now to argue the constitutional question at length - nor have I the ability to discuss it as it ought to be discussed. The subject has been handled with masterly power by Lysander Spooner, Esq., by William Goodell, by Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., and last, though not least, by Gerritt Smith, Esq. These gentlemen have, as I think,

fully and clearly vindicated the Constitution from any design to support slavery for an hour.

"[L]et me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slave-holding instrument, why neither slavery, slaveholding, nor slave can anywhere be found in it."

Fellow-citizens! there is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character 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? Is it at the gateway? or is it in the temple? It is neither. While I do not intend to argue this question on the present occasion, let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slave-holding instrument, why neither slavery, slaveholding, nor slave can anywhere be found in it. What would be thought of an instrument, drawn up, legally drawn up, for the purpose of entitling the city of Rochester to a track of land, in which no mention of land was made? Now, there are certain rules of interpretation, for the proper understanding of all legal instruments. These rules are well established. They are plain, common-sense rules, such as you and I, and all of us, can understand and apply, without having passed years in the study of law. I scout the idea that the question of the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of slavery is not a question for the people. I hold that every American citizen has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing one. Without this right, the liberty of an American citizen would be as insecure as that of a Frenchman. Ex-Vice-President Dallas tells us that the constitution is an object to which no American mind can be too attentive, and no American heart too devoted. He further says, the constitution, in its words, is plain and intelligible, and is meant for the home-bred, unsophisticated understandings of our fellow-citizens. Senator Berrien tell us that the Constitution is the fundamental law, that which controls all others. The charter of our liberties, which every citizen has a personal interest in understanding thoroughly. The testimony of Senator Breese, Lewis Cass, and many others that might be named, who are everywhere esteemed as sound lawyers, so regard the constitution. I take it, therefore, that it is not presumption in a private citizen to form an opinion of that instrument.

Now, take the constitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.

I have detained my audience entirely too long already. At some future period I will gladly avail myself of an opportunity to give this subject a full and fair discussion.

"Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country."

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened," and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference. The time was when such could be done. Long established customs of hurtful character could formerly fence themselves in, and do their evil work with social impunity. Knowledge was then confined and enjoyed by the privileged few, and the multitude walked on in mental darkness. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the earth. Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are, distinctly heard on the other. The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire, the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty, "Let there be Light," has not yet spent its force. No abuse, no outrage whether in taste, sport or avarice, can now hide itself from the all-pervading light. The iron shoe, and crippled foot of China must be seen, in contrast with nature. Africa must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God." In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying it:

God speed the year of jubilee

The wide world over

When from their galling chains set free,

The oppressed shall vilely bend the knee,

And wear the yoke of tyranny

Like brutes no more.

That year will come, and freedom's reign,

To man his plundered rights again

Restore.

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

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,  
When none on earth  
Shall exercise a lordly power,  
Nor in a tyrant's presence cower;  
But all to manhood's stature tower,  
By equal birth!  
THAT HOUR WILL, COME, to each, to all,  
And from his prison-house, the thrall  
Go forth.

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

### **Appendix C: Complete Letters, Poems, and Speeches from Frances Ellen Watkins Harper**

- “The Colored People in America”
- “Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart”
- “Our Greatest Want”
- “The Slave Mother”
- “Slave Auction”
- “Breathing the Air of Freedom”
- “Miss Watkins and the Constitution”

#### **“The Colored People in America”**

Having been placed by a dominant race in circumstances over which we have no control, we have been the butt of ridicule and the mark of oppression. Identified with a people over whom weary ages of degradation have passed, whatever concerns them, as a race, concerns me. I have noticed among our people a disposition to censure and upbraid each other, a disposition which has its foundation, rather, perhaps, in a want of common sympathy and consideration, that mutual hatred, or other unholy passions. Born into an inheritance of misery, nurtured in degradation, and cradled in oppression, with the scorn of the white man upon their souls, his fetters upon their limbs, his scourge upon their flesh, what can be expected from their offspring, but a mournful reaction of that cursed system which spreads its baneful influence over body and soul; which dwarfs the intellect, stuns its development, debases the spirit, and degrades the soul? Place any nation in the same condition which has been our hapless lot, fetter their limbs and degrade their souls, debase their sons and corrupt their daughters, and when the restless yearnings for liberty shall burn through heart and brain—when, tortured by wrong and goaded by oppression, the hearts that would madden with misery, or break in despair, resolve to break their thrall, and escape from bondage, then let the bay of the bloodhound and the scent of the human tiger be upon their track;—let them feel that, from the ceaseless murmur of the Atlantic to the sullen roar of the Pacific, from the thunders of the rainbow-crowned Niagara to the swollen waters of the Mexican gulf, they have no shelter for their bleeding feet, or the resting-place for their defenseless heads;—let them, when nominally free, feel that they have only exchanged the iron yoke of oppression for the galling fetters of the vitiated public opinion;—let prejudice assign them the lowest places and the humblest positions, and make them “hewers of wood and drawers of water;”—let their income be so small that they must from necessity bequeath to their children an inheritance of poverty and a limited education,—and tell me, reviler of our race! Censurer of our people! If there is a nation in whose veins runs the purest Caucasian blood, upon whom the same cause would not produce the same effects; whose social condition, intellectual and moral character, would present a more favorable aspect than ours? But there is hope; yes, blessed be God! For our down-trodden and despised race. Public and private schools accommodate our children; and in my own southern home, I see women whose lot is unremitted labor, saving a pittance from their scanty wages to defray the expense of learning to read. We have papers edited by colored editors, which we may consider it an honor to possess, and credit to sustain. We have a church that is extending itself from east

