

Folkways Records FH 5522

# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Edited by Dr. Philip Foner  
and read by Ossie Davis



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BIRTH, EARLY CHILDHOOD  
SLAVE LIFE  
SINGING SLAVES  
LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE  
LIFE IN BALTIMORE: ESCAPE  
A NEW NAME  
"THE LIBERATOR"  
IN ENGLAND  
NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER  
DEDICATION

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the partial autobiography of one of the greatest figures in American history, a man born a slave in Maryland in 1817, who escaped from slavery twenty-one years later, joined the ranks of the Abolitionists, and devoted a long and fruitful life to the winning of freedom for all Negroes. Born in the lowest position in society, Frederick Douglass educated himself and became an orator, an editor, a political figure, and a man of international renown.

In the abolitionist movement Douglass worked with William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and John Brown. He broke with Garrison over differences on the best methods to be used to achieve the emancipation of the slaves, and made important contributions of his own to the struggle against slavery. During the Civil War, Douglass prodded the famous "Slow Coach at Washington." Long before Lincoln perceived it, Douglass raised the slogan of emancipation of the Negro slave to assure a Union victory. In speeches and writings, he emphasized that the Negro was the key to the war, and that the war could not be ended with a victory over the Southern Confederacy without coming to grips with slavery. Lincoln acknowledged the truth of much that Douglass was saying, and, on one occasion, called him "the most meritorious person I have ever seen."

After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, Douglass immediately raised the demand for complete freedom -- not merely legal freedom -- for the Negro people. He demanded ballots for the freedmen, land distribution, and civil rights. He fought for the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, but even then he was not satisfied. Unless the laws of the country were fully enforced and the Negro enjoyed freedom in life as well as in the statute books, the battle must be continued. In 1883, he denounced the Negro's "so-called emancipation as a stupendous fraud, a fraud upon him, a fraud upon the world." America, he declared, had abandoned the Negro, ignored his rights, and left him "a deserted, a defrauded, a swindled, and an outcast man -- in law, free; in fact, a slave." And he continued to press the claims of the Negro. In the last year of his life, 1895, he was visited by a young Negro student who asked: "Mr. Douglass, what shall I do with my life?" Douglass answered with one word: "Agitate!"

Douglass was a universal reformer as well as the greatest spokesman for the Negro people in American history. He refused to allow himself "to be insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of any part of the great family of man." He fought for woman suffrage, freedom for Ireland, improved conditions for workingmen and women, and he opposed flogging in the Navy, monopolies, and capital punishment.

The present record tells the story of Frederick Douglass, in his own words, during the first thirty years of his life. It is based on material in three autobiographies Douglass wrote: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1845; *My Bondage and My Freedom*, published in 1855; and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, published in 1881. The material was edited by Dr. Philip S. Foner.

### SIDE 1, Band 1

I was born a slave in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell his birthday. They seldom come nearer to

it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time.

From various inquiries I have made, I have determined that I was born sometime in February in the year 1817.

My mother was named Harriet Bailey and she was a slave. She was of a very dark complexion. Of my father I know nothing. Slavery has no recognition of fathers, as none of families. That the mother is a slave is enough for its deadly purpose. By its law the child follows the condition of its mother. The father may be a freeman and the child a slave.

I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Once she walked twelve miles to see me, and had the same distance to travel again before the morning sunrise. Death soon ended what little communication we had between us, and with it her hardships and suffering. She died when I was but seven years old, on one of my master's farms. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or her burial. She was gone long before I knew anything about it.

### SIDE 1, Band 2

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony -- a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves.

Want of food was my chief trouble under Captain Anthony. I have often been so pinched with hunger as to dispute with old "Nep," the dog, for the crumbs which fell from the kitchen table. Many times have I followed, with eager step, the waiting-girl, when she shook the tablecloth, to get the crumbs and small bones flung out for the dogs and cats. It was a great thing to have the privilege of dipping a piece of bread into the water in which meat had been boiled, and the skin taken from the rusty bacon was a positive luxury.

I suffered also much from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked -- no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must have perished with cold but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that a pen might be laid in the gashes.

My master's farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding.

### SIDE 1, Band 3

Slaves were expected to sing as well as to work. A silent slave was not liked, either by masters or overseers. "Make a noise there!" "Make a noise there!" and "bear a hand," were words usually addressed to slaves when they were silent. The remark was often made that slaves were the most contented and happy laborers in the world, and their singing was referred to in proof of this alleged fact. But it was a great mistake to suppose them happy because they sometimes made these joyful noises. The songs of the slaves represented their sorrows, rather than their joys. They told a tale of woe; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. To these songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery.

