FREDERICK DOUGLASS' MULTIRACIAL ABOLITIONISM:
"ANTAGONISTIC COOPERATION" AND "REDEEMABLE IDEALS"
IN THE JULY 5 SPEECH

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Frederick Douglass spoke to a multiracial public sphere by engaging in "antagonistic cooperation " with white and black abolitionists. Far from being a relic of "black history," he served as an "integrative ancestor" for all those trying to help build a multiracial democracy. Douglass' July 5 Speech is placed in the context of his position at "a sort of half-way place" between racial collectives. Douglass' interracial rhetoric was developed to engage the different constituents of his multiracial audiences. Douglass sought to "redeem" both Enlightenment and Biblical egalitarian ideals in order to construct a multiracial "imagined community."

On July 5, 1852, Frederick Douglass gave an address entitled "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?," often called the "July 5 Speech" because Douglass attacked the hypocrisy of Independence Day celebrations in a slave-holding republic. William McFeely (1991) called it "the greatest antislavery oration ever given" (p. 73).' I would agree with that assessment, and add that it is also a text with deep poetic resonance and moral vision. I will examine here some rhetorical strategies Douglass employed in order to effectively communicate with the different constituents of his multiracial audience. Since many of these strategies were derived from Bible stories and Enlightenment/"natural rights" philosophy, I will pay particular attention to the streams of Christian and political egalitarianism which fed Douglass' vision. I have three main goals:
1) to give a sense of Douglass' stature in his own time;
2) to deepen our understanding of Douglass' biracial identity and political philosophy, and of how this makes him an "integrative ancestor"; and
3) to illustrate the continuing timeliness of Douglass' critique of American racialism.

In a conclusion on the contemporary implications of Douglass' life and thought, I will examine some of the aftershocks Douglass is still causing in the 1990s. These repercussions range from the rap star KRS-One's dismissal of Douglass as a "house nigger" and a "sellout," to political theorist Michael Lind's (1995) view of Douglass as "the greatest American" and as a "standard-bearer" for a transracial "fourth American revolution" (p. 378).2

As Gerald Fulkerson (1972) notes, Douglass has been "largely ignored by rhetorical critics" (p. 261). This does not seem to be for want of testimonies of Douglass' enormous talents as a speaker, either in our era or in Douglass' day. He is often cited as the greatest Negro abolitionist speaker (Harwood, 1959, p. 386), or even as the most effective orator in all of antebellum America (Oliver, 1965, p. 246). His "legendary popularity" spanned both sides of the Atlantic, with both the working classes and people of the "highest rank" flocking to his lectures in Ireland and Great Britain.

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During Douglass' career, one observer claimed that his voice "rivalled Webster's in its richness and in the depth and sonorousness of its cadences" (Whitfield, 1963, p. 7). The author of a letter to William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* simply declared that "It is impossible to do justice to the power and eloquence of Mr. Frederick Douglass" (Whitfield, 1963, p. 24). Reporters who did try to describe the electric appeal of Douglass often indulged "in embarrassingly florid prose," as Fulkerson (1974, p. 70) puts it.

Not only did Douglass speak to ecstatic, overflow multiracial audiences almost wherever he went, but the "mainstream" press of his day also took his influence far beyond abolitionist circles. Papers such as the *New York Tribune* and the *Chicago Tribune* printed full-length accounts of Douglass' lengthy speeches during the 1850s, and many other papers such as the *New York Times* printed summaries (Fulkerson, 1972, p. 265). His speeches were distributed widely in the United States, England, and Ireland as pamphlets (Foner, 1950, p. 95).

Such was Douglass' reputation that Stephen Douglas, later to run against Lincoln for the presidency, once feigned sickness to avoid having to share a stage with him (Fulkerson, 1972, pp. 267-268). Douglass' unprecedented package of skills as a charismatic speaker, editor, author, and political strategist translated into a real political power, which included but was not limited to advising political candidates and even presidents.

Douglass' autobiographies have become part of the canon for literary critics, and to a lesser degree, for historians. What then accounts for the paucity of Douglass studies among communication scholars? There are certainly several answers to this question. I will argue that our racialized "binary filters" cause us to turn blind eyes and deaf ears to social actors who define themselves and communicate in terms at least partially transcending "race." It may also be that Douglass' idealism and his use of the Bible make us uncomfortable. And certainly Douglass has been hurt by a tendency to "ghettoize" him in a "black studies" box, and a parallel Eurocentric bias towards abolitionism, as I will now argue.

**MULTIRACIAL ABOLITIONISM:**

"A SORT OF HALF-WAY PLACE"

Even as late as the 1970s, most histories of abolitionism tended to treat it as a monolithic movement, focusing on white activists such as William Lloyd Garrison or the Grimke sisters. Douglass himself described abolitionism as a movement with multiple centers, and recently historians have begun to follow his lead. Jane and William Pease (1974/1990) point out in their study of black abolitionists that there were "two overlapping movements," one white and one black (p. 15). This area of overlap was in fact a "contact zone" (Pratt, 1987; 1993) in which the two abolitionist "wings" parented a third, multiracial abolitionism. Though Douglass spearheaded the growth of the black wing, he also later positioned himself in a third space, which was "at a sort of half-way place between the blacks and whites" (Douglass, 1855/1969, p. 194). In the process of mediating between black and white abolitionisms, he came to embody a multiracial abolitionism.

Douglass' paper the *North Star* represents the difficulty of defining which part of this multiracial public sphere was "black" and which part was really an interracial co-creation. Douglass founded the paper in 1847 as a declaration of independence from Garrison and the white-led "mainstream" abolition movement. Historians view his paper as the first national black press. For the first time, black writers had an impact on...
national political debate. Yet 80% of Douglass' subscribers were white (Pease & Pease, 1974/1990, p. 117). The people he relied on to manage the day-to-day affairs of editing and production were largely white women. He relied heavily on Julia Griffiths, an Englishwoman who for seven years served as Douglass' closest partner. She edited his writing, wrote book reviews, booked and published his speeches, and served as his "constant companion" in his work on the Underground Railroad (Douglass, 1994, p. 706). The paper's major underwriter was Gerritt Smith, a wealthy white New York philanthropist who was elected to Congress on an abolitionist platform. 

Furthermore, in its editorial stance the *North Star* came to stake out a middle ground between the "white" Garrisonian wing, and a group of black abolitionists, many with their own papers, who often adopted separatist or emigrationist stances. And it was from this middle ground that Douglass counseled President Lincoln, and in a real sense defined the Civil War's focus-while Garrisonians and separatist black abolitionists shrank in size and impact.

