

The History of "Race Amity Day"

The National Center for Race Amity (NCRA) was founded by Dr. William Smith and is housed at Wheelock College.

In 2011 the NCRA began hosting a yearly event on the Rose Kennedy Greenway on the second Sunday in June where we came together each year to celebrate what we called "Race Amity Day". On those Sundays we celebrated cross racial, cross cultural friendship through music, art and just plain fun. At the heart of each event, though, was our effort to introduce what we call "The Other Tradition".

The Other Tradition, as noted above, is a part of American History that existed parallel to racism. This history of cross cultural, cross racial friendships brought people together who collaborated in their efforts to advance equity and social justice. Unfortunately, this positive side of our American racial history is not well known.

For each of the first five events, the sitting Governor of Massachusetts was asked, and he issued, a proclamation declaring that particular second Sunday in June, "Race Amity Day in Massachusetts". Last year, though, for our sixth Race Amity Day Celebration, one of our goals was reached when a bill was passed and signed by Governor Baker declaring that going forward, the Second Sunday in June would always be "Race Amity Day" in the Commonwealth of MA.

The Governor's office will be sending to the governing boards of all towns and cities a reminder that this year **JUNE 11** is **RACE AMITY DAY** and encouraging each town to celebrate this day in its own way.

This display here exemplifying The Other Tradition is part of our celebrating Race Amity Day in Wayland...

Interracial Amity and Cooperation: "The Other Tradition"

The Tradition of Racism

This is the tradition that everyone knows. The portrait of a racist "white" America oppressing human beings of a different color permeates and stains the view that many hold of our nation. For centuries, the world has watched and studied the worst side America's racial history. The dramatic images of this oppression and the fight to maintain it are indelible: slavery, beatings, lynchings, the Civil War, segregation, police brutality, black slums, suppression of earned rights... we all know the depressing tales. And there is no doubt that racism continues to be a formidable problem in America, e.g. Rodney King, Trayvon Martin. The nation's obsession with this tradition, while understandable, may betray a misguided belief that the past can only show us the brutality of human nature, the failures of policies, the lack of political will, the inevitability of racial conflict, or all the above. Unfortunately, the historical and educational emphasis on the tradition of "racial oppression" overwhelms the positive and hopeful story of "the other tradition," a fact this project can help correct, and in the process, offer strengths we can collectively emulate and draw on to bridge the racial divide.

The Other Tradition

While the tradition of racial oppression was unfolding, a parallel tradition, largely hidden and poorly understood, was demonstrating some of the most positive qualities to be found in American history. And the actions that resulted contributed significantly to the dismantling of racial oppression. Throughout our history, courageous African Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and Euro-Americans chose to stand shoulder to shoulder to ride the antislavery circuits, hide slaves, march together against racial discrimination, fight court battles, and too often end up persecuted, brutalized, even murdered. Together they have built racially integrated labor unions and political coalitions and worshipped together during times of profound racial conflict, disproving the notion that the races cannot live and work in harmony.

We highlight five examples here of historical cross cultural, cross racial friendships. Their stories provide Americans today with essential lessons that are vital for us to survive in a world that continues to shrink into a neighborhood of increasing interdependency.

A Proclamation

Whereas Massachusetts supports the Great Seal of the United States of America which bears the inscription, E Pluribus Unum, which translates from Latin as "Out of many, one"; and

Whereas H 2745, Chapter 163 of Acts of 2015 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts establishes the Second Sunday in June Annually as Race Amity Day; and

Whereas The greatest asset of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is its people; and

Whereas The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is comprised of multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial citizens; and

Whereas Friendship, collegiality, civility, respect, and kindness are commonly shared ideals of the collective citizenry of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and

Whereas The Towards E Pluribus Unum Initiative has invited communities across the United States of America to join in introspection and reflection on the beauty and richness of the diverse peoples of this great nation while reaching out with a spirit of amity toward one another annually on the second Sunday in June; and

Whereas H 2745, Chapter 163 of Acts of 2015 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts establishes the Second Sunday in June Annually as Race Amity Day,

Now, Therefore, I, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim June 11th, 2017, to be,

RACE AMITY DAY

And urge all the citizens of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event and participate fittingly in its observance.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston, this Twentieth Day of March, in the year two thousand and seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and forty-first.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

KARYN E. POLITO
LT. GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

God Save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

TWO STRONG VOICES, ONE CLEAR MESSAGE:

FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

Two men from different continents, of different skin color and backgrounds were joined in a spiritual quest as they raised their voices protesting both social injustice in their own countries as well as social injustice everywhere.

