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Frederick Douglass and the Rochester Community

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Frederick Douglass and the Rochester Community

by

Sara D'Ambrosio
August 28, 2014

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State
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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine the influence Frederick Douglass had on Rochester, New York in both the past and today. Beginning with an examination of research done on both the Reconstruction Era and Frederick Douglass, this study examines how Douglass played a crucial role in creating equality in the United States. Choosing to focus on elements other than slavery, there is an extensive look at the impact Douglass had in the areas of education, religion, politics, and global politics, and how his reach can still be felt in the present day.

Following the research on the impact of Douglass on modern day Rochester, there is an application of this information and how it can be applied within the classroom. Specifically, it features a lesson comparing artist's renderings of Douglass and how he influenced the art world and various time periods in American history. A specific lesson comparing two works of art focuses on developing students' critical thinking skills as well as improving their content knowledge surrounding Frederick Douglass and the struggle for in the United States.

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Background Reading

The period in the United States following the Civil War, known as Reconstruction is one of the most complex and complicated times in American history. In 1865, the country was divided between the North and South across political, social, economic, and racial lines. Reconstruction deals with how the United States chose to reunify itself and the impact this unification had on the present day. The debate today in the academic community still stems around the question, when did Reconstruction end in the United States? With many divisions between the races, some sociologists argue that the United States is still in a period of Reconstruction. Traditionally, however the period of Reconstruction ends in 1877. However, even with these racial and equality challenges still facing the country in the modern day it is important to analyze those individuals who inspired the great progress that occurred during the period following the Civil War.

Since 1877, historians have been analyzing the events that took place during this complex time and how these events have shaped the modern world. Beginning with looking for connections to the Civil War and the traditional Southern way of life historians have evolved their thinking of the period of Reconstruction to include the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that took place all across the United States. Historians have developed their thinking and focus of study on Reconstruction throughout history beginning with more racial biased histories in the early 1920s and 1930s to a revolutionized look of black agency in more recent years.

Within the period of Reconstruction, many individuals played critical roles in forwarding black agency across the South and setting the stage for the eventual Civil Rights Movement in the United States. One specific individual who greatly affected

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Reconstruction and made Rochester, New York his home was Frederick Douglass. Becoming a major political, social, and economic advocate of African Americans, Frederick Douglass proves to be one of the most influential local players during this time in American history. Beginning prior to the Civil War, Douglass proved himself to be one of the leading human rights advocates for equality amongst both race and gender in the United States.

To fully understand the impact of Frederick Douglass on the Reconstruction period in the United States it is critical to examine works that provide an in-depth look at Reconstruction as a whole, as well as works that deal specifically with the role of Frederick Douglass. Analyzing these two types of works concurrently provides a complete look at the important role and influence Frederick Douglass had on the United States as a prominent abolitionist and human rights advocate.

First examining studies on Reconstruction it is clear there has been an evolution in historical thinking, progressively adding the role of African Americans in reshaping the country after the Civil War as works become more modern. Popular thinking on the role and agency of African Americans during Reconstruction is changing and becoming less biased as a more accepting attitude of race relations in the United States has developed. Studying various historians views on Reconstruction, there are works dedicated to every aspect of the time period which when put together provide a reader with a full and complete picture of the political, social, economic, and cultural climate of this complex period in American history. As the study of Reconstruction progresses so does the expansive thesis that African Americans played a vital role in shaping the

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country at this time and were prepared for the independence that followed their freedom from slavery.

The first published historical work on Reconstruction, although now largely discounted, stemmed from William Archibald Dunning, a professor at Columbia University in the early 1900s. His viewpoints formed the original historical view on Reconstruction, and attempted to forward the white agenda within the United States. Due to the emancipation of African Americans and their gradual progress in society, many whites especially in the South were strongly opposing to the changing social structure they were seeing across the Southern states. With blacks having increased independence, many looked to the arguments of William Dunning as sympathetic to their view and desire for a return to normalcy in the South.

The idea of William Dunning and his white agenda became known as the Dunning School and while at Columbia he influenced many other future scholars on the Reconstruction era and their future historical analysis of the time period. A modern work that examines the Dunning School and its role on American society is The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction by John David Smith. This study critically examines the major claims made by the Dunning School while demonstrating how important its role was in the historical interpretation of Reconstruction.

The ideology of the Dunning School was sympathetic to white southerners, criticized “excessive” use of power by the federal government, and deemed the Republican party as a group of “carpetbaggers” and black supporters determined to demolish the traditional way of life in the South. By forwarding this terminology, these

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early historians further divided and created conflict between the North and the South, as well as furthering already strong racial divides. Many of these terms still exist in current curriculum on Reconstruction, most notably “carpetbaggers” and “scalawags” which were not as historically prevalent as argued by the Dunning School.

The ideology of the Dunning School challenges the notion that African Americans played an important role in Reconstruction and those specific individuals such as Frederick Douglass greatly influenced the history of progress in the United States. The Dunning thesis seeks to lessen the impact of African Americans and create a view on Reconstruction that appeals for a return to the pre Civil War way of life and social structure in the South. Understanding the Dunning School is essential to the study of Reconstruction because it serves as a starting point and demonstrates how academic thought examined Reconstruction immediately following its end in the late 1800s. Many ideas that began in the Dunning School are still a part of popular culture and have shaped the way many Americans view Reconstruction.

Due to the popularity of the Dunning School among white Southerners, historians following these arguments were faced with the challenge of overcoming their ideology with historic evidence. Modern studies on Reconstruction tend to place a specific element at the center of their research. Popular points of focus for research stem around violence, politics, religion, black agency, or economics in the South during this period in American history. Before analyzing specific elements of Reconstruction, one work that completely tore apart the Dunning School thesis was by Eric Foner, another acclaimed historian at Columbia University.

