**Is the Income Tax a Form of Slavery?**

Frederick Douglass was born in Maryland in February 1818. As a slave in the Baltimore area, he realized the only way to escape the bonds of slavery was to develop his reading and writing skills. This realization was formed by interaction with his masters, mistresses and their children. Using his keen intellect, he devised a way to learn those skills and use them to escape from slavery. After escaping slavery, he quickly became one of the nation’s leading public speakers and writers, and an advisor to presidents. As a result, Douglass was instrumental in starting the Republican Party, which had as its original basis his four political values: respect for the constitution, respect for life, belief in less government and belief in personal responsibility. He advised President Lincoln on emancipation strategies, being instrumental in abolishing slavery. He was also appointed to various high offices in the administrations of four presidents and served as adviser, political ally, and friend to a total of six presidents. He climbed his way from slavery to being an entrepreneur who escaped slavery, investing in several economic enterprises, leaving his family over $300,000 (over $25M today) upon his death. What does all of this Douglass history have to do with income taxes? Let’s let Frederick Douglass himself answer this question.

His Master at the time was Hugh Auld, who had placed him in the ship-yard where Auld was foreman. As Douglass writes about receiving his ship building skills in his autobiography “Narrative of the Life of FREDERICK DOUGLASS, an American Slave”, he revealed his yearnings for freedom:

“… I was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced caulkers. I was now of some importance to my master. I was bringing him from six to seven dollars per week. I sometimes brought him nine dollars per week: my wages were a dollar and a half a day.”

“… When I could get no caulking to do, I did nothing. During these leisure times, those old notions about freedom would steal over me again. When in Mr. Gardner's employment, I was kept in such a perpetual whirl of excitement, I could think of nothing, scarcely, but my life; and in thinking of my life, I almost forgot my liberty. I have observed this in my experience of slavery,-- that whenever my condition was improved, instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free, and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom*. I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one.* It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man.”

“I was now getting, as I have said, one dollar and fifty cents per day. I contracted for it; I earned it; it was paid to me; it was rightfully my own; yet, upon each returning Saturday night, I was compelled to deliver every cent of that money to Master Hugh. And why? Not because he earned it,-- not because he had any hand in earning it,-- not because I owed it to him,-- nor because he possessed the slightest shadow of a right to it; but *solely because he had the power to compel me to give it up. The right of the grim-visaged pirate upon the high seas is exactly the same*.”

“In the early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. *When I carried to him my weekly wages, he would, after counting the money, look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, "Is this all?" He was satisfied with nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when I made him* ***six dollars****, sometimes give me* ***six cents****, to encourage me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them. I always felt worse for having received any thing; for I feared that the giving me a few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of robber.* My discontent grew upon me. I was ever on the look-out for means of escape …” (All emphases added)

How different is Frederick Douglass’ story from ours as taxpayers. Well, we do have our civil rights and don’t necessarily live in the horrible situation he did, but reread the italicized portion of the previous paragraphs about contented slaves, the power to compel, etc. And, does the last paragraph sound familiar? You make a contract with your employer for a given wage. Each pay period, who is the first to get a cut of your pay? Who is the first to ask … *"Is this all?"* How many times have you heard politicians say they “… are going to fix this portion or that portion of the tax code to ***allow***  the American people to keep more of their own money!” Allow? Who thinks the present income tax code doesn’t parallel “*He would, however, when I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me”* ? Who disagrees with his statement: … *”The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them”?* And doesn’t his statement still hold true that *”I always felt worse for having received any thing; for I feared that the giving me a few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of robber.”* All of which leads to *“My discontent grew upon me. I was ever on the look-out for means of escape …”* Isn’t this argument the best one to repeal the income tax and enact a fairer way to collect taxes to fund our government? Isn’t this the best argument for un-taxing our production to allow for economic growth? Isn’t this the best argument for relieving us of taxes on the basic necessities of life? Isn’t this the best argument for returning the U.S. to the first principles of no direct taxes? With job opportunities and our economic health being so anemic now, it’s time to decide!

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“It does not take a majority to prevail…  but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.”  ---Samuel Adams