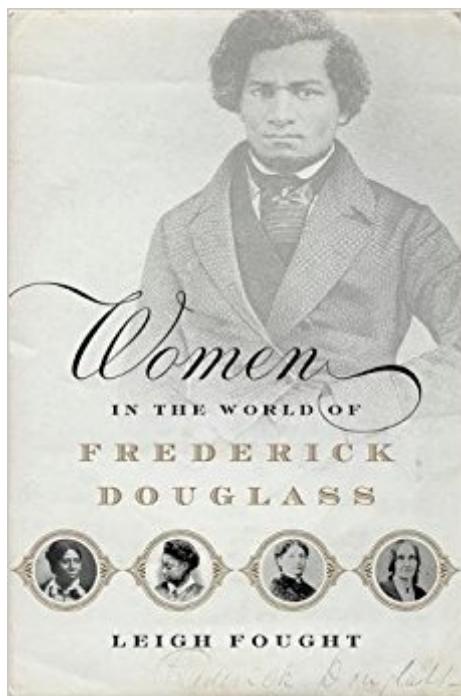


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# Women In The World Of Frederick Douglass



## Synopsis

In his extensive writings, Frederick Douglass revealed little about his private life. His famous autobiographies present him overcoming unimaginable trials to gain his freedom and establish his identity—all in service to his public role as an abolitionist. But in both the public and domestic spheres, Douglass relied on a complicated array of relationships with women: white and black, slave-mistresses and family, political collaborators and intellectual companions, wives and daughters. And the great man needed them throughout a turbulent life that was never so linear and self-made as he often wished to portray it. In *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass*, Leigh Fought illuminates the life of the famed abolitionist off the public stage. She begins with the women he knew during his life as a slave: his mother, from whom he was separated; his grandmother, who raised him; his slave mistresses, including the one who taught him how to read; and his first wife, Anna Murray, a free woman who helped him escape to freedom and managed the household that allowed him to build his career. Fought examines Douglass's varied relationships with white women—including Maria Weston Chapman, Julia Griffiths, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Otilie Assing—who were crucial to the success of his newspapers, were active in the antislavery and women's movements, and promoted his work nationally and internationally. She also considers Douglass's relationship with his daughter Rosetta, who symbolized her parents' middle class prominence but was caught navigating between their public and private worlds. Late in life, Douglass remarried to a white woman, Helen Pitts, who preserved his papers, home, and legacy for history. By examining the circle of women around Frederick Douglass, this work brings these figures into sharper focus and reveals a fuller and more complex image of the self-proclaimed "woman's rights man."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this well-researched and richly textured book, Leigh Fought gives us a fascinating new view into the life and times of one of our most famous and revered figures: Frederick Douglass. As he freely acknowledged, women helped make Douglass the man he became. So we, too, are in debt to the women whose stories come so vividly alive in these pages." - Annette Gordon-Reed, author of *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*"Fought's book takes us into the Douglass households and makes them come alive. Two wives, two intimate European friends, a grandmother, a fascinating daughter, many granddaughters, as well as fictive sisters and other kin all inhabit this work of deep scholarship. Fought is an intrepid researcher and lucid writer with superb judgment. The women and Douglass himself come alive anew through these crucial relationships; the man who expressed so little about his private life is here brought under a bright light, not with prurience, but with analytical understanding and keen sympathy. This is the most important Douglass book in many years." - David W. Blight, Yale University"With meticulous research and judicious analysis, Leigh Fought resurrects the women who until now lay hidden in the shadows of Frederick Douglass's storied life. Whether one agrees with her or not, this book is well worth the read." - Manisha Sinha, author of *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*"Leigh Fought reimagines Douglass's life by placing women at the center of the narrative. She offers vivid portraits of the relatives, friends, and sister activists-enslaved and free, black and white, American and British--who provided Douglass with critical emotional, material, intellectual, and political support. These women helped shape and sustain Douglass throughout his life and ensured his legacy for future generations; their legacy, too, is now ensured in this lively and lucid book." - Nancy A. Hewitt, author of *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*"[Douglass's] life, argues the author persuasively, was shaped by women... A fresh and insightful perspective on a major historical figure."--Kirkus "This is a fascinating account of an impressive man and the equally accomplished women who supported his monumental efforts to secure freedom and rights for blacks and women."--Booklist, Starred Review "[Frederick Douglass was] one of the age's most passionate male feminists, as Leigh Fought shows in *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass*, a fresh and surprising account of Douglass's life."--Wall Street Journal "By making its focus those indomitable and sometimes troubling women, Fought has written an engaging book that is compelling,

sometimes even fierce, and extremely relevant."--Arts Fuse

Leigh Fought is Assistant Professor of History at LeMoyne College. She is the author of *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord* and an editor of *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three: Correspondence, Volume 1: 1842-1852*.

excellent book

Clear writing, well-researched. I totally enjoyed this book. I have read others about Frederick Douglass but there has been very little written about the women in his life. He kept his private life private. I especially liked having more information about Helen, his second wife, and Rosetta, his oldest child. There was perhaps too much speculation about what Anna, his first wife, was thinking and feeling; Anna left no records of her own because she was illiterate.

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