Both black and white abolitionists puzzled in different ways over how to envision and build a multiracial society. A debate emerged over whether or not a biracial republic could be built on existing foundations. The Constitution, a contested cornerstone of the American republic, was a primary bone of contention. Douglass' mentor Garrison called it a "covenant with Death and an agreement with hell" that should be abolished. But as Douglass emerged as the first (inter)national voice of black abolitionism after his 1845-57 English sojourn, he increasingly questioned this view. Douglass came to believe that the Constitution, along with the Declaration of Independence, "gives us a platform broad enough" on which to build a multiracial democracy, "without regard to color, class, or clime" (Foner, 1950, p. 415, my emphasis). This belief was a heresy to Garrisonians, and led to his break with Garrison. But it also came to define the center of abolitionist thought, what Condit and Lucaites (1993) call "the generative center" (p. 72). Douglass pulled the mainstream of abolitionist thought to his position, and eventually a main stream of American legal theory and political practice followed.

Douglass' life and thought dramatize the importance of factoring into our analysis of "black" leaders, as Paul Gilroy (1993) has suggested, their almost inevitable sojourns in Europe and their symbiotic relationship with European philosophy and cultural traditions. Douglass' view of the Constitution grew out of an independence he achieved through three interracial, international processes. First, he wrote an autobiography which introduced him to a broader audience of white elites. Second, he lived and spoke publicly in Great Britain and Ireland for an extended time, coming into contact with other mass movements with which abolitionism could be allied, such as temperance. Third, he founded his own newspaper with funds raised in Great Britain, which allowed him to work out his emerging philosophy for an audience that transcended race, class, and gender. This illustrates how "black" history and culture in fact occur within a transnational, transracial space, what Gilroy calls the *Black Atlantic*, and what I conceive of as a racial frontier (Park, 1926; Hughes, 1952; Stephens, 1995; 1996, 1998).

**DOUGLASS AS BIRACIAL "BLACK CULTURE HERO"

Frederick Douglass is widely viewed as a "black culture hero," an icon of 19th-century Afro-American history. But Douglass represents biraciality as much as "black-ness"-at least, he is a voice for both "racial" and transracial communities. Douglass himself was quite conscious of this and referred often to his biraciality in both a biological and cultural sense.
Douglass sometimes referred to himself as an Anglo-African, and once remarked that he was "something of an Irishman as well as a Negro" (McFeely, 1991, p. 280). He also acknowledged that he was "part Indian" (McFeely, 1991, p. 280). Throughout his life, Douglass used his biraciality to subvert "race prejudice." In his Narrative Douglass commented that his mulatto-ness undermined the so-called "curse of Ham" myth, which white racists claimed offered Biblical legitimation of black inferiority. On the way to the Cleveland Convention in 1848, Douglass encountered a slaveholder who refused to speak to a "nigger." Unruffled, Douglass told the man that if it would make him feel more comfortable he could speak to the half of him that was white (Bell, 1969, pp. 101-102). Late in life Douglass often referred to an "intermediate race of a million" as proof that Negroes were not so "repulsive" as many pretended (Foner, 1955, p. 412). And he responded to criticism of his interracial marriage by observing with tongue in cheek that he was closer to the color of his white wife, Helen Pitts, than he had been to his black wife Anna (Foner, 1955, p. 427).

I interpret Douglass as a "biracial black culture hero" whose discursive and personal space cannot be seen as "just black." This outlook requires an understanding of Douglass' cultural and biological biraciality, as well as the multiracial contexts of his communication. Positioning himself midway between black and white communities, Douglass engaged in "antagonistic cooperation" (Ellison, 1966, p. 143) with both black and white abolitionists. As an interracial mediator, he drew on both Enlightenment and Biblical egalitarian traditions in order to construct a multiracial "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983/1991).

I have sketched the influence of white abolitionists on Douglass, and will also survey the impact on him of black abolitionists. Yet positioning Douglass is not as simple as listing white and black influences; it requires acknowledging their inter-penetration. For instance, one of his closest advisors was James McCune Smith, a black man who had earned B.A., M.A., and M.D. degrees from the University of Glasgow in Scotland (Douglass, 1994, pp. 1085-1086). And one of the keys to Douglass' move away from Garrisonian "moral suasion"-a branch of abolitionism often thought of as "white," and towards recognition of the need for violent resistance-a supposedly "black" perspective-was the enormous influence of John Brown. This was a "white" man who thought like a "black" man, one might say. Douglass met Brown in 1847, and afterwards, Douglass (1994) recalled, "my utterances became more and more tinged by the color of this man's strong impressions" (p. 719, my emphasis). What color were these impressions, we might ask? The color of the freedom struggle had become an intersubjective, multiracial arena.

Douglass in fact embodied and articulated a "third space" in American culture and politics, an emerging "multiracial public sphere" (Stephens, 1998) with deep historical roots (Sobel, 1979, 1987). Douglass fused oppositional and integrationist impulses: He fiercely criticized Americans for failing to live up to their democratic and Christian ideals, yet reaffirmed that natural rights philosophy and Judeo-Christian scripture were "redeemable" tools capable of helping build a multiracial democracy.

ABOLITIONISM AS A "SECULAR CHURCH"

It has been observed that abolitionism "became a kind of religious congregation" (Nord, 1986, p. 59), an American "civil religion," in Robert Bellah's (1967) words. Frederick Douglass' reactions were typical in this regard: When he read the Liberator for the first time in February 1839, the paper "took a place in my heart second only to
the Bible," he records. After hearing Garrison speak for the first time in 1841, Douglass (1855/1969) imagined him as "the Moses raised up by God, to deliver His modern Israel from bondage" (p. 355). Douglass (1855/1969) later recognized this "hero worship" as a "slavish adoration" (pp. 354, 394), a messianic projection. In the July 5 Speech, we can see Douglass resolving this "father complex" through a critical reappraisal of both political and religious patriarchs (Castronovo, 1995; Gibson, 1992; Wald, 1995).

Waldo Martin (1984) writes that "for Douglass, abolitionism quickly assumed the status of a religion, drawing upon the best Christian ideals: love, morality, and justice" (p. 20). Douglass, like many other abolitionists, integrated natural rights philosophy into a Judeo-Christian foundation, and even when he abandoned formal ties to the church, the moral language remained. He described the antislavery movement as a "combination of moral, religious, and political forces" (Foner, 1950, p. 333). I think it is significant that Douglass described moral forces as something that could be separate from politics or religion, although he certainly did not believe that religion and politics had to be morally bankrupt.

This union of moral language with political vision and religious conviction enabled abolitionism, as a semi-secular church, to inspire many societal changes. Before the Civil War, abolitionism "was about the only area in which white women and black women came into contact on anything near a level of equality" Frances Foster (1993) points out (p. 21). It also spawned an alliance of abolitionism and women's suffrage movements, a fusion that Douglass helped achieve (Kraditor, 1981).

Black abolitionists could challenge white stereotypes in print, through nationally distributed networks to a degree not previously possible. The anti-slavery movement's institutional channels created unprecedented space for interracial interpersonal contact, and this "promiscuous" contact, both personal and political, cleared space for the use of a "shareable language" (Sundquist, 1993). As that audience learned to "sing America" together (Foster, 1993), in sometimes clashing but sometimes harmonizing style and substance, they began to use more of what was becoming a mutually created language (Stephens, 1992). Douglass embodied and gave voice to this process, opening a channel within a multiracial public sphere through which black and interracial discourse "slowly infiltrated the mainstream public vocabulary" (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. 7).