to west, from north to south, through poverty and reproach, persecution and pain. We have our faults, our want of union and concentration of purpose; but are there not extenuating circumstances around our darkest faults—palliating excuses for our most egregious errors? And shall we not hope, that the mental and moral aspect which we present is but the first step of a mighty advancement, the faintest coruscations of the day that will dawn with the unclouded splendor upon our down-trodden and benighted race, and that ere long we may present to the admiring gaze of those who wish us well, a people who knowledge has given power, and righteousness exaltation?

### **“Could We Trace the Record of Every Human Heart”**

Could we trace the record of every human heart, the aspirations of every immortal soul, perhaps we would find no man so imbruted and degraded that we could not trace the word liberty either written in living characters upon the soul or hidden away in some nook or corner of the heart. The law of liberty is the law of God, and is antecedent to all human legislation. It existed in the mind of Deity when He hung the first world upon its orbit and gave it liberty to gather light from the central sun. Some people say, set the slaves free. Did you ever think, if the slaves were free, they would steal everything they could lay their hands on from now till the day of their death—that they would steal more than two thousand millions of dollars (applause)? Ask Maryland, with her tens of thousands of slaves, if she is not prepared for freedom, and hear her answer: “I help supply the cofflegangs of the South.” Ask Virginia, with her hundreds of thousands of slaves, is she is not weary with her merchandise of blood and anxious to shake the gory traffic from her hands, and hear her reply: “Though fertility has covered my soil, though a genial sky bends over my hills and vales, though I hold in my hand a wealth of water-power enough to turn the spindles to clothe the world, yet, with all these advantages, one of my chief staples has been the sons and daughters I send to the human market and human shambles” (applause). Ask the father South, and all the cotton-growing States chime in, “We have need of fresh supplies to fill the ranks of those whose lives have gone out in unrequited toil on our distant plantations.” A hundred thousand new-born babes are annually added to the victims of slavery; twenty thousand lives are annually sacrificed on the plantations of the South. Such a sight should send a thrill of horror through the nerves of civilization and impel the heart of humanity to lofty deeds. So it might, if men had not found out a fearful alchemy by which this blood can be transformed into gold. Instead of listening to the cry of agony, they listen to the ring of dollars and stoop down to pick up the coin (applause). But a few months since a man escaped from bondage and found a temporary shelter almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill. Had that man stood upon the deck of an Austrian ship, beneath the shadow of the house of the Hapsburgs, he would have found protection. Had he been wrecked upon an island or colony of Great Britain, the waves of the tempest-lashed ocean would have washed him deliverance. Had he landed upon the territory of vineencircled France and a Frenchman had reduced him to a thing and brought him here beneath the protection of our institutions and our laws, for such a nefarious deed that Frenchman would have lost his citizenship in France. Beneath the feebler light which glimmers from the Koran, the Bey of Tunis would have granted him freedom in his own dominions. Beside the ancient pyramids of Egypt he would have found liberty, for the soil laved by the glorious Nile is now consecrated to freedom. But from Boston harbour, made memorable by the infusion of three penny taxed tea, Boston in its proximity to the plains of Lexington and Concord, Boston almost beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill and almost in sight of Plymouth Rock, he is thrust back from liberty and manhood and reconverted into a chattel. You have heard that, down South, they keep bloodhounds to hunt slaves. Ye bloodhounds, go back to your kennels; when you fail to catch the flying fugitive, when his stealthy tread is heard in the place where

the bones of the revolutionary sires repose, the ready North is base enough to do your shameful service

