ON A hot day in August, 1864, a prominent politician entered the White House and paused in the President's outer office. "It was dark," Joseph T. Mills wrote later. And there "in a corner I saw a man quietly reading who possessed a remarkable physiognomy."

The man awed Judge Mills.

"I was riveted to the spot," he said, adding: "I stood and stared at him. He raised his flashing eyes and caught me in the act. I was compelled to speak. Said I, 'Are you the President?' 'No,' replied the stranger, 'I am Frederick Douglass.'"

It was an honest mistake.

Frederick Douglass was in Washington to see Abraham Lincoln. He was not the President, but, under different circumstances, he could have been. He had all the gifts—presence, passion, bearing, brilliance, all the gifts save one: he was non-white. Color—an accident of birth—barred him from the highest prize, but it did not prevent him from becoming one of the most remarkable men of that or any other age.

Born in the lowest position in society, Douglass emancipated himself and became an orator, an abolitionist, an editor, a politician, a seer and a prophet. Born brown and hungry in a society that forbade slaves to read, he lifted himself by his own efforts and became one of the great names of an age that abounds in greatness. For 50 years, from 1845 to 1895, he was in the forefront of the fight for human freedom. During this period, he laid the foundation for the Negro protest movement.

Although he died 68 years ago, Frederick Douglass is as current as yesterday's headline. One hundred and ten years ago, he was staging sit-ins on Massachusetts railroads. One hundred and six years ago, he was leading a protest movement that would not submit to the slave regime. The Negro-breaker's name was Edward Covey, and Covey was good at his trade. He worked Douglass until he was ready to drop from exhaustion and whipped him until he bowed and smiled. But worms—and slaves and Negroes—turn. One day, Douglass tells us, he turned and made a desperate last stand. The two men grappled to an indecisive draw. Covey stalked off and never afterwards touched Douglass. From this incident, Douglass drew a moral which he applied to many situations after he gained his freedom.

"He is whipped oftenest who is whipped easiest."

Four years later, at the age of 21, Douglass escaped from slavery. In 1838, he borrowed a sailor suit and an official-looking paper with a big American eagle on it. Grabbing a train, he traveled to New York, flashing his eagle-stamped paper as he went. Three years later, he joined the phalanx of Negro and white men who were waging an intensive cold war against slavery. White abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and free Negroes like Charles Lenox Remond were in the forefront of the movement, but they did not have the firsthand knowledge that Douglass had; and their speeches lacked his concreteness and fire. Douglass, on the platform, was a sight to see. He was a good-looking man, tall, well-built with olive skin and a halo of hair worn smooth. He was a seer, a prophet, and a force to be reckoned with. He was a moral which he applied to many situations after he gained his freedom.

"If there is no struggle," he said, "there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want the rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will. Men may not get all they pay for in this world; but they must certainly pay for all they get."

More important than the eloquence of Douglass' words was the eloquence of his life. Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey (he assumed the name Douglass later) was born in February, 1817, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He never knew his father (who was rumored to be his master) and he only saw his mother five or six times. Slavery, he said once, abolished both fatherhood and motherhood.

As a child, he knew the brutality and degradation of slavery. He knew hunger and pain and he saw his aunt and other Negro men and women whipped till blood ran like rivulets down their backs.

A stroke of luck sent Douglass to Baltimore, Md., where he learned at an early age that knowledge is power. His mistress wanted to teach him the alphabet, but his master forbade it. "Give a nigger an inch," he said, "and he will take an ell... Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world." Listening, thinking, dreaming, Frederick came to the conclusion that words were weapons. He hid dirty pages in his pockets and when no one was looking he extracted the pages and spelled out the magic words.

Later, while still a slave, Douglass learned that power has its limitations. This was an extraordinary discovery and it changed the whole course of his life. It happened this way. He refused to buckle down to his master and was sent to a professional Negro-breaker who specialized in destroying the spirit of slaves who would not submit to the slave regime. The Negro-breaker's name was Edward Covey, and Covey was good at his trade. He worked Douglass until he was ready to drop from exhaustion and whipped him until he bowed and smiled. But worms—and slaves and Negroes—turn. One day, Douglass tells us, he turned and made a desperate last stand. The two men grappled to an indecisive draw. Covey stalked off and never afterwards touched Douglass. From this incident, Douglass drew a moral which he applied to many situations after he gained his freedom.

"He is whipped oftenest who is whipped easiest."