When we arrive at Douglass' July 5 Speech, we will encounter a self-definition and political philosophy that Douglass had developed through a process of "antagonistic cooperation" with both black and white abolitionists. Abolitionists were an oppositional community and a fractious secular church. They had a general consensus on the goal of ending slavery, but fiercely contested divisions over how to achieve that goal. Schisms proliferated in the defining of ideological boundaries and in "naming the enemy." Douglass came into conflict with elements of both black and white "wings" over the nature of their opposition.

Through this interracial cooperation and conflict, Douglass came to believe it was as important to define what one stood for as to condemn what one opposed. He began to question condemnations of entire groups and traditions. He outgrew Garrisonian dogma that political action was immoral, and that the Constitution was pro-slavery. And he resisted the tendency of some black abolitionists to write off America, or to perpetuate the same sort of racialism they claimed to oppose. Douglass' emerging philosophy was a deeply reasoned critique of racialism in all its forms. The solutions he
proposed were deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian scripture and Constitutional law, read inclusively.

"REDEEMING" CHRISTIANITY AND THE CONSTITUTION

When Douglass determined that the Constitution provided a "broad enough platform," he was taking up the unfinished business of the American revolution. The text of the Constitution is indeed a "covenant" with slaveholders, but it also contains language and provisions clearly intended to steer the young republic towards more inclusive employment of its egalitarian ideals. The Constitution is a product of the immediate political concerns of the founders, but it also offers a window on deeper egalitarian currents, of both religious and political character. These shaped the worldview of the founders and flowed into the foundational documents that they devised for their experimental republic.

This platform—deeply rooted in the past and cautiously geared towards the future—was the base on which Douglass proposed to build. The moral baseline and political practice which Douglass envisioned was not black nationalism or racial Christianity—the two paths chosen by most black intellectuals of the 19th century (Moses, 1982). Nor was it assimilation, as we define that word now. Rather, Douglass' vision was of multiracial democracy as "inclusion, not assimilation," as Ralph Ellison (1995, p. 582) put it. Douglass held this notion up as a horizon to the American public for the rest of his life, no matter how far it appeared from the practice of the "actually existing" American republic.

Douglass' vision was rooted in two "religions." Christianity provided his first moral language and his first glimpse of a forum in which he could link personal redemption and political freedom. Abolitionism was the "secular church" of the 19th century, as we have seen. Even abolitionists who renounced Christianity continued to use an evangelical style in their appeals to conscience (Moses, 1982, p. 46). Douglass himself discovered that "he could not marry the two religions, Christianity and antislavery, though one led to the other," McFeely (1991, p. 84) writes. Douglass had served as a lay preacher in New Bedford's AME Zion chapel just before launching his career as an abolitionist speaker. This training "helped to prepare me for the wider sphere of usefulness which I have since occupied," Douglass wrote. "It was from this Zion church that I went forth to the work of delivering my brethren from bondage" (McFeely, 1991, p. 85).

In his blending of religious and political egalitarianism, Douglass echoed 18th-century revivalists, while foreshadowing the 20th-century Civil Rights movement (Moses, 1982, p. 48; Sobel, 1987). Like Anthony Benezet and other Christian abolitionists of the 18th century, and like Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 20th century, Douglass believed that both Enlightenment ideals of "equal rights" and Christian ideals of "one blood" were worth redeeming, and were capable of being redeemed. They were "redeemable ideals," as Eric Sundquist (1990, pp. 14-15) has put it. What is original about Douglass and the tradition in which he was based, is that he foresaw what we might call the "conditions of redemption" in a multiracial context. That is, both Christian and Enlightenment ideals were capable of being redeemed only if they were enacted in an inclusive, multiracial context. Only when the standards of inclusion were based on something beyond "race prejudice," as Douglass called it, could participants in the American experiment experience "the true meaning of our creed," or redemption in both its political and spiritual sense.
DOUGLASS AND THE BLACK CONVENTION MOVEMENT: A "Colored Man" Reborn

A final theme that needs to be sketched before moving on to the July 5 Speech is the "constructed" nature of Douglass' black (and later biracial) identity. This formation of a racial and then a trans-racial identity was a gradual process. The most important factors of this evolution were his involvement in the "black convention movement" of the late 1840s and early 1850s, and his estrangement from Garrison as a father figure, which was made possible through being introduced to a new circle of friends, both black and white, who were more broad-minded than Garrison.

It is important to recognize that only from 1838-1841 did Douglass operate within a predominantly black context, among black churches and black abolitionists in New Bedford. After signing on as an "agent" with Garrison's Anti-Slavery Society in 1841, Douglass spoke to and wrote for a predominantly white audience. His status among blacks Waldo Martin (1984) noted, "depended in large measure upon his status among powerful whites and his resulting facility at orchestrating among them support for tangible black advances" (p. 55).

And appeal to whites he did, in an unprecedented way. Douglass was "an extremely popular calling card" for the Garrisonians (Martin, 1984, p. 24). Douglass brought a new eloquence in an attractive new package that made him a valuable commodity. He was marketed in several ways. At first he was something of a curiosity as an ex-slave who spoke flawless English. He was also a model of a positive outcome to social and sexual miscegenation—a model with which many progressive white abolitionists were still not fully comfortable. Their discomfort was obvious as Douglass became an antebellum sex symbol. Early photos show a very handsome man, and both black and white women "unquestionably found Douglass irresistibly charming," Martin writes (p. 43). But his broad appeal to women was not merely sexual. Women flocked to Douglass because his "quest for liberation urged them on in their repressed quest for their own," McFeely (1991, p. 142) argues.

As compliments regarding Douglass' charm and eloquence grew, so did suspicions that he was not really an ex-slave. White backers worried about their "calling card." They advised him to keep "a little of the plantation speech." Douglass rejected this advice because, as he would write later, he wanted to become "a principal, and not an agent" (Douglass, 1892/1962, p. 264). To put doubts about his authenticity to rest, in 1844-1845 Douglass wrote his Narrative. The book was a critical and commercial success, selling out nine English editions by 1848 and appearing in French and German translations. One reviewer noted his "talent for melody" and "ready skill at imitation" (Andrews, 1991, p. 2), revealing common racial preconceptions. Another reviewer took a trans-racial point of view, remarking that Douglass' talent "would widen the fame of Bunyan or De Foe" (Gates, 1991, p. 82). The book led to his sojourn in England: Douglass was legal property and had published evidence which could lead to his recapture. By his return to America in 1847, after British friends had purchased his freedom, Douglass was a celebrity and could not be contained by white abolitionists.

