



Excerpt from "What to the American Slave Is your Fourth of July?"

by Frederick Douglass

Fellow citizens,
above your national, tumultuous joy,
I hear the mournful wail of millions!
Whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday,
are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them.
If I do forget,
if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day,
"may my right hand cleave to the roof of my mouth!"
To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs,
and to chime in with the popular theme
would be treason most scandalous and shocking,
and would make me a reproach before God and the world.
My subject, then, fellow citizens, is American slavery.
I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view.
Standing there identified with the American bondman,
making his wrongs mine.
I do not hesitate to declare with all my soul
that the character and conduct of this nation
never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July!