### SIDE 1, Band 4

I was probably between seven and eight years old when I left Captain Anthony to live in Baltimore with Mr. Hugh Auld, my second master. Mrs. Auld was a woman of the kindest heart and finest feeling. But slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these excellent qualities. Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned these, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once



forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. It will forever unfit him to be a slave, he said. He will at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master.

These words sank deep into my heart. From that moment I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. But now my former teacher became my greatest enemy. She became even more violent in her opposition to my learning to read than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply halting my lessons, as her husband had commanded. Nothing seemed to make her most angry than to see me with a newspaper. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension.

The plan which I adopted was that of making friends of the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errands quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time when it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The ideas as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's shipyard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus -- "L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus -- "S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus -- "L.F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus -- "L.A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus -- "S.A."

I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately began copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way.

During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then began and continued copying the letters in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all out without looking at the book. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

SIDE 1, Band 5

In March, 1832, I left Baltimore to live with Thomas Auld, a brother of my master, Hugh Auld. My new master and I had quite a number of differences. He found me unsuitable to his purpose. My city life in Baltimore, he said had had a very pernicious effect upon me. It had almost ruined me, he claimed, for use as a slave. During the first nine months I lived with him, he gave me a number of severe whippings to break my spirit, all to no good purpose. Finally, he resolved to put me out, as he said, to be broken; and, for this purpose, he hired me for one year to a man named Edward Covey, who enjoyed the reputation of being a first rate hand at breaking young Negroes. Some slaveholders thought it an advantage to allow Mr. Covey to have their slaves for one year or two, almost free of charge, for the sake of the excellent training they had under his management.

I left Master Thomas's house and went to live with Mr. Covey, on the 1st of January, 1833. I was now, for the first time in my life, a field hand. I had been at my new home but one week before Mr. Covey gave me a very severe whipping, cutting my back, causing the blood to run, and raising ridges on my flesh as large as my little finger.

I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back. If at any one time of

my life more than another, I was made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery, that time was during the first six months of my stay with Mr. Covey.

Then suddenly my situation changed. How did this happen? One morning, long before daylight, I was called to go and rub, curry, and feed the horses. I obeyed and was glad to obey. But while thus engaged, while in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft, Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about to tie me. As soon as I found what he was up to, a sudden determination to resist seized me. I gave a quick spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment -- from whence came the spirit I don't know -- I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him. We were at it for nearly two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him.

The whole six months afterwards, that I spent with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say he didn't want to get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come off worse than you did before."

SIDE 1, Band 6

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.

As I became more difficult to manage as a slave, it was decided to send me back to my old home in Baltimore. It was from this city in the year 1838 that I escaped from slavery.

In the early part of that year, I became quite restless. My master had hired me out as a ship caulker for which work I was paid wages which I had to turn over to my master. I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly wages, he would, after counting the money, look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, "Is this all?" He was satisfied with nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them. I always felt worse for having received anything; for I feared that the giving me a few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of robber. My discontent grew upon me. I was ever on the lookout for means of escape from slavery.

Two thoughts kept me from acting immediately to carry out my resolution. One was the thought of leaving my friends, fellow-slaves and free Negroes, whom I knew. This was decidedly the most painful thought with which I had to contend. The love of them was my tender point, and shook my decision more than all things else. Besides the pain of separation, there was the dread and apprehension of a failure. I felt sure that, if I failed in the attempt, my case would be a hopeless one -- it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with anything less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. But the wretchedness of slavery, and the



blessedness of freedom were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me. Therefore, I remained firm, and according to my resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains.

#### SIDE 2, Band 1

For many years after I escaped from slavery, I refrained from revealing to the public the manner of my escape. There were two reasons why I did so. First, to reveal this at any time during the existence of slavery might be used by the master against the slave, and prevent the future escape of any who might adopt the same means that I did. The second reason was, if possible, still more binding to silence -- for publication of details would certainly have put in peril the persons and property of those who assisted. Murder itself was not more sternly and certainly punished in the State of Maryland than was the aiding and abetting the escape of a slave.

My means of escape were provided for me by the very men who were making laws to hold and bind me more securely in slavery. It was the custom in the State of Maryland to require of the free Negro people to have what were called free papers. In these papers the name, age, color, height and form of the free men were described, together with any scars or other marks upon his person which could assist in his identification. This device of slaveholding ingenuity, like other devices of wickedness, in some measure defeated itself -- since more than one man could be found to answer the same general description. Hence many slaves could escape by personating the owner of one set of papers; and this was often done as follows: a slave nearly or sufficiently answering the description set forth in the papers, would borrow them till he could by their means escape to a free state, and then, by mail or otherwise, return them to the owner.

