Martin R. Delany and His Vision of Black Liberation in the Antebellum Period

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Introduction

Martin R. Delany (1812-85) is generally regarded as the one who contested with Frederick Douglass (1818-95) for the appellation as representative black[1] leader of the nineteenth century in the United States. While Douglass has emerged as the representative black male writer of the period as an integrationist, Delany, an abolitionist, editor, physician, writer, political and racial theorist, and explorer, has been marginalized and, for the most part, ignored because of his separatist, black nationalist position (Levine 3).

No figure outshines Frederick Douglass, an eminent abolitionist, orator, editor, writer, statesman and diplomat, in his political and social impact at the time as well as for his continuous influence on the African American liberation movement thereafter. However, as Robert S. Levine argues, the idea of male generational binarism on African American thought such as Booker T. Washington versus W. E. B. Du Bois and Malcolm X versus Martin Luther King Jr., does not always apply in the case of Douglass and Delaney (5).[2]

Considering that Delany's vision of black liberation, defined as the political discourse aiming to establish a society or nation which enables it to abolish the institution of slavery and to uplift black people, his political thought holds more significance than generally regarded. He was a precursor to modern transnational and Pan-African ideology in the antebellum period. This paper examines Delany's transnational and Pan-African vision of black liberation especially focusing on his political writings and his picaresque novel, *Blake; or the Huts of America* (1859-62).[3] First, the paper presents a biographical sketch of Delany in the historical context of the antebellum period. Then, it argues Delany's vision of black liberation in comparison with that of Frederick Douglass, one of his counterparts. Finally, it scrutinizes his transnational and Pan-African vision of black liberation in *Blake*.

The Life of Martin R. Delany Up to the Civil War

Martin Robison Delany was born free in Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia) on May 6, 1812,[4] to a free black mother and slave father, who later purchased his freedom. In 1823 the family relocated to Pennsylvania. Delany was educated both privately and at the school established by the Bethel African Methodist Church in Pittsburgh. In 1833 he began a medical apprenticeship with white

doctors, and in 1850 he was admitted to Harvard Medical School. However, a month later he was dismissed from the School by Dean Oliver Wendell Holmes after white medical students petitioned to continue to exclude blacks from the student body.

During his time in Pittsburgh, Delany joined and helped to found several African American antislavery and moral reform societies. As early as the 1830s, Delany contemplated African American emigration to Africa. In fact, in 1838 he drafted a proposal for black emigration to the eastern coast of Africa. In the following year he attempted for the first time to found a nation for himself and the people of African decent by exploring the Mexican part of Texas, where slavery was illegal and blacks could be citizens. However, it was not feasible because usurping American slaveholders were moving in to that area.

Delany founded a black weekly newspaper, *Mystery*, that argued against slavery and for equality between the races from 1847 to 1849. At the same time, he helped Frederick Douglass edit the antislavery newspaper, *North Star*, for a year and a half. He promoted the newspaper, lectured, described and criticized the conditions and attitudes of black people.

Although he was searching for the possibilities of African American emigration, Delany, mostly shared Frederick Douglass's and other black Garrisonians' commitments to moral suasion and black uplift. According to Levine, for Delany the existence of thriving black communities would offer indisputable evidence of blacks' equality with whites. This evidence, when assessed by rational whites, could not help but bring about social change (Delany, *Martin R. Delany* 181). However, Delany became disillusioned with such optimism for social change through moral suasion and black uplift because of three major political developments in the 1850s: the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, and the U. S. Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision of 1857. The Compromise of 1850 toughened the Fugitive Slave Law, which legally compelled Americans to return fugitive slaves who fled to the North to their owners in the South, and which also threatened to re-enslave free blacks. The Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the limits on the spread of slavery established by the Missouri Compromise of 1820-21. This Act had a high possibility of expanding slavery into new states. The Supreme Court's Dred Scott Decision denied black people's full citizenship rights. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney stated in the opinion of the Court: Even in the North or new free territories, blacks were "beings of an inferior order" with "no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

Disillusioned about African American prospects in the United States under these dire political and social developments in the 1850s, Delany drastically argued for black nationalism and black emigration. The most conspicuous discourse for his argument was in the book, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* of 1852, an antisentimental, sociopolitical report on blacks in America.[5] The publication of this book, however, was several weeks after the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Delany's book received little attention. By 1853 Delany reportedly began writing his fiction, "Blake; or the Huts of America— A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba," which illustrates his transnational and Pan-African vision.[6] In 1856 Delany moved to Canada where he worked as a contributing editor to the *Provincial Freemen*.

