



Great Speeches by African Americans: Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama, and Others

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This anthology comprises speeches by influential figures in the history of African-American culture and politics. Contents include the famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech by Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass' immortal "What, to the Slave, Is the Fourth of July?" Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s "I Have a Dream," Barack Obama, and many others.

Great Speeches by African Americans: Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama, and Others Details

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From Reader Review Great Speeches by African Americans: Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama, and Others for online ebook

Mykie says

My rating distribution for book reviews in general:

Content: 0-1 star

Delivery: 0-1 star

Relevance: 0-1 star

Impact: 0-1 star

Bonus (if warranted by additional components of the book that enhanced my experience with the read): 0-1 star

Why I read this book:

I hold a very deep passion for the African-American experience and I can appreciate true stories being told about pivotal events related to my history. I hold a sincere admiration for my ancestors and a specific vision for the future of African-Americans. I am a firm believer that you can't be sure of where you're going if you aren't conscious of where you've been. And such consciousness depends on one embracing and understanding the story. The story can't be taught by someone who did not live it, therefore it is not fitting to rely on the history taught in school for understanding of our personal history. I picked up this book for the purpose of hearing the story from pioneers who walked the walk.

Content: 0/1

This is where the book failed me. It contained several good speeches from former slaves and jumped right into several speeches about the Civil Rights Movement. Those were the only two components of the collection as if those were the only pivotal moments for African-Americans. The speeches were all excellent, my issue is whomever put this collection together missed something in their chronology efforts. The slavery and Civil Rights stories were important, but I would have liked to see more speeches on events and occurrences that happened between those times, too, in order to gain insight on the whole experience.

Delivery: 1/1

Of course, the speeches were well-written and I liked how there was a short bio on every author leading into their speech. This provided better insight into the speeches and the motivations for the speeches being written and spoken.

Relevance: 1/1

As we continue to deal with race issues in 2014, this book holds great relevance. It's important to understand what happened in order to fight what is currently happening. Unfortunately, some of the same issues that we've fought for hundreds of years still exist and reading these speeches was an important reminder that not much has changed and that there is still work to be done.

Impact: 1/1

The speeches did move me in ways that I expected to be moved. I was engaged with every speech and felt the pain of the stories deep in my heart and soul. Reading our truth had a huge impact on me. One that encourages me to continue the fight for social justice.

Jeffrey says

If you don't know about Sojourner Truth, King, Douglas, then you don't know American history. I don't care about color or sex, this is a must read. Oh, for you ladies voting, going to college, getting positive divorce settlements, one word: Tatoo. On your left arm: Elizabeth Cady Stanton. On the right: Susan B Anthony. Every American needs to know history . . . the COMPLETE history of their country. Cowboy up and get reading.

Cheryl says

Call it my personal ode to black history month or a re-visitation for personal edification; I felt the urge to read this collection this month. It didn't matter that some of the essays here are familiar, because a reread certainly helped me brush up on things I missed the first time around. I read Frederick Douglass' famous, "**What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July**" and I smiled as I remembered my American Lit professor years ago in undergrad, who made us read, re-read, and write a response to that great essay (boy did we have a heated class discussion to that one). I read and I thought how lucky I was to have an American Lit professor who included Civil Rights speeches and essays in his exploration of American writers and literature, because I've been in American Lit II classes where professors have refused to cover Harlem Renaissance or Civil Rights writers.

I read Sojourner Truth's "**Ain't I A Woman?**" aloud, standing on the couch, one hand on the hip, with my dog as the audience, because really, how else do you read *that* empowering speech? Some essays are not too familiar: like Alexander Crummell's powerful, "**The Black Woman of the South: Her Neglects and her Needs**," or President Obama's "**Knox College Commencement Address**."

Even more interesting, however, were the venues and purposes of each speech, and how the dates seem to track the progression of the Civil Rights Movement: from Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 speech to President Obama's 2005 speech. Those were the historical moments for me, the timeline of such important speeches, and the inclusion of the works of some of the greatest human rights activists. If I were to choose a speech that resonated with me, it would be Mary Church Terrell's "**What It Means To Be Colored In The Capital Of the United States**." She gave hers in 1906, and even though Crummell's speech on black women was in 1883, both are thematically aligned.

It matters not what my intellectual attainments may be or how great is the need of the services of a competent person, if I try to enter many of the numerous vocations in which my white sisters are allowed to engage, the door is shut in my face.

Terrell was an educator, author and activist whose works greatly influenced human rights. After reading her speech and having her words pierce through the veil of my trajectory, I had to research her biography and learn more about her. This book forced me to think and research Civil Rights giants, their messages, their debates, their influences on American history, and the personal lives they abandoned in order to fight for human rights.

Jerry Johnson says

This book does not only Chronicle African American speeches, it provides a time mapped measure of how well we have lived up to our ideals in this country.