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Published in 1988, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution completely revolutionized the way Reconstruction was studied in the United States. In this work, Foner attempted to produce an unbiased and complete study of the Reconstruction period beginning in 1863 all the way through 1877. His new thesis and revolutionary findings completely challenged the Dunning School and began the new way Reconstruction is viewed in the present day.

The main thesis of Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution centers on black agency and the political shifts throughout this time period in American history. Before this work, the common school of thought was that African Americans were not ready for the freedom given to them following the abolition of slavery in the United States. Foner first challenges the idea of black incompetence in Reconstruction by claiming that blacks were ready for freedom and fully capable of participating in American society. One of the main economic aspirations of African Americans following the Civil War was to own their own land and establish economic independence from their former white masters.¹ This desire to own land and establish their own independence demonstrates how blacks were capable of surviving as freedman in the United States and how they desired to achieve more in life, highly discounting the Dunning School argument. He also argues that blacks were hungry for education following their emancipation and were not lazy or ignorant, challenging the established view in the South following the war. Foner cites the creation of independent black churches following emancipation. These new independent black churches became the center of black

¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1988), 374.

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communities and a meeting ground for important political and social discussions within the community.²

The biggest contribution to the field that Foner makes in this work is establishing a political timeline for Reconstruction throughout the South and the North. Foner argues that the political and economic dynamics of the time affected the social order and issues with race relations throughout the United States during Reconstruction. Blacks took an active role in Reconstruction and were major players in establishing the changing social order in the South following the South.

Foner is able to discount many of the assumptions of the Dunning School of thought including terms such as “carpetbaggers” and “scalawags.” It is clear to see this phenomenon when looking at movies such as Gone with the Wind, which paints Northerners in an evil and unappealing light. Foner argues that there were many Northerners in political, social, and economic arenas dedicated to helping recreate the South following the Civil War. One example Foner cites is the Freedman’s Bureau whose primary focus was to help African Americans adjust to life in a New South and try and establish order. The Freedman’s Bureau was dedicated to setting up programs such as schools and hospitals in the South for blacks.³ Much like African Americans working toward a new South, the Freedman’s Bureau was undercut by ex-Confederate violence and lack of sustained federal and northern financial and popular support. Foner is able to effectively argue that the notion of “carpetbaggers” was entirely overdone and overemphasized in works previous to this study.

² Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, 88.

³ Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, 155.

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Critics of Foner argue that he did not spend enough time focusing on the violence and corruption that were highly influential in the South. Future works would start where Foner left off, focusing in on the volatile racial relations and challenging economic components that Foner does not go into detail.

Foner's work on overturning the Dunning School's argument and ideology supports the idea of African Americans playing an essential role in defining their societal role during Reconstruction. Understanding how the evolution of black agency, and the gradual power African Americans gained through political means in the South, demonstrates how blacks were able to influence the culture of the South. Foner creates a platform for other historical studies to focus on the specific impacts of African Americans on the South and the political nature of the United States as a whole. By arguing that blacks were active in the post Civil War political climate and had a stake in their freedom, Foner adds to the thesis that men such as Frederick Douglass were able to make huge impacts on the country as a whole.

One element essential to the study of culture and the understanding of the period of Reconstruction is religion. Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920 by Charles Reagan Wilson brought a religious and spiritual element to the research on Reconstruction in the United States. Revolutionary in 1980, Wilson argues that because of losing the Civil War Southerners unified under the idea of "the lost cause." The "lost cause" is the civil religion established by Southerners after the Civil War that determined white Southerners were God's "chosen people" and that they were superior to all others across the United States. After the South lost the Civil War, Southern preachers had the task of reformulating Southern identity to explain why they had just lost this

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righteous battle. It is in this pursuit that the Lost Cause was born. Southern ministers began preaching that Southerners were God's "chosen people" similar to the Israelites and that God forces his "chosen people" to suffer in order to prove their virtue and righteous.⁴ This moral superiority and religious interpretation of the Civil War affected every aspect of society within the South. Religious like rituals of comparing Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee to Christ-like figures through memorials and teachings of their lives led to the South idolizing these Confederate generals.⁵ The new moral teachings of the South rejected the evil seen in materialism and industry portrayed by Northern society.⁶ This morality would go on to encourage the violence and segregation that became entrenched in Southern society.

Wilson emphasizes how prior to the Civil War, slavery was seen as a biblical institution in the South.⁷ Following the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments which forbade slavery in the United States, many white Southerners had the fear that blacks with their new found freedom would revert back to their immorality and threaten Southern virtue.⁸ White Southerners believed to their cores that blacks were savages and needed to be contained to protect white women everywhere. This fear of the immorality of African Americans, Wilson argues motivated white Southern aggression and terror in the South. Needing to rediscover their lost masculinity, Southern white men founded and joined organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, built on the mission of defending the purity of Southern white women and the established social structure in the South. This fear and

⁴ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 23.

⁵ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 52.

⁶ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 83.

⁷ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 103.

⁸ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 106.

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sense of duty manifested itself into violence, including the terrifying night rides of the KKK and terrorist activities all across the South and over time into the North as well.

Understanding the religious element of the violence and rise of terrorist organizations in the South is essential to realizing the challenges African Americans were facing establishing themselves in the South. Religion played an essential role in the daily lives of whites and African Americans across the United States during this period, and consequently intertwined in the politics of Reconstruction and the political and social discussions surrounding the role of blacks in this new American society.

Violence played a major role in determining the status and success of African Americans in the South after the Civil War. But There Was No Peace by George Rable places violence at the center of his study on Reconstruction and analyzes how violence affected the social, political, and economic climate in the South during Reconstruction.

One of the myths that came out of the Dunning School was the notion of Southern innocence following the conclusion of the Civil War. The aggression of the South was merely a response to the opposing nature of the North and this perceived innocence carried over into the Southern whites tackling of Reconstruction politics. Rable challenges this innocence and demonstrates to the reader the rampant violence that made its way across the South that devastated African Americans and their white sympathizers. This violence served as one of the biggest challenges to influential African Americans attempting to create racial equality in the United States.

