

“It Must Develop Men”: Frederick Douglass and Education in Nineteenth-Century America

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Twenty-three years before the United States encountered the bloodiest and most divisive event in its history, Abraham Lincoln spoke to the Springfield, Illinois Lyceum on “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions.” As a young Illinois congressman, Lincoln firmly asserted that while the Founding generation’s passion may have sustained the American Revolution and created the United States, cold, calculating reason provided the necessary foundation for its preservation.¹ Reason furnished “general intelligence,” “sound morality,” and “in particular, a reverence for the Constitution and laws” to support and defend our country.² Passion, on the other hand, threatened society with disorder and instability as mobs disregarded the law.

Lincoln had cause for concern: divisive party politics and ethnic, religious, and racial animosities manifested early in the 1830s with “wild and furious passions” of “savage mobs” in the streets. “The most common targets of mob violence,” historian Daniel Walker Howe writes, “were the abolitionists and the free black communities that supported them.”³ Two months earlier and less than one hundred miles away from Springfield, the abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy was murdered at the hands of a pro-slavery mob in his Alton, Illinois print shop. The emergence of organized abolitionism “explains much of the dramatic rise in the number of riots.”⁴ While Lincoln’s Lyceum Address alluded to this incident (“throwing printing presses into rivers, shooting editors”), he was not taking sides on the matter of abolitionism but, rather, indicting mob rule.

In this time of massive immigration, internal improvements, westward migration, urban instability, growing sectionalism, and discord over the institution of slavery, Lincoln urged “reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother, “let it be taught in schools,” and “let it be written in primers, spelling books and in Almanacs.”⁵ Again, over twenty years later and a month before the Civil War, Lincoln explained why reverence for the Constitution and the laws was “the only guide to safety in the present crisis.”⁶

Although Lincoln did not live to see Reconstruction, there is nothing to suggest that he would have departed from this belief that the fruits of reason provided the surest defense and successful reconstruction of the Republic. We also know, from his last public address, that Lincoln found the black man capable of such civic participation and responsibility, too.⁷ But in a time as racially tumultuous and divisive as the abolitionist age of the 1830s, what type of education should be provided to this newly emancipated race?⁸

The following paper will discuss how Frederick Douglass fostered a clear vision of education that would not only improve his race but also provide an intelligent, virtuous, and moral citizenry that “the proud fabric of freedom” could rest “as the rock of its basis.”⁹ He considered this both a necessity and act of justice. From his own experience, Douglass found education a vital component for full emancipation. Enlightenment made man “fit to be free” and capable of self-government.¹⁰

Ultimately, Douglass sponsored an integrated education that resurrected the materials of reason from Lincoln’s Lyceum address. Such education would elevate the black man to disprove stereotypes, overcome prejudice, and demonstrate his capacity for citizenship. This article examines Frederick Douglass’s education while enslaved, his road to enlightenment, what he considered an appropriate education for the emancipated race, and why the federal government should provide a universal and integrated education.

“Slavery is the deadly foe of education.”¹¹

In 1896, Booker T. Washington told a Brooklyn audience that his race “whether in slavery or in freedom” had always “been loyal to the Stars and Stripes” and no schoolhouse was opened that had not been filled.¹² Indeed, in the three decades following the Civil War, freedmen responded to educational opportunities afforded them in such a manner that almost shocked white Southerners.¹³ Blacks moved from rural areas to towns, sacrificed to afford an education for their children, and established mock schoolhouses in churches, stables, basements, billiard rooms, plantation cotton houses, warehouses, and homes before missionary societies set up formal schooling. Even while negotiating labor contracts, some black men and women asked that the planter financially support the local black schoolhouse.¹⁴ Their desire for education was undoubtedly cultivated in the antebellum years as masters vehemently prohibited such activity. Educating slaves was highly discouraged and in most places unlawful. On one particular plantation, for example, if the master discovered a slave learned how to write, he cut off the slave’s fingers as punishment.¹⁵

