

## A HISTORIC HONOR

# A Degree for Frederick Douglass

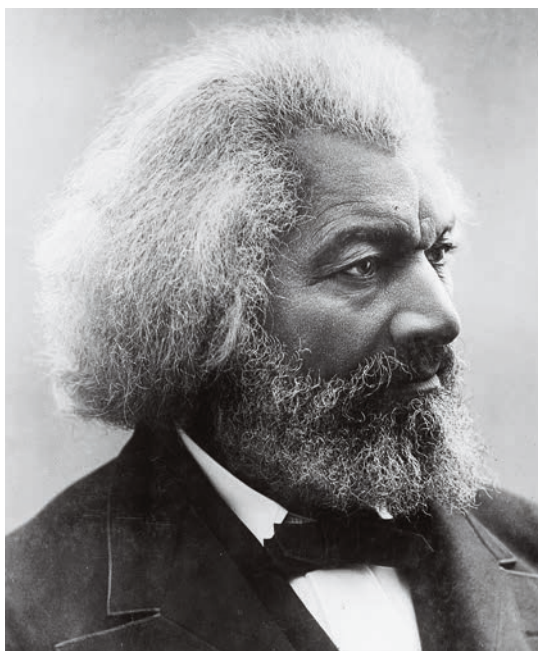
Frederick Douglass, widely considered the most important abolitionist leader in American history, was honored by the University during this spring's commencement ceremonies.

Douglass, who made his home in Rochester from 1847 to 1872, was recognized with an honorary degree, the first time the honor has been presented posthumously. The degree was accepted by his great-great-grandson, Kenneth Morris Jr.

After the ceremony, Morris said the family appreciated the recognition, particularly as a way to mark the 200th anniversary of Douglass's birth into slavery.

"Frederick Douglass said it's easier to build strong children than to repair broken men," Morris said. "We're living in a time right now where we need the glorious light of truth and people who will speak when others say be quiet, and stand when others say sit down. To hear that all these years later, he's inspiring the next generation of leaders is very humbling. He still has that impact, all these years later."

Born into slavery on a Maryland plantation in 1818, Douglass escaped to the North at age 20 with the help of Anna Murray, a free black woman in Baltimore. The two eventually married and settled together in Rochester, where Douglass founded the abolitionist newspaper the *North Star*. From 1847 until 1863, he published



**FIRST DEGREE:** Abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who made Rochester his home for more than two decades, is the first recipient of an honorary degree recognized posthumously.

the paper—renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in 1851—from a second story office in the Talman Building at 25 East Main Street.

An accomplished writer and speaker, Douglass taught himself to read and write. Before settling in Rochester, he traveled to Great Britain and Ireland—in large part

to avoid recapture—and spoke widely, to growing crowds. In Rochester, Douglass became friends with Susan B. Anthony and took up the cause of women's rights, attending the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. Douglass and Anthony were at the center of a prominent group of western New York activists who agitated for abolition and women's suffrage under the common umbrella of human rights.

Douglass delivered many of his most famous speeches while in Rochester, including his 1852 Independence Day address, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" He published three memoirs: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

(1881).

After moving to Washington, D.C., in 1872, he would eventually serve in several roles under five presidents.

Douglass died at his home in Washington in 1895. He is buried in Rochester's Mount Hope Cemetery. **R**

## TOP TEACHERS

## Singer Awards Honor High School Teachers

High school teachers who made a difference in the education of four graduating seniors were recognized for their dedication as mentors during commencement this spring. Supported by Paul Singer '66 through the Paul Singer Family Foundation, the annual Singer Family Prizes for Excellence in Secondary School Teaching are drawn from nominations submitted by members of the graduating class in the College. This year's recipients and their nominating students were (seated) Cristina Duarte, an English teacher at Manhattan Comprehensive Night & Day High School in New York City, who was nominated by Joseph Gray (standing); Teresa Haskiell, a mathematics teacher at James Wood High School in Winchester, Virginia, who was nominated by Brian Baker, who was also commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army through the Army ROTC program offered by the University in



partnership with the Rochester Institute of Technology; Allison Cain, a French teacher at Kent Denver School in Englewood, Colorado, who was nominated by Perry DeMarche; and Michael Zitolo, a physics teacher at the School

of the Future in New York City, who was nominated by Hannah Parker. The students and teachers were joined by Jeffrey Runner, dean of the College (standing, center).

—Joe Hagen '19E