

## Spotlight on Diversity



### Frederick Douglass

"Abolitionist/Editor"

Frederick Douglass was held as a slave until he escaped the physical bonds of slavery in 1838. He chose Rochester, New York, as his home, where he would raise his family, publish his newspapers, and be laid to rest. His life tells a story which should never be forgotten. It is a story of slavery and discrimination, and a constant struggle for freedom and equality. It is also a story about the people with whom Douglass lived and worked, and the contributions which they made to this country's history and the development of a free society.

Douglass dedicated his life to crusading for freedom, justice and equality. He was consumed by his work as an abolitionist, orator, writer, reformer, diplomat and statesman. As an abolitionist, he fought successfully to end the institution of slavery. As a reformer, he was a catalyst for a non-violent struggle for desegregation of schools, housing, employment and the right to vote. He wrote and spoke constantly on the need for all people to respect each other and themselves, and the need for education as a way to advance one's self and strengthen our society. He brought honor and recognition to Rochester as a community supportive of and home to those who continually sacrificed and fought to advance the cause of civil rights for all. He brought hope and pride to African Americans; he helped shape their history, heritage and culture; and he worked to promote recognition and respect for African Americans and their contributions to this nation.

Frederick Douglass was one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement, which fought to end slavery within the United States in the decades prior to the Civil War.

A brilliant speaker, Douglass was asked by the American Anti-Slavery Society to engage in a tour of lectures, and so became recognized as one of America's first great black speakers. He won world fame when his autobiography was publicized in 1845. Two years later he began publishing an antislavery paper called the North Star.

Douglass served as an adviser to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and fought for the adoption of constitutional amendments that guaranteed voting rights and other civil liberties for blacks. Douglass provided a powerful voice for human rights during this period of American history and is still revered today for his contributions against racial injustice.

### **The Life of Frederick Douglass**

1818

(Exact date unknown) Frederick Douglass is born as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, a slave at Holme Hill Farm, Talbot County, Maryland.

1826

Sent to live with Hugh Auld family in Baltimore.

1827

Asks Sophia Auld to teach him his letters. Hugh Auld stops the lessons because he feels that learning makes slaves discontented and rebellious.

1834

Hired Out to Edward Covey, a "slave breaker", to break his spirit and make him accept slavery.

1836

Tries to escape from slavery, but his plot is discovered.

1836-38

Works in Baltimore shipyards as a caulker. Falls in love with Anna Murray, a free Negro (daughter of slaves).

1838

Escapes from slavery and goes to New York City. Marries Anna Murray.

1839

Subscribes to William Garrison's The Liberator.

1841

Speaks at a meeting of the Bristol Anti-Slavery Society and becomes an agent for the Society traveling widely in the East and Midwest lecturing against slavery and campaigning for rights of free Blacks.

1842

Makes first visit to Rochester attending a convention of Blacks.

1845

Publishes the first of three autobiographies - *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. To escape recapture following publication, goes to England lecturing on the American anti-slavery movement throughout the British Isles.

1846

Becomes legally free when British supporters purchase his freedom from Hugh Auld, his former master.

1847

Returns to the United States as a free man. Against the advice of Garrison, moves to Rochester, NY to publish a weekly newspaper, *North Star*.

1848

Attends the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, NY and advocates the right to vote for women.

1850

Publishes an attack on the Compromise of 1850 and the new fugitive-slave law.

1851

Changes the name of *North Star* to *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. Helps three fugitive Maryland slaves escape to Canada as "Station Master" of the Rochester terminus of the Underground Railroad.

1852

Splits with Garrison over the means to achieve the abolition of slavery. Chosen vice-presidential candidate at the Liberal Party convention.

1855

Writes a second autobiography: *My Bondage and My Freedom*.

1858

John Brown stays at the Douglass home in Rochester while developing plans for encouraging a slave revolt.

1859

Escapes to Canada to avoid being arrested as an accomplice in John Brown's plan to seize Harper's Ferry and sails to England.

1860

Returns to the United States upon hearing of the death of his eleven-year old daughter, Annie.

1861

Calls for the use of Black troops to fight the Confederacy through the establishment of Negro regiments in the Union Army.

1863

Serves as a recruiter for the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. Visits President Lincoln to protest discrimination against Black troops.

1866

Attends convention of Equal Rights Association and clashes with women's rights leaders over their insistence that the vote not be extended to Black men unless it is given to all women at the same time.

1867

Turns down President Andrew Johnson's offer to name him commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau inasmuch as the National Black Leadership supported General Oliver O. Howard's continuation in the post.

1870

Becomes owner and editor of The New National Era, a weekly newspaper in Washington. DC.

1871

Appointed Assistant Secretary to the Commission of Inquiry into the possible annexation of Santo Domingo.

1872

Rochester home destroyed by fire with the loss of the newspaper archives. Moves his family to Washington, DC. Nominated for vice-president by Equal Rights Party on a ticket headed by Victoria Woodhull.

1874

Named president of Freedman's Savings and Trust Company.

1877

Appointed US Marshall of the District of Columbia.

1878

Purchases "Cedar Hill" a 9-acre estate in the Anacostia section of Washington, DC.

1881

Appointed Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. Publishes a third autobiography: *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*.

1882

Anna Mirrray Douglass dies.

1884

Marries Helen Pitts. Resigns as Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia.

1889

Appointed Charge d'Affaires for Santo Domingo and Minister Resident and Consul-General to Haiti.

1891

Resigns as Minister to Haiti.

1895

Dies at Cedar Hill, Anacostia.