

Celebrate July 4th at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site



NPS Photo

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WASHINGTON— Join us at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site for the annual Independence Day reading of one of Frederick Douglass’s most famous speeches “What to the American Slave is the Fourth of July?” It will be dramatically read by longstanding Douglass actor Michael Crutcher whose impression strongly resembles that of the elder Douglass when he resided in Washington, D.C. The program is given on the front porch of the historic Douglass home in Anacostia.

Event Details

What: Dramatic reading of “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

When: July 4 at 11 a.m.

Where: Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, 1411 W St SE, Washington, DC 20020

Who: Michael Crutcher, portraying Frederick Douglass

Visuals: There will be excellent opportunities to collect photos and b-roll of the site, visitors and the actor’s impression of Douglass.

Media Attendance

Media representatives are invited to attend. For additional information or to schedule interviews, please contact: NCR_communications@nps.gov

Event Highlights

Visitors are invited to begin their July 4th holiday in a thoughtful and reflective way at Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. Michael Crutcher will present “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” at 11 a.m. on the front porch of Frederick Douglass’s home, Cedar Hill, on July 4. Following the speech, DC Strings will perform selections popular in Douglass’s era. Visitors are invited to have their photos taken with “Frederick Douglass,” and to a first-floor walk-through of the Douglass home which contains more objects belonging to Frederick Douglass than anywhere in America.

The site closes at 5 p.m. Visitors wanting to view fireworks are invited to go to Anacostia Park nearby.

Background

This famous speech has been read at Cedar Hill on July 4th since it was given by actor James Earl Jones in 1973. Frederick Douglass gave the original speech in 1852 in Rochester, New York for the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Sewing Society. Frederick Douglass spent the last 17 years of his life at Cedar Hill in Washington, D.C. In addition to being a National Historic Site, it stands as a place of pilgrimage.

The mighty Douglass – self-emancipated husband, father, and world-renowned activist challenged America to keep truth with its own ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence with the words “All men are created free.” As he pondered the meaning of the Fourth of July to America, he spoke not only to that audience on July 5, 1852. He spoke across time and space, to generations he would never see.