DANIEL O'CONNEL

1775-1847



O'Connell, Irish politician, known as The Liberator, was a revered leader in the Catholic Emancipation from the Church of England. He was well known across Ireland, England and the United States as the staunchest abolitionist of that time. He was considered radical even by many other abolitionists and was very outspoken in his opposition and rhetoric. In an 1829 anti-slavery meeting in London, he declared "of all men living, an American citizen who is the owner of slaves is despicable." O'Connell, so strong in his conviction, would actually return any donation he received for the cause of Irish Emancipation, from an Irish man living in the United States, if he discovered that the money came from a slave owner.

His reputation as a great orator was unmatched. O'Connell was a large man, over six feet four, with a booming eloquent voice. His voice was called "musical". Douglass, himself a great orator, after hearing O'Connell speak, wrote that he was overwhelmed by him and had never heard any equal. "...It seems to me that the voice of O'Connell is enough to calm the most violent passion. ...There is a sweet persuasiveness in it, beyond any voice I ever heard. His power over an audience is perfect."

"The principle of my political life ... is that all amelioration and improvements in political institutions can be obtained by persevering in a perfectly peaceable and legal course, and cannot be obtained by forcible means, or if they could be got by forcible means, such means create more evils than they cure, and leave the country worse than they found it."

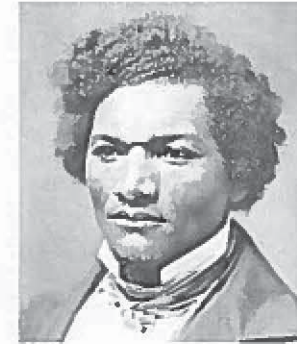
-Daniel O'Connell, The Nation newspaper, 1843

"I see much here (in Ireland) to remind me of my former condition, and I confess I should be ashamed to lift up my voice against American slavery, but that I know the cause of humanity is one the world over. He who really and truly feels for the American slave, cannot steel his heart to the woes of others; and he who thinks himself an abolitionist, yet cannot enter into the wrongs of others, has yet to find a true foundation for his anti-slavery."

-Frederick Douglass, letter to William Lloyd Garrison, 1845

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1818-1895



Douglass first learned of O'Connell when he heard his master curse the name of the Irishman. He later wrote "my master hated him so I knew I would love him." As a slave doing his master's bidding, Douglass had a chance encounter with some Irish sailors (his first connection to Ireland). They encouraged him to run for freedom, and Douglass, in 1838, did indeed escape slavery in Maryland by running North.

In 1845, as Ireland was plunging into the despair of the Great Famine, Douglass arrived for a four month speaking tour at the invitation of the Quaker Community there and was hosted by members of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society. Douglass had recently published his autobiography, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave". An Irish edition of his book was about to be published and his anti-slavery lectures across Ireland were meant to raise funds for the abolitionist movement in the United States.

Douglass was greeted by enthusiastic crowds in Dublin, Belfast and Cork and in Ireland he formed many friendships. The most significant of which was his relationship/friendship with Daniel O'Connell, which came about when in Sept. 1845, at a rally in Dublin, the two great men and orators shared a stage for the first and only time. At the time of their meeting O'Connell was seventy and Douglass twenty-eight. The two men retained a mutual respect and admiration for each other until O'Connell's death less than two years later. And for the rest of his life, Douglass acknowledged O'Connell's influence on his philosophy and world view.

It was from O'Connell that Douglass learned that it wasn't enough to work only for the emancipation of the American slave. He became a "world citizen" and would spend the rest of his life working for social justice anywhere injustice was found. So upon arriving back in America he immediately went to New York to offer his services to the Suffragist Movement - he had come to embrace the concept of universal suffrage so eloquently expressed and practiced by his new friend, O'Connell.