### **“Our Greatest Want”**

Leading ideas impress themselves upon communities and countries. A thought is evolved and thrown out among the masses, they receive it and it becomes inter-woven with their mental and moral life—if the thought be good the receivers are benefited, and helped onward to the truer life; if it is not, the reception of the idea is a detriment. A few earnest thinkers, and workers infuse into the mind of Great Britain, a sentiment of human brotherhood. The hue and cry of opposition is raised against it. Avarice and cupidity oppose it, but the great heart of the people throbs for it. A healthy public opinion dashes and surges against the British throne, the idea gains ground and progresses till hundreds of thousands of men, women and children arise, redeemed from bondage, and freed from chains, and the nation gains moral power by the act. Visions of dominion, proud dreams of conquest fill the soul of Napoleon Bonaparte, and he infuses them into the mind of France, and the peace of Europe is invaded. His bloodstained armies dazzled and misled, follow him through carnage and blood, to shake earth's proudest kingdoms to their base, and the march of a true progression is stayed by a river of blood.

In America, where public opinion exerts such a sway, a leading is success. The politician who chooses for his candidate not the best man but the most available one.—The money getter, who virtually says let me make money, though I coin it from blood and extract it from tears.—The minister, who stoops from his high position to the slave power, and in a word all who barter principle for expediency, the true and right for the available and convenient, are worshipers at the shrine of success. And we, or at least some of us, upon whose faculties the rust of centuries has lain, are beginning to awake and worship at the same altar, and bow to the idols.

The idea if I understand it aright, that is interweaving itself with our thoughts, is that the greatest need of our people at present is money, and that as money is a symbol of power, the possession of it will gain for us the rights which power and prejudice now deny us.—And it may be true that the richer we are the nearer we are to social and political equality; but somehow, (and I may not fully comprehend the idea,) it does not seem to me that money, as little as we possess of it, is our greatest want. Neither do I think that the possession of intelligence and talent is our greatest want. If I understand our greatest wants aright they strike deeper than any want that gold or knowledge can supply. We want more soul, a higher cultivation of all our spiritual faculties. We need more unselfishness, earnestness and integrity. Our greatest need is not gold or silver, talent or genius, but true men and true women. We have millions of our race in the prison house of slavery, but have we yet a single Moses in freedom. And if we had who among us would be led by him?

I like the character of Moses. He is the first disunionist we read of in the Jewish Scriptures. The magnificence of Pharaoh's throne loomed up before his vision, its oriental

splendors glittered before his eyes; but he turned from them all and chose rather to suffer with the enslaved, than rejoice with the free. He would have no union with the slave power of Egypt. When we have a race of men whom this blood stained government cannot tempt or flatter, who would sternly refuse every office in the nation's gift, from a president down to a tide-waiter, until she shook her hands from complicity in the guilt of cradle plundering and man stealing, then for us the foundations of an historic character will have been laid.

We need men and women whose hearts are the homes of a high and lofty enthusiasm, and a noble devotion to the cause of emancipation, who are ready and willing to lay time, talent and money on the altar of universal freedom. We have money among us, but how much of it is spent to bring deliverance to our captive brethren? Are our wealthiest men the most liberal sustainers of the Anti-slavery enterprise? Or does the bare fact of their having money, really help mould public opinion and reverse its sentiments? We need what money cannot buy and what affluence is too beggarly to purchase. Earnest, self sacrificing souls that will stamp themselves not only on the present but the future.

Let us not then defer all our noble opportunities till we get rich. And here I am, not aiming to enlist a fanatical crusade against the desire for riches, but I do protest against chaining down the soul, with its Heaven endowed faculties and God given attributes to the one idea of getting money as stepping into power or even gaining our rights in common with others. The respect that is only bought by gold is not worth much. It is no honor to shake hands politically with men who whip women and steal babies. If this government has no call for our services, no aim for your children, we have the greater need of them to build up a true manhood and womanhood for ourselves. The important lesson we should learn and be able to teach, is how to make every gift, whether gold or talent, fortune or genius, subserve the cause of crushed humanity and carry out the greatest idea of the present age, the glorious idea of human brotherhood.

**“The Slave Mother”**

HEARD you that shriek? It rose  
     So wildly on the air,  
 It seemed as if a burden'd heart  
     Was breaking in despair.  
 Saw you those hands so sadly clasped-  
     The bowed and feeble heart-  
 The suddering of that fragile form-  
     That look of grief and dread?  
 Saw you the sad, imploring eye?  
     Its every glance was pain,  
     As if a storm of agony  
 Were sweeping through the brain.  
 She is a mother pale with fear,  
     Her boy clings to her side,  
     And in her kirtle vainly tries  
     His trembling form to hide.  
 He is not hers, although she bore  
     For him a mother's pain;  
 He is not hers, although her blood  
     Is coursing through his veins!  
 He is not hers, for cruel hands  
     May rudely tear apart  
 The only wreath of household love  
     That binds her breaking heart.  
 His love has been a joyous light  
     That o'er her pathway smiled,  
     A fountain gushing ever new,  
     Amid life's desert wild.  
 His lightest word has been a tone  
     Of music round her heart,  
 Their lives a streamlet blent in one-  
     Oh, Father! must they part?  
 They tear him from her circling arms,  
     Her last and fond embrace.  
 Oh! never more may her sad eyes  
     Gaze on his mournful face.  
 No marvel, then, these bitter shrieks  
     Disturb the listening air:  
     She is a mother, and her heart  
     Is breaking in despair.

