

# Kunta kinte and gustavus vassa 2

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



The essential topic of black people history is the continuous fight to defeat the barrier of race, and the actuality of unequal cultural identity between black and white people. “ This racial bifurcation has created parallel realities or racial universes, in which blacks and whites may interact closely with one another, but perceive social reality in dramatically different ways” (Gordon 2003).

Blacks still suffer from discrimination trying to overcome all the difficulties and forget about their terrible past – slavery. However the past can't die and there are historical masterpieces that remind people about their past experience. Literature is the main sources of them. On the example of the life of two slaves the given paper will prove that the life of every slave was very much alike, almost the same, because of the lack of any opportunity for slaves to make their life outstanding

### The life of Kunta Kunte

Alex Haley is the author of the novel « Roots: The Saga of an American Family» Kunta Kunte is the main character of this novel. The movie “ Roots” was created based on the book. This work is considered to be a fiction that is a combination of both historical data and creative writing. Some plot is taken from a writing called “ The African” written by Harold Courlander. The main character of « Roots: The Saga of an American Family», Kunta was caught and taken as a slave to Annapolis, Maryland. Soon plantation holder from Spotsylvania County bought him (Gordon 2003).

In Maryland a monument to Kunta Kinte was created. It is one of a small number of memorials in the whole world to have the name of a really existed

African slave. There are some other monuments like the monument of Zumbi from Palmares Quilombo (a Negro and the leader of revolution) and the monument of Bussa.

The memorial of Kunta Kinte represents Alex Haley, manuscript on his knee, narrating his family's history to three kids. In a disreputable event, the Kunta Kinte statue was stolen in a very short period after its putting in place in 1981. It was not found and was restored within several months. But the new one was also stolen. A monument of Alex Haley telling the story to the kids is in its place (Gordon 2003).

The author started his narration with Kunte's birth. The main character of the novel was born in the rural community called Juffure in The Gambia in 1750. Kunte was the first of four children of the fighter Oumarou and his wife Binta. As his father was a soldier Kunte's was brought up in very strict conditions and became a good warrior (Gordon 2003).

In 1767, when the young fighter went to the wood to create a drum, he was caught by a group of people. Kunte woke up and realized that he became a captive of the white people. Haley shows how they disgrace the young soldier. Kunte and other captives are taken on a steamer for a terrifying three month trip to the United State. (Williams 2001)

There were 140 captives of the board of the ship, but only 98 remained alive after the trip. Kunte was among them. When they came to Maryland the young black soldier was sold to a white man who gave him a new name "Toby" to his shock. For the rest of his life Kunte was dreaming of freedom

and making attempts to run away. Once he was caught and the part of his foot was taken out. He married slave women Bell Waller and had a kid by name Kizzy. Unhappily, Kizzy was sold to another plantation. Years later Kizzy got to know that her father died, she came to his grave, crossed the name “ Toby” and wrote her father’s real name Kinta Kunte. (Williams 2001)

The rest of the story is about the life of Kizzy and Alex Haley telling about their distress, losses and final victory in America.

#### The life of Gustavus Vassa

The character of Kinta Kunte is symbolic; his story tells us the story of many slaves that is usually the same and not interesting and distinguished. The life of the given character is very much alike the life of Olaudah Equiano known as Gustavus Vassa. (Williams 2001)

According to his own narration, Olaudah Equiano was born in " Essaka" not far from the River Niger. His father was a respected man in the village.

People in the village were plain, had quiet and happy life. When he was very young he was caught exactly like Kinta Kunte and sold to slavery. He never saw white people before.

Equiano had many brothers and a sister, a large happy family. Her sister was caught together with him. Equiano was re-sold several times: he was not demanded because of small height. At last he was taken to Virginia, where he was bought by a man who decided to call his Gustavus Vassa. (Williams 2001)

In contrast to Kunta Kunte who has only one nickname “ Toby” Equiano was presented with new names by his owners many times. Notwithstanding that, this time a black man rejected the new one and courageously informed his new possessor that he wanted to be called Jacob. Pascal punished the slave and left him in shackles until he agrees to take the name he thought out for him. Equiano wrote that he had to accept the new name at last in order to be freed. The cause of the somewhat strange selection of name for a slave is mysterious. (Williams 2001)

In his autobiographical work, Equiano describes the unacceptable treatment of slaves who worked in houses of their owners in Virginia. They went through a number of abnormal types of punishment and traditions like the application of so-called “ iron muzzles” around the mouth of the slave make him quiet which prevented him from normal sleeping and eating. The story expresses the fear and shock Equiano went through in his new surroundings thinking that the eyes on wall were tracing him and a clock could tell his master everything about the mistakes he made in his work. (Williams 2001)

## Conclusion

The conclusion can be made that the lives of two slaves are very much alike. Both of them were born in small villages, than stolen. That explains their great desire to become free: they were not born slaves, so it was extremely unacceptable for them to appear in such conditions. Both of them lost their real names, suffer almost the same punishments. It is useless to look for the differences comparing the life of two slaves. The age of slavery ended but it has its own consequences. Race as a communal construction makes up its

own internal logic and social expressions of pain, irritation, and disaffection within different societies. (Reid-Pharr 1999)

### Sources

Gordon, Dexter B. *Black Identity: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Reid-Pharr, Robert. *Conjugal Union: The Body, the House, and the Black American*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Williams, Vernon J. "Racial Essentialism: A Case of Historical Continuity and Discontinuity in the Social Sciences." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 25. 4 (2001): 202.