

# Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth

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

Taps into a guiding principle for this audience

This is abridged version was delivered July 5, 1852, to the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society.

Pronoun establishes ownership

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.... 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.... 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....

sets up what will be the challenge

probing question disguised as humility establishes distance between speaker & audience

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? ... Would to God, both for your sakes and ours that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! ... 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.... This Fourth of July is yours, not mine.

Brings the hammer! pun? Boundary or Whiteness or Both? And his thesis!

Establishes the rules, the framework in which he will be operating

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 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....

pun?

Idiotment! Accusation! Now he must provide evidence

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.

Turns a commonly held presumptuous upside down

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 rival.

Central question Answer: Cruel Irony Mockery Unjust Unholy... An assault on the very things they love - Christianity & Democracy

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 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 knocking 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....

#1 in the very things they defeat in others

Suggest that the outcome will benefit no one & may be their very obstacle to achieving greatness - He's praying not only upon their patriotism but also their vanity

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