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**Frederick Douglass and the Battle for
Freedom - Part I**

Lead: "All the other speakers seemed tame after Frederick Douglass. He stood there like an African Prince, majestic in his wrath."

Tag: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Elizabeth Cady Stanton knew her activists. It was an age of moral agitation and she would go on to great fame at the side of Susan B. Anthony in the service of women's rights. That day in the mid-1800s when Frederick Douglass spoke to an

antislavery meeting in Boston, Stanton was as moved as the rest at the sound of his voice and the moral imperative of his message.

Douglass was an escaped slave. Raised by his grandmother on a Chesapeake Bay plantation, at the age of six he began his work under, Captain Aaron Anthony, the white farm manager and, so some of the slaves said, Frederick's father. In later years, he would make vivid to audiences throughout the North the picture of life as a slave.

Sent off to be a house servant in Baltimore as an eight-year-old, with gritty determination, he began to educate himself. He earned fifty cents

a day polishing boots and reading a secondhand copy of *The Colombian Orator* and first encountered words like emancipation and equality. He began to plan his escape. In 1833, Douglass borrowed the papers of a freeman and hopped a train north. He married the woman who helped him escape and settled in Massachusetts.

Douglass did manual labor and sharpened his rhetorical skills preaching against slavery in churches. On Nantucket Island in 1841, William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, heard Douglass speak and was fascinated. In the 1840s the antislavery movement was still pretty weak in part because its spokesmen

were usually sympathetic whites, not blacks. Here was an ex-slave, a very articulate and moving speaker, one who knew first-hand the horrors of slavery and was not hesitant to speak forcefully about it. Harrison immediately hired him as a lecturer. Next time: Douglass helps bring on a Civil War.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Conniff, Richard. "Frederick Douglass Always Knew He Was Meant to Be Free," Smithsonian 25 (11, February, 1995), 115-127.

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Toppin, Edgar A. *The Black American in United States History*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973.

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