

Abolition Fanaticism in New York

Frederick Douglass

Baltimore, 1847

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**ABOLITION
FANATICISM
IN NEW YORK.**

**SPEECH
OF A
RUNAWAY SLAVE FROM
BALTIMORE,
AT AN
ABOLITION MEETING IN NEW
YORK,
HELD MAY 11, 1847.**

1847.

FOR SALE AT ALL THE PERIODICAL AGENCIES.

**FLAMING
ABOLITION SPEECH
DELIVERED BY THE RUNAWAY
SLAVE,
FREDERICK DOUGLASS,
At the Anniversary of the American
Anti-Slavery Society,
IN THE TABERNACLE, NEW YORK,
MAY 11, 1847.**

The following Report will show to Marylanders, how a runaway slave talks, when he reaches the Abolition regions of the country. This presumptive negro was even present at the London World's Temperance Convention, last year; and in spite of all the efforts of the American Delegates to prevent it, he palmed off his Abolition bombast upon an audience of 7000 persons! Of this high-handed measure he now makes his boast in New-York, one of the hot-beds of Abolitionism. The Report is given exactly as published in the New-York Tribune. The reader will make his own comments.

Mr. DOUGLASS was introduced to the audience by WM. LLOYD GARRISON, Esq., President of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and, upon taking the platform, was greeted with enthusiastic and long-continued applause by the vast concourse which filled the spacious Tabernacle to overflowing. As soon as the audience became silent, Mr. D. with, at first, a slight degree of embarrassment, addressed them as follows:

“I am very glad to be here. I am very glad to be present at this Anniversary—glad again to mingle my voice with those with whom I have stood identified, with those with whom I have labored, for the last seven years, for the purpose of

undoing the burdens of my brethren, and hastening the day of their emancipation.

I do not doubt but that a large portion of this audience will be disappointed, both by the *manner* and the *matter* of what I shall this day set forth. The extraordinary and unmerited eulogies which have been showered upon me, here and elsewhere, have done much to create expectations which, I am well aware, I can never hope to gratify. I am here, a simple man, knowing what I have experienced in Slavery, knowing it to be a bad system, and desiring, by all Christian means, to seek its overthrow. I am not here to please you with an eloquent speech, with a refined and logical address, but to speak to you the sober truths of a heart overborne with gratitude to God that we have in this land, cursed as it is with Slavery, so noble a band to second my efforts and the efforts of others in the noble work of undoing the Yoke of Bondage, with which the majority of the States of this Union are now unfortunately cursed.

Since the last time I had the pleasure of mingling my voice with the voices of my friends on this platform, many interesting and even trying events have occurred to me. I have experienced, within the last eighteen or twenty months, many incidents, all of which it would be interesting to communicate to you; but many of these I shall be compelled to pass over at this time, and confine my remarks to giving a general outline of the manner and spirit with which I have been hailed abroad, and welcomed at the different places which I have visited during my absence of twenty months.

You are aware, doubtless, that my object in going from this country, was to get beyond the reach of the clutch of the man who claimed to own me as his property. I had written a book giving a history of that portion of my life spent in the gall and bitterness and degradation of Slavery, and in which I also identified my oppressors as the perpetrators of some of the most atrocious crimes. This had deeply incensed them against me, and stirred up within them the purpose of revenge, and my whereabouts being known, I believed it necessary for me, if I would preserve my liberty, to leave the shores of America, and take up my abode in some other land, at least until the

excitement occasioned by the publication of my Narrative had subsided. I went to England, Monarchical England, to get rid of Democratic Slavery, and I must confess that, at the very threshold, I was satisfied that I had gone to the right place. Say what you will of England—of the degradation—of the poverty—and there is much of it there—say what you will of the oppression and suffering going on in England at this time, there is Liberty there—there is Freedom there, not only for the white man, but for the black man also. The instant I stepped upon the shore, and looked into the faces of the crowd around me, I saw in every man a recognition of my manhood, and an absence, a perfect absence, of everything like that disgusting hate with which we are pursued in this country. [Cheers.] I looked around in vain to see in any man's face a token of the slightest aversion to me on account of my complexion. Even the cabmen demeaned themselves to me as they did to other men, and the very dogs and pigs of old England treated me as a man! I cannot, however, my friends, dwell upon this anti-Prejudice, or rather the many illustrations of the absence of Prejudice against Color in England—but will proceed, at once, to defend the Right and Duty of invoking English aid and English sympathy for the overthrow of American Slavery, for the education of Colored Americans, and to forward in every way, the interests of humanity; inasmuch as the right of appealing to England for aid in overthrowing Slavery in this country, has been called in question, in public meetings and by the press, in this city.