From 1859 to 1860 Delany toured the Yoruba region of West Africa to investigate the possibility of a colony for blacks in the Niger Valley. Delany had signed a treaty with the king and chiefs of Abeokuta that granted him the rights to establish a black settlement on the land of the Egba people although the king rescinded the treaty under pressure from British missionaries and government officials afterwards. Then, he went back to Canada and published *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party* in 1861. Delany continued his efforts to recruit blacks to emigrate to Africa up to the Civil War.

Delany's Ideas of "a Nation within a Nation"

Delany publishes his first book *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* in 1852. Delany states:

> [T]here have in all ages, in almost every nation, existed a nation within a nation—a people who although forming a part and parcel of the population, yet were from force of circumstances, known by the peculiar position they occupied, forming in fact, by the deprivation of political equality with others, no part, and if any, but a restricted part of the body politic of such nations, is also true. (42)

Phrasing "a nation within a nation," Delany envisions a black nation within a U.S. nation; he points out the unjust exclusion of black people from the United States. In *The Condition*, illustrating the black people's achievement in such fields as "business, professions, and literature," Delany makes his case for black citizenship in the United States. Also, he asserts racial consanguinity: "[I]t is none the less creditable to the colored people, that among those who have stood the most conspicuous and shone the brightest in the earliest period of our history, there are those of pure and unmixed African blood. … The elevation of the colored man can only be completed by the elevation of the pure descendants of Africa" (107). This assertion seems to be rather essential because Delany's racial pride reinforces the racism undergirding white power in the United States and confutes the humanistic notions of equality (Levine 7).[7] His concern with the racial superiority of blacks to whites is somehow related to his discontent about the black representations in *Uncle Tome's Cabin*.

While he believes that black people should be fully integrated into the American society, Delany is so disillusioned with their condition in the 1850s that he suggests black emigration outside the States: "We love our country, dearly love her, but she don't [sic] love us—she despises us, and bids us begone, driving us from her embraces; but we shall not go where she desires us; but when we do go, whatever love we have for her, we shall love the country none the less that receives us as her adopted children" (*The Condition* 216). He proposes: the "advantages to the colored people of the United States, to be derived from emigration to Central, South America, and the West Indies, are incomparably greater than that of any other parts of the world at present" (194). He advocates emigration to and the establishment of a black "nation" in Central and South America which will contribute to the downfall of American slavery by its economic and political potency.[8] This belief is also developed later in his novel *Blake*.

However, using “a nation, in the midst of a nation” the similar phrasing to Delany’s “a nation within a nation,” his contemporary African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass claims: “I rather wish to speak of the condition of the colored people of the United States generally. This people, free and slave, are rapidly filling up the number of four millions. They are becoming a nation, in the midst of a nation which disowns them, and for weal or for woe this nation is united. The distinction between the slave and the free is not great, and their destiny seems one and the same”[9] (*Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches* 253). Contrary to Delany, Douglass asserts that “a nation, in the midst of a nation” should be united as one nation because he has “faith left yet in the wisdom and justice of the country, and it may be that there are enough left of these to save the nation” (258). Indeed, Douglass is strongly against black emigration. Therefore, Delany’s suggestion in *The Condition* is a totally unacceptable one for Douglass.

