



“What, to the Americanist, Is the 4th of July?”

Suffering, Struggle, Survival: The Activism, Artistry, and Authorship of Frederick Douglass and Family (1818-2018)

Celeste-Marie Bernier (University of Edinburgh)

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While there have been many Frederick Douglasses – Douglass the abolitionist, Douglass the statesman, Douglass the autobiographer, Douglass the orator, Douglass the reformer, Douglass the essayist, and Douglass the politician – as we commemorate his two-hundredth anniversary, it is now time begin to trace the many lives of Douglass as a family man. In this talk I will trace the activism, artistry and authorship of Frederick Douglass not in isolation but alongside the sufferings and struggles for survival of his daughters and sons: Rosetta, Lewis Henry, Frederick Jr., Charles Remond and Annie Douglass. As activists, educators, campaigners, civil rights protesters, newspaper editors, orators, essayists,

and historians in their own right, his children each played a vital role in the freedom struggles of their father. They were no less afraid to sacrifice everything they had as they each fought for Black civic, cultural, political, and social liberties by every means necessary. No isolated endeavor undertaken by an exemplary icon, the fight for freedom was a family business to which all the Douglasses dedicated their lives as their rallying cry lives on to inspire today's activism: “Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!”

Celeste-Marie Bernier currently is an Obama Fellow at JGU and Professor of Black Studies and Personal Chair in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She is the author of *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (University of Virginia Press, 2012) and the co-editor of *Pictures and Power: Imaging and Imagining Frederick Douglass, 1818–2018* (Liverpool UP, 2017).