Douglass was originally used as an "opening act" for Garrison. But the pupil quickly left his mentor in the shadow of his own much larger spotlight. After Douglass returned from England in 1847, Garrison, now himself the opening act, was interrupted by cries of "Douglass, Douglass." Aside from new self-confidence, Douglass also brought back from England the funds to start his own newspaper. Garrisonians tried to discourage Douglass from publishing the North Star. Then Garrison and his lieutenants, both black
and white, tried to sabotage Douglass' credibility. Their attacks sharpened when Douglass moved towards political abolitionism around 1849, and turned personal when Garrison printed rumors that Douglass was having an affair with Julia Griffiths, his white assistant. But in 1852 Douglass could still write to an associate, explaining why he felt reluctant to respond to Garrison's attacks: "I stand in relation to him something like that of a child to a parent" (Foner, 1950, p. 210).

Douglass' close ties to Garrisonians "tended to set him apart from ... black abolitionism," Martin (1984, p. 56) notes. During most of the 1840s, his main contacts with black Americans were developed through the black convention movement. The Buffalo convention of 1843 was dominated by a clash between Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet. Garnet delivered what Philip Foner (1950) calls "the most savage indictment of slavery delivered by a Negro since David Walker's *Appeal*" (p. 22). Douglass objected to Garnet's call for an uprising, reflecting his allegiance to Garrisonian principles of moral suasion and non-resistance. His position narrowly won.

At the 1847 Troy convention, Douglass and Garnet clashed again. Still voicing Garrison's position, Douglass urged blacks "to come out from their pro-slavery churches," arguing that "they were not the places for colored men" (Martin, 1984, p. 23). Since Douglass seemed to think at this point that all churches were pro-slavery by association, his opposition offended black ministers like Garnet, pastor of a Presbyterian congregation. Douglass also disappointed delegates by opposing a national Negro press. This seemed to reflect his desire to maintain control of his own forthcoming paper, the *North Star*.

Douglass dominated the 1848 Cleveland convention. He was chosen convention president, and the *North Star* was declared to be the "voice of black abolitionists" (Bell, 1969, p. 98). Press coverage of Douglass was widespread and polarized—with papers sympathetic to abolitionists lavishing praise on Douglass, and pro-slavery papers demonizing him. Douglass' thinking was in transition at this point, and is sometimes inconsistent. In March 1848 he wrote a column arguing against separate black churches and schools. Such separation would perpetuate segregation in other institutions, he argued: "The axe must be laid at the root of the tree. The whole system of things is false" (*North Star* March 10, 1848). This brought him into conflict with incipient black nationalists who demanded complete separation. Yet in 1849, disturbed by the factionalism he had seen in black conventions, Douglass began a campaign to establish a National League of Colored People. He hoped that building a united front would give Negroes more political leverage. White supporters praised the idea, but it was largely ignored by the black press. Garnet attacked Douglass, ostensibly on religious grounds, accusing him of having denied "the inspiration of the Bible." Garnet's attack helped turn Negro clergymen against Douglass' League.13

Douglass "differed quite strikingly from other black leaders of the period, particularly clergymen, whose liberatory rhetoric was at all times interwoven with appeals to Providence and divine intervention," wrote Shelley Fishkin and Carla Peterson (1990, p. 194). In early speeches Douglass said that he had "prayed often for freedom," but that he did not obtain freedom "until I prayed with my legs." In 1849, when there was intense debate about giving slaves the Bible, Douglass said: "Give them freedom first, and they will find the Bible for themselves" (Gibson, 1990, pp. 91-92).

Yet as editor of the foremost abolitionist newspaper, Douglass was able to develop contacts of a more positive character with free blacks. Martin Delany was originally a co-editor of the *North Star*, and Douglass' initial partnership with him played an important part in the radicalization of Douglass' thinking in the early 1850s (Levine,
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1997; Moses, 1992). Among prominent blacks who contributed to the North Star were Samuel Ward, Henry Bibb, and James McCune Smith. In 1849 Douglass engaged in a spirited but friendly debate with Ward over whether or not the Constitution was antislavery. Douglass was still arguing against the Constitution at this point, but he was willing to concede that someone "in his sober senses" (Martin, 1984, p. 38) could interpret it as an antislavery document, or pro-slavery, or as some combination of the two, because of its studied ambiguity (McKivigan, 1990).

A hint of Douglass' ambiguous racial identity, and the irony with which some black peers viewed his role as "race leader," comes through in a letter his colleague James McCune Smith wrote to Gerrit Smith in 1848. "Only since his Editorial career has he seen, to become a colored man!" he remarked. In other words, the increased dialogue with other black leaders made possible by Douglass' journalism was removing some of the "whitewash" he had acquired under Garrison's tutelage. Smith insinuated, writes Martin (1984), that "Douglass was becoming more comfortable with the black half of his mulatto identity; his white patrimony ... was diminishing in psychological and practical significance" (p. 58).

Douglass was also discussing the Constitution with Gerrit Smith, his closest white ally. And Griffiths was helping moderate his criticisms of Christianity (Martin, 1984, p. 41). Both Griffiths and Smith were free of the condescension that Douglass had encountered among Garrisonians. The interracial social circles he entered through them seems to have influenced him as much as their philosophy. Douglass' thinking was becoming "blacker," but he was increasingly operating from within an interracial context.

The North Star's "statement of purpose" revealed this mixture of black independence and interracial interdependence. In the first issue, Douglass explained the role of the "black press" this way: "It is evident we must be our own representatives and advocates ... not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends" (North Star, Dec. 3, 1847). He was at first reluctant to accompany the wealthy Gerrit Smith to social functions. But Smith told him: "You must go Douglass; it is your mission to break down the walls of separation between the two races." Douglass (1892/1962) later remembered this as a defining moment (p. 453). As interracial mediator, Douglass saw establishing a "black voice" as coexistent with the creation of a multiracial sphere. Robert Levine (1997) argues that Delany, a competing representative black man, provided a model against which Douglass defined himself. Not only Douglass' new white friends, but also the separatism of incipient black nationalists such as Delany, drove Douglass to mark out a "third space" that was both "black" and "multiracial."

In 1851 Douglass changed the name of his paper from North Star to Frederick Douglass' Paper. Garrison criticized the change as an example of Douglass' egotism, but it actually had more to do with Douglass' desire to emphasize his editorial independence after a Gerrit Smith-funded merger. Douglass often used the paper to support Smith's Liberty Party causes. He campaigned relentlessly for Smith in 1852, when Smith won a congressional seat. Douglass was understandably worried about the perception that he was now publishing a mere party organ. One of his gestures of independence was that, at the same time that he was generally (but not always) endorsing Smith's ideas, he was also crusading for "race pride." Some of his writing at the time sounds much like Malcolm X's criticism of blacks who tried to look or act white. And some comments have a 1990s ring: in 1852 Douglass wrote that "there are some things which ought to be said to colored people ... that can be said more effectively among themselves, without the presence of white persons. We are the oppressed, the whites are the
oppressors, and the language I would address to the one is not always suited to the other" (Martin, 1984, p. 58). This appeared in a paper whose readership was 80 percent white. Martin concedes that despite these rhetorical gestures, "Douglass shared few thoughts with blacks ... that he did not share with whites as well" (Martin, 1984, p. 58). This interracial context behind his calls for "black freedom" needs to be kept in mind as we move on to Douglass' determined attempts to distance himself from his white listeners in the July 5 Speech.