Three months after his publication of *The Condition*, Delany criticizes Douglass for praising Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in his newspaper *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, while neglecting his attempts to reshape black political discourse in his book. Angered that Douglass has chosen to advocate an antislavery novel by a white woman over his own book, Delany writes letters to Douglass which are quite highly critical of Stowe:

> Now I simply wish to say, that we have always fallen into great errors in efforts of this kind, going to others than the *intelligent* and *experienced* among *ourselves*; and in all due respect and deference to Mrs. Stowe, I beg leave to say, that she *knows nothing about us*, “the Free Colored people of the United States,” neither does any other white person—and, consequently, can contrive no successful scheme for our elevation; it must be done by ourselves.[10] (*Martin R. Delany* 224)

In response to Delany, Douglass counterargues:

> To scornfully reject all aid from our white friends, and to denounce them as unworthy of our confidence, looks high and mighty enough on paper; but unless the back ground is filled up with facts demonstrating our independence and self-sustaining power, of what use is such display of self-consequence? …The assertion that Mrs. Stowe “knows nothing about us,” shows that Bro. DELANY knows nothing about Mrs. Stowe; for he certainly would not so violate his moral, or common sense if he did. (*Martin R. Delany* 226)

Douglass ironically points out that the plan presented by Delany for benefiting the black people is “no plan,” and that the book leaves them just where it finds them, without chart or compass, and in more doubt and perplexity than before they read it (226).[11]

Both Delany and Douglass share the idea that educating the talented free blacks and making them contribute to the American society will eventually elevate the black people as a whole. Also, in order to realize the idea, they know the necessity of the industrial school for blacks. However, frustrated by the

prejudice and social and economic discrimination practiced not only by the pro-slavery whites but also by white abolitionists, Delany is very doubtful about white people's assistance. Moreover, he believes the "elevation of the colored man can only be completed by the elevation of the pure descendants of Africa" (*The Condition* 107). Therefore, Delany is discontent with the representation of "pure/full-blooded" black slave Uncle Tom in Stowe's novel, (simple, docile, and childlike black male image) and also with the other main figure of "mulatto/mixed-blood" George Harris, who has gone to Liberia at the end of the story.

Behind the scene of George's going to Liberia, there is the huge influence of the American Colonization Society, a reformist "antislavery" organization that was committed to the idea that the United States would function best as an all-white nation. In fact, most black leaders were reluctant to support the aims of the Society that sought free blacks' eventual removal from the United States. Of course, Douglass has the same view on American Colonization Society. In fact, he had written a letter to Stowe: "Individuals emigrate—nations never. We have grown up with this republic, and I see nothing in her character, or even in the character of the American people as yet, which compels the belief that we must leave the United States" (*Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches* 217).[12] As Robert B. Stepto points out, while the donation to the industrial school from her was still a possibility, Douglass praised Stowe publicly and, for the most part, chose to debate their differences in conference, or if publicly, often circuitously (145). Indeed, Douglass euphemistically criticized the representation of black images such as Uncle Tom and George Harris and later presented an alternative image of a black man in "The Heroic Slave" of 1853.[13]

Unlike Douglass, Delany takes a pessimistic view of the future of American blacks and the support from white people. He argues that as long as black people stay in the United States where blacks are disdained and black political rights are denied they will never be able to prove their ability. His only remedy for black degradation in America at that time is emigration to the West Indies, Central and South America.

Transnational and Pan-African Vision in Blake

Delany exemplifies his ideal vision of black liberation in the novel, *Blake; or the Huts of America [: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba]* (1859-62).[14] Although Delany never claimed Blake, also the name of the hero in the novel, to be an answer to Stowe's best selling *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the subtitle, "Huts of America," implies an explicit and intertextual response to her work. Moreover, the epigraph of *Blake* is a quotation of Stowe's poem: "By myself, the Lord of Ages, / I have sworn to right the wrong, / I have pledged my word unbroken, / For the weak against the strong" (*Blake* 1). This stanza foreshadows Blake, the hero, to lead slaves from slavery to freedom.

In theme and content, Delany is clearly writing the antithesis to Stowe's presentation of a "mulatto" hero George Harris; to slave docility; to Christian endurance crystallized in "pure" black Uncle Tom; and to Liberia as the ultimate destination of the successful fugitive slave.

