

# **SELF-MADE MAN**

**The Life of Frederick Douglass**

**Educator's Guide**

**TEXT COPY ONLY**

Full Design Version available Summer 2013

## THE ONE-MAN SHOW

Self-Made Man is a one man show about Frederick Douglass, one of the most prominent figures in African American history and one of the most influential lecturers and authors in American history. He was a firm believer in the equality of all people whether black, American Indian, recent immigrant or the rights of females. In the show, Phil Darius Wallace performs numerous characters in Fredrick Douglass' life. Wallace skillfully plays the role of Frederick Douglass as a little boy along with other characters such as his powerful and loving grandmother, his cruel slave master, and finally Douglass as a free adult. The performance includes music, dancing, singing, monologues and poetry. The most powerful message delivered in the story is how education completely transformed Frederick Douglass' life. You will be transfixed by the variety in Frederick Douglass' story. It is an opportunity to meet a man who was an American abolitionist, editor, orator, author, statesman and reformer; a self-made man.

## THE PROCESS

**2001** - The first draft of a one man show based on the life of Frederick Douglas was created and produced by The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, TN

**2002** thru **2008**- The one-man show tours theatres, colleges and universities across the U.S.

**2008**- A new version is created and produced at Hattiloo Theatre, a black repertory theatre in Memphis, TN

**2009**- Another version is created for Theatre Works and Playhouse on the Square's solo performances series in Memphis, TN

**2011** - A third version focusing on Frederick Douglas as a "self-made man" is written for the Walking Dog Theater in Hudson, New York

**2012**- The current version of the production is created for The Orpheum Theatre in Memphis, TN

# Phil Darius Wallace

## *Frederick Douglass*

**“Since I was a child, I always loved the idea of hearing stories and telling stories.”**

**Phil Darius Wallace** is a native of Flint Michigan where he started as an actor with the Michigan Shakespeare festival as Caliban in the *Tempest*. Since then Darius has taken on the roles of actor, director, and playwright. He has worked locally with Playhouse on the Square, Hatiloo Theater, Voices Of The South, Play Back Memphis and The Tennessee Shakespeare Company where he has made his home as a company member. Darius is excited to be working with the Orpheum to remount his One Man Show on the life of Frederick Douglass which has toured around the country. His film credits include *Nothing But The Truth* and *100 Lives* which are now available on DVD and Netflix. Darius also directed *Love Choice*, a movie dealing with HIV. Phil Darius Wallace has toured 48 states performing one-man shows based on the lives of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes and Frederick Douglass. Most recently you can see Darius on ABC's hit television show, *Nashville*.

## Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)

Frederick Douglass was born in a slave cabin, in February, 1818, near the town of Easton, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Separated from his mother when only a few weeks old he was raised by his grandparents. At about the age of six, his grandmother took him to the plantation of his master and left him there. Not being told by her that she was going to leave him, Douglass never recovered from the betrayal of the abandonment. When he was about eight he was sent to Baltimore to live as a houseboy with Hugh and Sophia Auld, relatives of his master. It was shortly after his arrival that his new mistress taught him the alphabet. When her husband forbade her to continue her instruction, because it was unlawful to teach slaves how to read, Frederick took it upon himself to learn. He made the neighborhood boys his teachers, by giving away his food in exchange for lessons in reading and writing. At about the age of twelve or thirteen Douglass purchased a copy of **The Columbian Orator**, a popular schoolbook of the time, which helped him to gain an understanding and appreciation of the power of the spoken and the written word, as two of the most effective means by which to bring about permanent, positive change.

Returning to the Eastern Shore, at approximately the age of fifteen, Douglass became a field hand, and experienced most of the horrifying conditions that plagued slaves during the 270 years of legalized slavery in America. But it was during this time that he had an encounter with the "slavebreaker" Edward Covey. Their fight ended in a draw, but the victory was Douglass', as his challenge to the "slavebreaker" restored his sense of self-worth. After an aborted escape attempt when he was about eighteen, he was sent back to Baltimore to live with the Auld family, and in early September, 1838, at the age of twenty, Douglass succeeded in escaping from slavery by impersonating a sailor. He went first to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he and his new wife Anna Murray began to raise a family. Whenever he could he attended abolitionist meetings, and, in October, 1841, after attending an anti-slavery convention on Nantucket Island, Douglass became a lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and a colleague of William Lloyd Garrison. This work led him into public speaking and writing. He published his own newspaper, *The North Star*, participated in the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, in 1848, and wrote three autobiographies. He was internationally recognized as an uncompromising abolitionist, indefatigable worker for justice and equal opportunity, and an unyielding defender of women's rights. He became a trusted advisor to Abraham Lincoln, United States Marshal for the District of Columbia, Recorder of Deeds for Washington, D.C., and Minister-General to the Republic of Haiti. Frederick Douglass died late in the afternoon or early evening, of Tuesday, 20 February 1895, at his home in Anacostia, Washington, DC."

## Self-Made Men

By: Frederick Douglass

That there is, in more respects than one, something like a stoicism in this title, I freely admit. Properly speaking, there are in the world no such men as self-made men. That term implies an individual independence of the past and present which can never exist,

Our best and most valued acquisitions have been obtained either from our contemporaries or from those who have preceded us in the field of thought and discovery. We have all either begged, borrowed, or stolen. We have reaped where others have sown, and that which others have strewn, we have gathered. It must in truth be said, though it may not accord well with self-conscious individuality and self-conceit, that no possible native force of character, and no depth of wealth and originality, can lift a man into absolute independence of his fellowmen, and no generation of men can be independent of the preceding generation. The brotherhood and interdependence of mankind are guarded and defended at all points. . .

