

Frederick douglass essay

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A slave is a person who is legal property of another and is forced to obey them. Frederick Douglass was a slave, along with many other colored people in America in the 1800s; slavery was inhumane and wrong, especially as we look now in our modern society. Douglass uses rhetoric, like pathos, throughout his narrative to oppose and disprove the pro-slavery arguments of pre-Civil War America by discussing how slaves do not benefit slavery, and by showing how religion is not a base for treating slaves the way they were treated.

With this in mind, the socio-economic world of Pre-Civil War America was a lot different than we're used to today. As white and elite people, such as George Fitzhugh, argues, "slavery must be championed as a necessary social arrangement established for the advancement of the country, an arrangement where everyone benefits", but slaves really did not benefit. Frederick gives an example using pathos, "In the hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked - no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees" (36). While Douglass is given nothing, - only one piece of clothing for an entire year - his master is given everything including housing, a bed, clothes, and enough food. He uses pathos in this quote by making us feel bad for him as he suffered through the cold winters and hot summers.

Fitzhugh continues to argue that "with slavery, both the master and the slave are always provided for; the slave always has a home and food, while the master always has his lands worked on". However, Douglass was not always given enough food to provide for himself, and while a slave might be

lucky enough to have housing, there were not even beds or blankets, “ I had no bed...I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill.

I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes” (36), and furthermore, “ Mr. Covey gave us enough to eat, but scarce time to eat it. We were often less than five minutes taking our meals” (60). This shows the terrible conditions that slaves, who were indeed humans, were not benefitted in the socio-economic world of slavery. Douglass uses pathos and logos in his last quote, because no one can take in a meal within five minutes without their stomach starting to hurt, which is a logical standpoint.

He uses pathos by giving us imagery in thinking about the wounds in his feet from the cold. These were not in the ideal condition that humans should be in. They were forced to work to extents that could cease to be fatal, and they were harmed both emotionally and physically. In a like manner, religion was a huge factor in an excuse to treat slaves how they were treated in Pre-Civil War America. As Christian, white, and exclusive people such as Thorton Stringfellow argues, “ because Christ never disclaims it [slavery], He must be in favor of it, as he saw no need to change the rules regarding slavery”.

However, whether Christ disclaimed it or not, the public should never compare themselves to God on that level, because God is superior to all, and no one can be God. Douglass uses rhetoric like logos to refute this claim, saying that once his master converted to religion, he was even worse than before, “ but after his [Mr. Covey’s] conversion, he found religious sanction

and support for his slaveholding cruelty” (56), and his slaveholding cruelty included whipping and physically hurting the slaves. Mr. Covey was one of Douglass’s worst masters; he would use religion to think of himself superior to his slaves and harm them because he thought he was given consent by God to.

Stringfellow would feud “ that slavery is validated in the Bible” and that it’s ok to misuse the treatment of slaves. As shown in *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, treatment of slaves was commonly looked over as being ok, “ I have seen him [Mr. Covey] tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of the Scripture - ‘ He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes’” (57).

Douglass’s master would indeed use religion as an excuse to physically harm slaves. Douglass gives examples throughout his narrative using pathos to make us feel sympathy for these slaves who were whipped and treated like animals. Douglass gives many horrendous stories of slaves being whipped throughout his narrative.

Religion should have been the reason people would realize slavery is wrong, because we are all equal no matter our origin or skin colors, which are things we have no control over. As a final point, being or owning a slave is inhumane. There are many arguments Douglass uses in his narrative to disprove the pro-slavery controversy in the world of Pre-Civil War America.

Slavery is wrong and harmful in emotional, physical, and mental ways.

Slaves do not have beneficial rights in the act of slavery, and religion was

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not a logical generalization in an argument for slaves to be whipped, bought, assaulted, and, all in all, damaged in their humanity.