In 1859 Part I of the novel first appeared serially from the January to July issues of the *Anglo-*

African Magazine, a political journal for African Americans. A slightly revised version of Part I and Part II are eventually published in the *Weekly Anglo-African* newspaper, from November 1861 to April 1862. Approximately eighty chapters comprise the complete novel. Until Floyd J. Miller's 1970 Beacon Press edition collated all the available *Weekly Anglo-African* installments of the novel into an unfinished text,—existing chapters are from chapter one to seventy four— this novel had never been published in book form. The novel consists of two parts: Part I staged in the Southern United States, as the subtitle suggests, and Part II set in Cuba, the Caribbean Islands, West Africa and the Middle Passage.

Delany characterizes the hero, Henry Blake, as follows: "Henry was a black—a pure Negro—handsome, manly and intelligent, in size comparing well with his master, …. A man of good literary attainments…. He was bold, determined and courageous, but always mild, gentle and courteous, though impulsive when an occasion demanded his opposition" (*Blake* 16-17). The story concerns this Henry Blake, a free and educated black man from Cuba, who is deceived by whites and pirated away from his home and brought as a slave to the plantation of Colonel Stephen Franks in Mississippi. He marries a slave woman, Maggie, whose father is her owner, Colonel Franks. After Maggie is sold to the wife of a Northern judge who takes her to Cuba, Blake escapes from the plantation and makes a whirlwind tour throughout the South—from Louisiana to Arkansas to South Carolina to Virginia's Dismal Swamp—spreading his plan of organized rebellion against slavery in varied black communities. Blake then returns to the plantation and helps several slaves to escape to Canada. At this point, in Miller's words, "Delany veered away from what was, in part, a conventional story of the breaking-up of a slave family, escape and the long trek north" (xxi). Part I ends with Blake leaving New York for Cuba where he hopes to find his wife, Maggie.

In Part II, Blake secures Maggie's freedom and the story expands to the trans-Atlantic; he plans a black insurrection plot which is meant to occur not only in the United States but also in Cuba, West Africa, and onboard the slaver on Middle Passage. Finally, Blake seeks to overthrow slave holding power in the United States and the Caribbean and to establish a Pan-African republic in Cuba. However, as the story draws to a close, whites in Cuba terrified by the possibility of black rebellion attack blacks. The last six chapters has not been discovered yet; the last available words "Woe be unto those devils of whites, I say!" (*Blake* 313) symbolically echoes Delany's pessimism about racism and white supremacy in the United States.

Delany depicts slave owner Colonel Franks with paranoiac fear of black insurrection and makes him say: "… It's [a] rebellion! A plot —this is but the shadow of a cloud that's fast gathering around us! I see it plainly, I see it!" (*Blake* 19-20). In fact, while inciting latent horror among whites for Nat Turner-like violent rebellion throughout the novel, the impending violent revolt never materializes, at least in the existing chapters. However, as Rebecca Skidmore Biggio argues, the "threat of organized black violence Delany so painstakingly establishes in *Blake* is not an empty one" because "the illusion of conspiracy is not less valuable in terms of creating and sustaining community if the violence it has threatened is finally executed; instead, maintenance of the illusion and the community it creates must exist before any successful unified action can occur" (440). The projected revolt and the vision of community

Delany crafts in *Blake* is more than the creation of an insurrectionary army; it is the foundation for an autonomous black nation sustainable beyond emancipation and beyond any one instance, however grand, of revolutionary violence (Biggio 441).

Indeed, Blake's very first "scheme, and ... a plan for a general insurrection of the slaves in every state, and the successful overthrow of slavery" (*Blake* 39), exemplified in continuous metaphor, such as "sowing seeds" (*Blake* 73) or "sowing the seeds of future devastation" (*Blake* 83) is shared among black communities throughout the South. Furthermore, the seed of the secret revolt steadily spreads to a pluralistic coalition of unified black community.