Within a few years, Douglass was a household name. He traveled to England, Ireland and Scotland, was feted by ladies, lords and earls. His reception was so warm that he was tempted to remain abroad. But in an eloquent farewell speech at London Tavern, he said: "I choose rather to go home; to return to America... I go, turning my back upon the
ease, comfort and respectability which I might maintain even here, ignorant as I am. Still, I will go back for the sake of my brethren. I go to suffer with them; to toil with them; to endure insult with them; to lift up my voice in their behalf; to speak and write in their vindication; and struggle in their ranks for that emancipation which shall yet be achieved by the power of truth and of principle for that oppressed people."

So, turning his back on ease, comfort and respectability, Douglass returned to America. For almost six years, he had labored in the Garrison vineyard. Now he stepped out on his own. In 1847, he started publishing the North Star in Rochester, New York. From that year until the abolition of slavery, he was in the forefront of the abolitionist ranks.

In an age of danger and doubt, Douglass and other black abolitionists came to grips with dilemmas which lie deep in the Negro's heart. Douglass asked the old and insistent question: "How can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" The answers revolved around the traditional trilogy: ballots, bullets, or Bibles, and Iago's injunction: "Go, make money." The followers of William Lloyd Garrison condemned "complexional institutions" (Negro churches, lodges, schools, newspapers and conventions). The Garrisonians also abandoned political action and advocated a campaign based on passive resistance and moral force.

After 1851, Douglass favored ballots, if possible, and bullets, if necessary. He was an opportunist on the issue of "complexional institutions." He demanded complete integration, but if circumstances made this impossible, he unhesitatingly recommended special institutions. At stake here was a bitter issue of power. Douglass was an independent man who felt uncomfortable in a subsidiary role; he demanded a share in the "generalship" of the movement. In a statement reminiscent of Toussaint L'Ouverture, he said: "No people that has solely depended on foreign aid, or rather, upon the efforts of those, in any way identified with the oppressor, to undo the heavy burdens, ever stood forth in the attitude of Freedom."

Douglass believed that he and other black abolitionists could make a positive contribution by proving that Negroes were active rather than passive "cogs in the antislavery machinery. He said that "... the man who has suffered the wrong is the man to demand redress—that the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT—and that he who has endured the cruel pangs of Slavery is the man to advocate Liberty. It is evident that we must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends."

Douglass' famous Fourth of July speech is a good example of the passion and brilliance he brought to the anti-slavery cause. Speaking at Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852, he indicted every structure of power in America. "What," he asked, "is the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass pounded impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, more bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages ...

"You boast of your love of liberty," Douglass continued, "your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity... You hurl anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to the mere tools and body-guards of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot, and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the subject of public discourse!"

"You boast of your love of liberty," Douglass dared to make "the ten thousand wrongs" the subject of public discourse. Week after week, year after year, in the crucial decades before the Civil War, he went up and down the North, warning, preaching, pleading. He and other Negro abolitionists played a major role in shaping the crisis which led to the Civil War. During the Civil War, Douglass prodded the

---

In autumn of life, Douglass led protest against restoration of white supremacy in the South. He laid foundation for protest movement which suffered temporary eclipse during period of Booker T. Washington's leadership.
A few days later, the Negroes of Americas, Ga., held a meeting and voted to contribute to a national fund to erect a monument in Douglass’ honor. “No people;” these maidens and laborers and cottonpickers said, “no people who can produce a Douglass need despair.”

What does Douglass say to us today? What can we find in his life to nerve us for the trials of this hour?

First of all—and this is very important—Douglass was a man, in the deepest and truest sense of that much-abused word. Today, when there are so few men—black or white—we need the nobility of his example. Douglass knew—and we need that knowledge today—that to be a man is to be, precisely, responsible. He knew, too, that manhood is founded on self-respect and self-esteem. Frederick Douglass did not doubt himself; nor did he apologize for his place of birth or the color of his mother’s skin. He reminds us, at this hour when many need reminding, that the man who knows who he is and where he is going can move mountains—and Mississippi.

Frederick Douglass was a man; and he was a sensitive man. He did not isolate himself from the masses. Wherever he went, the Negro went with him. He bitterly criticized free Negroes—and there were many—who were indifferent to the anti-slavery cause. Free Negroes and slaves, he said, were chained together and would rise or fall together. Middle-class Negroes who shun and despise lower-class Negroes today would do well to remember his words. His mission, he said, was “to stand up for the downtrodden, to speak for the dumb, and to remember those in bond as bound with me.”

Another quality in Douglass’ life that speaks to us today is his commitment. Douglass was committed; he acted. Wherever he was, he sought out the struggle and involved himself in it. And he was persistent. Life in this age was not easy for a white agitator; it was impossible for a Negro. Douglass was roughed up by pro-slavery thugs; his right hand was

---

“Agitator!”

