

4b: response paper



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Here Your School Here Your Here Here Response Paper: Assessment of Leo Felton Article Leo Felton is actually both Caucasian as well as black, as he was born of an inter-racial marriage between a white woman and black man. Most interesting, as a black white supremacist, Felton chose to ignore his black heritage, likely because his facial features were difficult to trace back to his black heritage. In essence, Felton capitalizes on the ambiguous nature of his black father, telling others that is his part English and part Italian (Tough, 2003).

Having read through the research article, I would be somewhat hard-pressed to decide whether race is dictated by biological factors or whether race is based on personal beliefs and attitude. For instance, virtually any person in society would likely state matter-of-factly that race is determined by biological origin, thus Leo Felton could be considered a mulatto, which is generally the label given to individuals who are born of inter-racial marriages. However, it is clear that Felton experienced significant psychological damage due to his mother's lifestyle (lesbianism and single parenthood). After his mother had him committed to a psychiatric institute because Leo challenged others in the neighborhood with violence because of his half-breed heritage and the abuse he endured from others about his absent black father.

In addition, the prison system maintained a high percentage of black inmates, with white populations being the minority, and violence continued to ensue against white inmates. Perhaps this is the most logical reason for Felton's attitudes toward white supremacy, as through observing and experiencing the hostile actions of black inmates, he developed a long-term negative orientation toward his own black heritage.

Felton, later in life, suggested that “ race is, in the first instance, what a man feels” (Strong, 2003: 45). This offers that, in Felton’s viewpoint, race is not determined by biology but is determined by finding commonalities with cultural and ethnic viewpoints (such as Caucasian lifestyle preferences). This led Felton to believe that personal race is simply a matter of choice, thus he felt he was justified in deeming himself to be a white supremacist simply because he shared the beliefs of other white individuals he was familiar with.

In many respects, Felton surrounded himself with reading literature which was both hostile and racially inappropriate, driving him to firmly believe that race cannot be justified by biological heritage. When his final attempts at criminal behavior were thwarted by police in 2001 (his counterfeiting gig), he was publicly exposed as being partially black, driving him to attempt suicide due to the social humiliation he felt at being outed as a man with biological connections to black culture. However, despite Felton’s beliefs about race (with these being largely misguided and molded using a variety of white supremacist literature), his heritage is largely determined by the racial aspects of his parents. Hence, Leo Felton is both black and white, regardless of whether this is a comfortable or desired situation. I believe this to be true of any individuals in society, in terms of race being dictated by heritage.