

In slaves as if they
were luxury



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In nineteenth century New Orleans, one of the largest and most influential slave markets in American history sat and operated turning human beings into detached objects that were worth an individual profit, beasts that were sold into a life no human was fit for, and an asset to the estate that they were forced to labor and suffer on. The Antebellum slave market turned slaves into sellable products by storing and housing slaves as if they were animals to be sold at an auction, marketing slaves as if they were luxury products for enjoyment and leisure provided for the rich and successful planters and families as well as treat slaves as though they were not at all people, but strictly capital, during all aspects of the trade deals and in the showrooms themselves. Johnson takes the reader into the slave trade itself and states that his book represents “ a part of slavery that could be used to understand the whole of the institution (Johnson 2).

” Johnson strategically writes his book to stress the importance of using multiple frames of reference to fully understand the severity of the injustices that took place in the nineteenth century. The injustices being “ Slavery reduced to the simplicity of a pure form: a person with a price (Johnson 2).”

Slaves were kept in slave pens that housed hundreds of people in a perimeter large enough that only a single family home would fit on. From the outside, the slave pens were a place to house the slaves waiting to be sold in the showroom at a later date. On the Inside of the slave pens, the conditions were far less than humane with walls fifteen to twenty feet high blocking out all but muffled sound from the other side of the wall and consolidating extremely unsanitary conditions, with a significant lack of medical care, much like livestock packing rooms at processing plants. Aside from very

large amounts of human waste, disease and the mistreated, dishearted, overcrowded humans themselves, inside the walls of the slave pens were “Privies, kitchens, dressing rooms, and jails (Johnson 2).” Slave quarters such as the slave pens and the three story brick jails that were inside of them still remain in present day New Orleans as a brutal reminder of America’s ironic, inhumane history and to serve as a representation of the beast-like treatment slaves encountered just to turn a profit.