

Frederick Douglass

Eulogy for Abraham Lincoln

Address at Cooper Union, New York City

On June 1 a large, mostly African-American audience filled Cooper Union in New York City to hear the nation's leading black abolitionist eulogize the slain President. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) had written favorably about Lincoln during the 1860 campaign, then harshly criticized him after the election for his attempts to conciliate the South and willingness to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. From the beginning of the war Douglass had called for immediate emancipation and the arming of black troops, and had judged the President to be inexcusably slow in adopting these measures. Once Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and especially after the two men met at the White House to discuss policy in August 1863 and August 1864, Douglass altered his views and began to publicly praise Lincoln. His speech at Cooper Union was summarized in *The New York Times* and *New York Tribune*, but has never been printed in full. The text presented here is taken from the manuscript in the Library of Congress, and preserves Douglass's spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. In two places a bracketed space, i.e., [], is used to indicate where an unknown word, or words, was omitted from the manuscript.

I come before you this evening with much diffidence: The rarest gifts, the best eloquence, the highest order of genius to which the nation has given birth, might well be employed here and now, and yet fail of justice to the dignity and solemnity of this occasion.

The character of the illustrious deceased, the position he occupied at the head of our Government, the extraordinary manner of his death, with all the attendant circumstances of the country, are fruitful themes, of the most interesting nature;—themes which must depend upon the historian, rather than upon the orator, for elaborate and appropriate celebration.

Had Abraham Lincoln died from any of the numerous ills to which flesh is heir, and by which men are removed from the scenes of life; Had he reached that good old age, of which his vigorous constitution, and his temperate habits gave promise: Had he seen the end of the great work which it was his good fortune to inaugurate; Had the curtain of death been but gradually drawn around him;—our task this evening, though sad, and painful would be very simple.

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But dying as he did die, by the red hand of violence, snatched suddenly away from his work without warning;—killed, murdered, assassinated, not because of personal hate, for no man who knew Abraham Lincoln, could hate him; but solely because he was the President, the faithful, loyal President of the United States—true to his country, and true to the cause of human freedom, taking care that the Constitution and the laws were obeyed; for this reason he was slain, murdered, assassinated, and for this all commanding reason he to day commands our homage and the homage of good men every where as a glorious martyr—one who must be viewed if viewed rightly, in connection with his country and with all that pertains to his country.

Very evidently here is a large field opened, but the most any man can do, with a subject like this, and at a time like this, when every faculty of thought and feeling, is intensely active, when the press, the pulpit and the platform, when poetry and art in all her departments, has been occupied with this one great event for weeks: I say, the most I can do, the most any man can do, is in some humble measure, to give back to the country, the thoughts and feelings which are derived from the country:—The speaker upon occasions like this, is but as the wave to the ocean; he borrows all his weight and volume; from the sea out of which he rises.

To day all over this country—men have been thinking of Abraham Lincoln: Our statesmen scholars and poets—have been celebrating as never before the memory of our martyred President. It is well. He is worthy of it all—and it is becoming in all—to join however humbly in these tokens of respect and veneration.

One thing will be at once conceded by all generous minds; no people or class of people in this country, have a better reason for lamenting the death of Abraham Lincoln, and for desiring to honor and perpetuate his memory, than have the colored people; and yet we are about the only people who have been in any case forbidden to exhibit our sorrow, or to show our respect for the deceased president publicly. The attempt to exclude colored people from his funeral procession in New York—was one of the most disgraceful; and sickening manifestations of moral emptiness, ever exhibited by any nation or people professing to be civilized. But what was A. Lincoln to the colored people or they to him? As compared with the long line of his predecessors, many of whom were merely

the facile and servile instruments of the slave power, Abraham Lincoln, while unsurpassed in his devotion, to the welfare of the white race, was also in a sense hitherto without example, emphatically the black mans President: the first to show any respect for their rights as men.