“Agitator!”

On a cold gray day in February, 1895, the Great Agitator slumped to the floor in his mansion at Anacostia Heights, Washington, D.C., and went to that peace promised all men. The legislatures of several Northern states passed resolutions of regret. And the legislature of North Carolina adjourned for the day to mark the death of the greatest Negro produced in this country. At his funeral in Washington, John Hutchinson sang the abolitionist song his brother Jesse had dedicated to Douglass.

I’ll be free, I’ll be free, and none shall confine With letters and chains this spirit of mine; From my youth I have vowed in God to rely, And, despite the oppressor, gain freedom or die.

---

A few days later, the Negroes of Americas, Ga., held a meeting and voted to contribute to a national fund to erect a monument in Douglass’ honor. “No people;” these maidens and laborers and cottonpickers said, “no people who can produce a Douglass need despair.”

What does Douglass say to us today? What can we find in his life to nerve us for the trials of this hour?

First of all—and this is very important—Douglass was a man, in the deepest and truest sense of that much-abused word. Today, when there are so few men—black or white—we need the nobility of his example. Douglass knew—and we need that knowledge today—that to be a man is to be, precisely, responsible. He knew, too, that manhood is founded on self-respect and self-esteem. Frederick Douglass did not doubt himself; nor did he apologize for his place of birth or the color of his mother’s skin. He reminds us, at this hour when many need reminding, that the man who knows who he is and where he is going can move mountains—and Mississippi.

Frederick Douglass was a man; and he was a sensitive man. He did not isolate himself from the masses. Wherever he went, the Negro went with him. He bitterly criticized free Negroes—and there were many—who were indifferent to the anti-slavery cause. Free Negroes and slaves, he said, were chained together and would rise or fall together. Middle-class Negroes who shun and despise lower-class Negroes today would do well to remember his words. His mission, he said, was “to stand up for the downtrodden, to speak for the dumb, and to remember those in bond as bound with me.”

Another quality in Douglass’ life that speaks to us today is his commitment. Douglass was committed; he acted. Wherever he was, he sought out the struggle and involved himself in it. And he was persistent. Life in this age was not easy for a white agitator; it was impossible for a Negro. Douglass was roughed up by pro-slavery thugs; his right hand was

---

“Agitator!”

“Agitator!”

On a cold gray day in February, 1895, the Great Agitator slumped to the floor in his mansion at Anacostia Heights, Washington, D.C., and went to that peace promised all men. The legislatures of several Northern states passed resolutions of regret. And the legislature of North Carolina adjourned for the day to mark the death of the greatest Negro produced in this country. At his funeral in Washington, John Hutchinson sang the abolitionist song his brother Jesse had dedicated to Douglass.

I’ll be free, I’ll be free, and none shall confine With letters and chains this spirit of mine; From my youth I have vowed in God to rely, And, despite the oppressor, gain freedom or die.

---

A few days later, the Negroes of Americas, Ga., held a meeting and voted to contribute to a national fund to erect a monument in Douglass’ honor. “No people;” these maidens and laborers and cottonpickers said, “no people who can produce a Douglass need despair.”

What does Douglass say to us today? What can we find in his life to nerve us for the trials of this hour?

First of all—and this is very important—Douglass was a man, in the deepest and truest sense of that much-abused word. Today, when there are so few men—black or white—we need the nobility of his example. Douglass knew—and we need that knowledge today—that to be a man is to be, precisely, responsible. He knew, too, that manhood is founded on self-respect and self-esteem. Frederick Douglass did not doubt himself; nor did he apologize for his place of birth or the color of his mother’s skin. He reminds us, at this hour when many need reminding, that the man who knows who he is and where he is going can move mountains—and Mississippi.

Frederick Douglass was a man; and he was a sensitive man. He did not isolate himself from the masses. Wherever he went, the Negro went with him. He bitterly criticized free Negroes—and there were many—who were indifferent to the anti-slavery cause. Free Negroes and slaves, he said, were chained together and would rise or fall together. Middle-class Negroes who shun and despise lower-class Negroes today would do well to remember his words. His mission, he said, was “to stand up for the downtrodden, to speak for the dumb, and to remember those in bond as bound with me.”

Another quality in Douglass’ life that speaks to us today is his commitment. Douglass was committed; he acted. Wherever he was, he sought out the struggle and involved himself in it. And he was persistent. Life in this age was not easy for a white agitator; it was impossible for a Negro. Douglass was roughed up by pro-slavery thugs; his right hand was
Wherever in the world you travel, you're better off with Pan Am —world’s most experienced airline!

(See your Pan Am Travel Agent)