I was not so fortunate as to sufficiently resemble any of my free acquaintances as to answer the description of their papers. But I had one friend -- a sailor -- who owned a sailor's protection, which answered somewhat the purpose of free papers -- describing his person and certifying to the fact that he was a free American sailor. Unfortunately, this protection called for a man much darker than myself, and close examination of it would have caused my arrest. But I decided to use it, for I considered the jostle of the train, and the natural haste of the conductor in a train crowded with passengers, and relied upon my skill and address in playing the sailor as described in my protection, to do the rest. I had on a red shirt and a tarpaulin hat and black cravat, tied in sailor fashion, carelessly and loosely about my neck. My knowledge of ships and sailor's talk came to my assistance, for I knew a ship from stem to stern, and could talk sailor like an "old salt."

I was well on the way from Baltimore before the conductor came into the Negro car to collect fares and examine the papers of his black passengers. This was a critical moment. My whole future depended upon the decision of this conductor. "I suppose you have your free papers?" the conductor asked me. "No, sir; I never carry my free papers to sea with me," I replied in a calm and self-possessed manner. "But you have something to show that you are a free man, have you not?" "Yes, sir," I answered; "I have a paper with the American eagle on it, that will carry me round the world." With this I drew from my deep sailor's pocket my seaman's protection, as before described. The merest glance at the paper satisfied him, and he took my fare and went about his business.

After that no one disturbed me and I was soon speeding away to the Quaker City of Philadelphia. On reaching Philadelphia in the afternoon, I enquired of a colored man how I could get on to New York? He directed me to the depot, and thither I went, taking the train that night. I reached New York the next morning, having completed the journey from slavery to freedom in less than twenty-four hours. On the 4th day of September, 1838, after an anxious and most perilous but safe journey, I found myself in the big city of New York, a free man. I felt a joyous excitement which words can but tamely describe.

#### SIDE 2, Band 2

But this gladness was short lived, for I was not yet out of the reach and power of the slaveholders. Thank Heaven, I remained but a short time in this distressed situation. A sailor, a warm-hearted and generous fellow, saw me standing on opposite sidewalk wondering what next to do. As he approached me, I ventured a remark to him which at once enlisted his interest in me. He took me to his home to spend the night, and in the morning went with me to Mr. David Ruggles, the Negro secretary of the New York Vigilance Committee, an organization of free Negroes and white Abolitionists which assisted fugitive slaves.

I was hidden with Mr. Ruggles several days, during which Anna, my intended wife, came on from Baltimore on my call, to share the burdens of life with me. She was a free woman of color, and came at once on getting the good news of my safety. We were married, after which we left for New Bedford, Massachusetts, where Mr. Ruggles thought I could find work at my trade as a caulker.

Upon reaching New Bedford, we were directed to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Johnson, by whom we were kindly received. On the morning after our arrival, the question arose as to what name I should be called by. The name given me by my mother was "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey." I, however, had dispensed with the two middle names long before I left Maryland, so that I was generally known by the name of "Frederick Bailey." When I left Baltimore I changed my name to "Stanley" and then on reaching New York to "Johnson," but there were so many Johnsons in New Bedford that it was thought advisable for me to have a different name. I gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of "Frederick." I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity. Mr. Johnson had just been reading Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake," and at once suggested that my name be "Douglass," after the great character in that poem. From that time on I was called "Frederick Douglass."

#### SIDE 2, Band 3

I found employment, the third day after my arrival, in stowing a sloop with a load of oil. It was new, dirty, and hard work for me; but I went at it with a glad heart and a willing hand. It was a happy moment, the rapture of which can be understood only by those who have been slaves. It was the first work, the reward of which was to be entirely my own. There was no master standing ready, the moment I earned the money, to rob me of it. I worked that day with a pleasure I had never before experienced. I was at work for myself and newly-married wife. It was to me the starting point of a new existence.

I had been living four or five months in New Bedford when there came a young man to me with a copy of the *Liberator*, the paper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, and asked me to subscribe to it. I told him I had but just escaped from slavery and was of course very poor, and had no money then to pay for it. He was very willing to take me as a subscriber, notwithstanding, and I read the paper from week to week. It soon took a place in my heart second only to the Bible. It detested slavery and made no truce with traffickers in the bodies and souls of men. It preached human brotherhood; it denounced oppression and with all the solemnity of "Thus saith the Lord," demanded the complete emancipation of my race. The paper became my meat and my drink. My soul was set on fire. Its sympathy for my brethren in bonds -- its scathing denunciations of slaveholders -- and its powerful attacks upon the upholders of the institution -- sent a thrill of joy through my soul, such as I had never felt before!