To our white fellow countrymen therefore we say, follow your martyred president to his grave, lay the foundation of his monument broad and strong—let its capstone rise towards the sky—do homage to his character, forever perpetuate his memory, but as you respect genuine sorrow, unfeigned greif, and sincere bereavement, let the colored people of this country—for whom he did so much, have space at least, for one stone in that monument—one which shall tell to after-coming generations the story of their love and gratitude to Abraham Lincoln.

Those love most to whom most is forgiven. One of the most touching scenes connected with the funeral of our lamented President, occurred at the gate of the Presidential mansion. A colored woman standing at the gate weeping, was asked the cause of her tears; Oh! Sir she said we have lost our Moses. But said the gentleman, the Lord will send you another: That may be said the weeping woman, but Ah! we had him. To her mind one as good, or better might come in his stead—but no such possibility to her was equal to—to the reality, actual possession in the person of Abraham Lincoln.

The colored people, from first to last, and through all, whether through good or through evil report, fully believed in Abraham Lincoln. Even though he sometimes smote them, and wounded them severely, yet they firmly trusted in him: This was however, no blind trust unsupported by reason: They early caught a glimpse of the man, and from the evidence of their senses, they believed in him. They viewed him not in the light of separate individual facts—but in the light of his mission—as his manifest relation to events—and in the philosophy of his statesmanship—Viewing him thus they trusted him—as men are seldom trusted. They did not care what forms of expression the President adopted, whether it were justice, expediency, or military necessity so that they saw slavery abolished—and Liberty was established in the country.

Under Abraham Lincolns beneficent rule, they saw themselves being gradually lifted to the broad plain of equal manhood: Under his rule, and by measures approved by him, they saw gradually fading the hand writing of ages which was against them: Under his rule, they saw millions of

their bretheren proclaimed free and invested with the right to defend their freedom: Under his rule, they saw the Confederate states—that boldest of all conspiracies against the just rights of human nature, broken to peices, overpowered conquered, shattered to fragments—ground to powder and swept from the face of existence: Under his rule, they saw the Independence of Hayti and Liberia recognized—and the whole colored race steadily rising into the friendly consideration of the American people. In their broad practical common sense, they took no captious exceptions to the unpleasant incidents of their transition from slavery to freedom. All they wanted to know was that those incidents were only transitional not permanent.

But we speak here to night not merely as colored men, but as men among men, and as American citizens—having the same interest in the welfare permanence and prosperity, of the country—that any other class of citizens may be supposed to have. We survey the facts of the hour with reference to this relation to our fellow citizens:—From this outlook we find the prospect bright & glorious.

The greatness and grandeur of the American republic never appeared more conspicuously than in connection with the death of Abraham Lincoln: Though always great and always powerful, we have seemed to need the presence of some great, and widespread calamity, some over whelming sorrow, to reveal to our selves and the world, in glorified forms, all the elements of our national strength and greatness. While it cannot be affirmed, that our long torn and distracted country, has already reached the desired condition of peace, it may be said, and said in the face of all prophecies of failure—freely indulged in at one time, at home as well as abroad that we have survived the terrible agonies of a feirce and sanguinary rebellion, and have before us a fair prospect of a just and lasting peace, a peace which *if we are wise*, and just, can never be disturbed or broken by the remains of still insolent and designing slave oligarchy.

Already a strong hand is felt upon the helm of state; Already the key note of justice has been sounded; Already the majesty of the Law and the power of the Government are bringing order out of confusion, by making the Law a terror to evil doers, as well as a praise to those who do well: The word has gone forth that traitors and assassins whether of low or of high degree, whether male or female, are to be punished: that loyal and true men are to be rewarded and protected: That slavery the haggard

and damning offense of many generations, is to be entirely and for ever abolished: that the emancipated negro, so long outraged and degraded is to be enfranchised and clothed with the dignity of American citizenship: That the poor white man of the south—scornfully denominated by the rich slaveholders, as the poor white trash, so long deceived, misled and plundered by the slaveholding aristocracy—are to be delivered from their political and social debasement: That the loyal and patriot dead, whether dying of wounds on the field or of starvation in Rebel prisons, whether falling in open combat or by the stealthy dagger of the assassin—are to be gratefully remembered and honored forever. That the toil worn, scarred, maimed and battered veterans, of all nationalities and of all colors, now returning home from the scenes of strife, are to be welcomed home, and taught by the respect and gratitude they receive from their country—that they have been fighting for *their* country—and not merely for the empty and delusive hope of a country.

