

The Struggle of Frederick Douglass to Get his Freedom as Seen in the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave (A Psychological Approach)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze the struggle of Frederick Douglass as a slave to get his freedom and to reveal the impact of Douglass' struggle against his life and the impact of his struggle for the Black people's life as reflected in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass entitled 'The Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave'. It was experienced by the major character namely Frederick Douglass who had escaped from slavery and then also tried to struggle against slavery in the North where many people did not agree with slavery system. His nature story at a closer observation, portrayed much about conflicts between man and his environment, man and himself with slavery world as the background.

The method that is used in this study was descriptive qualitative method with the type of the study was library research. This study used two data sources namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data source was the autobiography of Frederick Douglass entitled the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave, including dialogues, events, and narrative expressions. Then, the secondary data covered some books, articles, encyclopedia, internet sources, and other writings about slavery and Frederick Douglass' life. This study also used Sigmund Freud's theory on psychology aspects. Basic assumption of individual psychology presented into three general headings: 1) Id; 2) Ego; and 3) Super ego. The technique of data collecting were reading the autobiography several times, taking note, determining the character, and drawing conclusion. In the technique of analysis data, the researchers applied Interactive model analysis which was proposed by Miles and Huberman, such as 1) data collection, 2) data reduction, 3) data display, and 4) conclusion.

The result of this study could be said that freedom for the slaves became the main issue in the 19th century in America as seen in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass entitled the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave. Douglass, as a main character, told about his real life as a slave and how he could escape from slavery. Douglass became too critical to the harsh reality of slavery system in that era and dared to protest openly. Id, Ego, and Super Ego in this autobiography could be reached by Frederick Douglass in his struggle to get his freedom as an American slave.

Keywords: A Psychological Approach, Descriptive Qualitative Method, Library Research, Frederick Douglass, Id, Ego, and Super Ego.

INTRODUCTION:

In this life, people want to reach their dreams although there are many obstacles when they try to reach it. Those obstacles can be from human psychological condition which has relationship with social, environment, God, faith, and so on. They should try to struggle to reach it and fulfill their dreams with hopes and plans. In struggling to reach their dream, they have to use their senses, energy, and positive minds to take a good decision for their better future. To get success in reaching the dreams, every individual should have motivation, inspiration, perseverance, and guidance from the people surround them. This goal, finally, becomes one of his or her motivation to reach the next goals in his or her life

Frederick Douglass' autobiography entitled *Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* was one of well-known literary works which was written from the social condition of the slavery era in the 19th century in America by a former slave, Frederick Douglass. It showed one of description of the Blacks' position in slavery era. Douglass became one of the most influential figure in American history who had been born. He deserved all of the honours for his struggle in the social reform and the abolition of slavery. He also had a big role to recruit Black volunteers for the Civil War and later he secured and protected the rights of free men. Unlike the famous Black leaders such as Nat Turner, Douglass could escape from slavery alive. Douglass was also famous as a great speaker and became the major drawing card at the meeting of the abolitionists society. Garrison (in Franklin and Moss, 1988) praised his ability as a good speaker as follows "*as a public speaker, he excels in pathos, wit, comparison, imitation, strength of reasoning, and fluency of language. There is in him that union of head and heart, which is indispensable to an enlightenment of the heads and a winning of the hearts of others.*"

Douglass' autobiography told about his true story when he was still in a large plantation as a slave. He told a story about the brutal beating given by slaveholders to women, children, and elderly people who became the property of slaveholders. He also told in his autobiography that there were masters who 'breeding' their female slaves and how he struggled to escape from slavery. He wanted justice and freedom for Blacks as human beings who had rights to live, to act, and to think as Whites do in that era. As (Quarles, 1989) stated that *...his narrative voiced a creed of liberty that all who listened would find hard to deny...his narrative reflected an undertone of retributive justice, that one reaps what he sows.*