DOUGLASS' JULY 5 SPEECH
"YOUR FATHERS": Rhetorical Distancing as "Antagonistic Cooperation"

Douglass' remark in 1852 that he still stood "in relation as child to father" towards Garrison would seem to indicate that he was still working through a powerful father complex. But the July 5 Speech shows that he meant this in the sense of being personally indebted, rather than being psychologically dependent. Early in the speech he honors Garrison by quoting a line from the first issue of the *Liberator*: "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse." And he closes the speech with a direct tribute to Garrison. In private he could write that he had outgrown the Garrisonian school because it was "too narrow in its philosophy and too bigoted in spirit to do justice to any who venture to differ from it" (Foner, 1950, p. 210). But in public, Garrison retained his honored place in Douglass' pantheon of abolitionist heroes.

Garrison was still in the house, but Douglass' horizons had lifted to a new set of fathers, both American "founding fathers" and Biblical patriarchs. These mythic fathers now provided Douglass with a baseline for his identity—fathers against whom and with whom Douglass could redefine his roles as son and citizen.

The July 5 Speech ruminates upon a series of opposites, all deriving from the July 4/July 5 double with which Douglass began his oration. "This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, I must mourn," he told his primarily white audience in Rochester, New York. The contrast between July 4 and not July 4 initiated a radical critique of American citizenship, symbolized by a series of seemingly irreconcilable doubles: white and black, American and not American, free and not free, celebration and mourning. Many anthologies print only extracts from the first part of this speech in which these binaries appear unresolvable.¹⁴

However, in the full speech, Douglass also utilized a series of "mediatory symbols" derived from the Bible and from natural rights philosophy that signify his vision of a "third space" capable of synthesizing these binaries.¹⁵ Douglass' July 5 Speech was the product of a long process of personal and intellectual maturation in which he achieved a measure of independence from his abolitionist mentors. Douglass' resolution of Constitutional doubleness gave him a "mediatory symbol" capable of depolarizing the series of binaries he outlined in his speech. The speech also shows Douglass moderating his earlier critique of Christianity in order to recover the Bible as a liberating document.

This speech is in fact permeated with the theme of dubious paternity. As Douglass recounts the origins of the 1776 Declaration of Independence, and comments on the contemporary context of July 4 celebrations, he distances himself from his white audience by repeatedly employing the adjective "your": "your nation," "your freedom," "your fathers." These "yours" are piled on and on through eight pages of text until Douglass has used "your," by my count, 45 times, of which 17 are references to "your fathers."
Douglass hints at the strategy he will employ at the start of this string of "yours" when he observes that, to his audience, July 4 represents "what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God." The linking of American freedom with Biblical emancipation drops out of the mix for the rest of Douglass' distancing, except for a brief comparison of the Revolutionary-era British to Pharaoh. Otherwise Douglass does not signal his coming reversal. He is full of praise for the founders, even as they are designated "your fathers." There is a hint that Douglass is aiming to reclaim their project when he notes that the founders "preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage," and "did not shrink from agitating against oppression." Douglass even seems to hold out the hope of common ground when he admits, somewhat begrudgingly, that these were men who were "great enough to give frame to a great age," and that he is willing to "unite with you to honor their memory."

But fulsome praise in itself should arouse suspicion, Douglass argues, since "men seldom eulogize the wisdom and virtues of their fathers, but to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own." His examples are both Biblical and American. The children of Jacob were prone to boast about having Abraham as "our father," Douglass observes, "when they had long lost Abraham's faith and spirit." And now slave-traders had the gall to call George Washington "our father" even though Washington at least had the decency to emancipate his own slaves before he died.

Douglass then turns the tables, asking his audience directly why they have asked him to speak on this day, and what "those I represent" have to do with this holiday. The aforementioned quote-"This Fourth of July is yours, not mine"--concludes the long sequence of distancing "yours," and completes the transition from irony to accusation. "Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day?" he asks. This is in a sense "merely" a rhetorical question-after all, Douglass would certainly not have appeared if he felt he were being mocked, and his audience in Rochester knew enough about him not to expect an oration of patriotic platitudes. After all, Douglass had taught a course on slavery "every Sunday during an entire winter" in Corinthian Hall (Douglass, 1962, p. 708). But the deeper purpose of this accusatory question is to make the audience think historically, and to claim an unassailable legitimation for his critique. To accomplish this, Douglass turns to the Bible, aligning black Americans with the children of Israel.

I call his strategy an interracial "antagonist cooperation," because the distancing is antagonistic and critical, but the use of the Bible and Constitution shows hope of cooperation. And Afro-Americans hold the key to a potential collective redemption.

"BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON": THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF SUFFERING

An archetypal feature of Afro-American/Caribbean religious expression is Biblical typology, which "links biblical types or figures to post-biblical persons, places, and events," Theophus Smith (1994) writes. Blacks in the diaspora often contrast a biblical "type" with a post-biblical "antitype" which is "understood to represent a fulfillment of prophecy" (p. 55). I would describe them as re-creations of archetypal figures: Moses reappears continuously in Afro-American music, literature, and political discourse, as well as in the art of other ethnic groups (Sollors, 1986). In any case, the intent of this rhetorical strategy is to claim a status for post-biblical people or events as "prophecy fulfilled." Douglass' representation of Afro-Americans as "virtual Jews" clearly is a part of this tradition of Biblical archetype.

Douglass' equation of the enslavement of Africans in America with the enslavement
of the ancient Jews is made most explicit in the following (unattributed) quotation from Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion ... For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song ... saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my ... tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

Those in Douglass' audience who knew their Biblical history would have recognized that this psalm was written after the Babylonic Empire's armies had sacked Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and carried the Jews away in exile. Those in my audience with some knowledge of the Harlem Renaissance, or of Afro-American history in the 1920s, may recall that Marcus Garvey made use of this scripture in his "Back to Africa" movement. And fans of reggae music would recognize this passage as having been adapted by Rastafarian groups such as the Melodians in 1973 and Steel Pulse in 1980. Douglass, Garvey, and the Rastafarians were all using Psalm 137 as a tool for similar purposes: to describe a sense of being outsiders, and to claim parallels between people of the African diaspora and diasporic jews, as God's "chosen people." Suffering endows a people with "redemptive power," as Martin Luther King, Jr. would later claim.

In this manner, Douglass dramatically claimed moral authority and illustrated why he could not share the spirit of celebration. Echoing the psalm again, he said his own tongue should "cleave to the roof of my mouth" if he should forget the millions of slaves who could not reap the benefits of the American revolution. Therefore, "I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view." And from this perspective, where "the name of the constitution and the Bible ... are disregarded and trampled upon," Douglass could unequivocally proclaim "this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July!"