**“The Slave Auction”**

The sale began—young girls were there,  
Defenseless in their wretchedness,  
Whose stifled sobs of deep despair  
Revealed their anguish and distress.

And mothers stood, with streaming eyes,  
And saw their dearest children sold;  
Unheeded rose their bitter cries,  
While tyrants battered them for gold.

And woman, with her love and truth—  
For these in sable forms may dwell—  
Gazed on the husband of her youth,  
With anguish none may paint or tell.

And men, whose sole crime was their hue,  
The impress of their Maker's hand,  
And frail and shrinking children too,  
Were gathered in that mournful band.

Ye who have laid your loved to rest,  
And wept above their lifeless clay,  
Know not the anguish of that breast,  
Whose loved are rudely torn away.

Ye may not know how desolate  
Are bosoms rudely forced to part,  
And how a dull and heavy weight  
Will press the life-drops from the heart.

### **“Breathing the Air of Freedom”**

My Dear Friend:—I have just returned from Canada to-day. I gave one lecture at Toronto, which was well attended... Well, I have gazed for the first time upon Free Land! And would you believe it, tears sprang to my eyes, and I wept. Oh! It was a glorious sight to gaze for the first time on a land where a poor slave, flying from our glorious land of liberty (!), would in a moment find his fetters broken, his shackles loosed, and whatever he was in the land of Washington, beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument, or even Plymouth Rock, *here* he becomes “a man and a brother.”

I had gazed on Harper’s Ferry, or rather the Rock at the Ferry, towering up in simple grandeur with the gentle Potomac gliding peacefully by its feet, and felt that that was God’s Masonry; and my soul had expanded in gazing on its sublimity. I had seen the Ocean, singing its wild chorus of sounding waves, and ecstasy had thrilled upon the living chords of my heart. I have since then seen the rainbow-crowned Niagara, girdled with grandeur, and robbed with glory, chanting the choral hymn of Omnipotence, but none of the sights have melted me as the first sight of Free Land.

Towering mountains, lifting their hoary summits to catch the first faint flush of day when the sunbeams kiss the shadows from morning’s drowsy face, may you expand your soul. The first view of the ocean may fill you with strange ecstasy and delight. Niagara, the great, the glorious Niagara, may hush your spirit with its ceaseless thunder; it may charm you with its robe of crested spray and rainbow crown; but the land of Freedom has a lesson of deeper significance than foaming waves or towering mountains.

It carries the heart back to that heroic struggle for emancipation, in Great Britain, in which the great heart of the people throbbed for liberty, and the mighty pulse of the nation beat for freedom till nearly 800,000 men, women and children arose redeemed from bondage and freed from chains.

**“Miss Watkins and the Constitution”**

I never saw so clearly the nature and intent of the Constitution before. Oh, was it not strangely inconsistent that men fresh, so fresh, from the baptism of the Revolution should make such concessions to the foul spirit of Despotism! that, when fresh from gaining their own liberty, they could permit the African slave trade--could let their national flag hang a sign of death on Guinea's coast and Congo's shore! Twenty-one years the slave-ships of the new Republic could gorge the sea monsters with their prey; twenty-one years of mourning and desolation for the children of the tropics, to gratify the avarice and cupidity of men styling themselves free! And then the dark intent of the fugitive clause veiled under words so specious that a stranger unacquainted with our nefarious government would not know that such a thing was meant by it. Alas for these fatal concessions. They remind me of the fabulous teeth sown by Cadmus--they rise, armed men, to smite. Is it a great mystery to you why these things are permitted? Wait, my brother, awhile; the end is not yet. The Psalmist was rather puzzled when he saw the wicked in power and spreading like a Bay tree; but how soon their end! Rest assured that, as nations and individuals, God will do right by us, and we should not ask of either God or man to do less than that. In the freedom of man's will I read the philosophy of his crimes, and the impossibility of his actions having a responsible moral character without it; and hence the continuance of slavery does not strike me as being so very mysterious.



Lauren Deborah Nye continues to develop and dare in New York.