

#### **4. Last words on Douglass**

*New York Times* Obituary, February 27, 1895.

**Background Notes:** This obituary contains elements of the, by 1895, well-developed arguments of scientific racism. Christians saw people as “one blood,” while racism of the time often defined a person by the % of black blood present. Douglass’ value was judged not only in racial terms, but also through his patrilineal lineage.

**Challenges of the text:** The double negative of the second point of the argument will give many students difficulty. A strategy should be devised to help students with this aspect of the obituary.

**Suggested curriculum uses:** Teachers develop for classroom use.

**Content questions:** Teachers develop for classroom use.

Text: *New York Times* Obituary, February 27, 1895.

Amid the universal commendation of Frederick Douglass as a colored man, who, against the greatest difficulties and in the most unfavorable circumstances, achieved well-deserved distinction, it might not be unreasonable, perhaps, to intimate that his white blood may have had something to do with the remarkable energy he displayed and the superior intelligence he manifested. Indeed, It might not be altogether unreasonable to ask whether, with more white blood, he would not have been an even better and greater man than he was, and whether the fact that he had any black blood at all may not have cost the world a genius, and be, in consequence, a cause for lamentation instead of a source of lyrical enthusiasm over African possibilities. It is always more or less foolish to credit or discredit a race with the doings, good or bad, of a particular member of that race, but if it must be done, plain justice should see to it that the right race gets the glory or the humiliation.