Nevertheless, the title of my lecture is eminently descriptive of a class and is, moreover, a fit and convenient one for my purpose, in illustrating the idea which I have in view...Self-made men are the men who, under peculiar difficulties and without the ordinary helps of favoring circumstances, have attained knowledge, usefulness, power and position and have learned from themselves the best uses to which life can be put in this world, and in the exercises of these uses to build up worthy character. They are the men who owe little or nothing to birth, relationship, or friendly surroundings; to wealth inherited or to early approved means of education; who are what they are, without the aid of any favoring conditions by which other men usually rise in the world and achieve great results. . . They are in a peculiar sense indebted to themselves for themselves. If they have traveled far, they have made the road on which they have travelled. If they have ascended high, they have built their own ladder . . . Such men as these, whether found in one position or another, whether in the college or in the factory; whether professors or plowmen; whether Caucasian or Indian; whether Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-African, are self-made men and are entitled to a certain measure of respect for their success and for proving to the world the grandest possibilities of human nature, of whatever variety of race or color.

Though a man of this class need not claim to be a hero or to be worshipped as such, there is genuine heroism in his struggle and something of sublimity and glory in his triumph. Every instance of such success is an example and help to humanity. It, better than any mere assertion, gives us assurance of the latent powers and resources of simple and unaided manhood. It dignifies labor, honors application, lessens pain and depression, dispels gloom from the brow of the destitute and weariness from the heart of him about to faint, and enables man to take hold of the roughest and flintiest hardships incident to the battle of life, with a lighter heart, with higher hopes and a larger courage.

## Vocabulary Grades 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

13th Amendment

Slavery

Abolitionist

Sojourner Truth

Abraham Lincoln

Speech

Bleeding Kansas

Story

Civil War

Suffrage

Confederacy

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Emancipation Proclamation

Underground Railroad

Equality

Fable

Fort Sumter

Harper's Ferry

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Tubman

John Brown

Myth

Nullification

Oral Tradition

Parable

Plantation

Racism

Ratify

Robert E. Lee

Slave

Slave master

# Vocabulary

## Grades 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

13th Amendment

Sojourner Truth

Abolition

Speech

Abolitionist

Story

Abraham Lincoln

Suffrage

Bleeding Kansas

The Liberator

Border States

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Civil war

Underground Railroad

Confederacy

Emancipate

Emancipation Proclamation

Fort Sumter

Fugitive Slave Laws

Harper's Ferry

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Tubman

Industrial Revolution

John Brown

Nullification

Orator

Plantation

Ratify

Robert E. Lee

Social reform

# Classroom Activities

## Grades 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

Curriculum Connections: Language Arts, Theatre, Reading Comprehension, History, Character Development, Social Studies, Geography

### Comprehension

#### **Once Upon a Time...**

Frederick Douglass' grandmother taught "Little Freddie" the parable of the Chicken and the Eagle.

- What lesson do you think she was trying to teach young Frederick Douglass?
- What is the difference between a parable and a story?
- Can you think of a modern day parable or story that might teach the same lesson?

### Creative Writing

#### **Pass It On!**

Frederick Douglass sings songs or hymns he has learned from his grandmother and other slaves, these songs are a form of *oral tradition*.

- Have students define *oral tradition*.
- What are examples of oral traditions?

#### **Activity:**

Have students interview a family member or friend about tradition.

- What traditions have been passed down through their family?
- What traditions are unique to Memphis and the South?

#### **What's in a Name?**

In the show, Frederick Douglass tells the story of how he received the nickname, "Little Chicken Fred".

Write a story about how you received your nickname. If you do not have nickname, write a story about a friend or family member's nickname

- How did you get the nickname?
- Who gave it to you?
- Do you like your nickname? Why or why not?



# Classroom Activities

## Grades 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

Curriculum Connections: Language Arts, Theatre, Reading Comprehension, History, Character Development, Social Studies, Geography

### **Comprehension and Character Development**

#### **Self Made**

What does Frederick Douglass define as a “Self-Made Man”?

According to Frederick Douglass’ definition who are other “self-made men” in history?

How is seeing the speech “Self-Made Man” performed different from just simply reading it?

#### **Activity:**

Have students choose another speech of Frederick Douglass’ and “perform” it in front of the class.

- Does this change the meaning of the speech?
- Does hearing the speech help you to understand it’s meaning better than just reading it?

### **History and Research**

#### **We the People...**

Frederick Douglass was famous for his public speaking and speech writing. He spoke out about injustices that affect his fellow Americans.

- Write a speech about an injustice that affects your school or community
- How will writing a speech help change this injustice?
- Who would be the best audience to facilitate change?

#### **History Repeated**

Performer, Darius Wallace thought Frederick Douglass was an important figure to write a play about:

- Why do you think he chose Frederick Douglass?
- Research another historical figure
- Share with the class your findings and why you chose your particular historical figure

### **Writing**

#### **Inspirations**

Frederick Douglass had many positive influences on his life, his grandmother who taught him to always believe in himself and Ms. Sophia Auld who taught him to read and write.

- Think of someone that has had an impact on your life (family member, friend or teacher) and write about how they have influenced you in a positive way.