All the anti-slavery meetings held in New Bedford I promptly attended, my heart bounding at every true utterance against the slave system and every rebuke of its friends and supporters. In the summer of 1841 a grand Anti-Slavery Convention was held in Nantucket, under the auspices of Mr. Garrison and his friends. I determined on attending the meeting, though I had no thought of taking any part in any of its proceedings. But once there, I felt strongly moved to speak, and though I trembled in every limb, I spoke a few moments, describing my life as a slave.

At the close of this great meeting I was approached by Mr. John A. Collins, then the general agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and urged to become an agent of that society and publicly advocate its principles. I was reluctant to accept the position. I had not been quite three years from slavery and was honestly distrustful of my ability. Besides, publicity might discover me to my master. But Mr. Collins was not to be refused, and I finally consented to go out for three months.

I traveled in the company of white abolitionists and lectured to large meetings. Many came, no doubt from curiosity to hear what a Negro could say in his own cause. I was generally introduced as a "chattel" -- a "thing" -- a piece of Southern property -- the chairman assuring the audience that it could speak.

As a fugitive slave lecturer, I faced many hostilities. My treatment in the use of public conveyances was extremely rough. On the railroads there was a mean, dirty and uncomfortable car set apart for Negro travelers called the "Jim Crow" car. Regarding this as the fruit of slaveholding prejudice and being determined to fight the spirit of slavery wherever I might find it, I resolved to avoid this car, though it sometimes re-



quired some courage to do so. I sometimes was soundly beaten by conductor and brakeman.

At several of our meetings, my fellow abolitionists and I were mobbed, and several of us had our good clothes spoiled by evil-smelling eggs. On one occasion, we had barely begun to speak when a mob of about sixty of the roughest characters I ever looked upon, ordered us, through its leaders, to "be silent," threatening us, if we were not, with violence. We attempted to dissuade them, but they had not come to parley but to fight, and were well armed. They tore down the platform on which we stood, and assaulted us. Undertaking to fight my way through the crowd with a stick which I caught up in the melee, I attracted the fury of the mob, which laid me prostrate on the ground under a torrent of blows. Leaving me thus, with my right hand broken, and in a state of unconsciousness, the mobocrats hastily mounted their horses and rode off. I was soon raised up and nursed and bandaged, but as the bones broken were not properly set, my hand has never recovered its natural strength and dexterity.

During the first three or four months of my work as an Anti-Slavery agent, my speeches were almost exclusively made up of narrations of my own personal experience as a slave. "Let us have the facts," said the people. But I was now reading and thinking. New views of the subject were being presented to my mind. It did not entirely satisfy me to narrate wrongs; I felt like denouncing them. I could not always curb my moral indignation for the perpetrators of slaveholding villainy long enough for a circumstantial statement of the facts which I felt almost sure everybody must know.

"People won't believe you ever were a slave, Frederick, if you keep on this way," my friends told me. "It is not best that you seemed too learned." These friends were not altogether wrong in their advice, and still I must speak just the word that seemed to me the word to be spoken by me.

At last the apprehended trouble came. People doubted if I had ever been a slave. They said I did not talk like a slave, look like a slave, or act like a slave, and that they believed I had never been south of Mason and Dixon's line. I decided to write out the leading facts connected with my experience in slavery, giving names of persons, places, and dates, thus putting it in the power of any who doubted, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my story. This book entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*, was published in Boston in 1845. William Lloyd Garrison wrote the preface to my book.

#### SIDE 2, Band 4

My book soon became known in Maryland, and I had reason to believe that an effort would be made to recapture me. I was persuaded by my friends to leave the country, and was sent as an agent to Great Britain. The object of my labors in Great Britain was the concentration of the moral and religious sentiment of its people against American slavery. To this end I visited and lectured in nearly all the large towns and cities of the United Kingdom, and enjoyed many favorable opportunities for observation and information.

Some notion may be formed of the difference in my feelings and circumstances while abroad, from a letter I wrote to Mr. Garrison on January 1, 1846:

"I live a new life. The warm and generous cooperation extended to me by the friends of my despised race; the prompt and liberal manner with which the press has rendered me its aid; the glorious enthusiasm with which thousands have flocked to hear the cruel wrongs of my down-trodden and long-enslaved fellow-countrymen portrayed; the deep sympathy for the slave, and the strong abhorrence of the slaveholder, everywhere evinced; the cordiality with which members and ministers of various religious bodies, and of various shades of religious opinion, have embraced me and lent me their aid; the kind hospitality constantly proffered me by persons of the highest rank in society; the spirit of freedom that seems to animate all with whom I come in contact, and the entire absence of everything that looks like prejudice against me, on account of the color of my skin, contrasts so strongly with my long and bitter experience in the United States, that I look with wonder and amazement on the transition."