As a child, little was available to the young, enslaved Frederick Douglass: he possessed no accurate knowledge of his age or parentage and he did not benefit from the appropriate lessons a family structure might afford. For his first eight years, the slave boy, Douglass recalled, “seldom has to listen to lectures on propriety of behavior, or on anything else. He is never chided for handling his knife or fork improperly or awkwardly, for he uses none. [. . .] He is never expected to act like a nice little gentleman, for he is only a rude little slave”; instead, “he literally runs wild; has no pretty little verses to learn in the nursery; no nice little speeches to make for aunts, uncles or cousins, to show how smart he is.”¹⁶ The barbarity and violence Douglass soon

encountered on the plantation coupled with his limited knowledge comprised a slave's education. He was reduced, along with other slaves, to a level with brutes and animals.¹⁷

In March of 1826, Douglass was sent to Baltimore to live with and serve Hugh and Sophia Auld. The following year, after Mr. Auld forbade his benevolent wife from helping young Frederick learn the alphabet (because it was “unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read”), Douglass understood “the white man's power to enslave the black man” and “the direct pathway from slavery to freedom” was education.¹⁸ Thus, “the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn more. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress.”¹⁹ At a young age Douglass understood that “education and slavery were incompatible with each other.”²⁰

Once his lessons with Mrs. Auld ceased, Douglass sought out young white schoolchildren in town to learn more of the alphabet. Few helped however, because, as Douglass knew, providing education was promoting freedom. It was “almost an unpardonable offense to do anything, directly or indirectly, to promote a slave's freedom in a slave state.”²¹ After learning how to read, Douglass bought a schoolbook entitled *The Columbian Orator*. A dialogue Douglass read—between a slave and his master—struck him deeply. With a “spirited defense” the slave successfully argued against the institution of slavery and his master “seeing himself to be thus vanquished at every turn in the argument; he generously and meekly emancipates the slave, with his best wishes for his prosperity.”²² An intelligent dialogue, for this slave, brought him freedom by “penetrating even the heart of the slaveholder, compelling him to yield up his earthly interests to the claims of eternal justice.”²³ Slavery, Douglass realized, was not the black man's inherent state.

The more Douglass read, the more he detested slavery as knowledge opened his eyes “to the horrible pit.”²⁴ He studied in the evenings and learned about the abolitionist movement through antislavery petitions in the newspaper. His education became a type of gospel he needed to share and imbue fellow slaves with “the desire to learn.”²⁵ While hired out to Mr. Freedman in the early 1830s, Douglass established a Sabbath school and taught many slaves. It was understood, however, “there must be as little display about it as possible.” Slaves could wrestle, box, drink whiskey and do “other unseemly things” but “to meet for the purpose of improving the mind and heart [...] was esteemed a most dangerous nuisance.”²⁶ The last thing slaveholders wanted to see in their slaves, according to Douglass, were the Lincolnian traits of the 1838 Lyceum Address. “For they had much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports,” wrote Douglass, “than to see us behaving like *intellectual, moral, and accountable beings*.”²⁷

In September of 1838 Douglass successfully escaped his enslavement at Mr. Hugh's plantation. In freedom, he became a nationally recognized abolitionist, known for his fiery and eloquent speeches. In a letter to fellow abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, Douglass affirmed the

redemptive qualities of education and believed it could rescue the free black population from their social disease of “poverty, ignorance and degradation.” This “disease” affirmed whites’ perception that “blacks equated freedom with irresponsibility”; they characterized this group as “unruly” and “lacking in self-restraint” with a culture that advocated “license” and “permissiveness.”²⁸

An industrial education addressed this immediate concern and prepared the black youth for future employment. “We needed more to learn how to make a good living,” he wrote Stowe, “than to learn Latin and Greek.”²⁹ Douglass later favored classical education but black education in antebellum America needed to serve immediate financial ends and prove the black man could flourish in freedom, develop a sound work ethic, and become a productive citizen in society. This type of education extended a powerful argument for the abolition of slavery. “The most telling, the most killing refutation of slavery,” Douglass wrote, “is the presentation of an industrious, enterprising, thrifty and intelligent free black population.”³⁰ In other words, the free black population of the North held the heavy responsibility of proving their race capable and worthy of freedom.

