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**“Susan B and Frederick D Paved the Way”**

February holds special historical significance to the Rochester community. It is the month that we honor two of our best known and most respected public figures, Susan B.

Anthony and Frederick Douglass, for their courage and efforts to forge a path for justice and equality for all Americans. In 2008, February is also the month when citizens head to the polls to cast their votes in our nation's Primary Elections.

These two significant events are inextricably connected, for one could surely not have happened without the historical benefit of the other.

We begin with the extraordinary life of Susan B. Anthony, known to many as the leader of the suffragist movement. Born on February 15, 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts, Anthony's path to social justice began when she was refused the right to learn long division because of her gender. Undeterred, she became a dedicated teacher, despite earning a salary roughly one fourth that of her male counterparts. In 1849, at age 29, Anthony relocated to Rochester, New York and soon became active in the temperance movement, and in speaking out against slavery. Her path took a decidedly political turn when the first American women's rights convention took place in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. After meeting Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851, Anthony found her true voice and joined the burgeoning women's rights movement. In the decade before the American Civil War, Susan B. Anthony became a renowned advocate of women's rights and dedicated her life to the struggle for equality. She worked tirelessly for the abolition of slavery, educational reform, and equal rights for all American citizens.

We turn to Frederick Douglass, who was born in Maryland in February 1818 and became one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement. Admired for his eloquence, he

became a sought-after speaker and lectured extensively throughout the United States and England in his crusade against slavery. His success as a prominent public figure was even more noteworthy in that he escaped the scar of slavery as a young man. In later years, he had the distinction of being appointed to several high-ranking positions within the U.S. government.

Douglas moved to Rochester and in 1847, began a career as publisher of the weekly antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*. During his years in Rochester, Douglass' reputation and status in the community grew. He showed his support of the feminist movement by attending the first women's rights convention in 1848. Douglass, like Anthony, found his voice when speaking out against slavery and inequality. It is no surprise that he ultimately found a lifelong friend in fellow abolitionist Susan B. Anthony. Their paths crossed many times as they fought for the same shared vision of equality and freedom for all Americans. It is noteworthy that on the masthead of his newspaper appeared the motto, "Right is of no sex. Truth is of no color." Douglass and Anthony embraced this creed and spent the majority of their lives upholding it.

As we reflect on the extraordinary lives and accomplishments of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass during the month of February, we are reminded that their struggle for freedom was hard fought, and not easily won. We have come a long way since they stood together for equality and justice, but we still have more work to do.

Today, we must stand together to reserve and protect the fruits of their labor and ensure that all citizens, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, handicapping condition or economic status, enjoy equality under the law.

During this remarkable election year, which is like none we've experienced before in American history, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass challenge us to be vigilant and informed voters and to continue to live their legacy.

To them we say, 'thank you' for paving the way.

