

true. Every day, my colleagues and I in the Congressional Equality Caucus, which is over 190 strong, are fighting for you.

I know it is hard right now, but you are not alone. Even with all the antitrans attacks coming from this Chamber, my colleagues in the Equality Caucus and I have been successful in blocking the worst of the worst from becoming law.

We successfully blocked every antitransgender rider in the fiscal year 2026 government funding bills from becoming law. Not a single bill exclusively focused on attacking our rights has made it to the President's desk in this Congress.

We are still fighting for a brighter tomorrow, and I hope you are, too.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that it has been my profound honor to celebrate the LGBTQI+ community and honor the conclusion of Pride Month with my colleagues here tonight.

Pride began as a protest, as a demand—a demand for equal dignity, equal treatment, and equal justice for LGBTQI+ people. As we continue our fight for the rights of LGBTQI+ people here and in the Halls of Congress, that spirit is what drives us.

To every American watching tonight, I want you to know that we will never give up. We will never stop fighting for equality.

To you all, to every American across this country, from Maine to Hawaii to the territories, I say happy Pride.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Ms. PRESSLEY of Massachusetts is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.)

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, in 1852, Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist, orator, and formerly enslaved man, delivered one of America's most famous speeches: "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"

He addressed a nation celebrating freedom while denying it to millions. With moral clarity and urgency, he exposed the stark contradiction between America's founding ideals and the lived reality of Black people, calling out a democracy that had excluded those who it claimed to liberate.

As our Nation celebrates its 250-year anniversary, that tension still resonates. Black Americans continue to confront systemic inequities that have been legislated and codified. Douglass' words endure as both a mirror and a mandate, revealing uncomfortable truths while urging us to fight for an America as good as its promise.

Before I begin, I recognize and thank Mass Humanities for sustaining this vital tradition through public readings of Douglass' speech across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, ensuring that its message continues to educate, challenge, and inspire new generations.

Now, I invite you to listen and to consider these words not as distant history but as a call to action today.

"What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"

Mr. President, Friends, and Fellow Citizens:

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 Fourth 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. 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 today is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude.

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the Fourth 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.

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.

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.

Fellow-citizens, the simple story 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. England as the fatherland, although a considerable distance from your home, impose, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, 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 idea 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 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.

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. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness, and scorn.

Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers 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 of that day, were, of course, shocked and

alarmed by it. 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.

□ 1850

On the Second of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshippers of property, clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution. We seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day, whose transparency is at all equal 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."

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

My business, if I have any here today, is with the present. The accepted time with God and his cause is the ever-living now. We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. 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.

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? 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?

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 today? Fellow citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them.

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 here 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 Fourth 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.

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?

Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? 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 72 crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, 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?

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, then 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 hillside, 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 today, in the presence of Americans, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? To do so, would be to make my-

self 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.

□ 1900

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 burn 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? 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, today, 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 Fourth 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, 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.

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 exist-

ence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, 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 byword to a mocking Earth. 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!

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

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.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

MATH DOESN'T LIE

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. SCHWEIKERT of Arizona was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.)

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, this is going to be another presentation of basically budget, debt, my frustration with this place, and my frustration with telling the truth.

Look, we are a remarkable country, no matter what you hear often from our brothers and sisters, particularly from the left, a quarter millennium of a remarkable experiment. We have brought more freedom to the world, more prosperity to the world, more ingenuity to the world, more health to the world.

I think sometimes our dourness, if that is a word, our frustration—and Heaven knows I am a sinner on this. I am terrified of our unwillingness to