"Black" here seems to signify "without hope." But in context, it also carries an ironic resonance, a double meaning. Because Douglass follows this declaration with a laundry list of all the work black people were doing for America while some white citizens were still debating their humanity. This work included "ploughing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses ... digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific." Again, Douglass piles on the evidence until its sheer weight gives one the clear sense that the very foundations of the American republic have been built, and are being maintained, by black people. Without credit. The intent of this rhetorical strategy is to show that "Western culture and the economic systems driving and perpetuating it are not so white after all" (Levine, 1997, p. 38).

What Douglass accomplishes through these rhetorical maneuvers is to position himself "outside the American dream but within the circle of the post-Revolutionary generation's rhetoric," writes Eric Sundquist (1990, pp. 14-15). Douglass was "the truer 'son,' the truer inheritor of the flawed yet redeemable ideals of the Revolutionary generation." Douglass employs three legitimation strategies to claim this status as "truer son," the "true heir" of the founders (Wald, 1995, p. 90). First, his reference to the founding fathers as men who "did not shrink from agitating against oppression" makes it clear that it is black freedom fighters (and their white supporters) who are continuing this heroic tradition. Second, he portrays black Americans as a double of the children of Israel. And third, he describes black people as having built the nation through their "invisible" work.

The idea of "redeemable ideals" presents a key to this speech, and to Douglass' philosophy. He is arguing that both the ideals of America's founders and the emancipa-
tory visions of Biblical patriarchs are worth "redeeming," or reclaiming. This represented a process of self-fathering on Douglass' part, as Sundquist (1990, p. 12) sees it. Douglass is looking beyond his biological father and beyond Garrison to a much deeper paternity. He finds his deepest legitimating roots by drawing a parallel between the situation in which he finds himself, as a "coloured" man asked to speak before whites, and the ancient children of Israel, who had also been asked to "perform" by the people who kept them in bondage.17

"ETHIOPIA'S HANDS": "BLACKENING" THE BIBLE

Douglass is engaged in a "blackening" of American democracy, and of the Bible. He puts an exclamation point to this "blackening" by ending the speech with a quote from Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God." Albert Raboteau (1995) calls this "the most quoted verse in black religious history" (p. 42). Douglass actually names the first man to use Psalm 68:31 to argue for black equality, white Boston judge Samuel Sewall in 1700. Many black leaders such as Richard Alien had made use of this and other Ethiopian references in the Bible. By Douglass' time, Psalm 68:31 was saturated with millenial associations, including the belief that black people had been chosen by God to teach Americans "the true meaning of their creed," as Martin Luther King, Jr. would later say. So Douglass' use of this verse signifies a very specific subcultural context, but at the same time, it is also part of and commentary on the "mainstream" belief in America as a "redeemer nation." Like Psalm 137, this passage also later reappears in the speeches of Marcus Garvey and in the music of Rastafarians.

The extent of Douglass' Biblical references, and his use of Psalm 68:31 in particular, is not typical. It is hard to imagine Douglass citing it after 1860, as this verse came to be associated with colonization ventures that replicated the worst of American racialism and Christian imperialism (Gershoni, 1985; Levine, 1997, p. 63). Why did Douglass use it at this moment? The answer may lie in Douglass' "antagonistic cooperation" with black abolitionists.

Garrisonians were inclined to attribute Douglass' changes—the outreach to Christians, political activism, and an interpretation of the Constitution as antislavery—to the "heretical" influence of his co-editor Julia Griffiths and of Gerrit Smith, a radical abolitionist who was elected to Congress in 1852. These two white friends had an undeniably large influence. But the view of Douglass as having been infected by the "apostasies" of anti-Garrisonians was, of course, extremely patronizing. It shortchanged Douglass' independent frame of mind, his ability to listen to a diversity of viewpoints and then to formulate his own position. And it did not take into account Douglass' relationships with other free blacks. As I have suggested, the "blackening" of American democracy and the Bible that one sees in the 1852 speech seems to reflect the impact on Douglass of a series of black conventions he had attended.

"CHRISTIAN LIBERTY" AND "ONE BLOOD"

At age 34, Douglass adopted a familiar position in relation to his predominantly white audience at Corinthian Hall—a spokesman of blacks pleading their ease to whites. But his comments on Christianity and the Constitution also reveal a more complicated positionality that was emerging through call-and-response with his mixed publics: emphasizing great differences but also stressing deep common roots.

After recounting the vast range of activities accomplished by black labor, Douglass asked the rhetorical question of the speech's title: "What, to the American slave, is your
4th of July?" This day revealed to the slave above all America's "gross injustice." "To him, your celebration is a sham." The "shocking and bloody" practices of Americans were so widespread, argued Douglass, that one could travel the world and document all the abuses of other nations and still come to the conclusion that "for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival."

Douglass then "dramatized" the inhumanities of the slave trade in great detail, as he had been doing for over a decade. Lest his audience imagine that these barbarities were a thing of the past, Douglass drew attention to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Bill, which had "nationalized" slavery. Worst of all, this "vile" and "abominable" law had been supported by "the chosen men of American theology," said Douglass, naming names. These "champions of oppressors" had "deliberately taught us, against the example of the Hebrews, and against the remonstrance of the Apostles, that we ought to obey man's law before the law of God." Such a Christianity "makes God a respecter of persons," despite Peter's remark in Acts 10:34 that "God has no favorites." Douglass again turns to scripture to ground his critique. Quoting Isaiah and Psalm 68, he reads: "Your hands are full of blood." This passage exhorts those who have abandoned the "higher law": "cease to do evil . . . relieve the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead for the widow."

Thereafter, Douglass proceeds to moderate his critique. He wants it to be "distinctly understood" that "there are exceptions," and once again he names names. He also calls attention to the history of Christian participation in British abolitionism. "The anti-slavery movement there was not an anti-church movement, for the reason that the church took its full share in prosecuting that movement." Douglass points out that abolitionism in America will "cease to be an anti-church movement" when Christians as a "great mass" throw their weight behind the principles of what Douglass calls "Christian Liberty."

Douglass' stance towards Christianity here is a cautious and very partial rapprochement. He thinks that the tendency of some abolitionists to be antichurch is understandable. But he has also come to see the Church as a "redeemable" institution which, should it interpret its own scriptures properly, could still be a powerful tool in the struggle for equal rights. This reflects Douglass' view of the historical currents in which he was situated. Abolitionism was "a byproduct of the upsurge of revivalism popularly known as the 'Second Great Awakening'," as John McKivigan (1990) writes, and has even deeper roots in the First Great Awakening. But Garrisonians abandoned the church as unsalvageable and developed "an extreme brand of perfectionist philosophy" (p. 206).