Throughout the study, Rable discusses race riots that took place across the South and the corruption in the predominately white political system that prevented African Americans from receiving justice from crimes committed against them. Rable also

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proposes the revolutionary thesis of looking at Reconstruction in terms of a revolutionary counter revolutionary structure. The North attempted a complete revolution of the social, political, and economic structures of the South during Reconstruction and in a counter-revolution the traditional South rebelled against these new structures. This thesis emphasizes the importance violence played in the establishment of new structures in the South.

A key aspect of Rable's argument centers on how the social changes in the South motivated the violence and in turn affected the political climate. "The Confederacy never surrendered beyond the mere laying down of arms."⁹ The Civil War ended without a peace treaty and without a clear picture of how to rejoin the North and South. Following the war the South experienced major changes to their economic and social structures, without experiencing a change in their ideological thought. These social changes, argues Rable, led Southerners to violence as a way of attempting to regain control and reestablish their old cultural and racial norms. Rioting and violent intimidation became a part of the political process in the South.¹⁰ The large riots that took place across the South speak to the violent nature of the country at this time and describe the tense social climate, which influenced the way in which the entire South was run. Blacks and whites brawled in the streets from the frustration of the struggle for power in the South. Both the federal government and local law enforcement officials across the South failed to control

⁹ George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 188.

¹⁰ Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*, 87.

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the large-scale violence because of the lack of authority on both sides and ideological constituency on how these matters should be handled.¹¹

Connecting to the argument that African Americans were influential in the redesign of Southern structures and were influential in creating racial equality in the United States, Rable provides a study of the challenges facing them at this time. African Americans were up against organizations such as the KKK, bent on returning to the old way of Southern life. Challenging these oppressive organizations, individual African Americans attempted to secure equality and greatly affected the racial outlook of the United States.

A specific element of violence that is essential to understanding the Reconstruction period as a whole is the phenomenon of lynching that took off in the South following the Civil War through the early 1900s. In At the Hands of Persons Unknown, Philip Dray seeks to explain the increase in lynching cases and the motivating factors behind such terrifying crimes during Reconstruction. Dray describes in detail specific lynching instances, talking at length about the graphic and violent elements these crimes involved. One such crime involved a black man named Sam Hose who was lynched following the accusation of him assaulting a southern white woman. Dray discusses the violent acts leading up to the final hanging of Hose including his castration and dismemberment.¹² This work also discusses the involvement of terrorist organizations such as the KKK in these lynching tragedies. At the Hands of Persons Unknown explores in depth the effect and evolution of the Ku Klux Klan across the

¹¹ Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*, 144.

¹² Phillip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 13.

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South and how the organization gained their influence over American life during Reconstruction. Dray discounts the notion that the KKK sprung up accidentally or that violence amongst the KKK came as a secondary course of actions to the original social founding. He argues that the KKK was founded as a violent organization, determined to terrorize minorities across the South following the Civil War.¹³

Realizing the profound impact lynching had in the South is crucial to understanding the period of Reconstruction and the challenges that were facing blacks at this time in American history. Becoming involved in securing their own political freedom even after their emancipation from slavery was extremely dangerous for African Americans. Great risk was put on those who sought to challenge the established traditions and social order within the South. By understanding the violent challenges facing African Americans, it becomes all the more important to study and recognize those who were able to overcome and create major impact across the United States.

Essential to an understanding of any topic in history is a collection of primary sources from the time period. Within the period of Reconstruction, newspapers were essential to the spinning and producing of false and exaggerated stories to fuel the already existing class and racial conflict across the North and South. Newspapers and editorials spread false allegations and spread news of the great violence and terrorist activity that was taking place across the South. Collections of primary sources allow historians to pull from gathered strong materials that emphasis particular themes within a topic. The Reconstruction Era: Primary Documents on Events from 1865 to 1877 by Donna Lee Dickerson features compilations of newspaper and editorial articles from the period of

¹³ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, 40.

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Reconstruction. Many of these sources are extremely rare and therefore act as a guide for further research to analyze the opinions of people at the time in which these articles were written. Historians can analyze these documents and present the general attitude of the American public during Reconstruction.

Featuring articles written around African American's struggle for independence, this benefits the historian by providing personal elements to the research surrounding Reconstruction. The primary sources revolving around the chronology of African American freedoms helps reflect how the United States felt at the time and the challenges and triumphs blacks experienced at different times throughout Reconstruction.

While many historical studies on Reconstruction tend to focus on the demise and racism of the South, few focus in on the negative attitudes that existed in the North during this period as well. The North in popular history is thought to be an enlightened and completely forward thinking place, however upon critical examination this is not always the case. African Americans faced challenges in the North as well as in the South.

One work that exposes racial equality and political issues in the North is The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post Civil War North by Heather Cox Richardson. Analyzing the dynamics of the tension in the North through a class structure lens, Richardson is able emphasizes the inequality that still prevailed in the post Civil War North. Richardson argues that a demand for the redistribution of the wealth and economic instability added to the conflict between black and white. Fueled by economic desires, she suggests that it was the economy along with the actions of black individuals that created a more equal society in the United States following Reconstruction.

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Adding economic perspective to the field of Reconstruction gains new insight to the era and brings forth issues that had never been discussed in previous historical works of study. By discussing issues such as black suffrage, Richardson is able to prove that blacks in the North faced much opposition too although they were considered to have much more freedom than they would have experienced in the South. As the country continued through Reconstruction and the economy showed little improvement, Northern whites also began to become more resentful of African Americans around them. This Northern backlash against blacks in the closing years of Reconstruction demonstrates the challenges African Americans, such as Douglass faced across the country, not simply in the South.

Bringing to light the issue of Northern racism and conflict provides a new topic of study into the historiography of Reconstruction. Understanding how another section of the country handled the same political changes provides a fuller picture for academics of how Reconstruction was handled on a national scale between whites and African Americans.

