

From “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” a speech by Frederick Douglass,  
at Rochester, New York, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1852.

Thesis: “Americans! Your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent.”

## Inconsistencies

TM/Cn	What Americans Say and Do	The Reality for Slaves
while	You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity,	<b>while</b> the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three million of your countrymen.
while	You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions,	
but	You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water;	
yet		<b>yet</b> you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation - a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty...
but		<b>but</b> are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America.
yet	You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor;	

and yet	You can bare you bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a three-penny tax on tea;	
yet	You profess to believe "that of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth," and hath commanded all men everywhere, to love one another;	

Content Questions:

- 1) According to Douglass who supports slavery in America?
- 2) Does Douglass believe Christians are inconsistent? Why?
- 3) How has Douglass structured his argument? Why is that effective?

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while	You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions,	<b>while</b> you yourselves consent to be the mere <i>tools</i> and <i>body-guards</i> of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina.
but	You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water;	<b>but</b> the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot, and kill.
yet	You glory in your refinement and your universal education;	<b>yet</b> you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation - a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty...
but	You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland;	<b>but</b> are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America.
yet	You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor;	<b>yet</b> , you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor.

and yet	You can bare you bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a three-penny tax on tea;	<b>and yet</b> wring the last hard earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country.
yet	You profess to believe "that of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth," and hath commanded all men everywhere, to love one another;	<b>yet</b> you notoriously hate (and glory in your hatred) all men whose skins are not colored as you're your own.
and yet	You declare before the world, and are understood by the world to declare that you " <i>hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness</i> ";	<b>and yet</b> , you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, " <i>is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,</i> " a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Content Questions:

- 4) According to Douglass who supports slavery in America?
- 5) Does Douglass believe Christians are inconsistent? Why?
- 6) How has Douglass structured his argument? Why is that effective?

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Americans! Your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three million of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere *tools* and *body-guards* of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot, and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty... You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very

essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a three-penny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe “that of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth,” and hath commanded all men everywhere, to love one another; yet you notoriously hate (and glory in your hatred) all men whose skins are not colored you’re your own. You declare before the world, and are understood by the world to declare that you “*hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*”; and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, “*is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,*” a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

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 pretense, and your Christianity as a lie... It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*...