

Speaker Jones, February 10, 2020

Douglass-Tubman Reveal Remarks

In a few minutes, we will open the doors behind me and have the moment we have all been waiting for – revealing the statues of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass inside the Old House of Delegates Chamber.

A remarkable letter was written by Frederick Douglass to Harriet Tubman in 1868 where he acknowledged their shared commitment to fighting injustice. In it, he said:

"...The difference between us is very marked. Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day – you in the night.

I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by

the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scared, and foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt, "God bless you," has been your only reward.

The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism. . . ."

A mark of true greatness is shining light on a system of oppression and having the courage to change it.

The statues are a reminder that our laws aren't always right or just. But there's always room for improvement.

We have to critically evaluate our laws – ask ourselves if we're complicit in any injustice –

and decide what we're willing to risk for a more perfect union.

I now invite the descendants and relatives of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass who are here with us today, to join me ~~and~~ Governor Hogan, ~~and~~ President Ferguson and President Emeritus Miller, in opening the doors to the chamber.

THAT
LEADER