After examining the academic studies surrounding Reconstruction as a whole in the United States, one can narrow the study further to establish major players in this period in American history. Many African Americans rose to meet the challenges of helping to determine the meaning of their freedom and pave the way for the future Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

Frederick Douglass, an essential figure in the Rochester community, established himself as a advocate of African Americans and woman throughout the period of Reconstruction and afterwards. His influence on the politics of race relations in the

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United States is astounding and is demonstrative of how African Americans did have a desire for freedom and equality in society. Born into slavery, Fredrick Douglass achieved his freedom and came to be an advisor to the president on race relations, as well as a leading human rights advocate of his time. Works focusing of Frederick Douglass discuss his many contributions to the Reconstruction era and equality in the United States as a whole. By examining the life of Douglass, one can determine the role of black agency and the Rochester community's influence on Reconstruction and human rights.

To begin to understand the role of Fredrick Douglas on Reconstruction and equality in the United States, beginning points of research are his two autobiographies, My Bondage and My Freedom and The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave. Both give revolutionary insight into the lives of African Americans, Douglass begins by chronicling his life as a slave up through his beginning of life as a freeman and travels to Europe to discuss slavery related issues and equality. Having these first person accounts on the ideology of life in slavery establishes life for African Americans before Reconstruction and demonstrates the established social structure of the South prior to the Civil War. Recognizing the life experiences of Frederick Douglass allows for a greater understanding to his personal connection to the struggles of African Americans and his desire to help create racial and eventually gender equality in the United States.

To being to understand the life of Frederick Douglass and his later influence on the world it is important to have knowledge of the challenges and hardships he faced from early in life. Born in slavery in Maryland, Douglass began life against tremendous odds. This difficult beginning is one of the main sources of inspiration for many in the

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Civil Rights Movement and in equality struggles today. Understanding the overwhelming obstacles Douglass experienced from an early age expands upon his importance later in life.

“The three years of my freedom had been spent in the hard school of adversity.”¹⁴ Douglass emphasizes the struggle African Americans faced and how freedom was a right that they themselves would need to fight for. This attitude of strength and tenacity reflects the thesis of strong black agency following the Civil War, with African Americans dedicated to creating better lives for themselves. Studies surrounding Douglass often focus in on the adversity of his life to help tell his story. Douglass is an inspiring hero in American history because of the story of how he transformed from a slave to an extremely influential man in politics and issues regarding human rights.

“From the time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren- with what success, and with what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide.”¹⁵ Historians since Reconstruction have been left with the legacy of Frederick Douglass and how he plays into that era and the Civil War as a whole. In more modern histories the focus has been on black agency and the independent nature and desires of African Americans following their emancipation. This shift in historical focus has increased the importance and analysis done on men like Frederick Douglass because they stand as case studies of a greater phenomenon at work.

More modern analyses of the life and influence of Frederick Douglass focus on the long-term impact of his struggle for reform during the period of Reconstruction and

¹⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 219.

¹⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 151.

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afterwards in both the North and South. Choosing specific pieces of his influence, historians together have been able to paint a picture of how influential Frederick Douglass was at this time in American history, as well as inspiring events that happen in the modern day. One of the most important aspects of the life of Frederick Douglass is his relationship with President Lincoln and how the two men influenced each other's ideology and philosophy regarding equality.

Giants: The Parallel and Abraham Lincoln by John Stauffer chronicles the relationship between these two important men in American history. Beginning on opposite ends of the antislavery spectrum, Lincoln being more moderate whereas Douglass was more radical, having views similar to the modern accepted thoughts on race relations, the work examines how the two ended up meeting in the middle. The fact that Douglass, an African American born slave, was able to have the influence he did over the president at this time shows how impressive and influential of a man he was in history. This chronology exemplifies the role and importance of Frederick Douglass on American politics and the way race was handled over the next 150 years in American history. As one of the most influential African American men in American history, understanding the dynamic between Douglass and Lincoln allows one to understand how this would later influence his politics and goals in equality.

The way Lincoln and Douglas interacted demonstrates how African Americans were able to influence the politics of this time in American history. Douglass helped mold the abolition of slavery and begin the steps toward equality in the United States. One man was able to have such a large influence on the abolition of slavery, the rights of African Americans, and the rights of woman, and is a clear example of how African

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Americans were committed to their freedom, contrary to the belief spread by the Dunning School and early historians. This study of the interactions between the two men helps to explain how blacks were active participants and demonstrates the politics and complications behind achieving civil rights legislation.

Stauffer brings the reader up through the end of Douglass's life and choose to end the book with his final words. When asked what a young African American man should get started in the fight for equality, Douglass responded with, "Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!"¹⁶ Choosing to end in this fashion allows for other historians to pick up where Stauffer leaves off. Stauffer is able to establish the role of Douglass in creating change in the African American community and the United States as a whole, as well as serving as an inspiration for generations to come in the fight for civil rights.

An essential element of Frederick Douglas's career and impact on human rights his abolitionist and civil liberties newspaper based out of Rochester, New York, The North Star. Although publication stopped in 1851, it is an important aspect of the life, ideology, and influence of Douglass and demonstrates the local connection and impact Rochester had on the United States as a whole. By analyzing editions of the North Star, one can gather a sense of the ideological thoughts of Douglass and how these would go on to later effect policies developed during Reconstruction. Primary historical study is often interwoven with secondary research to provide specific evidence for interpretation.

The main goal of the North Star was, "abolish slavery in all its forms and aspects, promote the moral and intellectual improvement of the colored people, and hasten the day of freedom to the three millions of our enslaved fellow countrymen." His literary talents

¹⁶ John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lines of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Twelve Hachette Book Group, 2008), 314.