Slavery itself had appeared from Ancient Greece or in 17th century in America which used Africans and American Indians as beneficial objects for individual business, as (Grolier Academic Encyclopedia, 1997) stated that *slavery itself is a societal institution based on ownership, dominance, and exploitation of human being by another.* The masters of plantation had many slaves to do their land and they held their power to control their slaves' works and to limit their activities. Their slaves worked all day from early in the morning until the night. Generally, the masters were responsible only for providing minimal food, shelter, and clothing. Commonly, slaves were regarded as an article of property therefore they could be sold or given away as a gift to someone else. They had no rights and they were unfree to do some activities in the English colonies. The slave trade which involved Africans as object of victims became an important business for the Europeans and it became bigger and bigger business. Soon, it was accepted legally as an important part of European commerce. The Spanish and Portuguese traders got a lot of economic advantages from this business in the whole Europe. As Charles G. Seller (1975) stated that *the trade in slave...is...the business of king, rich men, and prime merchants.*

The first African slaves were brought to America in 1619. They were put ashore at Jamestown, Virginia, by the Captain of a Dutch Vessel who sold twenty Blacks to the Virginian settlers. As (Southern, 1971) stated that *about the last of August came a Dutch man-of-war that sold us twenty Negroes.* Those twenty Negroes who were sold by the Dutch captain were not legal slaves. They worked in the large plantations in Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, and Carolinas. In 1623 and 1624, they were listed as servants in the census counts. The slave trade developed a triangular pattern: goods were transported from British ports to the west coast of Africa where they were exchanged for slaves and then the slaves were taken to the New World and traded for agricultural staples. One of the worst features of slavery was the trading of slaves. Men, women, and children were sold at public auction and sometimes the members of family were bought by a different person. The father was separated from the mother and the children. As (Seller & Mayer, 1975) stated "*To be slave...was to be a human being undercondition in which that humanity was denied. They were not slaves. They were people. Their condition was slavery.* The Blacks were put into America to take Indian's position as slaves. Their roles as slaves has an important part in American history. The slaves did not have education since teaching slaves was forbidden by law after 1830. Slavery had made the life of Black people were full of misery and they did not get their rights to be free as human beings.

Frederick Douglass as a former slave and then became an active abolitionist expressed social condition in

slavery era in America through his autobiography entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. He wanted to show to the public that slavery was a brutal and a cruel institution in the world. Through his autobiography, Douglass also gave a message that Blacks wanted to be respected as human beings who had freedom and opportunities in the life. He tried to claim the equality of Blacks and Whites as the Declaration of Independent stated that*all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain alienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness...* Douglass and other abolitionists, both Blacks and Whites, struggled against slavery to get a freedom for Blacks who were still bound to slavery through their underground railroad. Their struggle was full of sacrifice. Then, on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation* which said that all slaves in the South were free. It was continued with *Civil Rights Act* in 1865 which gave citizenship to Black men, and guaranteed them equal treatment under the law. This law made slavery illegal or against the law.

This research internal issues are 1) how does Frederick Douglass illustrate the slavery in America in the 19th century as seen in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave?*; and 2) how is the struggle of Frederick Douglass to get his freedom as seen in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* which is studied from a psychological approach especially from the theory of personality by Sigmund Freud (id, ego, and super ego)?

RESEARCH METHOD:

In this study, the researchers employed the descriptive qualitative method with the type of the study was library research. Descriptive qualitative method is *prosedur pemecahan masalah yang diselidiki dengan menggambarkan atau melukiskan keadaan subyek atau obyek penelitian pada saat sekarang berdasarkan fakta-fakta yang tampak atau sebagaimana adanya* (Nawawi, 1995). It meant that descriptive qualitative method caould be defined as a procedure to solve the problems by describing the problems of the research based on the real facts. Library research focused on the bibliographical resources by gathering and collecting data and information from books, essays, encyclopedia, internet sources, and other writings which were considered relevant to the topic of the research and those were as follows: 1) main data which was taken from the autobiography itself entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. Including dialogues, events, and narrative expressions. The dialogues consisted of the ones of the main characters or other characters in it who became a useful source to be considered by the researchers. The events were number of facts, happening in the story. These may be taken from the behaviours and the acts or the experiences undergone by the characters. Narration is what the author (Frederick Douglass) wanted to describe about the situation of slavery in the 19th century; 2) supporting data covered some books, essays, encyclopedia, internet sources, and other writings about slavery era and Frederick Douglass’ life.