At the time Douglass joined the Garrisonians, their "come out of the church" Puritanism made sense to him. After all, Covey, the slave-breaker with whom he had battled, was also a preacher. By the 1840s, only the Quakers still held a strong antislavery position. It took time for Douglass to become aware of the deeper antiracist roots of evangelicals. And it may have taken the charges by black abolitionists that he was anti-Bible, as well as the proddings of Griffiths, for him to revisit the scriptures that once enthused him in his youth, before he found in Garrison a "new Moses."

It is significant that Douglass uses the term "Christian Liberty" as representing the antithesis of the Fugitive Slave Law. As the "truer son" of die Revolution, Douglass has chosen to take his stand at the crossroads where Christian principles intersect with natural rights philosophy-die same fusion of ideals that had brought abolitionism into the mainstream of public sphere discourse during the Revolutionary years. That Douglass understands this doubling to have an emancipatory potential is made clear,
near the end of the speech, when he pairs quotes from both of these inter-related traditions. He reminds his audience, as citizens of a would-be democracy, of the natural rights philosophy enshrined in the Declaration of Independence: "all men are created equal."

Douglass also quotes the famous passage in Acts 17:26 that "of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth." This scripture also has historical resonances that reach far back and far forward. Foreshadowed again by Samuel Sewall in 1700, both black and white writers and preachers employed the "one blood" motif to argue for multiracial equal rights throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Douglass' contemporary Harriett Beecher Stowe used it *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the piece continued to echo through Afro-American and Caribbean cultures, as well as other ethnic literatures. In a recent manifestation, "One Blood" reappeared as a reggae anthem sung by Junior Reid in the 1990s.

The Biblical precept of "one blood" established in America "a sacred textual basis for the spiritual unity of a secularly divided people," writes Werner Sollors (1986, pp. 59-60). Like most texts used by promiscuous audiences, it conveyed multiple meanings. Different speakers used it inclusively and exclusively, to pursue both consensus and conflict. But the end result was to "establish a common language within which dissent can take place" (Sollors, 1986, pp. 59-60).

Douglass' approach, as a form of "antagonistic cooperation," allowed for both cooperation and conflict. Douglass read into the concept of "one blood" a legitimation of his own mixed heritage. His attitudes towards miscegenation, eventually formalized in an interracial marriage, reflect his belief that hybridity, as a "composite" identity, was the invisible "deep roots" of America, and its inescapable future.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**DOUGLASS AS INTEGRATIVE ANCESTOR: MERGING HORIZONS AND A MUTUALLY CREATED LANGUAGE**

The study of Douglass has contemporary consequences. In a recent interview in *Vibe* magazine, the rap star KRS-One dismissed Douglass as a "house nigger" and a "fucking sellout" (Wood, 1995) KRS-One, an influential speaker on college campuses, reflects how pervasive racial binaries have become. KRS's view of Douglass comes from Malcolm X, in which all Afro-Americans were either "house niggers" or "field niggers." They either loved the white man, or tried "by all means necessary" to destroy the white man's system. Therefore, one couldn't be truly "black" without being unalterably opposed to all things "white." In this view, Douglass was insufficiently oppositional. Of course, KRS had not read Douglass or he would have known that Douglass both lived in the "big house" and worked in the field; that he was something far more complex than a "sell-out."

The binary filters we have internalized, both in academia and within popular culture, often prevent us from seeing figures such as Douglass in all their complexity. These binary blinders prevent us from understanding Douglass' relevance to contemporary Americans of all colors. Throughout his mature years, he held up as a horizon die vision of what historian David Hollinger (1995) has recently called a *Postethnic America*, an equivalent, in 19th-century terms, of what Nelson Mandela (1994) would call a "nonracial democracy."

Constructing a multiracial, or in time, a nonracial democracy, requires at least a partial merging of worldviews. Gadamer (1975), referred to this process as a "fusion of horizons" (p. 289). Charles Taylor (1994) writes that this fusion depends on and is
enacted through mutually created "vocabularies of comparison" (p. 67). That horizons fuse means that they intersect, not that one supersedes the other. These vocabularies of comparison, functioning in "parallel discursive universes" (Gates, 1988), interpenetrate, seed each other, and become a mutually created language.

Douglass can serve as an "integrative ancestor" who aids this partial fusing of horizons which, according to racial mythology, have been mutually exclusive and hostile. By sharing the same ancestor, and acknowledging ourselves as both the co-creators and inheritors of his legacy, we can move away from "zero-sum" world-views and towards positive-sum solutions, in which the whole (a trans-racial collective) is greater than the sum of its parts.

Where "racial" horizons merged, the "racial frontier" was born. Frederick Douglass was a charter member of that "third space," affording us a glimpse of life beyond the "racial" hall of mirrors. This has, I would affirm, "emancipatory potential" (Fraser, 1992) for those of us on the cusp of a new millenium who are still psychologically paralyzed by the very thought of "race."25

Douglass extracted an "emancipatory potential" from the forms of doubleness with which he struggled, precisely because he refused to interpret them in a binary fashion (Gates, 1991). Even at his most oppositional, as in the July 5 Speech, Douglass affirmed a foundational interrelatedness. And even at his most integrationist, as in his interracial marriage, he maintained an oppositional critique of American racialism. This tendency to "affirm while resisting" (Ellison, 1995, p. xxii) was a cornerstone of Douglass' style of mediatory communication. This "biracial" rhetoric, characterized by an acceptance of the "double-voiced" nature of our language, and of the multiple allegiances possible in personal identity, can integrate affirmation and resistance, commonality and difference. Using our respective "vocabularies of comparison," we engage in "antagonistic cooperation," and thereby co-author a mutually created language-which may be the closest we can come to redeeming the ideals of democracy or of a "beloved community."26

My emphasis upon why Douglass cannot be ghettoized in a "black studies" box relates to a challenge to achieve a "reintegration of American History" (Freehling, 1994). Such a reintegration requires us to move beyond action-reaction cycles and into a multiethnic synthesis. Many progressive late-20th-century educators have invested deeply in deconstructing received versions of a whitewashed American history, and reconstructing alternative histories that emphasize the contributions of Afro-Americans, Latinos, indigenous peoples, and women.27 This is an historically necessary process, but it has often led to a reliance on essentialized perceptual filters that tune out history as our-story. As Albert Murray (1970) once wrote, "the mainstream in America is not white but mulatto" (p. 112). In the long run, it will be just as inaccurate to speak of a "black history" as it would be to pretend that there has ever been such a thing as a "white history." The language of race, as Douglass argued, is inadequate to re-integrate our heritage, to recognize that American history has been multi-"racial" from the beginning, although often not recognized as such. A cultural interraciality has always existed in addition to what we call "black" or "mainstream" history.