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were extraordinary at the time and the expansion of his ideas through this newspaper influenced the ideology of whites and blacks across the Northern states. His influence and impact prior to the Civil War shows his lifelong commitment to the cause of equality in the United States and how long he was actively involved in the fight for the modern day America.

Popular historiography includes piecing together the work of famous individuals for analysis. Through the Library of Black America, Phillip Foner researched and selected the most influential works of Frederick Douglass in Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings. Breaking down the various periods of Douglass's career in human rights advocating, Phillip Foner is able to establish the essential timeline for the life of Frederick Douglass. By further analyzing each individual work, one is able to see the development of the ideology of Douglass and how events at the time in history and his life experiences affected his writing.

Specifically in the section featuring Reconstruction, Phillip Foner chose to emphasize writing that featured the goals and ambitions of African Americans. Articles that were featured in the Atlantic Monthly or speeches given honoring the late Abraham Lincoln demonstrate the political activism of Frederick Douglass in creating a better future for African Americans. The collection of speeches and primary sources all bound together with introductions add to the study of Douglass and Reconstruction as a whole.

In the academic timeline of historical studies done on Douglass, works that focus solely on his primary actions benefit the field greatly. Primary source collections serve as a base for all research done on an individual. By reading the actual words of Douglass, a historian is able to interpret his meaning directly and determine the goals and political

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desires of Douglass and other advocates during Reconstruction up through the current civil rights debates.

Local historiography on Frederick Douglass also emphasizes the importance he had on the Rochester area and the North as a whole. Focusing on civil equality for all people, Douglass helped propel Rochester as a leading activist city, and influenced movements around the country. Historical works that focus on his time in Rochester highlight the contributions he made to both the city and national politics while he was here, and on how he lived his daily life. Important landmarks and historical sites are featured so that future historians are able to visit and interpret their own meaning behind some of his famous speeches given at various locations around Rochester.

The City of Frederick Douglass: Rochester's African American People and Places by Eugene E. Du Bois highlights an example of a historian within the field weaving together an individual to a location. Du Bois chooses to break the city down into sections and then highlight the impact of Douglass on each of the individual sections. The importance of works like these within the field is the personal touch they add to the knowledge of an individual. Demonstrating the impact Douglass had on an individual city expands upon the thesis of black agency and independence across the country during the period of Reconstruction.

Understanding the influence of Frederick Douglass on the rights of African Americans in the United States involves researching his own works as well as studies done on his life and career in civil rights legislation and policy. By combining these sources the connection between the modern assumption of active black participation in their freedom and the life of Frederick Douglass can be drawn.

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Reconstruction is an essential period in American history that is generally misunderstood. The ideology on the nature of Reconstruction has evolved over time to reflect the general racial attitude of the nation at a particular time in American history. Examining the politics, economics, and societal changes that occurred in the South during Reconstruction it is understandable why this period is also one of the most violent in American history.

The general academic modern consensus regarding the role of African Americans in Reconstruction is one of attempted progressive black agency. African Americans established schools for themselves, put together their own church communities, and began voting in political elections, even with the threat of violence. Early studies of Reconstruction as a time of white suffering and the evils of Northern society across the South have in general been overturned based on the actual cultural climate of the time in the South.

The evolution of blacks in society following the Civil War was made possible due to the labored efforts of many individuals focusing on creating an equal racial society across the United States. Beginning the fight toward equality, one man Frederick Douglass had enormous impact on American history and the political and social revolutions that have occurred regarding race in both the North and the South. From the fight to end slavery to helping establishing equality in a post Civil War American Douglass's progressive modern beliefs still influence social advocates today.

From Rochester, New York, he was able to publish the North Star, an advocate newspaper that helped establish upstate New York as a breeding ground for social equality advocates. Understanding how Frederick Douglass influenced the United States

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allows one to better understand how African Americans positively and actively participated in advocating their basic human rights.

Analyzing the studies of Reconstruction and those of Frederick Douglass concurrently allows a complete study of the agency of blacks during the period of Reconstruction and how their work impacted the years that followed. The direction of modern historiography on both subjects' centers on creating positive black identity and forwarding the role African Americans played in writing and creating their own equality. Many older academic ideologies still exist in modern culture and school curriculum including the Dunning School concepts of "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags." Modern historic academic studies will continue to attempt to discount these beliefs in popular culture and begin to change the way the general public views Reconstruction. The evolution of historical study on Reconstruction and the influence of African Americans on their own freedom reflect the major cultural changes the United States as experienced as a whole within society.

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Douglass and the Rochester Community

The darkest stain on American history arguably is the shameful existence of slavery and oppression seen across the entire nation from its formation into the early twentieth century. The United States government and people were responsible for the mass oppression and captivity of millions, forced to work in appalling conditions, and treated as property rather than people. Coming from the depths of this darkness in our nation's history stand figures of strength that attempted to forge ahead and create a nation of tolerance in which all people, regardless of race were treated equally. One such figure in American history is Frederick Douglass. Born into slavery, he grew to become one of the biggest advocates of change in United States history and would be remembered as a great figure in the struggle for racial equality.

While Douglass is remembered for his influence on the abolition of slavery, his influence is wide-reaching, discussing topics such as global revolutions, education, religion, and the meaning of citizenship in the United States. Center stage in his crusade for equality is the city of Rochester, serving as a home base of many of Douglass's most famous speeches and meetings. Douglass began his passionate career in 1841 and would carry on through the post-Reconstruction era. His writing, speeches, and letters also inspired those coming after him to continue the fight for equality in the United States. Understanding that Douglass influenced more than slavery is essential for students to have a complete picture of how Douglass and the city of Rochester influenced the world.