The researchers have to reach the major part or event all of the data for getting the answer or the solution of the problem (Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono, 2009). To collect the data, the researchers used some techniques such as 1) reading the autobiography for several times; 2) taking notes and giving a certain code as the data to be analyzed; 3) determining the character; and 4) drawing the conclusion. After presenting the data collecting, the researchers employed interactive model of analysis which was proposed by Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2009) in analysing data. This model of analysis consisted of four activities, those are 1) data collection: the data may collect in variety of ways (observation, interview, documentation, and tape recording), 2) data reduction: it refered to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data appeared in written up field notes, 3) data display: it is a key element because the data available was presented with adding interpretation and explanation based on theoretical approach, and 4) conclusion: drawing/verification: it refered to the activity of checking and re-checking the relationship between collected data and the theory to examine their coherence in order to get the validity and to make conclusion.

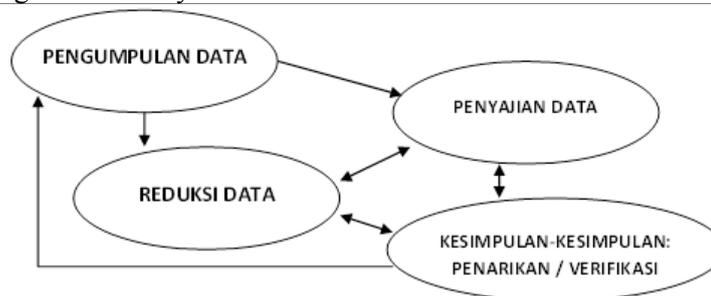


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman’s Component of data (in Sugiyono, 2009)

RESULT OF THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

Frederick Douglass as an individual was the product of his community in which his social environment played an important role in shaping his mind or vision as an abolitionist. He had tried to struggle against slavery for a long time and also had ever lived in a large plantation as a slave and run his life in misery and torturing. He learnt the harsh realities of the slaves system. As a literary work, which was against slavery, his autobiography entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* told about the reality of slave system which was full of violation. His autobiography was published in 1845 and it became an influential reforming propaganda in America in that time. As (Quarles, 1989) stated that *...for it bore upon the matter at hand – human bondage – an issue potentially explosive in its power to divide the nation along sectional lines, with the northern states, where slavery no longer existed, arrayed against the southern states, where black laborers were needed to produce cotton and other agricultural staples*. Through his autobiography, Douglass claimed for Blacks' freedom and equality between Blacks and Whites. He recorded the realistic details of slavery that was more valuable than a mere imagination.

Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born on February 1818 at that time when slavery was very popular and was practiced in the American society especially in Southern Territory. He was born and grew up as a slave. He was born at Tuckahoe near Hillsborough approximately 12 miles from Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He lived in a bindage which was owned by Captain Aaron Anthony. His master also managed the plantations of Colonel Edward Lloyd V, one of wealthiest men in Maryland. When he was a baby, his master, Captain Aaron Anthony, had separated him from his mother's affection (Harriet Bailey). Fred was then taken care of by his grandmother, Betsey Bailey, whose tasks was to take care of the children of the female slaves until they were strong enough to work. The separation of children from their mothers was commonplace in the slavery system. The aim was to cut off the child's dependence upon his or her mother and destroyed the affection of his or her mother. When Frederick was about seven years old, his master sent him to the nearby plantation in the Lloyd plantation where for the first time he met his brother, Perry, and his sisters Sara and Eliza. But, they were not too close each other. His heart hurt because slavery had made them strangers to each other. When he was eight years old, he was sent to live with Hugh Auld's house in Baltimore. Sophia Auld, his new mistress and Hugh Auld's wife, was a religious woman. She was very kind and nice to him. After Frederick lived with Hugh Auld's family, Sophia Auld began to teach him the alphabeth. But it was not long because Hugh Auld found out what was going on. Hugh became furious and forbidden his wife to teach Fred further. It was unlawful to teach a slave to read. Hugh Auld believed that slaves should not be educated. A slave that could read and write would be no longer obey his or her master. Frederick then understood that the white men had made black people in that time stupid and with their power they enslaved the black people. Frederick learnt from Hugh Auld's sentence that if a slave learned how to read and how to write, it became his pathways to get a freedom. So, he tried to get a lot of knowledge and to make it as his goal in order to reach his freedom from slavery. He tried to learn how to read the alphabeth by himself and made a relationship with poor white children that he met in sending of errands and used them as his teachers. At home, he tried to learn to read some books and newspaper but unfortunately his activity had been caught by his mistress, Sophia Auld. She screamed when she knew it and her attitude toward Frederick had changed. With a little money which he had got by doing errands, Frederick bought a book entitled *The Columbian Orator*. It was about a collection of classic poems, dialogues, plays, and speeches dealing with liberty, democracy, and courage. Someday, he would use it as a model for his own speeches. The book which disapprove of slavery and oppression made his hatred of slavery more deeper. This book has opened his eyes about the horrible condition of slavery. He got enlightenment and new ideas which had tormented and inspired him. He dreamed of emancipation and freedom for all slaves in America. He also began to learn about abolitionists and their activities which concerned on helping Blacks to escape from slavery. On September 3, 1838, Frederick Escaped from slavery, Espaing was a difficult decision for him. Because, if he was caught during his escape, he was sure that he would be killed or sold to the slave traders. He travelled to New York city with identification which was borrowed from a free black seaman named Stanley. Frederick changed his name from Bailey to Johnson. On September 15, 1838, he got married with Anna Murray, a free black woman, in New York and then they settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. There, he took the name Douglass. His name was given by Nathan Johnson who helped him when he arrived to New Bedford. Johnson suggested this name after he rad the *Lady of the Lake* a novel by Scottish author namely Sir Walter Scott. Frederick could not find the words to express his feelings of setting his life free from slavery. He later wrote *"A new world had opened upon me. Anguish and grief, like darkness and rain, may be depicted, but gladness and joy like the rainbow, defy the skill of pen or pencil*. His experiences as a slave had developed his vision about slavery.*slavery was a poor school for the human intellect and heart* (Garrison in Franklin and Moss, 1988).

After living in New Bedford, Douglass became a member of the abolitionist movement and regularly attended lectures in New Bedford. On the 11th of August, 1841, Douglass attended an Antislavery convention at Nantucket New Bedford. He met William Lloyd Garrison for the first time. He felt strongly moved to speak in front of the members of the New England Antislavery Society to tell his experiences as a slave. Garrison immediately recognized him as a potential speaker and asked him to be an agent of abolitionist for the society. More than 10 years, Douglass was associated with Garrisonian school of the antislavery movement. Garrison believed that only moral persuasion could end slavery. Garrison opposed to slave uprisings and other violence resistance but he was firm in his belief that slavery must be totally abolished. In the first issue of the *Liberator* (a newspaper of antislavery) in 1831, he wrote *I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population...On this subject I do not wish to think, or to speak, or to write with moderation...I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch AND I WILL BE HEARD* (An Outline of American History, 1994).

Douglass abilities as a speaker grew as he continued to lecture in 1844. Many abolitionists thought that he was growing in his ability too quickly and the audiences were no longer sympathetic to him. They advised him to tell about his life as a slave and not about the goal of the antislavery movement. People gradually began to doubt that Douglass was telling the truth about himself. To dispel doubts about his past, he published his autobiography in 1845 entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips wrote the introduction to this book. And it became best-seller. When the Civil War began in 1861, Douglass took an important role. He campaigned for the recruitment of slaves and free blacks into the Union Army and his own sons were among the first to enlist. In 1855, Douglass published his new version of his autobiography entitled *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Then, in 1881 he published his third autobiography entitled *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. He was born in slavery era when the strong voices were desperately needed to cry out for freedom. He was a powerful speaker for all men and women.

