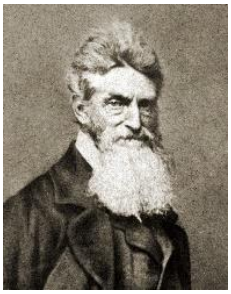
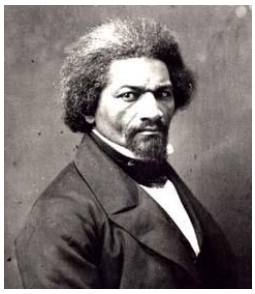
HARPERS FERRY

THREE WINDOWS ON LEADING CHANGE

No change in our nation's history has been more difficult or necessary to effect than the end of slavery. In the years before the Civil War, there were both coordinated efforts and individual acts meant to abolish slavery. An exploration of the efforts of John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman to strike blows against the "peculiar institution" offers tremendous insights into the competency of **leading change**.





While Brown, Douglass, and Tubman were all committed to leading the same change – destroying slavery – their differing values and personal strengths meant they undertook disparate missions in the name of that common goal. Brown determined to bring attention to the crime of slavery by making war upon slaveowners. Douglass used his oratorical skills and personal story to agitate for a legal end to the institution of slavery. Tubman used her ability to stay in the shadows to lead over seventy enslaved people to freedom. Despite their different spheres of operation, these three abolitionists knew each other and *almost* all worked together on one project: John Brown's 1859 raid on the federal armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Ultimately Douglass and Tubman decided the strike did not match their skill sets or values and declined to join John Brown.

A discussion of these three leaders and their attempts to strike a blow against slavery in the 1840s and 1850s allows us to explore the work of **John Kotter on the phases of change, William Bridges on transitions, and Malcolm Gladwell's** work from *David and Goliath*. As we look at the specific actions taken by Brown, Douglass, and Tubman, we also delve into the sub-competencies of **creativity and innovation, external awareness, flexibility, resilience, strategic thinking,** and **vision.**

There are three delivery format options for this session:

1. A two-hour seminar without a site-visit component.
2. A half-day program in a seminar room in Washington D.C. with a site-visit to the Frederick Douglass House in Anacostia.
3. A full-day program (including transit time) in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. This session makes use of a nearby classroom for a two-hour seminar and concludes with a one-hour walking tour of John Brown's 1859 raid.

At the end of the session, participants reflect upon what they can learn about leading change from these historical characters, and what the implications might be for their daily work.