Henceforth we have a new date, a new era for our great Republic: Henceforth a new account is opened, between the government and the people of the United States: Henceforth there is to be no north no south in American politics, but a common country of all for all: Henceforth the nation assumes a new position and a new relation to the nations of the Earth: Henceforth an American citizen may defend his country at the tribunal of the world's judgement, without defending a glaring inconsistency and a scandalous crime: Henceforth there is an end to that compromising statesmanship—which has so deeply demoralized both the Government and the people: Henceforth we shall stand an acknowledged power among the great powers of Europe and exert a beneficent influence in the destiny of nations. Out of the vast and dreadful concatenation of evils which have environed us, brought upon us during these four years of treason rebellion and assassination, we shall yet be the recipients of immeasurable and priceless blessings: It is something that the crash has come and that the worst is known—that the storm cloud has burst, and sent down its bolt and has left the blue sky above, calm and bright as when the morning stars sang to gether for joy!

Spanning the horrible gulf, the fearful chasm—made by the sad, the mournful, and tragic death of our greatly loved; greatly honored greatly trusted and greatly lamented President, we behold from side to side,

a perfect bow of promise with all its beautiful beams undimmed, dispelling fear, and kindling hope a new for the future of the Republic.

This occasion therefore, though sad and solemn when we contemplate our martyred president, is not one of gloom, when we consider the future of the country. There is here joy as well as sorrow, gratulation as well as grief, great gain as well as great loss. This last drop in our cup of bitterness was perhaps needed: No nation ever passed an ordeal better fitted to try its strength, or to test the value of its institutions. Know thyself is a wise admonition to nations as well as to individuals, such national self knowledge has been imparted by the war and by this last act of the war. It had long been the settled opinion of European statesmen and philosophers, that our ship of state was too weak for stormy weather. They predicted that though beautiful to the eye, strong to the touch and swift upon the wave, our gallant bark would go down in the first great storm. They had little faith in the wisdom or virtue of the people. And as little in the form and substance of popular government. I have no reproaches for these foreigners of little faith, for it cannot be denied that many thoughtful and patriotic men at home, have doubted and trembled while contemplating the possibility of just such a conflict as that through which we have now so nearly and happily passed.

The cost of the experiment in blood and treasure has been vast, but the results attained and made attainable by it will fully compensate for all loss: Already we are realizing its blessings: At this moment as never before in our history we are enjoying not, I trust, a haughty but a healthy consciousness of our strength: Already there is a feeling of national repose, an assured faith in the ability of the people, and in the stability of Republican Government—such as never before existed.

Happily too: this confidence is not limited to our own country—It is defusing itself through all countries—and over all continents. Writhing under the heel of an imported despotism, the worst of all the despotisms of Europe—Mexico to day, lifts up her dejected and woe smitten head, with revived and reinvigorated hope, and the friends of free institutions throughout the world, will recognize in our great national triumph over rebellion and slavery, a powerful guarantee, of the ultimate universal establishment of free institutions.

But I will not stop here to argue the value of the results thus far of our conflict. When measured by the hardships endured, and the fearful loss

of human life involved, such arguments however just, may savour too much of indifference to human suffering.

A more tranquilizing thought comes to us on this occasion. That thought is the inevitability of the conflict. It was beyond the power of human will or wisdom—to have prevented just what has happened. We should never forget that this dreadful war with all its incidents was a part of—and sprung out of the fundamental elements of our national structure—and was in the nature of things unavoidable. We have but reaped where we had sown. Its hour had come, and there was nothing left but to make room for it, to accept it, and derive from it, whatever advantage it brought. We could no more evade it, than we could unmake our antecedents.