“Great we are, in many and very important respects. As a nation, we are great in numbers and geographical extent- great in wealth- great in internal resources- great in the proclamations of great truths- great in our professions of

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republicanism and religion- great in our inconsistencies- great in our hypocrisy- and great in our atrocious wickedness.”¹⁷

When chronicling the career and influence of Douglass it is important to note his both respect and distain for the United States. Acknowledging it’s great strength along with its great flaws demonstrates Douglass’s aim to create an even stronger America. Although prior to the start of the Civil War, this quote would go on to encompass the culture of the United States into the Reconstructive era. Following the Civil War attempts were made to further the cause of African Americans in both the North and the South. With every great gain would come a great setback, demonstrating the greatness and evil alongside each other in the citizens of the United States. The opposition of good and evil in American history is continuing theme and one that many, including Douglass fought to overcome.

“Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts side by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.”¹⁸

When considering the career of Frederick Douglass the first place one must look are his efforts to overturn the force of slavery in the United States. “That must be a powerful influence which can truly be said the govern a nation; and that slavery governs the

¹⁷ Frederick Douglass. “The Revolution of 1848” (1848), in *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 109.

¹⁸ Frederick Douglass. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 197.

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American people is indisputably true.”¹⁹ When looking at slavery as an institution in the United States it is impossible to ignore the last power and impression it left on every part of society. From the politics of the era to the social class and structure, slavery impacted the daily operations of life in the United States for over one hundred years. The influence slavery had on the politics of the time was one of the main forces Douglass hoped to bring awareness and change upon in the United States. From his platform in Rochester, New York, Douglass hoped to influence change over slavery by opening the eyes of the public to the power it had over every aspect of their lives.

Alongside his desire to bring awareness to the power of slavery over operations in the United States, Douglass also aimed to bring an end to the slave trade by exposing its evils in plain forward speaking form.

“To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell’s Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves of the slave ships in the Basin, anchored from the shore, with their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness.”²⁰

This heart wrenching and graphic tale explains to the audience the nature of the wickedness going on in the United States. Although miles away from this story, Douglass

¹⁹ Frederick Douglass. “Lecture on Slavery, No. 1” (1850), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 165.

²⁰ Frederick Douglass. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 198.

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seeks to make his listeners in Rochester understand the evil going on and call about change to stop it. By attempting to recreate in the minds of people in the North the horrors of the South, Douglass is able to spur quicker change due to the undeniable wrongs of what he is describing. However, Douglass was not quick to ignore the major injustices being done racially in the North at this time as well. Douglass also called to attention the racial inequality and oppression faced by African Americans North of the Mason-Dixon line.²¹ Racial inequality and slavery were affected everyone in the United States whether they acknowledged that fact or not. Those who held slaves in captivity and violated basic human rights and privileges should be looked down upon not celebrated by society. In a letter to the Rochester Democrat and American newspaper Douglass stated,

“Men who live by robbing their fellow-men of their labor and liberty, have forfeited their right to know anything of the thoughts, feelings, or purposes of those whom they rob and plunder. They have by the single act of slaveholding voluntarily placed themselves beyond the laws of justice and honor, and have become only fitted for companionship with thieves and pirates.”²²

One of the major accomplishments of Douglass from the Rochester area is forcing those across the nation to question their own values and practices in terms of their morality and justness.

One of the lesser-known arenas of Douglass’s influence on race relations was his knowledge and celebration of various global racial revolutions. The commonality of

²¹ Frederick Douglass. “Lecture on Slavery, No. 1” (1850), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 164.

²² Frederick Douglass. “To Rochester Democrat and American” (1859), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 376.

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struggle across peoples throughout the world touched on the very points Frederick Douglass was arguing in the United States. Drawing on the similarities and differences between global revolutions and the idea of racial equality in the United States, Douglass was able to connect with a larger audience than by simply focusing on the struggle of African Americans in the United States.

Douglass celebrated the success of other nations around the world in their struggle and subsequent success in the fight for equality. Douglass spoke on how the revolutions in other countries around the world forced Americans to question themselves and their beliefs surrounding freedom and equality. “It placed our slave holding Republic in a dilemma which all the world could see. We desired to rejoice with her in her republicanism, but it was impossible to do so without seeming to rejoice over abolitionism.”²³ The United States found itself in a difficult position with the desire to celebrate freedom while still having millions enslaved on its own soil. Douglass points out and values the overcoming of inequality in other countries while showcasing the wrongness in his own. In a global sense Douglass was able to put the faults of the United States on display while drawing on the similarities and differences between slaves in America and other nations. One of the sharpest contrasts Douglass makes is between American slaves and the plight of the Irish attempting to overthrow English control. While he supports the struggle the Irish were facing he notes the extreme differences between the two situations. “The Irishman has not only the liberty to emigrate from his country, but he has liberty at home. He can write, speak, and co-operate for the

²³ Frederick Douglass. “The Revolution of 1848” (1848), in *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 106.

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attainment of rights and the redress of his wrongs.”²⁴ Slaves in the United States did not have the privilege of even being considered a person, but were rather counted as property to their masters. Pointing out these stark differences forced the world to reexamine American slavery and called the country to look at itself closely.

Education and the struggle for equality go hand in hand throughout history with the access to education opening doors for millions of oppressed peoples throughout the world. Douglass referred to an old master discussing the reaction upon discovering Douglass could read and write,

“I was ruined, and my value as a slave destroyed; that a slave would know nothing but to obey his master; that to give a Negro an inch would lead him to take ell; that having learned how to read, I would soon know how to write; and that, bye and bye, I would be running away.”²⁵

Douglass argued that education was the key to success and freedom within the United States. Its importance could easily be noted by understanding that whites in the South did everything in their power to keep blacks from becoming educated. The only way to self-advocate for one's freedom is to be educated so that there is a greater understanding of wrong doings being done and how to stop them. Douglass would go on to advocate for the equal education for blacks in the United States and urged African Americans to educate themselves to the best of their ability. Education and the ability to read and write would change America for blacks in the South.

²⁴ Frederick Douglass. “Lecture on Slavery, No. 1” (1850), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 170.

²⁵ Frederick Douglass. “Lecture on Slavery, No. 1” (1850), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 168.