Clark and Kathleen Hug (1997) stated that *meskipun Frederick Douglass merupakan suara utama demi pembebasan kaum kulit hitam America, ia berjuang demi hak-hak asasi manusia bagi setiap orang, termasuk hak memberikan suara bagi kaum wanita*. On February 20, 1895, Douglass was struck by a massive heart attack and died in Washington D.C. During his life, he had ever become a minister to Haiti from 1889 to 1891.

Frederick Douglass' story linked with the process of slavery in America in the 19th century which trampled the human rights. Slaves were from Africa and arrived to America brought by the Dutch slave merchants. Since then, those black-skinned slaves multiplied in the vicinity where they worked for the white people. The number of slaves in America boomed quickly due to the increased slave trade. The white people wanted to get much profits from the slave trade and therefore allowed illegal deeds such as kidnapping or separated them from their families and brought them away from their ancestor's land. Douglass' story represented what has happened in American society at that era of slavery where human rights had no value at all and slaves were regarded as animals having no mind and feeling. Douglass tried to describe how hard and severe the slavery system was. To add to their wealth (counting the number of the slaves), white people were willing to buy more slaves from the auction and took care of them as if they were pets and chained them align. The price depended on the condition of the slaves. The slaves would be very sad to see the numbers of their family separated from each other to follow their new masters. In his autobiography, Douglass wanted to show us vividly about the social conditions of American society in the Southern Territory where slavery system was practiced.

The struggle of Frederick Douglass to get his freedom as seen in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* could be analyzed from a psychological aspect. He showed us about his id, ego, and super ego which can be analyzed by Sigmund Freud's theory as follows:

1)Id: id refers exclusively to the primitive, instinctive, and inherited aspects of personality (Freud in Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992). Id consists of everything psychological that is inherited and that is present at birth, including the instincts (Hall & Gardner, 1991). Frederick Douglass as the major character in his autobiography entitled the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* has a strong personality. He never gave up with their fate, ambitious, active, and he tried to reach his goal to get a freedom from slavery. The id has its command of two process, these are Reflex Action and Primary Process (Hall & Gardner, 1991), it could be seen as follows: a) Reflex Action: are inborn and automatic reaction like sneezing and blinking. The organism is equipped with a number of such reflexes for dealing with relatively simple forms of excitation. In his autobiography, Douglass also had the reflex action. He always told a pieces of story when he met with other people, especially abolitionists, for the first time. He told about his life that ever he got in the past and it made the people who heard his story would be interested and became sympathized; b) Primary Process: involves a somewhat more complicated psychological reaction and it attempts to discharge tension by forming an image of

an object that will remove the tension. In his autobiography, Douglass tried to learn to read and to write by himself after his new mistress, Sophia Auld, taught him the alphabeth. He thought that this became his pathways to get a freedom. His desire for freedom enabled him to learn to read and write so quickly.