When slavery was first planted in the national soil, treason, rebellion and assassination were planted with it and their bloody fruit was bequeathed to the present generation. And if in the coming reconstruction, we shall incorporate any of the seeds of injustice, any of the remains of slavery, we shall repeat the mistake of our fathers, with the certainty that our children after us will reap a similar harvest of blood to that we have just experienced.

All the great nations of the Earth, no matter how isolated their location, no matter how iron like their ruler no matter how conservative their statesmen, no matter how carefully they exclude the light of new ideas—are fated to pass through what may be termed their historical periods—certain grand epochs, made up by the irrepressible tendencies of their inherent social forces, coming upon them whether they will or not.

Their political astrologers and wisemen, look upward and read as they think the signs of the times they see the crises coming just as they see the storm gathering in the sky. They may utter their warning, but can neither avert nor hinder the event. There is however nothing aimless capricious arbitrary or blind in the oncoming of such periods. They are prepared for—provided for by violation of law, they come when they are ready and they depart when their work is done. Such epochs occurring at different points of time and in different nations, are the great teachers of mankind, they disclose in striking forms and colors, the active elements of the national life good and bad, of each individual nation, making each better acquainted with itself and better known to all other nations.

As a people though less disturbed and more fortunate than most

other nations we are no exception to the general rule applying to all. One such period as this happened to us, four score and nine years ago. It was when our delegates sat in solemn assembly in Philadelphia and openly declared our independence of Great Britain—and when the American people, with a courage that never quailed—and a faith that knew no doubt marched through bloody fields during all the length of seven years to make that declaration a solid reality.

Another and mightier than that, is the one compressed within the narrow limits of the last four years. There is not one jot of all this space from the first of June sixty one, to the first of June sixty-five, which is not studded with stupendous events, destined to engage the thoughts, and thrill the hearts of mankind away into the depths of coming ages. I repeat nothing strange has happened unto us. We have been simply playing our appointed parts in the subtle machinery of human advancement and civilization. We had within our midst a gigantic system of injustice, and barbarism, a shocking offense against the enlightened judgement of mankind—a system which the world had out grown, one which we were required by the necessity of our existence and our relations to mankind to put away. Peaceably if we could, forcibly if we must.

In doing this great work for ourselves, we have done other, if not greater service.

To the grand sum of human knowledge as to what men have done, will do, as to what great nations and states have done and will do, when vital interests are involved and powerful human passions are stirred, we have during these four years—added our special and peculiar contribution, such an one as no other nation of modern times could add.

Our experience has been full of instruction and our example brilliant and striking beyond a parrable: The very ends of the earth may look and learn. During this tremendous struggle for national [], so feirce, bitter and sanguinary, so long protracted and so desperate, we have illustrated both extremes of human possibilities. As a nation we have exemplified the best and noblest qualities—which distinguish human nature, as well as those which most blot and disgrace it.

The history of this war for the union and for Free Institutions, will possess many thrilling Chapters full of moving incidents, full of battles, sieges, hair breadths escape, of gallant achievements upon flood and field, but it will have none, which will so interest, so *astound* and amaze

mankind as that which shall contain a faithful record of the events and scenes which have transpired in our country during the last seven weeks:

We have here the concentrated *virus* the moral poison, accumulated by more than two centuries of human slavery, pouring itself out upon the nation as a vial of wrath in one dreadful and shocking crime the first of its kind in the annals of the country.

The accursed thing, so long defended in the name of the Bible and religion—defended thus while known to live upon blood and tears—the hateful crime, so long defended in the name of law and order, properly celebrates its own death by a crime that sends a shudder around the world.

England, France, Germany all European nations have been literally struck dumb, by this appropriate exhibition of slaveholding hate. It is well that slavery should give this mean and bloody sign of its death, cradled in theft, and living by robbery, it is meet that it should go to its grave under a storm of execration from every quarter of the globe.