Furthermore, the black race had not reached a point where they could benefit from high schools and college. Douglass contended, “We cannot, and we ought not to hope that, in a single leap from our low condition, we can reach that of ministers, lawyers, doctors, editors, and merchants.” While capable of such occupations, the “intermediate gradations of agriculture and the mechanic arts” must first be mastered. In order to “properly live or be respected by our fellow men,” the black man “must build as well as live in houses; must make as well as use furniture; we must construct bridges as well as pass over them.”³¹ Free black men should be “instructed to use their hands, as well as their heads.”³²

Moreover, unlike some of his contemporaries, Douglass envisioned an integrated education for the black youth, “let the colored children be educated and grow up side by side with white children, come up friends unsophisticated and generous childhood together, and it will require a powerful agent to convert them into enemies, and lead them to prey upon each other’s rights and liberties.”³³ Education should not be alienating or divisive but integrative. Engagement in white society and white institutions provided “many opportunities for removing prejudices and establishing the rights of all men.”³⁴ “Douglass hoped that a forced interaction might lay the groundwork for a strong culture of personal and social responsibility,” political theorist Nicholas Buccola writes, “if individuals from diverse backgrounds are educated together they will gain an appreciation for their common humanity” and nationality instead of cultivating a race pride.³⁵

Douglass understood that individuals needed to be conditioned for the institution of slavery, both as slaves and masters. “Nature has done almost nothing,” he wrote, “to prepare men and women to be either slaves or slaveholders.”³⁶ One needed to be *taught* to be a master and this always, as seen in his discussion of Mrs. Auld, had “brutalizing effects” on both slave and

slaveholder.³⁷ Douglass recalled never having met a young boy who defended the institution of slavery, “but I have often had boys console me, with the hope that something would yet occur, by which I might be made free.”³⁸ For full emancipation, to reverse the conditioned slave and master, both races—all of society—needed new educations.³⁹

Douglass worked as an itinerant abolitionist speaker for William Lloyd Garrison’s American Anti-Slavery Society for a number of years after his escape. As he recalled in one of his autobiographies, “All that the American people needed, I thought, was light. Could they know slavery as I knew it, they would hasten to the work of its extinction.”⁴⁰ Like the articulate slave in *The Columbian Orator*, Douglass believed the United States simply needed an exposition of the horrors of slavery from an articulate, intelligent black man. He soon realized, however, a grander education would be necessary.

The Civil War, according to Douglass, served the purpose as an “apocalyptic education” for the United States.⁴¹ Historian David Blight notes, “only small numbers of Americans would have willed emancipation in 1861; none could stop it in 1864–1865.”⁴² Douglass considered President Lincoln one of the war’s best students.⁴³ He continued to recruit black soldiers for the Union cause, in part, because he was “so well satisfied” with Lincoln and “the educating tendency of the conflict.”⁴⁴ Moreover, Douglass urged black men to enlist for the Union during the Civil War to demonstrate to all of society their capacity to reason: “you are a man [. . .] if you were only a horse or an ox, incapable of deciding whether the rebels are right or wrong, you would have no responsibility, and might like the ox go on eating your corn.”⁴⁵ But, instead, “manhood requires you to take sides.”⁴⁶

In January of 1864, a year after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Douglass addressed the Women’s Loyal League at the Cooper Institute in New York City and spoke on the meaning of the Civil War. If the Union continued to fight, struggle, and sacrifice, this “abolition war” would produce a different country. With nothing “analogous to the old Union” and “great moral changes in the fundamental condition of the people,” this new country would not “brand the Declaration of Independence a lie.”⁴⁷

