

Frederick douglas: american dream essay sample

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In Pursuit of the American Dream The American Dream for the average slave was simple in mind, yet incredibly difficult to achieve. This basic dream was freedom, something we have lived with for all of our lives. To a slave, this is usually nothing more than a dream, one that shall never become a reality. A slave is bound physically and mentally to the institution of slavery. The institution breaks the spirit of the slave, until he or she could not even think of escape or freedom, but only on the task at hand. The white southern planters were suppressing the African American population. Whether free or in bondage, it didn't matter. The racial discrepancy was the excuse of this muzzle the planter class put on the blacks. Frederick Douglass, a slave until he ran away, was consistently dissuaded for trying to learn and educate himself. He was beat down by the white supremacists for standing up for his beliefs, but he was also encouraged by others to achieve his dream.

When Frederick Douglass was separated from his mother when he was a mere infant, to hinder the affection he might have for his mother. She died when he was seven years old, but was not allowed to be present during her death or burial. Douglas points out that he felt the same emotions he should have felt at the death of a stranger. The reason this was done is unknown. What good it does to separate the child from its mother is inconceivable, yet it was a standard practice during this time period. There is also the problem that the slaves must realize they are slaves for their whole lives, and cannot do anything about it. This is a very demoralizing situation.

Frederick Douglass makes the point when talking to white boys of his age that they can be free when they turn twenty-one, but he shall be a slave his whole life. He used these same boys to his advantage though. They are the

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ones who taught him how to read after Mrs. Auld had forbid him to do so. He would carry bread around to trade knowledge for food. The white supremacists had decided “ if you give a slave an inch, he’ll take an ell.” Douglass decided this was true, for after he had learned to read, he wanted more. Finally, the first moment came, when he was helping two Irishmen unload cargo on a wharf, and they told him he should run away to the north. That is when he resolved to run away.

The next incident that would spark him to gain his freedom would not come for many years later, when he was a man. He had been sent off to a man named Mr. Covey, a slavebreaker. This is truly an atrocious man. He was known for his deceit and inelegance toward slaves. Mr. Covey had beaten Frederick badly for not being able to keep working because he was sick and had collapsed from lack of strength. Douglass flees, and upon returning one day, the next morning Mr. Covey and Douglass got in a fight, in which case Douglas would end up winning. This was significant to him because had beaten a white man, but also because it had “ rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom”|a determination to be free,” as he puts it. All he needs now is a bit of a push, and he shall win his freedom, the ultimate goal, the American Dream.

This last little push, the final crack in the dam would be when he was sold to Mr. Freeland, and started to actually intermingle with the other slaves, and found out they too wanted freedom. They hatched a plan to escape, but were betrayed and were captured. Because Frederick was the ringleader, he was separated from the rest of them. This failure to escape the institution did

the exact opposite of what it should have done, which was to silence him, but it in fact made the fire inside of him burn brighter and stronger. He was getting that much closer to the dream. He would finally escape with help from friends in Baltimore, and was known widely for intellect, which was odd for an African American to have at this time.

Frederick Douglass had overcome enormous odds, and beaten the system. He achieved his dream of freedom, both physically and mentally. He surpassed the line that was set for blacks at the time, by educating himself, becoming free and eventually traveling abroad to lecture on abolition and rights for African Americans in the United States.