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“The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in its connection with its ability to abolish slavery.”²⁶ Religion has always proven to be intertwined in American politics throughout United States history. Understanding this connection between religion and politics Douglass highlights the Church’s inability to come to a moral and righteous conclusion regarding the existence of slavery.

Douglass held strong and firm beliefs on the meaning of being an American and what rights as an American a citizen should be given. In 1852 in Rochester, Douglass was asked to give meaning to the fourth of July and how it should be celebrated across the United States. “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”²⁷ In the eyes of Douglass and many others across the nation during the period of slavery was that the meaning of being “American” and the privilege of living in the United States was denied to anyone held in the captivity of slavery. Some of the ideals the United States was founded upon were life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. All three of these natural born rights were being denied to millions of black slaves across the South and even to the Northern states in blatant racism. Aside from attempting to abolish slavery and foster equality between blacks and whites across the United States, Douglass spoke often on defining the American citizen.

Appealing to white Americans Douglass often compared the plight of African Americans to those fighting for citizenship during the American Revolution.

²⁶ Frederick Douglass. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 201.

²⁷ Frederick Douglass. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 196.

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“Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly untreated, by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. Their conduct was wholly unexceptionable. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness, and scorn. Yet they preserved. They were not men to look back.”²⁸

The meaning of being an American citizen was to stand behind basic moral principles and defend them. Douglass felt that African Americans were modeling themselves after this model and attempting to appeal to their white brothers in this nature. By discussing the similarities between the American Revolution and the fight against injustice, Douglass made major impact on the meaning of being an American, regardless of race.

The influence of Frederick Douglass in the modern day is still felt on the stage of race relations and the platform of equality in the United States. Beginning from his birth into slavery to his death, Douglass lived his life with the intention of freeing others from the bonds of slavery and oppression in all fields. Studying his famous works it is clear his ability to persuade and formulate opinionated and moral arguments over the institutions supporting oppression helped establish the authority in politics that he held. Analyzing the speeches and letters that came out of Rochester, New York demonstrate the power the city held in early American history and the stage it would become for civil rights across the nation.

In the modern era the presence of Frederick Douglass is still felt across the entire nation, both North and South, however there is added importance given to Douglass in

²⁸ Frederick Douglass. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852), *Frederick Douglass Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 190.

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Rochester, New York. Rochester was one of the leading cities Douglass crusaded for equality in and his influence is still seen in a variety of ways.

The beginning of the memorial of Frederick Douglass in Rochester begins with his death in 1895. Douglass is buried in section A of Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, New York along with many other notable crusaders including Susan B. Anthony.²⁹

Students and the public can currently take part in walking tours of the cemetery and pay tribute to many Rochestarians who have helped greatly influence the world, including Douglass. The importance of the burial site of Douglass being in Rochester cannot be overlooked. One of the most notable men in American history and Civil Rights worked for decades within the city to improve the lives of millions across the world.

Understanding that Rochester was home to these major events allows for students to make a connection to their home and learn of its great value to the rest of the country.

Along with the burial site of Frederick Douglass, Rochester, New York has created many unique ways in which Douglass can still be felt within the community over a century after his death. Spanning across the Genesee River, The Frederick Douglass Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge was completed in 2007.³⁰ The “three arch bridge” has captivated both architects and photographers alike and has become a key piece in the Rochester skyline. Choosing to name such a major focal point in Rochester after Douglass and Anthony demonstrates the pride the city feels in both of these individuals and how city officials want these two names to become ingrained in Rochester history.

²⁹ “Mount Hope Cemetery,” City of Rochester, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/mounthope/>.

³⁰ “Frederick Douglass Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge,” City of Rochester, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589937540>.

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There is also a prominent statue dedicated to Douglass in Highland Park, a major attraction in Rochester and near the location where Douglass lived during his time in Rochester.³¹ Having monuments dedicated to famous individuals allows the community a place to gather in remembrance and adds continued importance to the life of Frederick Douglass in the present day.

The most prominent place however that Douglass's influence on the Rochester area is felt is in the Unite Rochester project dedicated to creating greater equality within the city itself. The goals of the Unite Rochester project are, "to raise awareness about racial inequalities, to help facilitate a community conversation about race, and to encourage more inclusive problem solving and create positive change."³² The spirit of Frederick Douglass is alive within the committee and a major source and spark for change in the Rochester community toward greater equality in a variety of areas. The main areas of change highlighted by Unite Rochester are employment, education, criminal justice, and housing; many similar to the very topics Douglass crusaded for over a century prior to the formation of this committee. Realizing that there are still many issues to solve in the Rochester community, the image and life of Douglass can serve as an example to the community on how to continue to strive for greater equality and the destruction of the current "two separate Rochesters."³³

³¹ "Frederick Douglass Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge," City of Rochester, accessed August 24,

2014, <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589937540>.

³² "Unite Rochester: Progress in the Name of Douglass, Anthony," Democrat and Chronicle, accessed

August 24, 2014, <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/longform/opinion/editorials/2014/06/26/unite-rochester-democrat-chronicle-editorial-board/11400899/>.

³³ "Unite Rochester: Progress in the Name of Douglass, Anthony," Democrat and Chronicle, accessed

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In the 1800s Douglass sought to create change and greater equality in education, living conditions, politics, and general quality of life between the two races in both the city of Rochester and the United States as a whole. While great progress was achieved in his lifetime there is still a great amount of work to be done in terms of creating an equal United States of America. Looking to the life and work of Douglass can serve as a floor plan for the city of Rochester and the country as a whole. Accomplishments created in the Rochester community thus far in the Unite Rochester program inspired by Frederick Douglass include,

- Creation of a committee of area educators to revitalize/expand Urban/Suburban program
- Establishment of a committee of public leaders to explore state and federal assistance to spark development of affordable suburban housing
- Students of University Preparatory Charter School connected with RochesterWorks for career-readiness training
- Series of business breakfasts held to recruit local industry leaders to adopt more inclusive hiring practices
- Public education initiatives – forums and a 'Citizens Court Academy' – in the works to combat perceptions justice isn't delivered fairly.
- Monroe County Sheriff's Office has formed partnership with Rochester Educational Opportunity Center to identify potential sheriff's cadets with eye toward greater diversity
- Minority recruitment specialist assigned to Monroe County Sheriff's Office.³⁴

August 24, 2014, <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/longform/opinion/editorials/2014/06/26/unite-rochester-democrat-chronicle-editorial-board/11400899/>.

