

Slavery in the south: servitude and experiences as slaves essay



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During a sad part of the American history, when slavery was a major resource of living in the South, men and women sometimes endured servitude in similar ways. Nevertheless, both sexes had different experiences as slaves.

Men and women were often assigned to complete different types of labor. Bear in mind that women had double responsibilities, since they worked for their masters and for their families. Moreover, each sex rebelled in different ways and had different strategies of resistance. White masters raped slave women, who lived in a continuous threat of sexual abuse.

All slaves worked sun to sun in the fields, but managers gave men the more physically demanding work “ Men usually shelled corn, threshed peas, and cut potatoes for planting and platted shucks. Grinding corn into meal or hominy was woman’s work; as were spinning, weaving, sewing, and washing. ” And after the field work men had nothing to do but sleep to wake up next morning and go back to the plantation. But for slave woman, master and mistress expected her to be available whenever she is needed.

Even after a long day of work in the fields, women were required to clean up the house complete all chores, spin, weave, and sew. Then they woke up next morning to wash and hang the clothes to dry, and certainly go back to the fields. A slave man did not have full authority as a father upon his family; he was not able to protect his wife from being raped or his mother from being whipped by white masters. He aslo could not afford enough food and clothes for his children. Therefore, slave men main responsibility was to obey master’s orders and get married to a slave woman to increase the population

of black slaves. Unlike men, black women bear the greatest burden of everyday life responsibilities.

Slaveholders were keen to have a huge population of slaves in their plantations, so they ensured that all young-female slaves were capable to deliver new generations. No doubt, this will not cease her to accomplish house chores and function as any hard worker in the fields. African woman slave devoted her life for people around her, she worked day and night, undergo childbearing, in some cases suffered the separation of her children. Read also And then, after she reached a certain age where she couldn't handle field work, she was assigned to look after slave children to become a babysitter. African slaves had feelings as any other human being, thus it was expected that some would resist the brutality of owners.

Masters and overseers would classify any slave that tries to resist or fight back as unmanageable nigger. Some slave men used their strength and aggressively attacked their owners, others would surprisingly fight back if they were beaten or insulted. For example, Fredrick Douglass mentioned in his narrative the first battle between him and his master " at this moment - from whence came the spirit I don't know- I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. " Moreover, a lot of men tried to escape slavery by fleeing to the North but few who succeeded.

The majority of those failed to run away had families and children. For slave women, most of them failed to escape, they were slower than men when break out, and women with children had greater chance to be caught.

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Women who flee successfully had to choose between their freedom and their own children “ hundred fifty-one fugitive women advertised for in the 1850 New Orleans newspapers, none was listed as having run away without her children. ” As means of resistance slave women had several stories of faking illness, especially during pregnancy in order to relax and escape the hard work of plantations. Some women would “ play the lady” and faked sickness just to be reassigned to the house and leave plantations.

Since marriage did not represent protection for a black woman, she had to protect and defend herself from sexual abuse, with all courage some women, White mentioned, fought back “ After the overseer had taken off his clothes, the women pounced upon him, wrestled him to the ground, and then ran away. ” Because of the nature of their job some poor slave women were physically exposed during field work, unlike white women who were covered with layers of clothes, cruel slaveholders and overseers took advantage and abused women sexually. Even when a slaveholder wanted to practice his barbarity and whip his slave, she was forced to be naked “ Henry Bibb reported a whipping where a woman’s naked quivering flesh was tied up and exposed to the public gaze of all”. As Deborah White stated, raping a black women was not recognized to be a crime in the Southern laws. Furthermore, at the New Orleans slave market buying slave women for sex was a regular behavior for some white planters, who were ready to pay high costs for the “ fancy trade” . All slaves from both genders had a legendary story through their career.

Women had to undergo the humiliation of sex abuse. Slave men had their own strategies of resistance, as well as women. Masters expected slave
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women to serve them anytime they wish, besides she had to take care of her own family. So slave owners divided men and women and held them to different types of labor. Sometimes black men and women were treated equally as slaves. But for the most part slave men and women lived different experiences in the South.