Hereafter when men think of slavery, they will think of murder, Hereafter when men think of slaveholders, they will think of assassins: Hereafter when men think of southern chivalry they will think of our starving prisoners at Andersonville, Hereafter when men think of southern honor, they will think of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Deny it who will, Doubt it who may—that hell black deed sprung from the very heart of the aristocratic class of the south.

I know that some of the leaders of the rebellion have affected to deplore it, Some have even ventured to plead their honorable character as proof their innocence of that foul and ghastly crime. But such pleas cannot be received. They are utterly vain and worthless—These slaveholders know, we know, and the world knows where the responsibility for this crime belongs.

The assassin not less than any member of the late Confederate Government, represented a cause, and was the very image and superscription of that cause. Those who have by fraud, treachery robbery broken oaths and piracy, carried on a war during four years to break up this union, with no better or other motive than to make human bondage perpetual, will have to bring better evidence than their own word of honor, to remove from their shoulders this heavy responsibility.

Booth the assassin is of the south. His affiliations such as they were,

are of the south. He fired his deadly shot in the interest of the south. His motto of defense after committing the atrocious crime, was copied from the south; From the first of the war he took sides with the south. His first thought upon the commission of the crime, was escape to the south; There is nothing in his morals or manners, or in the crime itself to separate him from the south—or that should make the south disown him. As types, and representative men of southern civilization—Booth and Brooks stand well together. Brooks, attempted to assassinate Mr Sumner of Massachusetts—a noble representative of New England culture—and statesmanship—and was applauded, publicly applauded all over the south. And I undertake to say, knowing the south as I do—that the same south, or what is left of it, which applauded the assassination of Hon. Charles Sumner—at its inmost heart will applaud the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Let us not, mistake public opinion either at the north or the south. This mistake is the danger, the imminent danger of the hour. We have done too much of this in other days.

Public journals, there are all over the north—which have sympathised from the first with the rebels and traitors—just so far as they could do so with safety—are endeavoring to serve their old friends and allies to day by persuading their readers—that the south disowns Booth—and laments as sincerely as we do the death of Abraham Lincoln. To this there is just one word to be said—It comes entirely too late, and is utterly inconsistent with the past. Take the federal soldiers from the so called Confederate states and tomorrow the very elite of the south will drink to the memory of Booth the assassin.

Besides, the crime accords well, with the several attempts to burn up sleeping women and innocent children in hotels. It accords well with the attempt to throw crowded Railway trains from the tracks. It accords well with the torpedo and infernal machine mode of warfare, so universally adopted by the chivalry of the south. It accords well with the horrid profanation of the graves of our brave soldiers, and making ornaments of their bones: It accords well with the massacre at Fort Pillow—It accords well with the system of starvation adopted by the Confederate government in its treatment of our prisoners. And it accords generally with the cowardly ferocity—with which the system of slavery naturally inspires her worshippers:

Men who whip women with their hands tied, and burn their names into their flesh with hot irons—can not be allowed any especial abhorrence of assassination—or for any other crime it may seem for their interest to commit.

Another strong argument in favor of this theory of southern responsibility for the assassination, is found in the fact, that that crime was freely talked of at the south, and the time and the place were specified previously to Mr Lincoln's first inauguration: His journey to Washington was the time and Baltimore was the appointed place for the tragedy. Even men here at the North, by winks and nods, and other intimations, which would not now be tolerated, gave us to understand then, that though elected, Mr Lincoln could never be inaugurated.

That their evil prophecies were not fulfilled, we all know was owing to his travelling by an irregular train and arriving in Baltimore at an unexpected time.

Booth the miserable assassin only did at the last what was meditated threatened, and expected at the very outset of the rebellion.

Great as was his crime, he is at this moment not one whit guiltier, than is General Lee and other Leaders of the rebellion.

The beginning of the rebellion is assassination. The end of the rebellion is assassination—It is consistent throughout. It ends as it began, not a line of analogy is missing. Booth and Beauregard, Payne and President Davis Adzerot and Breckenridge, were servants of a common cause, and will go down in history as clansmen and kinsmen—and brothers beloved in a common conspiracy and a common crime.