I cannot agree with my friend Mr. Garrison in relation to my love and attachment to this land. I have no love for America, as such; I have no patriotism. I have no country. What country have I? The Institutions of this country do not know me—do not recognize me as a man. I am not thought of, spoken of, in any direction, out of the Anti-Slavery ranks, as a man. I am not thought of or spoken of, except as a piece of property belonging to some *Christian* Slaveholder, and all the Religious and Political Institutions of this Country alike pronounce me a Slave and a chattel. Now, in such a country as this I cannot have patriotism. The only thing that links me to this land is my family, and the painful consciousness that here there are 3,000,000 of my fellow creatures groaning beneath the iron

rod of the worst despotism that could be devised even in Pandemonium,—that here are men and brethren who are identified with me by their complexion, identified with me by their hatred of Slavery, identified with me by their love and aspirations for Liberty, identified with me by the stripes upon their backs, their inhuman wrongs and cruel sufferings. This, and this only, attaches me to this land, and brings me here to plead with you, and with this country at large, for the disenthralment of my oppressed countrymen, and to overthrow this system of Slavery which is crushing them to the earth. How can I love a country that dooms 3,000,000 of my brethren, some of them my own kindred, my own brothers, my own sisters, who are now clanking the chains of Slavery upon the plains of the South, whose warm blood is now making fat the soil of Maryland and of Alabama, and over whose crushed spirits rolls the dark shadow of Oppression, shutting out and extinguishing forever the cheering rays of that bright Sun of Liberty, lighted in the souls of all God's children by the omnipotent hand of Deity itself? How can I, I say, love a country thus cursed, thus bedewed with the blood of my brethren? A Country, the Church of which, and the Government of which, and the Constitution of which are in favor of supporting and perpetuating this monstrous system of injustice and blood? I have not, I cannot have, any love for this country, as such, or for its Constitution. I desire to see it overthrown as speedily as possible and its Constitution shivered in a thousand fragments, rather than this foul curse should continue to remain as now. [Hisses and cheers.]

In all this, my friends, let me make myself understood. I do not hate America as against England, or against any other country or land. I love Humanity all over the globe. I am anxious to see Righteousness prevail in all directions. I am anxious to see Slavery overthrown here; but, I never appealed to Englishmen in a manner calculated to awaken feelings of hatred or disgust, or to inflame their prejudices toward America as a nation, or in a manner provocative of national jealousy or ill-will; but I always appealed to their conscience—to the higher and nobler feelings of the people of that country, to enlist them in this cause. I always appealed to their manhood, that which preceded their being Englishmen, (to

quote an expression of my friend Phillips,) I appealed to them as men, and I had a right to do so. They are men, and the Slave is a man, and we have a right to call upon all men to assist in breaking his bonds, let them be born when and live where they may.

But it is asked, ‘What good will this do?’ or ‘What good has it done?’ ‘Have you not irritated, have you not annoyed your American friends and the American people rather than done them good?’ I admit that we have irritated them. They deserve to be irritated. I am anxious to irritate the American people on this question. As it is in physics, so in morals, there are cases which demand irritation and counter-irritation. The conscience of the American public needs this irritation, and I would *blister it all over from centre to circumference*, until it gives signs of a purer and a better life than it is now manifesting to the world.

