

Free essay on the african american experience

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The African American Experience

Blog Entry 1: Pre-Slavery Era

Nolen (2001) records that the first Africans set foot in America in 1619, at a place called Jamestown in Virginia. They arrived on a Dutch ship that had docked in the town and wanted food for their continued journey. Therefore, the Dutch crew sold the 20 Africans to a local trader for food. The twenty Africans were servants and were on a payroll, a position similar to that of poor Englishmen who traded freedom to pass in America for several years labour. The pre-slavery era as experienced by African Americans was experienced between 1619 and 1680 (Nolen, 2001). Therefore, in this period all races provided servants for the various labour situations in the society. Before 1656, the term ' slave' was also unheard of with labourers called ' indentured servants'. These servants whether white or black had the same status.

The town, Jamestown, was extraordinarily active in trade with the focus being in exporting Tobacco to Europe. The economy of the time required workers and so the first imports were 20 Blacks, and 80 women from

England. These indentured servants were paid for by food. However, indentured servants could be released through a payment that was equivalent to a certain amount of Tobacco. For instance, men wanting to marry the women servant were required to pay 120 pounds of Tobacco (Nolen, 2001).

Tobacco farming became a success, and it was the basis of the Southern economy, which was agricultural based. This led to legalization of forced labour more so amongst African Americans in 1656 (Nolen, 2001). These forced workers were termed as slaves, a political, economic, and legal term that was race based. The numbers in this time grew quickly mainly because of illegalization in England, and so many Africans were forcibly transported to North America.

Blog Entry 2: Slavery Era

In the slave era (1719 and 1829), a notable figure who shaped African American culture is Terry Lucy Prince. Terry was a poet and a singer of African America literature. Harris (2000) indicates that Terry was stolen from a place of birth while an infant, and sold to Wells Ebenezer in Massachusetts. Ebenezer converted Terry to Christianity through baptising her at the age of five. Baptism was done during the great awakening, an era that started in 1730 where Christianity was fortified and made popular through encouragement of introspect and commitment to certain high morals (Harris, 2000).

A popular literary work, by Terry is a ballad called " Bars Fight" in 1746. The piece was about an attack by African Americans on two White families. The poem was preserved orally for one hundred and nine years before its

publication in 1855. Ten years after the publication, Terry married Abijah Prince, a successful African American, who bought her freedom from her masters. The two stayed in Vermont, and it is here that Terry proved to be a champion of right through being a persuasive orator. Though not a lawyer, she argued against two leading lawyers in the supreme court of Vermont, in 1790, about a land case. The false land claim was brought by Colonel Eli Bronson, and she won convincingly with the presiding judge stating that her arguments were better than any lawyer he had heard (Harris, 2000). Furthermore, her speech on why her son, Festus, should be admitted to Williams College was also persuasive and classified as eloquent and skilful. Terry Lucy Prince died on July, 11 1821 at 97 years being a leading figure in African American literature. She triumphed over bitter controversy, hard life, and disappointment. This is a reminiscent of struggles African American women experienced in the slave era, but Terry struggled to overcome them.

Blog Entry 3: Civil War and Reconstruction Era

This era—1850-1877—was marked by the steady rise of slavery globally and its illegalization. A figure who helped a lot in reforming the social system of America in this period from a slave system to an antislavery system is Frederick Douglass (Towers, 1995). Douglass was a social reformer talented in many disciplines such as public speaking, politics, and literature. His influence stems from his experience of slavery. He was born a slave in Maryland and moved from house to house after his mother died when 10 years. At 12 years, the wife of his master, Hugh Auld, taught him the alphabet. This sparked his interest in education where he taught himself to read, and also teach other slaves in the plantation farms how to read the

New Testament bible (Towers, 1995).

In 1833, Douglass was returned to his former slave owner who mistreated him, including whipping him until he was nearly affected psychologically. This inspired him to fight against slavery. He tried to escape several times and before his successful attempt he married Anna Murray, a free slave. They escaped together to Massachusetts and began involving themselves in abolitionist activities. The activities included starting a paper highlighting the ills of slavery and campaign for rights such as women rights (Towers, 1995). Support for his activities was done by activists in England, who he met during his travels there.

In the civil years, he fought for the emancipation and suffrage while at times giving speeches against slavery. In the reconstruction years, Douglas served in many political positions that championed African American rights. However, in 1872 he resigned from government after disagreements with government policies (Towers, 1995). Frederick Douglass died in 1895 after attending a Women Council meeting in Washington. He was a social reformer amongst African Americans through engaging in abolitionist activities that discriminated against women, and promoted slavery.

Blog Entry 4: Reconstruction to Present

These are the years from 1878 to present. African Americans slowly started obtaining their rights though through struggles such as protests and campaigns. There are many contributors to this fight, but one figure who marks the achievement presently is Barack Obama, first Black president of America.

Despite slavery abolition, Blacks were socially restrained through attending

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sub-standard schools and disadvantaged in the job market. Figures such as Martin Luther and Malcom X fought for this equality but were assassinated in the process. Barack Obama a Black American of an African and White Parent ran for office in 2008. The election was a significant event where race was not an issue, but issues. Barack Obama won the presidency to become the 44th president of America and the first African American president.

This event shows that America has advanced socially into accepting different races and females in politics. For instance, Campaign of Hillary Clinton, who was in Barack Obama's camp, also signified that women were also accepted as capable leaders in the political system.

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