To my friends in England I owe my freedom in the United States. They learned through correspondence that Captain Auld, my master, would take one hundred and fifty pounds sterling for me, and this sum they promptly raised and paid for my liberation, placing the papers of my manumission into my hands before they would tolerate the idea of my return to my native land. To this commercial transaction, to this blood-money, I owe my immunity from the operation of the fugitive slave law.

#### SIDE 2, Band 5

Having remained abroad nearly two years, and being about to return to America, not as I left it, a slave, but a free-man, prominent friends of the cause of emancipation in England offered to make me a testimonial, both on grounds of personal regard to me and also to the cause to which they were so ardently devoted. I suggested that my friends should simply give me the means of obtaining a printing-press and materials to enable me to start a paper advocating the interests of my enslaved and oppressed people.

I told them that perhaps the greatest hindrance to the adoption of Abolition principles by the people of the United States was the low estimate everywhere in that country placed upon the Negro as a man; that because of his assumed natural inferiority people reconciled themselves to his enslavement and oppression as being inevitable, if not desirable. The grand thing to be done, therefore, was to change this estimation by disproving his inferiority and demonstrating his capacity for a more exalted civilization than slavery and prejudice had assigned him. In my judgment, a newspaper in the hands of persons of the despised race would by calling out and making them acquainted with their own latent powers, by enkindling their hope of a future and developing their moral force, prove a most powerful means of removing prejudice and awakening an interest in them.

These views I laid before my friends. The result was that nearly two thousand five hundred dollars were speedily raised toward my establishing such a paper as I had indicated. On December 3, 1847, I launched my own newspaper, *The North Star*, in Rochester, New York. I chose this name because a slave followed the north star when he was escaping north to freedom. The masthead I inscribed as the paper's motto the words: "Right is of no sex -- Truth is of no Color -- God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren." In a message to my Oppressed Countrymen, I wrote: "We solemnly dedicate the 'North Star' to the cause of our long oppressed and plundered fellow countrymen. May God bless the undertaking to your good! It shall fearlessly assert your rights, faithfully proclaim your wrongs, and earnestly demand for you instant and even-handed justice. Giving no quarter to slavery in the South, it will hold no truce with oppressors in the North. While it shall boldly advocate emancipation for our enslaved brethren, it shall omit no opportunity to gain for the nominally free complete enfranchisement. Every effort to injure or degrade you or your cause -- originating wheresoever, or with whomsoever -- shall find in it a constant, unswerving and inflexible foe.

"Remember that we are one, that our cause is one, and that we must help each other, if we would succeed. We have drunk to the dregs the bitter cup of slavery; we have worn the heavy yoke; we have sighed beneath our bonds, and writhed beneath the bloody lash; -- cruel mementoes of our oneness are indelibly marked on our living flesh. We are one with you under the ban of prejudice and proscription -- one with you under the slander of inferiority -- one with you in social and political disfranchisement. What you suffer, we suffer; what you endure, we endure. We are indissolubly united, and must fall or flourish together."

I had resolved that whatever power I had should be devoted to the freeing of my people from slavery and that once free they should enjoy all the rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by any other members of American society. To the achievement of these goals, I dedicated the rest of my life.

Dr. Philip S. Foner, a distinguished American historian, is the author, among many other books, of *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (four volumes) which contains the definitive biography of Frederick Douglass and the only collection of his writings and speeches. Dr. Foner is also the author of a four-volume *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, and of biographies of Thomas Paine, Mark Twain, Jack London.

Ossie Davis, the noted actor, made his Broadway debut in *Jeb*, presented by Herman Shumlin. Subsequently he appeared with Helen Hayes in *The Wisteria Trees*, with Lena Horne in the musical, *Jamaica*, and he replaced Sidney Poitier in *Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun*. On the screen he was in *Otto Preminger's The Cardinal*, and currently can be seen in *Sidney Lumet's The Hill*, with Sean Connery. He is the author of *Purlie Victorious*, in which he appeared on Broadway, and in which his wife, Ruby Dee, was co-starred. Mr. Davis was host and narrator of National Educational T.V. series on the *History of the Negro People*, was Master of Ceremonies at the historic *March on Washington* in 1963, and has written and directed the annual *Negro History Show* for Local 1199, Drug and Hospital Workers Union.