But why expose the sins of one nation in the eyes of another? Why attempt to bring one people under the odium of another people? There is much force in this question. I admit that there are sins in almost every country which can be best removed by means confined exclusively to their immediate locality. But such evils and such sins pre-suppose the existence of a moral power in their immediate locality sufficient to accomplish the work of renovation. But, where, pray, can we go to find moral power in this nation sufficient to overthrow Slavery? To what institution, to what party shall we apply for aid? I say we admit that there are evils which can be best removed by influences confined to their immediate locality. But in regard to American Slavery it is not so. It is such a giant crime, so darkening to the soul, so blinding in its moral influence, so well calculated to blast and corrupt all the humane principles of our nature, so well adapted to infuse its own accursed spirit into all around it, that the people among whom it exists have not the moral power to abolish it. Shall we go to the Church for this influence? We have heard its character described. Shall we go to Politicians or Political Parties? Have they the moral power necessary to accomplish this mighty task? They have not. What are they doing at this moment? Voting supplies for Slavery—voting supplies for the

extension, the stability, the perpetuation of Slavery in this land. What is the press doing? The same. The pulpit? Almost the same. I do not flatter myself that there is moral power in the land sufficient to overthrow Slavery, and I welcome the aid of England. And that aid will come. The growing intercourse between England and this country, by means of steam navigation, the relaxation of the protective system in various countries in Europe, gives us an opportunity to bring in the aid, the moral and Christian aid of those living on the other side of the Atlantic. We welcome it in the language of the resolution. We entreat our British friends to continue to send their remonstrances across the deep against Slavery in this land. And these remonstrances will have a powerful effect here. Sir, the Americans may tell of their ability, and I have no doubt they have it, to keep back the invader's hosts, to repulse the strongest force that its enemies may send against this country. It may boast, and *rightly* boast of its capacity to build its ramparts so high that no foe can hope to scale them—to render them so impregnable as to defy the assaults of the world. But, sir, there is one thing it cannot resist, come from what quarter it may. It cannot resist TRUTH. You cannot build your forts so strong, nor your ramparts so high, nor arm yourselves so powerfully, as to be able to withstand the overwhelming MORAL SENTIMENT against Slavery now flowing into this land. For example: Prejudice against Color is continually becoming weaker in this land; and why? Because the whole European Continent denounces this sentiment as unworthy a lodgment in the breast of an enlightened community. And the American abroad dares not now, even in a public conveyance, to lift his voice in defence of this disgusting prejudice.

I do not mean to say that there are no practices abroad which deserve to receive an influence, favorable to their extermination, from America. I am most glad to know that Democratic Freedom—not the bastard Democracy which, while loud in its protestations of regard for Liberty and Equality, builds up Slavery, and, in the name of Freedom fights the battles of Despotism—is making great strides in Europe. We see, abroad, in England especially, happy indications of the progress of American principles. A little

while ago England was cursed by a Corn monopoly—by that giant monopoly which snatched from the mouths of the famishing Poor the bread which you sent from this land. The community—the *people* of England demanded its destruction, and they have triumphed! We have aided them, and they aid us, and the mission of the two nations, henceforth, is *to serve each other*.

Sir, it is said that, when abroad, I misrepresented my country on this question. I am not aware of any misrepresentation. I stated facts and facts only. A gentleman of your own City, Rev. Dr. Cox, has taken particular pains to stigmatize me as having introduced the subject of Slavery illegitimately into the World's Temperance Convention. But what was the fact? I went to that Convention, not as a Delegate—I went into it by the invitation of a Committee of the Convention. I suppose most of you know the circumstances, but I wish to say one word in relation to the spirit and the principle which animated me at that meeting. I went into it at the invitation of the Committee, and spoke not only at their urgent request, but by public announcement. I stood on the platform on the evening referred to, and heard some eight or ten Americans address the 7,000 people assembled in that vast Hall. I heard them speak of the Temperance movement in the land. I heard them eulogize the Temperance Societies in the highest terms, calling on England to follow their example (and England may follow them with advantage to herself;) but I heard no reference made to the 3,000,000 of people in this country who are denied the privilege, not only of Temperance, but of all other Societies. I heard not a word of the American Slaves, who, if seven of them were found together at a Temperance meeting or any other place, would be scourged and beaten by their cruel tyrants. Yes, nine-and-thirty lashes is the penalty required to be inflicted by the law if any of the Slaves get together in a number exceeding seven, for any purpose, however peaceable or laudable. And while these American gentlemen were extending their hands to me, and saying, 'How do you do, Mr. Douglass? I am most happy to meet you here,' &c. &c. I knew that, in America, they would not have touched me with a pair of tongues. I felt, therefore, that that was the place and the time to call to remembrance the