It has been sometimes regretted that Booth was not captured alive, that he might have been regularly tried, condemned, sentenced and executed.

I shall waste no unavailing regrets, upon this point. The ends of justice in his case have been satisfied. His punishment has been indeed swift and terrible.

Men at the North where they have dared do so, have been heard to extol the bravery of Booth.

That he had more courage than his captain may be freely admitted. Yet in no honorable or desirable sense was Booth a brave man. His courage was the courage of the thief—the burglar, the highway robber, who murder at midnight and escape in the darkness—by plans and appliances arranged weeks in advance.

His courage was no bar to his suffering: In his ten days wanderings after committing his crime he must have suffered more than a hundred deaths.

I can conceive of no torture more exquisite and extreme than his. Reckless of life as he affected to be, when captured no criminal ever made a more desperate effort to save his life than he did, while there seemed the least chance of saving it.

To imagine the intense anguish he suffered those ten days we need not track him in his perilous flight, with a broken leg at the start, inflamed by liquor and swelling with pain: we need not follow him as he hobbled along—on either side of the Potomac in the darkness seeking safety and finding none. We need not go with him into that dismal swamp wherein he whirled about upon his crutch, startled by every sound like a hunted wolf in an iron trap—hemmed in all sides, all chance of escape cut off, with sleep murdered appetite gone, his broken limb all the while getting worse no friend daring to approach him with succor, the lines of his pursuers steadily drawing more closely around him: as certain for days of final capture, as though the iron hand of the law had already fallen heavily upon him. I say we need not follow him through these scenes to imagine his terrible suffering, nor even to that last scene of all, wherein he piteously begs the by standers to kill him—to put an end to his pains, and remove him from the horrible thing he was—to his own sight.

The simple fact that he had shed innocent blood, and that a whole nation was roused for his capture—and that no assylum awaited him—in any country except the south—and that the south was now utterly impossible to him, will give a distressing idea enough—of the living death through which he dragged himself during those ten terrible days.

No: assassination finds no encouragement in the fate of Booth—as treason finds no countenance in the capture of Davis.

But let us turn away from the hateful assassin, and think of the loved and honored martyr who fell by the hand of the assassin.

The world is old, and its experience vast, but was there ever such an hour caused by the announcement of the death of any monarch, as was caused by the news of the death of Abraham Lincoln? Was ever any people so instantly and so universally overwhelmed with grief? Did ever a great and victorious nation so suddenly pass from triumph to tears—from exaltation and joy to the very dust and ashes of mourning. I know of none and the world knows of none.

The monstrous blow came when, as at no time before during all the war, we were rejoicing in great and decisive victories, the rebel capital had fallen, General Lee had surrendered: Mobile was in our hands; the rebel army was scattered, blown away like the fine dust, before the strong North wind: the press, the loyal press, had put off the wrinkled front of war—and was appealing for clemency in behalf of the defeated rebels. The feeling of resentment and wrath was everywhere giving way to a spirit of forgiveness and oblivion; the whole national horizon seemed fringed with the golden dawn of peace; when all at once, we were startled, amazed, struck down, overwhelmed, by this most foul and dreadful murder. The gentle, the amiable, character of the man—the man, with malice towards none, but charity towards—all—the last man in the world—one would think to tempt the assassins dagger—The thought was full of astonishment as well as horror. The event itself, was so sudden, so tragic, and so out of joint with all seeming probability, so in contradiction to all our feelings that few could at the first believe the dreadful news.

You remember all the circumstances, and yet it seems fit in an address like this that we reiterate their leading features. The story is soon told: While seated with his wife, in a private box at Ford's theatre, set apart by its proprietor, for the President and his family;—while putting off the burdens of state for the moment, observing the play entitled *Our American Cousin*, which he had been specially invited to witness—all unconscious of danger to himself or to the state: Abraham Lincoln was shot down by an assassin who stood behind him—and died from the wound the ensuing morning: such was the shocking news flashed from Washington on the Fifteenth April—Along with it also came the stunning announcement that Hon: William H. Seward—Secretary of State had been assassinated in his chamber, upon a bed where some thought he had days before laid down to die: and that both himself and his son, the assistant Secretary of State must die from the terrible wounds inflicted by the assassin.