However, this “new order” would not come by Union victory or emancipation alone. As Douglass wrote in *Douglass’ Monthly*, “the work does not end with the abolition of slavery but only begins.”⁴⁸ Education needed to be an integral part of the postwar process. Douglass hoped the New England schoolhouse would replace every Southern whipping-post: “Schools for the education of dusky millions will be required, and all the elevating and civilizing institutions of the country must be extended to these people” since slavery has “stood athwart the pathway of knowledge and progress” and “kept the nation from fully becoming what it was meant to be.”⁴⁹ The institution of slavery inhibited Americans—both slave and master—from bettering themselves for their Republic.

He dreamt this new country would be a place where general intelligence would flourish—where “no man shall be fined for reading a book”, “imprisoned for selling a book” or “flogged or sold for learning to read.”⁵⁰ Drawing from his own experience in the Auld home and teaching Sabbath School, “nothing had given more meaning to his life than the freedom, self-understanding, and power he had attained through language and learning.” Thus, education “was indispensable to his social reform policy, as well as to his vision of Reconstruction.”⁵¹ Legal emancipation meant nothing without educating both races.

Moreover, the emancipated race needed to be an educated race for the stability of the nation. This was not a matter of preference or prejudice but national importance: “we must (provide education) or give up the country.”⁵² Only Southern blacks provided the necessary stability for this new order that emerged after the Civil War. A country “based upon loyalty, liberty and equality” and “delivered from all contradictions” could only be maintained with “a profounder wisdom” and “holier zeal” than anything witnessed during the Civil War. The most courageous and patriotic Americans were needed to support the Republic.⁵³ Ex-Confederates, while defeated, were not reformed. “It would be absurd and ridiculous,” Douglass wrote, “to expect that the conquered traitors will at once cordially cooperate with the Federal Government.” Instead, a “new class of men, men who have hitherto exercised but little influence on the State” would be needed in the South.⁵⁴

Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner agreed. In a letter to John Bright in March of 1865, Sumner stated that without black Southerners and their vote, “the old enemy will reappear.”⁵⁵ Because this emancipated race neutralized the potential passion of ex-Confederates, Douglass argued, “we shall *have* to educate the (emancipated) people.”⁵⁶ As he told readers of *The New National Era* in September of 1870 (seven months after the ratification of the 15th amendment), “we are henceforth to fall or flourish together” as “the safety and prosperity of the Republic depends upon the intelligence of colored voters” standing together “in the maintenance of those great rights and liberties.”⁵⁷ This process would not happen overnight, however, as “there is no such thing as immediate Emancipation either for the master or for the slave.” The slow work of Reconstruction needed to be a “radical revolution in all modes of thought” and only “time, experience, and culture” can “gradually bring society back to the normal condition from which long years of slavery have carried all under its iron sway.”⁵⁸ Until then, Douglass wrote, “no colored voter shall either *forget* or *forgive* the men who have enslaved him until they have repented.”

“How can you organize Reconstruction except on the everlasting foundation of education?”⁵⁹

The Freedman's Bureau provided one of the first educational opportunities for freedmen postwar and attempted to create that safeguard for the Republic.⁶⁰ Established by the federal government in March of 1865, the Bureau (officially known as The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands) aided ex-slaves transition from enslavement to freedom. In addition to helping locate family members, providing rations, and negotiating labor contracts, the Bureau coordinated the schooling, activities, and institution building by Northern aid, abolitionist and missionary societies for freed people's education.

