

Antebellum families and women generally(base on the book i list in details)

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Antebellum families and women generally In his book *Celia a Slave*, Melton McLaurin details a true story of a female slave who killed her master and got rid of his body by burning it on June 23, 1855. This incident happened during a disturbing time in Antellebum America when Kansa's neighboring territory was amid a debate on whether it would become a slave state or a free state. The murder took place in Colloway County, Missouri. In his description of Celia's trial process that was influenced by the political factors, McLaurin offers great understanding on slavery and the Antebellum period. He notes that the Celias defense questioned the role of the white man as the protector of women within southern society, analyzing the concept of male honor, a key factor of the Souths social system. It highlighted the plight of young female slaves who were sexually manipulated. The case had a major significance in that it created boundaries of slavery in Missouri. Celias story generally portrays a political and legal system that condoned rape and sexual abuse of female slaves in Antebellum families.

In the 1800s, slavery became an ingrained economic and legal institution (Williamson and Cain, 1). In Antebellum families, owning slaves was prestigious, a measure of wealth. Bales notes that slaves cost around \$40,000 in Antebellum at the time. Robert Newson viewed his slaves as a perfect reward for the years he had spent laboring (McLaurin, 8). Slaves were used and abused by their master, and Newton's relations with Celia were no different. Newton raped his new slave on their trip home, an indication that he hoped to use her as a sexual tool following his wife's death (McLaurin 18). Newton employed her as the house cook, a possible cover up of his sexual relations with Celia. She was exposed to continuous sexual exploitation by

her master (McLaurin 22) who considered sexual relations with her his privilege (McLaurin 28-29). He granted her favors due to their sexual relationship. She owned her own cabin very close to the family house - a very rare occurrence in Antebellum America. She bore two children, believed to be fathered by Newton.

Slaves were regarded as insignificant. They were powerless and defenseless. Gordon-Reed (p. 50) highlights the paradoxical role of sexual relations between masters and slaves, despite the stigma attached to slaves. When George, a fellow slave fell in love with Celia, he was so frustrated that he could not protect Celia from the man who owned them both (McLaurin 25). Slaves were their owners' property. George and Celia were both helpless. George's frustrations play a big role in Newton's death.

On the evening that Celia committed the murder, Newson went to her cabin and she physically put him off, hitting him over the head with a tree branch she had secured for that purpose. His insistence made her hit him with a second blow that was fatal. Her decision to burn her master's body was out of fear and desperation, considering the consequences she would face. She killed under provocation. Her attorneys argued for state law that would allow women to use deadly force to defend their honor. Celia was ultimately found guilty and executed for Newson's murder. Her case raised an alarm regarding the morality of whites about slavery and its repercussions. It heightened the need for reforms that would make female slaves able to protect themselves better. On the other hand, it highlighted the limits of the white man as the female protector, showing pitfalls in the concept of male honor.

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