

# Douglass' words spoken in Rochester resonate now as then



**Your Turn**  
heresa Bowick  
Guest columnist

Dear President-Elect Donald J. Trump:

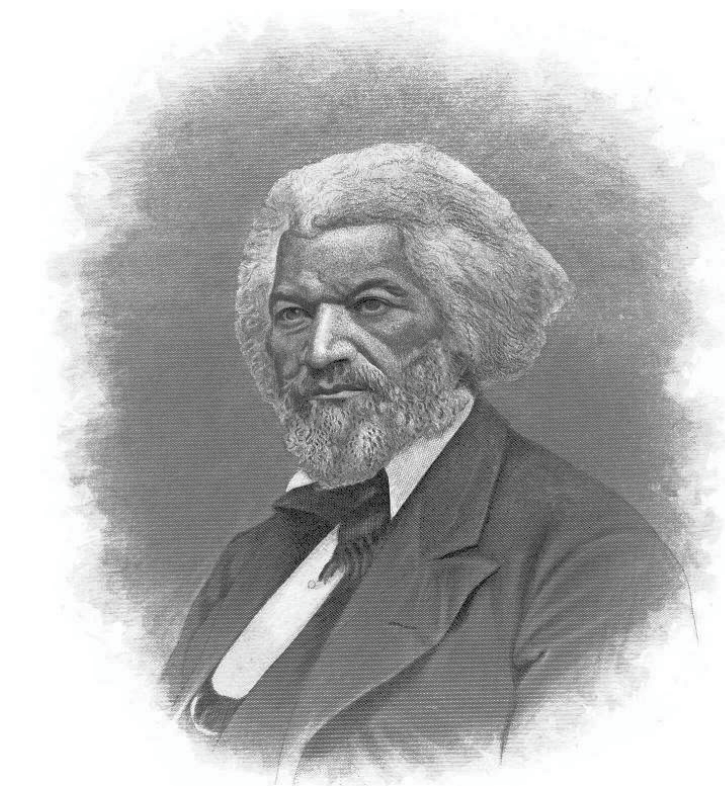
It would be remiss or downright disrespectful of me not to congratulate you on this savvy, never before seen admirable political accomplishment. Congratulations, on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, I and others will watch a peaceful transition of power as you take the throne once again as the leader of the free world.

Mr. President Elect, am I, a 56-year-old disabled Black female nurse, included in your vision to make America great again? In the absence of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, will my college-educated daughter and future grandchildren have an opportunity to actualize the American Dream?

Do you remember that old American dream? The dream that everyone can attain a husband or wife, two and half kids, a dog, a car, and a home with a white picket fence. White picket fences were most popular in suburban middle-class neighborhoods. These were the symbols of success, stability, family and peaceful living, which bellowed to the world that you made it.

Today, I am afraid that the road to making it in America has become lined with despair and hate.

In 1852, Frederick Douglass was invited to give a keynote address at an In-



Frederick Douglass GETTY IMAGES

dependence Day Celebration in Rochester. He opened by acknowledging the accomplishments of our nation's founding fathers with admiration. In his

speech titled, "What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?," he continued with these remarks, "I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not in-

cluded within the pale of glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn."

I ask you this, what to the disenfranchised, detached and disengaged is Election Day 2024? What does Election Day mean to those that have made it clear that they do not care who wins or loses the presidential election? These folks were not undecided, and/or on the fence. They, much like the millions who did not vote in the 2020 presidential election, opted out because they do not believe that in this America, they can acquire a fence.

Those many millions are far too many disenfranchised, detached and disengaged Americans. When President Biden passes the torch to you, some will rejoice, some will mourn. Let the words of the great Frederick Douglass guide your policies and remind you that the rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence must be attainable by all Americans. As president you can shorten the distance between us and them.

Best Regards,  
Theresa Bowick  
Theresa Bowick, a Rochester native, is a nurse and community advocate.