For abolitionists, their work remained unfinished until the black man held equal rights in postwar society. Indeed, many Northern white women who ventured south to teach in freedmen's schools considered themselves "soldiers," continuing the Union campaign their father, husband, brothers, and cousins started during wartime—that is, total emancipation of the black man.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, abolitionists' post-bellum activities evoked similar violent responses as their antebellum emancipation efforts. Using Frederick Douglass's life as example, James McCune Smith wrote in the introductory notes of Douglass's autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* that education provided Douglass "first as a means of attaining liberty; then as an end in itself most desirable; a will; an unfaltering energy and determination to obtain what his soul pronounced desirable; a majestic self-hood" and "determined courage."⁶² As discussed earlier, Southerners knew the potential knowledge possessed to liberate the body and mind and many engaged in racial violence and mob rule in hopes of maintaining black illiteracy and inferiority. One Georgian recorded, "It is well known that the sight of a Negro school house stirs up the rabid feelings of the Ku-Klux-Klan gang, as the sight of water is said to disturb a mad dog."⁶³

In spite of this, by 1870, thousands of schools housed 3,300 teachers and almost 150,000 students.⁶⁴ While this was a relatively small portion of the freed population, the Bureau's educational advancements in the postwar South are considered their greatest success. Unlike the Bureau's other efforts, education was the only activity that left permanent institutions in the South as bureau leaders were "convinced that blacks would benefit more by recognition as equal citizens than from being treated as a special class permanently dependent upon federal assistance and protection."⁶⁵

In his approach as Commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau, General Oliver O. Howard understood, like Douglass, that access to education was "central to the meaning of freedom" and served as the foundation "upon which all efforts to assist the freedmen rested."⁶⁶ Besides acquiring land, blacks looked to education to free them from mental and physical dependency on the Southern white population. A "mental appetite" needed to be awakened to "lift the freedman 'to the proper position of manhood and equality.'"⁶⁷ As one Mississippi freedman remarked, "If I nebber does do nothing more while I live, I shall give my children a chance to go to school, for I considers education next best thing to liberty."⁶⁸

Furthermore, freedman schools provided an education that attempted to equip the emancipated race to become reasoned, responsible citizens as well. General Oliver O. Howard stated, freedmen “already exert a powerful political influence [. . .] they must be educated, or they will become tools of demagogues and a power for evil rather than good.”⁶⁹ Therefore, in addition to basic instruction of reading, writing, and arithmetic, Bureau education aimed to “equip the freedmen to take full advantage of citizenship,” “obedience to law and respect for the rights and property of others,” and “plant a genuine republicanism in the southern States.”⁷⁰ Even before the founding of the Freedman’s Bureau, Northern nonsectarian and evangelical societies sent teachers to areas of the Union-occupied South to teach black men and women “the ways of ‘civilization’ and freedom.”⁷¹ Of these societies, the prominent American Missionary Association centered their teaching on guiding, counseling, instructing, protecting and directing freed people’s energies “to make them useful to themselves, their families *and their country*.”⁷²

Black teachers held a prominent place in the black community as the schoolhouse, second only to the church, became the “institutional and emotional anchor of black life.”⁷³ Considered the “community leaders” and “interracial diplomats” of the black community, teaching oftentimes served as a springboard into politics.⁷⁴ Black teachers invested in the success of the Republican Party for they knew that ensured Southern black education. After successfully ratifying the 13th amendment, many Republicans wondered what could replace antislavery “as the leading Republican idealistic issue.”⁷⁵ The Republican Party decided to promote public schools, especially for emancipated blacks, so they would be “worthy of the responsibilities of citizenship and suffrage.”⁷⁶

While the first years of Reconstruction (1865–1870) centered on amending the Constitution, in the years following 1870 the focus shifted to make “these new constitutionally proclaimed abstractions real” and “one important aspect of this” was “promoting, expanding and protecting the public school.”⁷⁷ In other words, the emancipation of slaves (13th amendment) held little significance without education.⁷⁸ The Republican Party considered universal education so important to the reconstruction of the South that it became an integral condition for admittance back into the Union.⁷⁹