3,000,000 of Slaves, whom I aspired to represent on that occasion. I did so, not maliciously, but with a desire, only, to subserve the best interests of my race. I besought the American Delegates who had at first responded to my speech with shouts of applause, when they should arrive at home, to extend the borders of their Temperance Societies, so as to include the 500,000 Colored People in the Northern States of the Union. I also called to mind the facts in relation to the mob that occurred in the City of Philadelphia in the year 1842. I stated these facts to show to the British public how difficult it is for a colored man in this country to do anything to elevate himself or his race from the state of degradation in which they are plunged; how difficult it is for him to be virtuous or temperate, or anything but a menial, an outcast. You all remember the circumstances of the mob to which I have alluded. A number of intelligent, philanthropic, manly colored men, desirous of snatching their colored brethren from the fangs of intemperance, formed themselves into a procession and walked through the streets of Philadelphia with appropriate banners, and badges, and mottoes. I stated the fact that that procession was not allowed to proceed far, in the City of Philadelphia—the American City of Brotherly Love, the city of all others loudest in its boasts of freedom and liberty—before these noble-minded men were assaulted by the citizens, their banners torn in shreds and themselves trampled in the dust, and inhumanly beaten, and all their bright and fond hopes and anticipations in behalf of their friends and their race blasted by the wanton cruelty of their white fellow citizens. And all this was done for no other reason than that they had presumed to walk through the streets with Temperance banners and badges, like human beings.

The statement of this fact caused the whole Convention to break forth in one general expression of intense disgust at such atrocious and inhuman conduct. This disturbed the composure of some of our American representatives, who, in serious alarm, caught hold of the skirts of my coat, and attempted to make me desist from my exposition of the situation of the colored race in this country. There was one Doctor of Divinity there—the ugliest man that I ever saw in my life—who almost tore the skirts of my coat off, so vehement was he in his

friendly attempts to induce me to yield the floor. But fortunately the audience came to my rescue, and demanded that I should go on, and I did go on, and, I trust, discharged my duty to my brethren in bonds and the cause of Human Liberty, in a manner not altogether unworthy the occasion.

I have been accused of *dragging* the question of Slavery into the Convention. I had a right to do so. It was the *World's* Convention—not the Convention of any sect or number of sects—not the convention of any particular Nation—not a man's nor a woman's Convention, not a black man's nor a white man's Convention, but the *World's* Convention, the convention of ALL, *black* as well as *white*, *bond* as well as *free*. And I stood there, as I thought, a representative of 3,000,000 of men whom I had left in rags and wretchedness to be devoured by the accursed Institution which stands by them, as with a drawn sword, ever ready to fall upon their devoted and defenceless heads. I felt, as I said to Dr. Cox, that it was demanded of me by Conscience, to speak out boldly in behalf of those whom I had left behind. [Cheers.] And, sir, (I think I may say this, without subjecting myself to the charge of egotism) I deem it very fortunate for the friends of the Slave, that Mr. Garrison and myself were there just at that time. Sir, the Churches in this country have long repined at the position of the Churches in England on the subject of Slavery. They have sought many opportunities to do away the prejudices of the English Churches against American Slavery. Why, sir, at this time there were not far from Seventy Ministers of the Gospel from Christian America, in England, pouring their leprous pro-slavery distilment into the ears of the people of that country, and by their prayers, their conversation and their public speeches, seeking to darken the British mind on the subject of Slavery, and to create in the English public the same cruel and heartless apathy that prevails in this country in relation to the Slave, his wrongs and his rights. I knew them by their continuous slandering of my race, and at this time, and under these circumstances, I deemed it a happy interposition of God, in behalf of my oppressed, and misrepresented, and slandered people, that one of their number should be able to break his chains and burst up through the dark incrustations of malice and hate and degradation which had been thrown over

them, and stand before the British public to open to them the secrets of the prison-house of bondage in America. [Cheers.] Sir, the Slave sends no Delegates to the Evangelical Alliance. [Cheers.] The Slave sends no Delegates to the World's Temperance Convention. Why? Because chains are upon his arms, and fetters fast bind his limbs. He must be driven out to be sold at auction by some *Christian* Slaveholder, and the money for which his soul is bartered must be appropriated to spread the Gospel among the Heathen.