"Harriet Tubman and Ida B. Wells should inspire all students, not simply African-American females," Gary Nash (1992, p. 23) insists. This is especially true of Douglass: his cultural/biological biraciality means that all Americans can claim him as an icon. Douglass' embrace of religious and political egalitarianism was an effort to refute the idea that there is a "mainstream" which can be defined as "white," and "tributaries" to this stream which can be defined as "black" or "brown." Rather, American cultural and political history is an intersubjective arena which should properly be viewed as an
inter-'racial' co-creation. Douglass embodies the interpenetration of African and European elements in the American experience. Black and white cultural spheres in effect "parented" a mixed-'race' sphere, and this interraciality, although it has been actively repressed in American history, is part of the very foundation of our cultural, political, and religious traditions.

FOOTNOTES

1Similar assessments of this speech are in Sundquist (1990, p. 14), and Redding, in Andrews (1991, pp. 58,60).
2Douglass referred to himself as "a colored man of both Anglo-Saxon and African descent" (Foner, 1950, p. 421). While Douglass is the explicit model for Lind's (1995) post-multicultural concept of diversity, he is an implicit model for David Hollinger's (1995) vision of a postethnic America.
3Douglass' career as public speaker and editor has played second fiddle in scholarly studies to his autobiographies, which provide well-defined windows for textual or psychological analysis. Most textual studies have focused on Douglass' Narrative, which only hints at his career as public servant My Bondage and My Freedom has received much less attention than the Narrative. W.J. Wilson (1990) analyzes this phenomenon.
5In "The Antislavery Movement" (Foner, 1950, p. 350), Douglass classified abolitionists in four main groups: a) Garrisonians; b) Anti-Garrisonians; c) Political Abolitionists, or The Free Soil Party; d) The Liberty Party, i.e., the Gerrit Smith School.
6Describing his attitude at a "camp meeting" around 1833, Douglass (1855/1969) later wrote: "I ventured … to take my stand at a sort of half-way place between the blacks and whites" (p. 194). This foreshadows a course he would pursue for the remainder of his life.
7In the early days of Garrison's paper, 3/4 of his subscribers were black (Pease & Pease, 1990, p. 31). Black writers published in the Liberator, but it did not have the same impact on "mainstream" politics-partly because of Garrisonians' self-righteous anti-political postures. On Douglass' relations with Griffiths, see Foner (1950, pp. 89-92); Foner (1955, p. 47); Blight (1989, pp. 19-22); and Martin (1984, p. 43). McKivigan (1990) provides a useful overview of the Douglass-Smith alliance.
8This lends support to Nancy Fraser's theory (1992) that the dual character of counterpublics, both separatist and integrationist, gives them "emancipatory potential." However, the "emancipatory potential" of counterpublics depends on the character of their spokespersons. Douglass' counter-public "redeemed" much of its emancipatory potential, because he consistently balanced themes of separation and integration: both oppositional critique and articulation of potential common ground. Garrisonians voiced counter-publics of sheer opposition. As Puritans they were intent on separation from an enemy. Unable to imagine integration, they could not "redeem" liberatory potential or engage in politics.
9Solutions [for] those who thought about ending slavery in America (depended) on a willingness to make economic sacrifices [and] an ability to envision a truly biracial republic society" (Nash 1990, p. 35).
10"Among the... seasons for the Revolution's failure to cope with slavery were an inability to imagine a genuinely multiracial society, and an over-scrupulous regard for private property" (Lynd 1967, p. 180).
11In 1990s public discourse, "biracial" is often used to refer to the offspring of black and white parents, and more broadly, to any child of parents from different ethnic groups. Sundquist (1993) employs this sense of biraciality as a fusion or heritage when he refers to "the expressive heritage of a biracial culture" (p. 9). In my earlier writing on Douglass (Stephens, 1996), I followed this usage. However, subsequent research has made it clear that, for most of the 20th century, "bi-racial" has been used to refer to a binary, and oppressive, racial division, rather to a synthesis. All forms of racial language, of course, carry on troublesome baggage. But given the history of the use of "biracial," I have found it preferable to refer to a "multiracial" abolitionism, to indicate the multiple positions of participants (potentially including Indian and Hispanic), and an "interracial" culture, to indicate an inter-subjective mixture, rather than a binary co-existence. However, I have retained "biracial" to refer to persons, such as Douglass, who were the offspring of black and white parents.
12See also Nieman (1991). Contrary to conventional wisdom, post-1877 antiracist activism continued and led directly to the founding of the NAACP and indirectly into the Civil Rights Movement (McPherson 1975).
I discuss the concept of "biracial black culture heroes," as applied to Bob Marley, Ellison's Invisible Man, and Douglass, in Stephens (1996, 1999) H. L. Gates (1988) writes of the impossibility of any text being "just black" because of the inter-penetration between "parallel discursive universes" (pp. ix-xxv).


I have used the text of this speech in The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (Foner, 1950). The full text also appears in William Andrews (1996). The short edit seems to follow the extract Douglass printed in an Appendix to My Bondage and My Freedom.

A symbol created out of a collision between opposites, and having "bipolar" meaning capable of mediating between binaries and creating a third space or "third thing" Jung, 1921/1971, p. 90.

The Melodians' 1973 song "Rivers of Babylon" is available on the compilation Groove Yard (Mango/Island, 1979). The Steel Pulse song, "Rally Round," is from True Democracy (Elektra, 1980).

"In some ways the manner in which Douglass interacts with his white audience is a forerunner of what Shelby Steele (1990) has called a "harrangue-flagellation ritual" in the 1960s.


These are McFeeley's (1991, p. 158) words.

Douglass refers to the "higher law" controversy. At the Union Safety Committee's request, New York clergy had set aside Dec. 12, 1850 for sermons upholding the Compromise of 1850. They advised acquiescence and denounced the "higher law" doctrine that argued that scriptures insisting on the commonality of all humanity should take precedence over unjust human laws. Many of these sermons were published, such as John C. Lord's The Higher Law in its Application to the Fugitive Slave Bill (Foner, 1950, 561-562).

A good overview of the way Psalm 68 and the theme of "father for the fatherless" has been used in Afro-American religious history is Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (1989). See also Albert Raboteau (1995). On its political applications, see George Frederickson's (1995) excellent survey.

Douglass tried to educate his contemporaries, who were inclined to view Garrison as the "founder" of abolitionism, about the deep roots of the anti-slavery movement in the 18th century: "the oldest abolitionist of to-day is but the preacher of a faith framed and practised long before he was born" (Foner, 1950, p. 337).

As Condit & Lucaites (1993) detail, 19th-century black egalitarians often employed the Declaration "as a rhetorical fulcrum to give leverage to Equality as a primary commitment of the community, promoting it to the status of the prevailing and competing constitutive values of Liberty and Property" (p. 88).


"Emancipatory potential" is what Nancy Fraser (1992) sees as the moral or political resource of "counter-spheres" - that is, alternative or oppositional "public spheres" of debate and artistic, political or religious expression.

The reference is to King's "I Have A Dream" speech, in which his strategy of reclaiming Christian and democratic ideals echoes Douglass. No wonder King could speak in "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" of the "echoing demands" of Afro-Americans embodying "the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God" (quoted in Raboteau, 1995, p. 69).


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