Schoolteachers shared Douglass’s belief that education liberated the masses from ignorance and insisted that, “the colored race would sink or swim according to the education they received.”⁸⁰ Intellectually impoverished and “benighted by ignorance,” these ex-slaves urgently needed “required lessons in freedom.”⁸¹ Unlike ministers, who catered their sermons and language to the level of an uneducated, illiterate congregation, black school teachers spoke to elevate and encourage their pupils to adopt different habits, language, and perspective.⁸²

Douglass revered schoolteachers and considered their profession one of the highest callings. “To properly teach is to induce man’s potential and latent greatness, to discover and develop the noblest, highest, and best that is in him” and unfold and strengthen “the powers of the human

soul.”⁸³ What is the proper way to teach and induce potential greatness? There was no consensus among black or white southern schoolteachers concerning curriculum. Some offered Greek lessons and had their students recite the infamous John C. Calhoun before they began, “Show me a negro who knows Greek syntax and I will then believe that he is a human being and should be treated like a man.” Thus many missionaries “meant to train men who would be treated like men.”⁸⁴ For the most part however, post-emancipation education was grounded in the three R’s, geography, and American history. For the latter, black leader and reverend Henry M. Turner emphasized the necessary duty of teachers to instruct on “patriotism and an appreciation of how they [freed slaves] came to be freed.”⁸⁵ Teachers combined reading and writing instruction with “positive moral and patriotic images” and “in teaching the alphabet, each letter might introduce a couplet conveying some moral or value.”⁸⁶

Douglass advocated an industrial education for free blacks in antebellum America to secure financial security and disprove “the infamous opinion of our natural inferiority.” In the years following the Civil War he further explained how this type of education developed Lincoln’s second characteristic of reason: sound morality. While dedicating the Douglass Institute in Maryland (a black industrial school dedicated to Frederick Douglass), he recognized this training also promoted “manly character” and taught “the true idea of manly independence and self-respect.”⁸⁷ The Douglass Institute promoted “virtue, temperance, knowledge, truth, liberty, and justice.”⁸⁸ Similar to Lincoln, Douglass wanted the black man’s mind enlightened to the “whole circle of social, moral, political and educational duties” and “true politeness and refinements.”⁸⁹

Although the Bureau was officially dismantled by 1872, freedmen “took control of the educational system and transformed federal schools into local free schools.”⁹⁰ Freedman’s Bureau schools provided the necessary foundation for a movement towards general Southern public education.⁹¹ Republicans, with black legislators trailblazing the path, established “the principle of state responsibility for public education” with the Reconstruction constitutions requiring tax-supported school systems for children of both races.⁹² Historian Michael Perman notes, “this was a reform of great significance” as “only a rudimentary system of public education had existed before the war and only a fraction of the black school-age population—as little as five percent in Georgia—had been reached by the schools established by the missionary societies and the Freedman’s Bureau after emancipation.”⁹³ Again, blacks showed their zeal for education by outnumbering white students in both Mississippi and South Carolina.⁹⁴ One black preacher observed, “the ignorant whites had every chance to learn, but didn’t. We had every chance to remain ignorant, and many of us learned in spite of them.”⁹⁵

In addition to formal institutions, statesmen, such as Douglass provided a civic education to the people, “nurturing a just and virtuous political community” as well as “a sense of community by talking about the values that unite us.”⁹⁶ Douglass believed statesmen could “impact the attitudes of citizens through legislation and by articulating moral and political messages about

the fundamental values of the community.”⁹⁷ In his speeches, Douglass emphasized the third Lincolnian pillar for a stable Republic, “reverence for the Constitution and laws.” Political theorist Nicholas Buccola writes on this very subject, highlighting civic ceremonies where Douglass spoke and provided a “moral education” for Americans. “These occasions,” Buccola writes, “he hoped, would provide citizens with opportunities to think about and discuss the meaning of political lives.”⁹⁸ From his most famous “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”—explaining the gap “between the moral ideals of the Declaration [. . .] and the realities of American life”—to Decoration Day speeches—this ritual served as a “celebration of the rights that are promised in the American founding documents *and* it is a reminder of the duties of citizenship.”⁹⁹ Douglass also revered the country’s leaders, particularly Lincoln, in various speeches. He pointed to Lincoln’s humble beginnings when, with his “fortitude and industry which could split rails by day, and learn grammar at night at the hearthstone of a log hut . . . prepared this man for a service to his country to mankind.”¹⁰⁰