Sir, I feel it is good to be here. There is always work to be done. Slavery is everywhere. Slavery goes out in the Cambria and comes back in the Cambria. Slavery was in the Evangelical Alliance, looking saintly in the person of Rev. Doctor Smythe; it was in the World's Temperance Convention, in the person of Rev. Mr. Kirk. Dr. Marsh went about saying, in so many words, that the unfortunate Slaveholders in America were so peculiarly situated, so environed by uncontrollable circumstances that they could not liberate their slaves; that if they were to emancipate them they would be, in many instances, cast into prison. Sir, it did me good to go around on the heels of this gentleman. I was glad to follow him around for the sake of my country, for the country is not, after all, so bad as Rev. Dr. Marsh represented it to be. My fellow countrymen, what think ye he said of you, on the other side of the Atlantic? He said you were not only pro-Slavery, but that you actually aided the Slaveholder in holding his Slaves securely in his grasp; that, in fact, you compelled him to be a Slaveholder. This I deny. You are not so bad as that. You do not compel the Slaveholder to be a Slaveholder.

And Rev. Doctor Cox, too, talked a great deal over there, and among other things, he said that 'many Slave-holders—dear Christian men!—were sincerely anxious to get rid of their slaves;' and to show how difficult it is for them to get rid of their human chattels, he put the following case: A man living in a State, the laws of which compel all persons emancipating their slaves to remove them beyond its limits, wishes to liberate his slaves; but he is too poor to transport them beyond the confines of the State in which he resides; therefore he cannot emancipate them—he is necessarily a slaveholder. But,

sir, there was one fact, which I happened, fortunately, to have on hand just at that time, which completely neutralized this very affecting statement of the Doctor's. It so happens that Messrs. Gerrit Smith and Arthur Tappan have advertised for the especial benefit of this afflicted class of Slaveholders, that they have set apart the sum of \$10,000, to be appropriated in aiding them to remove their emancipated Slaves beyond the jurisdiction of the State, and that the money would be forthcoming on application being made for it; but *no such application was ever made*. This shows that however truthful the statements of these gentlemen may be concerning the things of the world to come, they are lamentably reckless in their statements concerning things appertaining to this world. I do not mean to say that they would designedly tell that which is false; but they did make the statements which I have ascribed to them.

And Doct. Cox and others charge me with having stirred up warlike feeling while abroad. This charge, also, I deny. The whole of my arguments and the whole of my appeals, while I was abroad, were in favor of any thing else than war. I embraced every opportunity to propagate the principles of Peace while I was in Great Britain. I confess, honestly, that were I not a Peace man, were I a believer in fighting at all, I should have gone through England, saying to Englishmen, *as Englishmen*, 'There are 3,000,000 of men across the Atlantic who are whipped, scourged, robbed of themselves, denied every privilege, denied the right to read the Word of the God who made them, trampled under foot, denied all the rights of human beings; go to their rescue; shoulder your muskets, buckle on your knapsacks, and in the invincible cause of Human Rights and Universal Liberty, go forth, and the laurels which you shall win will be as fadeless and as imperishable as the eternal aspirations of the human soul after that Freedom which every being made after God's image instinctively feels is his birthright.' This would have been my course had I been a war man. That such was not my course, I appeal to my whole career while abroad to determine.

Weapons of war we have cast from the battle:

TRUTH is our armor—our watchword is LOVE;

Hushed be the sword, and the musketry's rattle,
All our equipments are drawn from above.
Praise then the God of Truth,
Hoary age and ruddy youth.
Long may our rally be
Love, Light and Liberty;
Ever our banner the banner of Peace.”

Mr. Douglass took his seat in the midst of the most enthusiastic and overwhelming applause in which the whole of the vast assembly appeared heartily to join.