



## Legislation Text

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Res. No. 695

Resolution commemorating the life and important legacy of Frederick Douglas, a major spokesperson for the Abolitionist Movement in 19th century America, and declaring February 14th as "Frederick Douglas Day" in the City of New York.

By Council Members Barron, Boyland, Clarke, Comrie, Felder, Fidler, Jackson, Koppell, Lopez, Monserrate, Nelson, Reed, Rivera, Sanders, Seabrook, Sears, Stewart, Vann, Weprin and Yassky

Whereas, The institution of slavery and the monstrous injustice it committed upon men, women, and children of African descent represented a profound moral

crisis in our nation, and was one of the bleakest periods in our history; and

Whereas, Confronted by the fierce and terrible inhumanity which allowed one man to enslave another, there arose a number of courageous individuals willing to risk their lives for the betterment of all humankind, individuals determined to expose the horrors of slavery and put an end to its practice; and

Whereas, Few fought more valiantly, or had a greater impact on advancing the abolitionist cause and eradicating slavery, than Frederick Douglas, an escaped slave who, through sheer determination and force of will, educated himself to become one of our nation's great statesmen, writers and orators; and

Whereas, The "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, An American Slave," was Douglas's autobiographical first-hand account of his journey from slavery to freedom; it not only stands as one of the most scathing indictments of slavery ever written, but also shows the evolution of what Emerson called "the self-made man," that heroic, archetypal figure whose distinguishing quality of self-reliance made him, in spirit, a most representative American; and

Whereas, Frederick Douglas devoted his whole life to fighting for freedom, especially the causes of Abolition and Women's Suffrage; he was an advisor to Abraham Lincoln and helped to recruit black troops during the Civil War; and

Whereas, Frederick Douglas's example was highly instructive: among other things, it taught people how, despite unimaginable hardship, suffering and incredible risk to life, a determined individual could rise above his condition to achieve his goals with dignity; and

Whereas, Frederick Douglas recognized justice and equality as the vital,

animating principles that should inform democracy, and dedicated his life to ensuring that

African-Americans received equal measures of both; and

Whereas, Frederick Douglas spoke out against the social forces that denied all

African-Americans life's fundamentals: faith, family, education, the capacity for bold

action and personal identity; Douglas saw reclamation of these things as the key to the

survival, redemption and salvation of people of African lineage; and

Whereas, Frederick Douglas established the abolitionist paper The North Star on December 3, 1847, in Rochester, NY, and developed it into the most influential black anti-slavery paper published during the antebellum era; it was used to not only denounce slavery, but to fight for the emancipation of women and other oppressed groups; its motto was "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren"; now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commemorates the life and legacy of Frederick Douglas, and declares February 14th, 2003 as "Frederick Douglas Day" in the City of New York.

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