When Douglass called for equal rights and education for the black man after the war, he did so believing this would complete their mental and physical emancipation and provide a more stable Republic that lived up to the founding creeds in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He never entertained the idea of colonization and “the love of the country,” he believed, would check the black man upon all schemes of such. “We are *here*, and here we are likely to remain,” Douglass declared, “we have grown up in this Republic, and I see nothing in her character, or even in the character of the American people as yet, which compels the belief that we must leave the United States.”¹⁰¹ However, in order to keep this Republic, the youth—all youth—must be educated, “it is everywhere an accepted truth,” he told The Colored Convention of Louisville:

In a country governed by the people, like education of the youth of all classes is vital to its welfare, prosperity, and to its existence . . . the fact remains that the whole country is directly interested in the education of every child that lives within its borders. The ignorance of any part of the American people so deeply concerns all the rest that there can be no doubt of the right to pass laws compelling the attendance of every child at school.¹⁰²

He urged Congress to “enter vigorously upon the work of universal education,” instead of waiting on the states, because “to withhold this boon is to neglect the greatest assurance it has of its own perpetuity.”¹⁰³

For Douglass, an integrated and universal education encouraged “forms of moral responsibility that are essential to civic life,” “responsible behavior because educated people [. . .] are less likely to behave immorally,” and “the development of stronger bonds of civic

education by bringing (or forcing) citizens together into a public space where they must interact with one another.”¹⁰⁴ Providing universal education to the black man was a necessary act of justice and preservation.¹⁰⁵ Douglass urged a manly education, with Lincolnian characteristics as the foundation of such education.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the 13th amendment. While Congressional debates have changed since Reconstruction, Douglass’s thoughts on education retain their currency today. Education provides moral and intellectual benefits to the individual, his/her community, and country. Douglass “believed education was crucial for the development of free and responsible citizens.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, for Douglass, a thriving Republic requires public schools to place civic education at the forefront of instruction. Such education should emphasize students’ common nationality as opposed to “any measure that authorizes or deepens one’s self-identification in predominantly racial terms.”¹⁰⁷ As Douglass addressed the Manassas Industrial School’s first attendees in 1894, he reminded them, “God and nature speak to our manhood and manhood alone.”¹⁰⁸

Endnotes

1. Jaffa 2004, 345.
2. Basler 2001, 84.
3. Howe 2007, 432; also see 430–35.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Basler 2001, 81.
6. Jaffa 2004, 259.
7. Basler 2001, 799.
8. For more on racial violence and political terrorism during Reconstruction, see Litwack 1980 and 1997.
9. Basler 2001, 85.
10. Buccola 2012, 148.
11. Foner 1999, 188.
12. Brotz 1991, 364.

13. For more on freedmen and women seeking and funding education in the postwar South, see Butchart 1980, 169–76.
14. Litwack 1980, 475–76.
15. Litwack 1997, 53.
16. Gates 1994, 15, 144–45.
17. *Ibid.*, 142.
18. *Ibid.*, 37, 218.
19. *Ibid.*, 38.
20. *Ibid.*, 40.
21. *Ibid.*, 224.
22. *Ibid.*, 225.
23. *Ibid.*, 226.
24. *Ibid.*, 227.
25. *Ibid.*, 298.
26. *Ibid.*, 299.
27. *Ibid.*, 71.
28. McAfee 1998, 81.
29. Gates 1994, 727.
30. *Ibid.*, 731–32.
31. *Ibid.*, 215.
32. Foner 1999, 215.
33. Buccola 2012, 152.
34. Foner 1999, 119–20.
35. Buccola 2012, 155; also see Buchart 1980, 174. Black Nationalist Martin Delany, for example, warned black students to be skeptical of and not trust their white schoolteachers

in Freedman's Bureau schools. He preferred, as with many other black schoolteachers and leaders, a segregated education.

