

# Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this third annual thematic issue of *CRM* devoted entirely to African-American history. This year we have dedicated the issue of *CRM* to articles on slavery and the underground railroad, topics that are receiving considerable attention in the National Park Service.

Since beginning my career with the National Park Service as a seasonal park ranger at Grand Teton National Park, I have witnessed many changes in the scope and direction of the Service and its historic preservation programs. In 1962, the year I joined the Service, we had only a few parks devoted to the preservation and interpretation of sites related to African-American history. Today there are 26 parks with a multitude of other programs and services devoted to this history.

In 1966, I moved to Washington, DC, and became acquainted with the rich diversity of African-American history sites in the immediate area of our nation's capital including the Frederick Douglass NHS. Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in 1818 and lived to become one of the most famous Americans of his day by the time of his death just before the turn of the century.

In a speech given in Rochester, New York, on Independence Day in 1852, Douglass pointed out how differently blacks and whites viewed the day's celebrations: "What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all the other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.... To him your celebration is a sham ... a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States." The sufferings of the hunted fugitive slaves reminded Douglass that freedom for his people would not come easily.

The memory and contributions of Frederick Douglass and other great Americans are preserved and interpreted through the medium of our great national park system. However important we may find Frederick Douglass, his history preserves only one small portion of the fabric of our story. In recent years, the Martin Luther King, Jr., NHS, Brown v. Board of Education NHS, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, Nicodemus NHS, and many other sites have been added to the national park system to tell this story.

I am pleased to see all aspects of American history and culture, including such topics as slavery and the underground railroad, discussed and interpreted by our many historic sites and national parks. The depth and breath of this history is the subject of this thematic issue of *CRM*.

As you read these articles, you will learn about our past and of the history and events that commemorate our journey through the centuries as a free and sovereign nation. I hope you will rediscover the resources and people that form one part of the mosaic that is the United States of America.

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