

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: Father of the Protest Movement

One of a handful of names which immediately leaps to mind at the mention of a Black American is that of *Frederick Douglass*, probably the foremost voice in the abolitionist movement of the 19th century.

Born in February of 1817 in Talbot County, Maryland, *Douglass* was sent to Baltimore as a house servant at the age of eight. He learned to read and write under the instruction of his mistress.

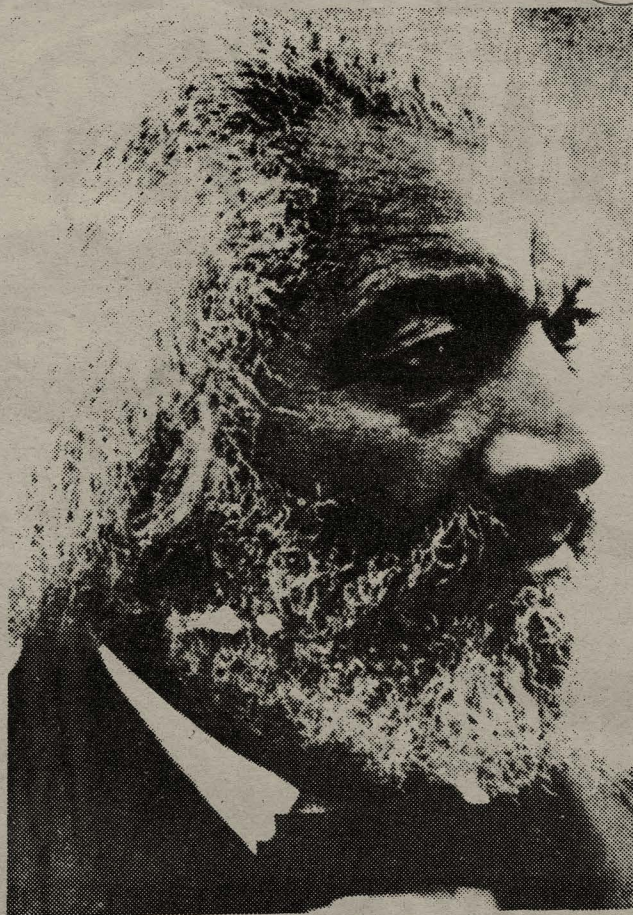
At the death of her husband, *Douglass* was sent to the country as a field hand. In his early teens, he began to teach in a Sunday school which was forcibly shut down by hostile Southerners. *Douglass* himself was severely flogged for his resistance to slavery.

After making one unsuccessful attempt to escape, *Douglass* managed to make his way to New York disguised as a sailor. Once in the North, it was not long before he found his true calling—leader in the anti-slavery crusade.

Taken on as an agent by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, he soon helped in the fight then taking place in Rhode Island against a new constitution aimed at disenfranchising Blacks.

As the years passed, *Douglass* became an increasingly familiar figure to abolitionists throughout the country.

In 1845, after having published his *Narrative* at great personal risk (that of re-enslavement as a fugitive), he went to England where he raised enough money, through lectures on slavery and women's rights, to buy his freedom. Upon his return to his native shores, he founded the famous newspaper, *The North Star*. Later,



he was forced to flee to Canada when the governor of Virginia swore out a warrant for his arrest on charges that he had conspired with John Brown, leader of the Harpers Ferry revolt.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, *Douglass*—once again back in the United States—met with President *Abraham Lincoln* and assisted him in recruiting what were to become the celebrated 54th and 55th Massachusetts Negro regiments.

In 1871, during the Reconstruction period, he was appointed to the territorial legislature of the District of Columbia; in 1872, he served as one of the presidential electors-at-large for New York and shortly thereafter, became secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission.

In 1877, after a short term as a police commissioner of the District of Columbia, he was appointed Marshal—a post he held until he was named Recorder of Deeds in 1881.

Eight years later, in return for his strong support of the presidential campaign of *Benjamin Harrison*, *Douglass* was appointed to the most important federal post he was to hold—Minister Resident and Consul General to the Republic of Haiti and, later, Charge d'Affaires for Santo Domingo.

However, when he saw his efforts being undermined by unscrupulous American businessmen interested solely in exploiting Haiti, he finally resigned his post in 1891.

Four years later, *Frederick Douglass* died at his home in Washington D.C.

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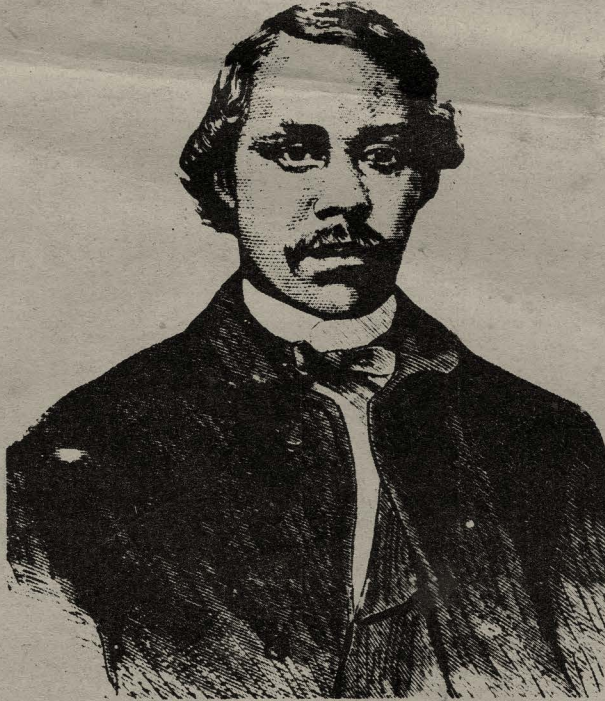
We pay tribute to Blacks achievement

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments



John Mercer Langston, a Negro abolitionist and a Reconstruction leader, who became a Representative from Virginia.

The combined effects of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 brought some legal protection to Southern Negroes against former slave-holders and also inflamed the poor whites. The Civil Rights Act, which conferred rights of citizenship on the freedmen, was further bolstered by the Fourteenth Amendment: no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law."



Ebenezer D. Bassett, a Reconstruction leader who had studied at Yale, was appointed United States Minister to Haiti.

The Reconstruction Act, having placed ten states of the South under military government, put teeth in federal edicts of Army backing. Soldiers and officials of the Freedmen's Bureau attempted to protect the Negro's right to the ballot, fair working conditions and an education but with no help from former Confederates or the Southern press. When, in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed Negroes the right to vote—and Negroes in large numbers duly exercised this right—that was the last straw. Animosity developed which have festered to this day.



Jonathan Jasper Wright served in the South Carolina Senate and as an associate justice of the State Supreme Court.

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