Delany criticizes the notorious political developments in the 1850s in *Blake*, and the disillusionment about African American prospects in the United States; the Compromise of the 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854, and the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision of 1857. He highlights the problematic shared consensus on the institution of slavery in Antebellum America; the country where white masters exploit black slaves or where the North ignores slave holdings in the South and legally assists in capturing runaway slaves. The "eminent jurist of one of the Northern States" (*Blake* 4), Judge Ballard, whose wife is a cousin of Mrs. Stephen Franks, shows his "opinion of equality" :

> … I hold as a just construction of the law, that not only has the slaveholder a right to reclaim his slave when and wherever found, but by its provision every free black in the country, North and South, are liable to enslavement by any white person. They are free-men by sufferance or slaves-at-large, whom any white person may claim at discretion. It was a just decision of the Supreme Court—though I was in advance of it by action—that persons of African descent have no rights that white men are bound to respect! (*Blake* 61)

Unlike his contemporary black writers, who have acknowledged that they must encourage the white Northerners to support black people in order to end the horror of slavery by writing antislavery fictions, Delany dares to demonstrate that Northerners could be even more vicious towards blacks than Southerners. Disillusioned by white supremacy and racism, for Delany, the solution of "a nation within a nation" transcends the limits of the United States as the raced nation.

Delany also points out the problem of slavery in capitalist culture. Conversing with Judge Ballard, Major Armsted, a famous "Merchantman" (*Blake* 59), actually a slave dealer, reveals his opinion on slavery and slave trade: "… I would just as readily hold a white as a black in slavery, were it the custom and policy of the country to do so. It is all a matter of self-interest with me; and though I am morally opposed to slavery, yet while the thing exists, I may as well profit by it, as others" (*Blake* 64). Although Armsted protests that he would hold whites or blacks in slavery merely according to "custom," his notion reinforces how his pretended political disinterest and silence, as he pursues economic gain, nonetheless comply with the racist policies and economic practices to which he ignores (Clymer 718). Also, Gregg D. Crane argues that in the dialogue of Judge Ballard and Major Armsted, "Judge Ballad rationalizes white supremacy with the language of legal reasoning and the rule of law, while Major Armsted unequivocally

enunciates the self-interest of the powerful that animates Judge Ballad's legal doctrines" (538).

Delany extends his argument on the issue of slavery to the socioeconomic perspective. When he helped fellow slaves escape from slavery, Blake told them as follows:

> With money you may effect your escape almost at any time. Your most difficult point is an elevated obstruction, a mighty hill, a mountain; but through that hill there is a gap, and money is your passport through that White Gap to freedom. Mark that! It is the great range of White mountains and White river which are before you, and the White Gap that you must pass through to reach the haven of safety. Money alone will carry you through the White mountains or across the White river to liberty. (*Blake* 84)

The metaphors of "passport" and "White Gap" related to money indicate blacks' need to empower themselves in a capitalist culture or society. In John Ernest's words, "Delany uses the language of market economics as a method for imagining freedom; fleeing slaves literary buy the liberty that whites possess" (Clymer 719). The novel makes this economic lesson when Blake, leading fugitive slaves, encounters a stubborn ferryman who refuses to accept their forged passes and row them across the Arkansas River. Then Blake says " 'I have one that will pass us!' " and shows "the unmistaking evidence of a shining gold eagle." Seeing the "emblem of his country's liberty," the ferryman's "patriotism was at once awakened, and their right to pass as American freemen indisputable" (*Blake* 135). As Clymer argues: "Though the 'emblem' of the US that the ferryman responds to is ostensibly the eagle, Delany deftly implies that money itself equally symbolizes America. Furthermore, he acerbically demonstrates that in capitalist America money, and evidently only money, can trump political ideology and individuals' racist beliefs" (719). More ironically, the fact that slaves themselves are regarded as "property" under the law underscores the fact that the crucial roles of black people in chains have historically been displayed in the American and European economy.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Martin R. Delany's vision of black liberation as well as his political discourse and activity in the antebellum period, especially focusing on his novel *Blake*. Delany condemned the legality of the institution of slavery which supported American capitalist culture and society, to say nothing of racism. Anticipated transnational/trans-Atlantic black revolution in *Blake* shows his vision of a black community and of the foundation for an autonomous black nation. Delany fully acknowledged the necessity and significance of the economic independence of black people, but it was not feasible to realize black economic independence as long as the institution of slavery existed in the United States. Therefore, he advocated emigration to and the establishment of a black "nation" in Central and South America which would contribute to the downfall of American slavery by its economic and political potency. In this respect, the precursory vision of modern transnational and Pan-African ideology can be found in his thoughts and activities.