Further on still, there came the intimation hardly needed, that their assassinations were not the self moved, individual outbreaks of the malign passions of miscreants: That they were representative men. They were but as the hands of the clock, in front and in sight, but the cunning machinery that moved them was behind and out of sight. It was

seen at the moment that the assassins had only accomplished a part of the bloody work, marked out for their hands. Murder was to have had a more extended circle. All the heads of the State—and the head of the Army, were to have fallen: Men everywhere recognized in it the hand and heart of the rebellion: The life taken was not the life the murderer sought. It was not the President, but the country—they would strike down through him.

But what a day! What a day to the American people was that fourteenth of April. For the moment we seemed suspended over the howling abyss of Anarchy and social chaos: At that moment a breath or an atom might have detached us from the moorings of civil order—and plunged us into national ruin.

One feature of the moment was the feeling of astonishment: In the condition of the country—and the threats so frequently made, the event ought to have been looked for. Men are men, here as elsewhere. History is but repeating itself—said Mr Seward—as soon as able to speak—The remark is strictly philosophical. We ought to have expected it.—Yet it caught us all unprepared.

Had the solid earth opened and swallowed up one of our chief cities, had the tombs, burst beneath our feet, and the sheeted dead walked forth from the dust of ages, the sensation of astonishment and horror could not have been more profound and all pervading.

A hush, a solemn stillness went out over the land, as though each man had heard a voice from heaven, an uninterpreted sound from the sky, and had tremblingly paused to learn its meaning.

Men spoke to each other with bated breath, with voices—broken and scarcely audible. The heads of the people were bowed—like the waves of the sea when first swept by the tempest, only to rise higher later in the storm.

I shall not undertake to describe the grand tumult of emotions that throbbled in all loyal hearts that day. A thought of the assassin caused a shudder, as if one had in the darkness of a lonely way come upon the fierce glaring eyes of a ferocious beast—or trodden upon a poisonous reptile. We were smitten with a feeling of shame for the fiendish possibilities of human nature.

For a moment there stole through men's hearts a strange distrust of each other. They looked at their fellow citizens with a searching glance,

which said not so much who are you but what are you and how do you feel at this mournful hour? for none could tell how far the dark spirit of assassination had travelled north nor where the blow would next fall.

Still as I look back to that day, and analyze the emotions every where excited, I must say, the one sentiment, the one feeling,—vastly more intense, more prominent and all pervading, than all others; the one that stirred deepest, the hearts of men, and caused their eyes to alternate between tears at one moment, and sparks of fire at another, was a feeling of sorrow—a sense of personal bereavement—in the death of Abraham Lincoln. This one great feeling—overlapped and interlaced all others—and colored every object to the eye and spirits.

What was the real cause of this deep sorrow? Who can explain whence the hold this man had upon the American people? His high official character, no doubt had something to do with it—but very evidently this was not all. Other Presidents have died, though none have been assassinated before President Lincoln—yet none were ever so mourned.

So far as the contingency of the loss of the president was concerned, it was already provided for. It is one of the marvels to the outside world that the confidence of the country—was so easily and promptly transferred from the President dead to the President Living. The death of a monarch is looked to as an event of great political changes if not of revolution—but we have shown that even in times of great troubles and calamities—our country can pass from the hands of one ruler to those of another without noise or detriment of any sort: In this fact we have a renewed guarantee of the perpetuity of Republican Institutions.

What then was the cause of our grief? Whence our bereavement: If I affirm that it was not because the country had lost a president, but because the world had lost a man—one whose like we may not see again.

The fact is the people in the very depths of their souls loved Abraham Lincoln. They knew him, *and* knew him as one brother knows another, and they loved him as one brother loves another. He was not only the President of the country, but a member of each loyal family in the country. The very picture of his plain American face, was loved—as the picture of a dear relation.

