

In this selection, John C. Calhoun advocates the rights of individual states as part of a broader defense of the institution of slavery, which he claims is good for slaveholders, for slaves, and for society.

. . . I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slave-holding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good. I feel myself called upon to speak freely upon the subject where the honor and interests of those I represent are involved. I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other. Broad and general as is this assertion, it is fully borne out by history. This is not the proper occasion, but if it were, it would not be difficult to trace the various devices by which the wealth of all civilized communities has been so unequally divided, and to show by what means so small a share has been allotted to those by whose labor it was produced, and so large a share given to the non-producing classes. The devices are almost innumerable, from the brute force and gross superstition of ancient times, to the subtle and artful fiscal contrivances of modern. I might well challenge a comparison between them and the more direct, simple, and patriarchal mode by which the labor of the African race is, among us, commanded by the European. I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age. Compare his condition with the tenants of the poor houses in the most civilized portions of Europe—look at the sick, and the old and infirm slave, on one hand, in the midst of his family and friends, under the kind superintending care of his master and mistress, and compare it with the forlorn and wretched condition of the pauper in the poor house. But I will not dwell on this aspect of the question; I turn to the political; and here I fearlessly assert that the existing relation between the two races in the South, against which these blind fanatics are waging war, forms the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable political institutions. It is useless to disguise the fact. There is and always has been in an advanced stage of wealth and civilization, a conflict between labor and capital. The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict; and which explains why it is that the political condition of the slave-holding States has been so much more stable and quiet than those of the North. . . .

Surrounded as the slave-holding States are with such imminent perils, I rejoice to think that our means of defence are ample, if we shall prove to have the

intelligence and spirit to see and apply them before it is too late. All we want is concert, to lay aside all party differences, and unite with zeal and energy in repelling approaching dangers. Let there be concert of action, and we shall find ample means of security without resorting to secession or disunion. I speak with full knowledge and a thorough examination of the subject, and for one see my way clearly. . . . I dare not hope that any thing I can say will arouse the South to a due sense of danger; I fear it is beyond the power of mortal voice to awaken it in time from the fatal security into which it has fallen.

John Calhoun, *Speeches of Mr. Calhoun of S. Carolina, on the Bill for the Admission of Michigan: Delivered in the Senate of the United States, January, 1837* (Washington, DC: Duff Green, 1837), 6–7.

### PRACTICING Historical Thinking

**Identify:** What are Calhoun's moral and economic arguments?

**Analyze:** How does Calhoun's comparison to Europe or ancient times further his argument?

**Evaluate:** Compare this document to those by Lyman Beecher (Doc. 7.5), David Walker (Doc. 7.6), and William Lloyd Garrison (Doc. 7.7) above.

## DOCUMENT 7.9

### FREDERICK DOUGLASS, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

1845

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was the best-known African American abolitionist of his day. His *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* served as a template for similar narratives of escaped slaves and sought to prove to skeptical readers that enslaved African Americans were capable of demanding freedom and enjoying equal rights with white Americans.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to