36. Gates 1994, 222, 224.

37. *Ibid.*, 46.

38. *Ibid.*, 224.

39. When Douglass called for the abolishment of slavery he always followed with a call for "education of colored Americans" as well. See, for example, Douglass 1847.

40. Gates 1994, 671.

41. Blight 1994, 187.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Basler 2001, 691; also see 734, 796.

44. Foner 1999, 547; also see 528.

45. *Ibid.*, 528.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, 554.

48. *Ibid.*, 523.

49. *Ibid.*, 523.

50. *Ibid.*, 562.

51. Blight 1991, 198.

52. Foner 1999, 562.

53. *Ibid.*, 521.

54. *Ibid.*, 522.

55. Palmer 1990, 273.

56. Foner 1999, 522.

57. *Ibid.*, 605.

58. *Ibid.*, 522.

59. McAfee 1998, 89.

60. Gutman 1999, 260–98.

61. Foner 2007, 144.

62. Gates 1994, 126.

63. McAfee 1998, 96.

64. Perman 2003, 26.

65. Foner 1999, 148.

66. Foner 2002, 96, 144.

67. Butchart 1980, 16.

68. Litwack 1980, 472.

69. Howard 1869, 12–13.

70. Foner 2002, 146–47.

71. Litwack 1980, 477.

72. *Ibid.*, (italics mine).

73. Fairclough 2007, 5.

74. *Ibid.*, 5, 48.

75. McAfee, 1998, 6.

76. *Ibid.*, 5–6. This was not limited to the black man. The Republican Party pushed for universal education to Americanize immigrants as well (especially Catholics, “keeping America safe from feared papal domination”). Republicans “attempted to persuade the electorate that Reconstruction’s goal was to remodel a nation divided and devastated by civil war and handicapped by the human degradation and ignorance spawned by slavery” and “the nation’s need was for social unity and expanding educational opportunity for the common person.”

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*, 85. Charles Sumner, like Douglass, pushed further and demanded integrated education as racial segregation in education creates a “caste, and, on this account, a violation of equality.”
79. *Ibid.*, 86.
80. Fairclough 2007, 7.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*, 17; Buchart 1980, 169. Douglass hoped education would not only provide the tools for self-elevation but disprove stereotypes and prejudice. His initial criticism of the Freedman’s Bureau was that it would exclude the black race “from the general schemes of civilization [. . .] that they will be an injury to the colored race. They will serve to keep up the very prejudices which it is so desirable to banish from the country.”
83. Douglass 1894.
84. McPherson 1975, 204–5.
85. Litwack 1980, 85.
86. *Ibid.*
87. Foner 1999, 585.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*, 586.
90. Anderson 1988, 10.
91. Foner 2002, 144.
92. Litwack 1997, 61.
93. Foner 2002, 365; Perman 2003, 90.
94. *Ibid.*
95. Litwack 1997, 53.
96. Buccola 2012, 137.
97. *Ibid.*, 137–38.

98. *Ibid.*, 144.
99. *Ibid.*, 144, 146.
100. Foner 1999, 615–24.
101. *Ibid.*, 216–17.
102. *Ibid.*, 680. Douglass marked a state’s potential for success upon its public education program. Michigan, for example, established such a program and Douglass deemed this state to have “a great future.” An entire editorial, “A Progressive State,” was dedicated to the subject: Buccola 2012, 154.
103. *Ibid.*, 680.
104. Buccola 2012, 155.
105. Douglass 1849.
106. Buccola 2012, 155.
107. Myers 2013.
108. Douglass 1894.

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