Abraham Lincoln was no exotic,—no imported growth of king craft or of Priest craft. He was no imitator of foreign customs or copiest of foreign manners, but thoroughly American in all that distinguished his

character—There was not a fibre in his whole composition—that did not identify him with his country to the fullest extent. He was a self-made man, the architect of his own fortune. And the American people—indebted to themselves for themselves, saw in him, a full length portrait of themselves. In him they saw their better qualities represented—incarnated, and glorified—and as such they loved him.

Other men have, perhaps, been as much honored, but no American has been so much loved—by the American people.

But we stand even yet, too near the newly made grave of Abraham Lincoln, either for a just analysis of his character—or for a dispassionate review of his official life. The wound caused by his death is yet too deep—too fresh, the sorrow too lasting, and the mind too excited with the scenes of sorrow for just criticism or unbiased Eulogy.

The sad and solemn pageantry of his funeral has not yet faded from our vision: The long and imposing procession winding its way through distant states, towards the setting sun is still in sight. The sable drapery of mourning has scarcely ceased to sadden on dwellings or streets, the booming of distant cannon proclaiming a nation's grief, has hardly ceased to reverberate. Muffled drums are still beating funeral marches to his grave, the national flag still waves sadly at half mast against the hollow sky. While the image of him who has gone, lingers in our hearts, like the last smile of a loving mother—just quitting the shores of time.

It was my privilege to know Abraham Lincoln and to know him well. I saw and conversed with him at different times during his administration, and upon two occasions at least by his special invitation. He was the first American President, who thus rose above the prejudices of his times, and country.

I mention it as a proof of his independence. He knew that he could do nothing—which would call down upon him more feircely the ribaldry of the vulgar— than by showing any respect to a colored man.

I found him as you all know him to have been a plain man. There was neither paint nor varnish about him. His manners were simple, unaffected unstudied. His language was like himself—plain strong, sinewy—and earnest. He stated his views with great clearness and strength. Few men could state a case so strongly and convincingly. His utterances were always to the point and without ornament. Though a western man—he was entirely free from extravagance or exaggeration in thought or

speech: He was conscious of the vast responsibilities resting upon him, but bore himself—as one able to bear them successfully. His dignity as the President, never stood in the way of his amiability as a man. He was like his pictures, the same man from whichever side you viewed him. He neither awed by his silence nor silenced by the volubility or authority of his speech. While willing to give, he was equally willing to receive: and so far from feeling ostracised in his presence, he acted upon me as all truly great men act upon their fellow men, as a Liberator,—He set me at perfect Liberty—to state where I differed from him as freely, as where I agreed with him. From the first five minutes I seemed to myself, to have been acquainted with him during all my life. He was one of the most solid men I ever met, and one of the most transparent.

What Mr Lincoln was among white men, How he bore himself towards them, I do not know, but this much I am bound to say, that he was one of the very few white Americans who could converse with a negro without any thing like condescension, and without in anywise reminding him of the unpopularity of his color.

If you will pardon the seeming egotism I will mention a fact or two in further illustration of the character of President Lincoln and of his kindly disposition towards colored people. He seemed to want to know them thoroughly. Born in Kentucky—living in Illinois—accustomed to seeing the colored man in most unfavorable conditions it was natural to expect from him at the first—as those [] made to the colored people he called about him during the first years of the war. But Mr Lincoln soon outgrew his colonization ideas and schemes—and came to look upon the Blackman as an American citizen.

On one occasion while conversing with him, his messenger twice announced that Governor Buckingham of Connecticut was in an adjoining room, and was very desirous of seeing him. Tell the Governor to wait—said Mr Lincoln—I want to have a long talk with my friend Douglass. I remained a full hour after this with the President. While Governor Buckingham waited patiently in an adjoining room the Presidents pleasure to see.

This was probably the first time in the history of the country when the Governor of a state, was required to wait for an interview, because the President of the United States, was engaged in conversation with a negro.