

# Frederick Douglass: Boston Anti-Slavery Meeting

"The American people are disposed often to be generous rather than just. I look over this country at the present time, and I see educational societies, sanitary commissions, freedmen's associations and the like - all very good; but in regard to the colored people there is always more that is benevolent, I perceive, than just, manifested toward us. What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simple justice.

Men are so constituted that they derive their conviction of their own possibilities largely from the estimate formed of them by others. If nothing is expected of a people, that people will find it difficult to contradict that expectation.

Everybody has asked the question, and they learned to ask it early of the Abolitionists, 'What shall we do with the Negro?' I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us. If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm-eaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! I am not for tying or fastening them on the tree in any way, except by nature's plan, and if they will not stay there, let them fall. And if the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask be given him a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone. If you see him on his way to school, let him alone-don't disturb him. If you see him going to the dinner table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot box, let him alone - don't disturb him! If you see him going into a workshop, just let him alone. Your interference is doing him a positive injury...Let him fall if he cannot stand-alone! If the Negro cannot live by the line of eternal justice . . . the fault will not be yours, it will be his who made the Negro, and established that line for his government. Let him live or die by that. If you will only untie his hands, and give him a chance, I think he will live . . ."

## Questions for Discussion:

### First Paragraph:

1. What do you think he meant by this statement?
2. What are some examples that show Americans are generous? Not generous?
3. What are some examples that show Americans are just? Not just?



**Second Paragraph:**

4. What did Douglass mean by this statement?
5. How do people decide what to do with themselves and their lives?

**Third Paragraph:**

6. What personal values of Douglass come through in this passage?
7. Why do you think Douglass uses repetition in this passage? Is it effective?
8. Do you think Douglass was effective in reaching non-abolitionists? Why or why not?

