Above: digital image of one of the 26 known copies of the historic first printing of the Declaration of Independence. Often referred to as the Dunlap Broadside, in honor of John Dunlap who printed approximately 200 copies in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, the broadside was soon distributed throughout the states to announce the establishment of the new nation. In past years, this essential document of the United States has been on public view at Beinecke Library in the weeks before and after Independence Day. It will be on public view again in future years. For 2020, given the public health requirements, Beinecke Library is sharing this document from the collections with our neighbors through this edition.
M y business, if I have any here today, is with the present. The accepted
time with God and his cause is the
every-living now.

Trust no future, however pleasant, Let the dead past bury its dead; Act, act in the living present, Heart within, and God overhead.

We have to do with the past only as we can to make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome. But now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blear by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. Sidney Smith tells us that men seldom elucidate the wisdom of the ancients, except to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own.

This truth is not a doubtful one. There are illustrations of it near and remote, and ancient and modern. What, are there, for instance, two centuries ago, for the children of Jacob to boast, we have Abraham to our fathers, when they had long lost Abraham's faith and spirit. That people contemn themselves and the great end of Abraham's great name, while they repudiated the deeds which made his name great. Need I remind you that a similar thing is being done all over this country today? Need I tell you that the Jews are not the only people who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous? Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in his slaves. He would never have been a Washington to our father. Alas! that it should be so; yet so it is.

The evil that men do, lives after them. The bodies and souls of men, shout “We have a right and are justified in what we do, for the great name of Abraham is with us.” But, such is not the state of the case. I say it is just in this circumstance that you and your servers acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be,) subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. This is but the acknowledgement that the slave is a man, a moral, intellectual and responsible being. This is with the present. The accepted
drama of the nation, and to confess the inadequacy of the chosen people of this country, need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slave-holders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes

“Who, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?”

Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of the American bondman. Chains, heavy and greaves yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those who loved the freedom of our fathers, let them without wages, to keep them ignorant of

Fellow-citizens, I may not argue that man is entitled to freedom; but, I say, it is your duty to see that they are free. You cannot tell, with all the information of which we are possessed, the state in which they are. I will not argue that the American slave is entitled to liberty; but, I say, it is your duty to see that they are free.
What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! Who can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may, I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scourging irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. It is not in that light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. A day that reveals to him, at a single glance, more purposely and audaciously wickedness, than the whole horizon of our guarantee can justly feared. A day to tear your heart, and to make you educated men and women from every state and nation, to mark a number of your gravest crimes, and your greatest wrongs. I am not话多，翻译不出来。
Above: carte-de-visite, portrait of Frederick Douglass, 1860, studio unknown, in the Randolph Linsly Simpson African-American Collection (JWJ MSS 54), part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, Beinecke Library.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, named for a forceful leader for liberation and against racist violence, includes the papers of Johnson and his wife, Grace Nail Johnson, along with founding archives entrusted by Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul and Edanda Goode Robeson, and many more. Its establishment, in 1941, made Yale Library special collections a place where the voices and stories of Black American writers can be seen and shared across generations. The collection has continued to grow over the decades, with both historic and contemporary archives. Much of the collection has been digitized and all are welcome to learn more and view the images on the digital library at any time. Visit beinecke.library.yale.edu for more information and links.