

Frederick Douglass

“I see, too, that there are special reasons why I should write my own biography, in preference to employing another to do it. Not only is slavery on trial, but unfortunately, the enslaved people are also on trial. It is alleged, that they are, naturally, inferior; that they are so low in the scale of humanity, and so utterly stupid, that they are unconscious of their wrongs, and do not apprehend their rights.”

Preface to *My Bondage, My Freedom*, 1855

“. . . Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? . . . The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice are not enjoyed in common. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. . . . the Constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery - the great sin and shame of America.”

What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?, 1852

Guiding Questions

1. According to the text, why did Douglass write his autobiography?

2. What do Douglass' statements reveal about his opinions on slavery?