2)Ego: the ego comes into existence because the needs of organism require appropriate transactions with the objective world of reality (Hall and Lindzey, 1981). In Ego, there are two kinds of process, they are: 1) Reality Principle: it suspends the pleasure principle temporarily although the pleasure principle is eventually served when the needed object is found and the tension is thereby reduced. In this autobiography, Douglass told that his mistress, Sophia Auld began to teach him the alphabeth. But it was not long because her husband, Hugh Auld, found out what was going on. Hugh Auld became furious and told his wife not to teach Douglass because it was unlawful to teach a slave to read. Hug Auld believed that slaves should not be educated. A slave that could read and write would be no longer obey his master. He could make a written letter which said that he was free and thus escaped to a Northern state where slavery was outlawed and there were a lot of free black men. The words of Hugh Auld sank deeply into Douglass' feeling. He then understood that white men had made the black people stupid and with their power they could do anything to black men as slaves. Douglass learnt from Hugh Auld's words that if a slave learnt to read and write, it became his way to get a freedom. So, Douglass tried to learn to read the alphabeth by himself and made a relationship with poor white kids and used them as teachers. He asked them to teach him how to spell the alphabeth well and paid them for his reading lesson with pieces of bread. At his master's house, he read some books and newspaper when he could in secret but his activity had been discovered by his mistress. She screamed when she caught his activity and her attitude toward Doglass had changed. She did not consider him as any child anymore but as a piece of property. However, Douglass could learn to read and to write well; 2) Secondary Process: it is realistic thinking which means that the ego formulates a plan for satisfaction of the need and then tests this plan, usually by some kinds of action, to see whether or not it will work. In his autobiography, after he could read and write well, then he bought a book entitled *The Columbian Orator*. He could buy this book with a little money which he had got by doing errands. This book was about a collection of classic poems, dialogues, plays, and speeches dealing with liberty, democracy, and courage. Someday, he used it as a model for his own speeches. This book disagreed with slavery and oppression. It opened his eyes to the horrible condition of slavery. He got enlightenment and new ideas which inspired him. He began to know closer with abolitionists and their activities which concerned on helping black slaves to escape from slavery. He felt eager to be free and joined with the abolitionists in the North. But he must wait and still lived in a plantation. In the plantation, he organized a Sabbath School for slaves in secret. But it was not long because many white people discovered his activities to teach slaves. Because of his unlawful activities, Douglass and other slaves was treated so bad and forbade them to continue their activity anymore. But Douglass never gave up. He started illegal school for slaves namely Sabbath School again. They met at night on Sunday secretly and he taught them how to read and write. At the close of the year 1834, William Freeland hired Douglass as a worker in his farm. In the Freeland's farm, he began to escape from slavery to the North with other five slaves. They stole a large canoe which was belonging to William Hamilton. They paddled the canoe directly up the Chesapeake Bay. The escape was held just before the Easter holiday in 1835. But their journey to freedom was caught and they were jailed. Douglass was in jail for about one week. Finally, his master came and released him then sent him back to Baltimore.

3)Super Ego: Super ego becomes the last component of personality which has to be developed and it represents an internalized version of society's norms and standards of behavior (Hjelle & Daniel, 1991) Super ego is the moral or ethical province of personality and it is guided by the idealistic principle as opposed to the pleasure principle of the id and the realistic principle of the ego (Feist, 1985). In this part, the super ego of Douglass came out. It could be seen in his autobiography which told that he decided to have a plan to escape from his master's house. On September 3, 1838, Douglass escaped from slavery bravely. It was not an easy decision for him. He resolved to escape from slavery and to get his freedom. He went to New York city with a new identification which was borrowed by him from a free black seaman named Stanley. He could reach North safely and changed his name to be Douglass as suggested by Nathan Johnson who helped him when he arrived to New Bedford. Douglass could not find the words to express his feelings of setting his life from slavery. He was really grateful and opened his new life in New Bedford. He joined with an Antislavery Society and was active as a speaker for antislavery. Douglass became an activist not only in antislavery society but also in feminist problems. He attended the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York and convinced the women that political equality was an essential step in their liberation. Many people described him as one of the world's greatest speaker. During his life, he had ever become a minister to Haiti from 1889 to 1891. He died on February, 20, 1895 in Washington D.C.

CONCLUSION:

The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* which was written by Frederick Douglass as his own autobiography told us about his struggle to get a freedom from slavery. From his autobiography, it showed us about the potrays of a slavery in the 19th century when Douglass lived. This autobiography described lively the slavery situation and its system in it in America in the 19th century. It also described the struggle of Frederick Douglass to get his freedom which could be seen from psychological approach by using Sigmund Freud's theory of Id, Ego, and Super Ego. There were success and failure in his struggle. But finally, he could get his freedom from slavery and could be actualized himself as a speaker in an antislavery society to talk about his experiences as a former slave. He became the most influential black figures in American history had been born. He deserved all of the honours for his struggle in the social reform and the abolition of slavery. Garrison (Franklin & Alfred A. Moss, 1988) praised his ability to be a good speaker *as a public speaker, he excels in pathos, wit, comparison, imitation, strength of reasoning, and fluency of language. There is in him that union of head and heart which is indispensable to an enlightenment of the heads and a winning of the hearts of others.*

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