³⁴ "Unite Rochester: Progress in the Name of Douglass, Anthony," Democrat and Chronicle, accessed

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Understanding these significant steps in the community in Rochester is key for both students and the public alike. All of these steps forward in progress toward equality are based on the central goal or focus of Douglass toward creating a smaller gap between the races in the United States. Students involved in studying Frederick Douglass would benefit from seeing the real progress toward his goal being made in the city of Rochester in the modern day.

Studying Frederick Douglass in schools is both beneficial to students and the communities in which they live. Frederick Douglass impacted more than simply race in the United States. His influence can be felt in the fields of education, race, religion, and the global world. Continuing into the modern day, Douglass is constantly influencing improvement in the relationships and life of minorities in the United States as a whole and his home city of Rochester, New York. Inspiring change for the better, Douglass has allowed the Rochester community to create a more positive place to live for all residents and has begun discussing important matters that still divide the community. Douglass was able to influence a generation of change and is still felt in the politics and decisions of communities across the United States.

Application to Teaching

Frederick Douglass is a figure essential to understanding and having a complete picture of American history. Douglass is a key element in many content units including slavery, the Civil War, the Reconstruction era, and the Civil Rights movement. Students should walk away from their time in school having an understanding of the life of Frederick Douglass and how he impacted multiple areas of daily American life in both the past and modern day.

While it is impossible to understand every aspect of the life of Douglass in history, there are some essential concepts students should be able to comprehend. First, understanding the early life of Douglass and his transformation from slave into defender of equality and civil rights in the United States. Understanding the upbringing of Douglass allows students to have a better picture of what slavery in the United States looked like and how his early life affected the way in which Douglass carried himself later in life. Another key concept for students to understand is the influence Douglass had in the emancipation proclamation and in gaining greater equality for African Americans in the United States. Students should comprehend the great influence Douglass had and how he was a major shaper in the desegregation of America. A final point student's should understand is that Douglass impacted more than just race relations in the United

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States. Knowing his influence over politics, religion, education, and global revolutions allows for the ability to connect all of these major concepts with a central figure.

One effective and interesting method to understanding the influence of Frederick Douglass on American history is through art. Looking at multiple perspectives on Douglass from different time periods allows students to see the evolution and depth of his affect on American policies. Art allows for students to gain a deeper understanding of a topic and allows for students to use a different approach to learning traditional historical material in school. Looking at art connects to the current common core standards and helps develop the student's critical thinking skills. Specifically from the reading common core standards looking and analyzing art will allow for students to...

- Cite textual (visual) evidence to support analysis of what the text (object) says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (object)
- Determine the central idea of a text (object) and how it is conveyed through particular details
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases (images, patterns, symbols, colors, size) and how they are used in a text (object), including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings (cultural, religious, historical, or personal)
- Determine the author's (artist's) point of view or purpose in a text (object) and explain how it is conveyed in the text (object) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of an issue or topic
- Compare and contrast one author's (artist's or culture's) presentation of events (use of technology, use of materials, interpretation of object) with that of another

The development of these essential skills can be concurrently enhanced while broadening content knowledge on Frederick Douglass. In the following lesson students gain both an understanding of Frederick Douglass but also his influence on American life. Looking at two very different perspectives on the life of Douglass, students are able to see how important Douglass is viewed in the bigger picture of American history.

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Adding art to the classroom allows for all students to experience in history in a new light and allows for greater understanding to be achieved.

Name:

Date:

Frederick Douglass: Then and Now

Today you will be examining two separate pieces of artwork dedicated to the great Frederic Douglass. While looking at the two pieces of art discuss in your small groups the following questions...

- What do you see? What is going on in the painting?
- What do you think the artist is trying to tell you?
- How does each painting present Frederick Douglass?
- What do you like about each painting? Why?

Record your notes underneath each painting.

PAINTING 1

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Notes:

PAINTING TWO

FREDERICK DOUGLASS



Notes:

Now that you have recoded your initial thoughts about each painting, it is time to learn some more information about each.

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PAINTING 1-

In 1942-43, a mural competition was held for the newly built Recorder of Deeds Building in Washington, D.C. The topic was "The Contribution of the Negro to the American Nation." Hale Woodruff submitted this imagined grouping of Frederick Douglass, President Lincoln, and members of Lincoln's cabinet. While Woodruff did not win the competition, his mural study is a dramatic reminder of the alliance of two of America's most courageous leaders, Lincoln and Douglass, during a period that threatened to destroy the American union. □ □ While Douglass never, in reality, met with Lincoln's cabinet, he did meet with Lincoln and repeatedly urged the president to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. (from the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery Website)

PAINTING 2-

Frederick Douglass / Unidentified Artist / Oil on canvas, c. 1844 / National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Many students share the surprise of many northern men and women who encountered Douglass for the first time on the abolitionist lecture circuit in the 1840s. Many, with preconceived notions of how a former slave would look and speak, did not expect to find an elegantly attired man who so eloquently detailed his time in bondage and his passion for ending the inhumane practice.

Now that you know a little more background information on each painting, how does this change your initial thoughts? How does the time period in which each painting created affect the image?

Create a Venn Diagram comparing the two works of art in the space below. Consider...

- the time period of the artwork
- cultural conditions that influences the view point of the artists

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- style and technique of the artist
- connections to themes or content in American history

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