

Typical slave experience essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Frederick Douglass was the most significant black figure in the nineteenth century America. He emerged from a family of slavery at a plantation in Maryland from 1818 to 1895 and became an influential person in the most controversial and important political and social struggles of his age . He involved in various reforms, including the civil rights, women’s rights and temperance, after demonstrating an unusual courage, eloquence and tenacity in the crusade against slavery. Millie Evans, on the other hand, belonged to North Carolina and described her life under slavery as positive for she witnessed the kindness of her masters. Serving as a slave between 1849 until the Civil War, Evans gave an account of the kindness of her master and emphasized that it was after the emancipation of slavery that she had to undergo difficulties.

During his twenty years as a victim of the peculiar institution of slavery, Douglass served the roles of a domestic servant, a field hand and a skilled labor. He experienced all the typical slave-master relationships, for various slave masters owned, borrowed, rented and accepted Douglass on consignments. Douglass suffered in the plantations for he received very little food, which was insufficient and unhygienic to eat . On the other hand, Evans led a decent life as a slave for her mistress raised her in spite of her stay with her mother. She had plenty of food to eat with homemade wood spoons on a table set under a chinaberry tree. She received buttermilk and johnnycake occasionally in long troughs that were clean . The mistress used to call the children at three in the evening every day and lay them down on pallets to put them to sleep by singing lullabies. After getting older, Evans

nursed the mistress' baby and played several games, which was unusual for the slave kids. She also cooked for the master's family.

Practicing Christianity was a common practice among the slave masters and the slaves.

Several slave masters, similar to that of Douglass forced the slaves to follow Christianity and attend the church every week. Douglass experienced the corrupt, women-whipping, slaveholding, cradle-plundering, hypocritical and partial Christianity of his masters, for they taught only suffrage and misery to the slaves. Slave masters similar to that of Evans read the Bible every Sunday and taught the slaves to be good, and not steal anything ever or tell lies or do anything that is bad . Evans' master allowed the slave children to study in schoolhouses made of log, where they learnt how to read and write. On the contrary, Douglass' master felt that knowing how to read and write would make a slave unfit and unmanageable in the institution of slavery. Evans enjoyed a pleasant living in the quarters, where each family had a single or double room cabin with long tall beds for elders and little small beds for children stuffed with hay and straw . On the contrary, Douglass had to sleep in inhuman conditions where in a group of slaves consisting of the young and old, male and female, single and married slept on cold damp floors under miserable blankets . The slaves interpreted by both Douglass and Evans had to do mechanical operations in the plantations, such as weaving, dyeing and knitting the clothes from the cotton produced in the plantations. Evans and her contemporaries wore drawers, which were longer than dresses. Evans wore seven petticoats and leather shoes to withstand the cold weather during the winters. The boys of her age wore heavy shirts

to protect from cold.

On the other hand, Douglass received two coarse linen shirts, trousers and one pair of shoes for the entire year, while the children roamed naked at all the seasons of the year. Evans' master raised indigo and tobacco in the plantations in addition to cotton . The slaves made vinegar out of apples and used it for soaking clothes during washing. The whites were rich as they had nothing to do with the money except to raise a variety of crops. Douglass' master raised tobacco, corn and wheat as the principal crops . During Evans' experience as a slave, marriages took place with the consent of the girls and the boys, while Douglass witnessed forceful marriages with the sole motto of breeding the slaves for future use. Douglass had to run away from his master unable to withstand the brutality and whippings. On the other hand, Evans' mistress was so close to the slaves that she begged them to stay with her forever and promised freedom .

The slaves in the cities worked as skilled labor and enjoyed significant independence from their masters when compared to those in the countryside. Slavery in the countryside produced organized labor with the production of cotton in the plantations. Rice and sugar plantations required abundant capital to support the irrigation systems, which led to the rise of planter elites who possessed enormous wealth. The shift from tobacco plantations to wheat and corn reduced the number of slaves working in the plantations all the year round. After several years of bondage, most of the slaved enjoyed a substantial amount of freedom to grow and market crops in the individual garden plots allotted to them. In Maryland, half the slaves became free by 1860.

Douglass' slave narrative is a groundbreaking work articulating man's achievement of selfhood. His narrative refers to the ideals of equality and human freedom. However, Evans' narrative describes only the resourcefulness of slaves and does not make a mention of the brutal treatments, which was most common among the slaves. The slave narrative written by Douglass is the most believable as a majority of the slaves suffered brutal treatment by their masters, which was the main reason for the emancipation of slavery. Douglass gave several reasons for the necessity of the Abolitionist Movement to end the institution of slavery. Since Evans received a positive experience from her slave master, she never made a mention of the partial treatment among the slaves. There were good masters, who took great care of the slaves; however, their number is limited to only a few.

Gender plays a prominent role in slave experience. Since Evans was a female, the mistress confined her to the domestic household to take care of her children and perform tasks in the plantations that were easy to execute. On the other hand, being male, Douglass had to work on the tobacco plantations under hot sun with little or no clothes. As a child, Douglass had to do petty tasks on the plantations and so was Evans. As they grew up, they had to confine themselves to specific skill sets to fulfill the needs of their masters. For example, Douglass had to work as a domestic servant in his childhood, which later transformed into a field labor and a skilled worker. Similarly, when Evans was a child, she had to take care of the mistress' baby. As she grew old, she had to cook for the master and perform field tasks, such as spinning, weaving and knitting clothes .

References

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