

Frederick douglass, "what, to the slave, is the fourth of july" assignment

[History](#)



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Independence Day, since the first signing of the Declaration of Independence, has been a nationwide victorious day filled with cheer in celebration of the United States gaining freedom from the British Crown.

The Declaration of Independence stated itself that, “[they] hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are the Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” but what’s not commonly grasped is that the effects of the Declaration of Independence did not at all do what it was expected of. Frederick Douglass, however, did realize the results were unsatisfactory.

The year was 1818 when Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born under his slave mother and master father into slavery in Talbot Country. Growing up a slave during the 19th century allowed Frederick Bailey to personally know the conditions of a slaves everyday life. Realizing his purpose, Frederick Bailey escaped from his master as a slave and vowed to serve for his fellow slaves by fighting for the rights and freedom he knew all the slaves and Blacks deserved. Following his escape; Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey became formally known as Frederick Douglass.

As he planned, Frederick later moved to Rochester, New York and exhibited all he planned, to exposing the people of his nation to the true faults of the utopia imitated United States. On July 5th of 1852 Frederick Douglass was invited to speak to the public of the meaning of Independence Day. Titling his speech, “ What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July? ” Douglass planned to

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notify his people of the reality of the U. S. , to assist their naivete into acknowledging the truth.

Starting of innocently, Douglass mentions he is nervous about public speaking and how his presentation may not be as powerful as it became. During the beginning of his speech, Douglass speaks sarcastically about how great America is. The declaration of Independence was supposed to, on Douglass's terms, execute the "[E]xercise of [Britains] parental prerogatives, [and] impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgment, it deemed wise, right and proper. " Later, Douglass adds, But, your fathers ... presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of those burdens and restraint. " What is immediately noticed is Douglass's vocabulary. Frederick Douglass says the U. S. " presumed to differ" which foreshadows his upcoming claim. Without full reflection of the full speech as one, a member of his audience would believe Douglass is entirely in favor of the American government. Douglass clearly states the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence, making it valid, were brave and wise.

However, Douglass analyzed the real effects of the Declaration and acknowledged the true motives of gaining its Independence. Generally, it would be assumed that Black men, in addition to white, would receive their rights for the reason that the document was titled the " Declaration of Independence. " When simply read, one might believe the Declaration of Independence promises freedom and the rights deserved for all men

because they are all equal. Critically, nowhere in the entire Declaration of Independence does it say anything regarding a slave or Black men.

Technically though, everything was “‘ settled’” because “ with them, justice liberty and humanity were “‘ Final;’” not slavery and oppression. Seriously, Douglass wonders if his offer to speak on his take of the Declaration of Independence was an entire joke. He realizes that the Fourth of July is a celebration of Freedom, but technically only for the White men in America. About the White Folk, Douglass says, “ This Fourth of July is yours not mine,” and that he honestly trusts the request to have him speak is a scam of mockery.

Douglass questions the reason he is speaking on this Fourth of July because he believes the Declaration of Independence has done nothing for him as a former slave, black individual. Knowing he should have just as many rights as any other man, Douglass states the difference of consequence between White and Black people committing crimes: “ 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. It is unjust to confine Black people from their rights and capabilities. “ Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write. ” The reason of why governments try so hard to restrict Blacks from obtaining knowledge is incomprehensible, all that is known is that many Whites did what they could by setting social standards and passing laws to keep Blacks inferior.

Nevertheless, Blacks as well as slaves are no less men than any White person who begs to differ.

To continue his speech, Douglass declares, "[t]here is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong for him," no matter the alibi to make slavery appear acceptable. Regardless however the Black man is perceived it is always wrong to deprive someone of their natural rights as a human. The system in which over working a man, while punishing with psychological abuse and jeopardizing his life is tolerable gravely needs abolishment.

For centuries slavery has been okay to the masters and slave holders, but there must come a time when men and women of all complexities are treated as one mass nation filled with equality. However, to Frederick Douglass, all the commotion he could add to the unacceptable truth and his personal views on slavery has already been aforementioned. Since Frederick Douglass was born a slave and lived it for 20 years before he escaped, he understands how much of a burden life can become.

Douglass personally believes, " the American slave-trade is a terrible reality," and that there is no question of whether or not it is immoral to support the slave-trade. America has existed, functioning from the production of buying and selling slaves. Although the slave-trade helped America gain income and become stronger, it is not okay to treat humans as inferior. It is impossible as a free man to begin to understand the pain slaves have endured, but their pain is obvious. Looking upon any slave, any person

could effortlessly notice the sorrow in his or her eyes and the pain throughout his or her veins.

Slavery is a form of theft. Stealing people's lives and depriving them for the supposed inalienable rights is inhumane. Sadly, Blacks have no hope because when captured and taken in front of a judge to either plead for freedom or be subjected to slavery, they stand alone. Any judge who sentenced a Black to slavery receives double the amount of money he would have if he failed, so it is purposeless to even try for freedom because once captured, their freedom is apparent. Religion has been a huge part of society since religions have been established. ... [T]he church of our country ... 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. " One would believe that since most religions are expected to be righteous, the church would be in favor of the abolishment of slavery. Incomprehensibly however, embodying the power to fully abolish slavery once and for all, the Church has not. " 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. Lastly, Frederick Douglass ends his speech ultimately exposing the American government. Douglass planned his speech so extensively in the way he, at first, appeared to be in favor of the Declaration of Independence and its effects. His vocabulary complimented the 56 men who signed the Declaration and gave the impression he was in favor of the celebration. Then, he shifts, transitioning from the idea of the Fourth of July to the reality and what is factual.

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Bringing up the fact that 76 years after the Declaration of Independence stated all men are equal and allowed the "unalienable Rights [of] Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," for all, Douglass restates his idea of how Slavery is immoral and impossible under all circumstances to ever be justified. Douglass begs the question 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," further proving that even to the men in control of the country, slavery is not intended to last forever.

Ending with prayers to God, Frederick Douglass begs for the day when all Black men are not labeled under slavery. He waits with hope for the day when Black and White men and women can share a comradeship with one another, equally, in friendship. He prays for the day when, with no catch, the birth of a child, under all circumstances, obliges complete freedom, so Blacks and former slaves can too understand what the Fourth of July means for them. ?

Sources Primary Source: Frederick Douglass, "What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July" (Rochester, 1852). Other Accumulated Sources: "Declaration of Independence - Text Transcript." National Archives and Records Administration. Web. 10 Dec. 2011.. Ferris, William R. , Charles Reagan Wilson, Ann J. Abadie, and Mary Louise. Hart. "Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895." Encyclopedia of Southern Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989. Print.