Also, I find reading speeches is a good way to find direction in your own writing.

Bouguerche says

A very interesting book that, I believe, everyone should read. A gathering of amazing speeches by leaders that changed history.

Elmo says

powering black people di negeri paman sam.. pingin bgt pnya ni buku

Crystal says

Well! Bravo on nine of these speeches and fine people who did very well to make the nation better. And boo on seven that are ugly, divisive and promote agitation. Three I didn't bother to read. So, nine at five stars, seven at one? 3+ stars on this collection of powerful speeches. Some are very, very long. Wow.

Fascinating! Today it is common to hear people deny the Christian foundation and core of America. Nearly every one of these highly educated former slaves and born free men and women give glory and love to Almighty God and some warned the nation to not stray from His grace ...

"The secession of the Southern States in 1860 was a small matter compared with the secession of the Union itself in the great principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, in the Golden Rule, in the Ten Commandments, in the Sermon on the Mount. Unless we hold, and hold firmly to these great fundamental principles of righteousness, of social, political, and economic wisdom, our Union, as Mr. Garrison expressed it, will be 'only a covenant with death and agreement with hell.' If it continues to exist it will be a curse, and not a blessing." Francis J. Grimke, 1909.

And: "Democracy is for me, and for 12 million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith. For me, it is based on Christianity, in which we confidently entrust our destiny as a people. Under God's guidance in this great democracy, we are rising out of the darkness of slavery into the light of freedom.

... 12 million Negroes, shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Americans, will strive that this nation under God, will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth." Mary McLeod Bethune, 1939.

Interesting: The nine most calm, rational voices for peace and progress are from eight southern born persons, five former slaves, three born to slaves. And seven who called for aggression never knew slavery first hand

and were born into lives of some privilege outside of the "rebel" south!

Matt Nunn says

this is a very inspirational book and i think that it explains key points in american history

Nate Jordon says

More than a collection of speeches, this solemn and profound book is a window into the history (or should I say plight?) of African Americans. Of many sagacious passages, here are a few highlights:

Fellow citizens, I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a by word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement; the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet your cling to it as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh, be warned! Be warned! A horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear way, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!

Frederick Douglas

July 5, 1852

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver – no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.

Malcolm X

April 3, 1964

What will be [your:] place in history?

In other eras, across distant lands, this is a question that could be answered with relative ease and certainty. As a servant of Rome, you knew you would spend your life forced to build somebody else's Empire. As a peasant in 11th century China, you knew that no matter how hard you worked, the local warlord might take everything you had – and that famine might come knocking on your door any day. As a subject of King George, you knew that your freedom to worship and speak and build your own life would be ultimately limited by the throne.

And then America happened.

A place where destiny was not a destination, but a journey to be shared and shaped and remade by people

who had the gall, the temerity to believe that, against all odds, they could form “a more perfect union” on this new frontier.

And as people around the world began to hear the tale of the lowly colonists who overthrew an Empire for the sake of an idea, they came. Across the oceans and the ages, they settled in Boston and Charleston, Chicago and St. Louis, Kalamazoo and Galesburg, to try and build their own American Dream. This collective dream moved forward imperfectly – it was scarred by our treatment of native peoples, betrayed by slavery, clouded by the subjugation of women, shaken by war and depression. And yet, brick by brick, rail by rail, calloused hand by calloused hand, people kept dreaming, and building, and working, and marching, and petitioning their government, until they made America a land where the question of our place in history is not answered for us, but by us.

Barack Obama

June 4, 2005

None of this will come easy. Every one of us will have to work more, read more, train more, think more. We will have to slough off bad habits – like driving gas guzzlers that weaken our economy and feed our enemies abroad. Our kids will have to turn off the TV sets and put away the video games and start hitting the books.

Barack Obama

June 4, 2005

Mary Louise says

If you haven't read any Frederick Douglass, shame on you!

Minnie says

I have read and re-read every speech and learned where each speaker stood on the issues of slavery in the United States. I'm particularly struck by Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois and how their opinions differ. Great reference book.

I wish I had read these speeches while in high school. I am a 75-year-old, African American writer, and generally write fiction.

Monique says

A must have for all avid readers, lovers of history and followers of African American leaders. The speeches will evoke all types of emotions, inspire action, and help you focus on the love of family. Thanks James Daley for taking the time to bring these speeches together.

Sean says

I feel like I may have read a book in college with a similar title or perhaps an earlier edition? Since I don't remember the contents, decided to pick this one up. Hopefully will start reading it by the end of the summer.

Malcolm says

Good book with an assortment of speeches from times of slavery through the Civil Rights Era and to a few years ago. Malcolm X "The Ballot or The Bullet" was my favorite.

Tayon says

Well i do not like this book. I mean i already know so much about slaves and all that. I crave to learn new info on slaves not the old.