In the Unites States, Fredrick Douglass came to be re-evaluated during the Civil Rights Movement era in the 1950s to 60s, and his ideology and activism were and are inherited by Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama.[15] Meanwhile, Delany's thought and vision of black liberation lead to Pan-Africanism and the modern discourse of Black Atlantic or of African Diaspora; accordingly, Delany has been re-evaluated by recent scholars.

The thought, writings, and activism of Martin R. Delany, as well as those of Douglass, have had a significant influence on African American intellectuals in later ages. Scrutinizing the life and works of Delany also reveals the diversity and dissemination of African American intellectualism during the very time when the institution of slavery still existed in the United States of America.

Notes

1 The conventional name for Americans of African descent historically has been changed. In Delany's days "colored" or "negro/Negro" were often used in identifying themselves in a positive way. During the twentieth century the name changed from "Afro-American" to "African American." In this paper I use mainly two identifications, "African American" and "black," since the former is the most recent trend by which they call themselves and the latter is still the most common colloquial term.

2 For a more detailed argument challenging reductive binarism that lead to Delany and Douglass being regarded as unequivocal opponents on the subjects of race and nation, see Levine.

3 This article is partly based on my unpublished paper "Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delany: African American 'revolutionism' in the Antebellum Period" presented at the annual meeting of the American Literature Society of Japan, Chubu Branch on April 20, 2014 at Chukyo University in Nagoya, Japan.

4 Knowing one's exact date of birth in the age of slavery could mean he or she is a free-born black. Douglass never knew his exact date of birth during his lifetime which he noted in his autobiographies. In fact, it was not until Douglass scholars found his birth year and month, February 1818, in the 1970s, on a slave record of a former master of Douglass. Even now the day has not been known yet.

5 Even the so-called optimist Frederick Douglass became so disappointed that he decided to split with the Garrisonian abolitionism and changed his interpretation of the Constitution as a "warrant for the abolition of slavery in every state in the American Union" (*My Bondage* 393). But Douglass sought for the same legal rights to citizenship as whites in the United States. For the most part, Douglass never agreed with colonization and immigration during his life except for a very short period when he contemplated the feasibility of black settlement in Haiti in the antebellum period.

6 *Blake* first announced as "Blake; or the Huts of America— A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba." However, the only available version of the novel in book form is titled *Blake or the Huts of America*; Floyd J. Miller's 1970 Beacon Press edition.

7 Delany tried to show himself as a more "authentic" black man than Douglass; a son of a slave woman and said-to-be white master, by celebrating his own "African" blood. In response to Delany, Douglass emphasized his native roots in the United States, which specifically means his former enslavement and his ability to overcome it.

8 Delany more vehemently insists on his emigrationism and separatist idea in "Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent," a keynote address at the 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored Men, Cleveland, August, 1854. Delany, *Martin R. Delany* 245-79.

9 "The Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Negro People," a speech at the annual meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, New York City, May 11, 1853.

10 Letter to Frederick Douglass, Pittsburgh, March 20, 1853.

[11] Remarks by Frederick Douglass. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 1, 1853.

[12] To Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rochester, March 8, 1853.

[13] For a more detailed argument on the issue, see Park, chapter 2-2 "Construction of a Militant African American Man Image in 'The Heroic Slave,' " of "Frederick Douglass and His Strategic Application of Masculinity to African American Liberation."

[14] The writing of this fiction is also his attempt to manipulate the American market place and to sell it in order to support his African venture that aimed to undermine slavery by producing high-quality, cheap, African cotton.

[15] Obama's allusion to Douglass has been often pointed out. According to David Remnick, "Obama said that he identified with Douglass and saw the limits of a nationalist politics [like Delany's]" (275). Also, Obama refers to Douglass (and Delany) in the epilogue of *Dreams from My Father*, his autobiography: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident*. In those words, I hear the spirits of Douglass and Delany, as well as Jefferson and Lincoln; the struggles of Martin and Malcolm and unheralded marchers to bring these words to life" (437).

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