

Narrative of the life of frederic douglass, an american slave and incidents in th...

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



The narrative of Fredrick Douglass was published the first time in 1845. It is a wonderful read. It is also very enlightening. Mr. Douglas was a very prominent person in his time. He became the first spokesman for his people. Though he was born into slavery, he managed to achieve what most men of his generation could not achieve. He was also a newspaper editor. In this narrative, there is an unparalleled account of the life in slavery. He gives first-hand information about the dehumanizing conditions of slavery and the narrator's own victory over the vice. Similar to Fredrick Douglass's personal accounts of slavery, Harriet Jacobs also gives her own personal account slavery. Like, Douglass, she was also born in slavery. Nevertheless, her narrative was published in 1861. Douglass' was published in 1845. Now considered the most factual and best antebellum of all slave narratives, this account of first hand African American slavery is very comprehensive. Her account gave the first ever information about the exploitation and sufferings of African American slave women. This narrative is a very crucial reading in academic circles. The two narratives complement and illuminate each other. From the two narratives, one could observe that there exists some difference between the two activists in terms of social life, torture and their childhood experiences.

Fredrick Douglass gives the story of his segregation and active resistance in the fight against slavery. Since this vice had a corrosive and long-term effect, Douglass gives in detail his encounters in the North. This is a similar to Harriet Jacob's story which gives her experiences as a slave girl in the North. Ms. Jacobs sheds light on the experience of female African American slaves. Before her, no story was ever told about the experiences of female

slaves. There is a difference between the two narrators' autobiographies. Thus, there was tension in between the two. The first noticeable difference is in the title. The title ' fugitive slave narrative' is the most popular title. Therefore, there is a need to establish a common title that depicts both narratives. The most common one that is popular with scholars is ' an end to slavery' since both narratives talk about the end to slavery. The facts may differ but they both talk about the same thing.

Both these narrators are called upon to create a reproduction of the experiences and places they once fled from. During the time of slavery, white abolitionists urged slaves to follow the laid down conventions when they were producing their experiences and writing about what they saw. They used this as arsenal. These abolitionists also insisted that they have their own introductions and prefaces as far as the slave literature were concerned. They had the right to subtract or add information about the slaves' writings. The writers however took the opportunity to tell their stories. Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs were among them. Another similarity between the two slave writers is the fact that both of them took this opportunity offered to them to individualize their narrations.

If the two narrators' works are compared, they give the extent to which the situations and demands experienced. Some of the similarities between Jacobs and Douglass results from the formats which were laid down by the white abolitionists. The ex-slaves were expected to give details about their experiences, giving emphasis to their sufferings. Douglass and Harriet also gave details about their sufferings in the cruel hands of their inhuman masters. Another similarity between the two narrators was the fact that both

of them gave the ' literacy scene'. This is where both the narrators gave how they came to do what most people thought it impossible for most slaves, that is, to read and write.

Besides the very noticeable differences on the year of publication for Fredrick Douglass (1845) and Harriet Jacobs (1861), there are other differences as well. Douglass was a well-known slave writer of his time. His first autobiography of course came out in 1845. However, he added two more in 1855 and 1881. At his time of writing, there was the commencing of the Abolitionist Movement. It was beginning to take political shape. This was also what caused the delay of the publication of Jacobs' book. While, Douglass was a well-known public figure since he was also a spokesman for his people and a well-known newspaper editor, Jacobs was an unknown figure. Her publication, ' Incidents of life of a Slave Girl' went into oblivion as soon as it was published. She did not have much sale. In contrast, Douglass first publication was a hit.

Many scholars argue that the main reason why Jacobs's book did not get the readership it deserved was because of her gender. Nevertheless, other scholars point out that during the time of slavery, there were not substantial gender considerations. They only accounted for genre and style difference. However, it is obvious that the two narrator's authorship versions shaped them into freedom. Douglass combined his selfhood achievement with voice, freedom and manhood. This identity is seen in his narrative. He gained a lead character in his community and led the escape from Baltimore to Massachusetts. On the other hand, his counterpart, Harriet Jacobs was a normal member of the society, trapped in domesticity and family. She was a

slave mother who wanted nothing but to protect her children. Jacobs is most famous for her quote, 'slavery is bad for men, but far more terrible for women'. In her narrative, she spells out the sufferings of women on the hands of their masters. Her most notable one is the sexual exploitation whereby she narrates how her master forcefully had sexual attentions with her very many times.

In summary, both Douglass and Jacobs talk about slavery. They give first hand narratives on how they suffered and were exploited in different ways. There are some differences mentioned. All in all, these narratives give insight to what slaves actually went through. They provoke shame and pity at the same time.

References

Douglass, Frederick, and Harriet A. Jacobs. (2000) Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. New York: Modern Library. Print.