

Introduction
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Introduction

In the history of America as a nation, there lies the dark truth about slavery that has left scars in those that suffered its effects.

To the then perpetrators of slavery, the whites, it has left a shameful mark that America will ever live to regret of. This essay focuses on a narrative by Frederick Douglass who was formerly a slave. The narrative shows the negativity of slavery and its consequential effects, and champions for its abolishment. The book, 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass' is both an indictment of slavery and a call to action for its abolition (Lecture Notes 1).

Frederick Douglass' main arguments against slavery

Douglass writes the narrative out of experience in slavery. He states that slavery is the worst thing that ever happened to America and has its effects even in this present age. His narration is with a deep sigh of regret as to why he had to pass through that especially when he was very young. The death and separation from his mother at a very tender age saddens him very much.

He is believed to have had a white father, a fact that acts as a proof of some negative things that the slaves had to experience. This in itself explains that the slaves, especially the women suffered rape from the slave holders who took them in by force (Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" 1). Douglass had to witness the whipping of his aunt, a thing that he looks back with great pity. The slaves were brutally treated, being beaten day in day out with no good reason.

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They had to do donkeys work with an accompaniment of strokes. The description given by Douglass to the torturous treatment of the slaves clearly shows his hatred and condemnation of slavery together with those who practiced it. A description of how the slaves operated especially when they interacted with their masters is also given. They had a lot of inferiority complex due to the ill treatment they received from the white people. They therefore walked in a lot of fear to the brutal masters. They literally feared the whites since they had no say before them (Murrin 98).

For instance, the slaves were seen to be liars even if they told the truth. This worsened the situation of the slaves since they felt segregated. The fear therefore acted as a tool that protected the slaves from brutality and even death (Douglass " Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" 1). Douglass critically outlines the several events of extreme brutality to the slaves. They were being treated as beasts yet they were human beings just like the whites. This is very inhuman since every human being has a right which they should freely enjoy. Everybody should have the right to learn freely but this opportunity is denied to the slaves. The slave holders argued that the slaves should not at all know how to read or write.

They ought not to even know how to read the Bible which is God's Word. It is so ironical since God intends that all should read and know his Word but the slaves are denied that chance. They give the reason that their knowledge from reading or writing will disqualify them as slaves. Slavery is therefore portrayed by Douglass as a crime and its perpetrators ought to face justice.

For instance, Douglass narrates his story when he moved to Baltimore. He was happy of this because he knew that it was an end to the life of slavery. It marked a new beginning in his life but on the contrary, his efforts to learn even the simple alphabets are watered down by a White man who believed that the slaves would lose their positions by reading, and especially the Bible. The slaves were also treated among the property that a slave holder owned alongside things like livestock. This is a thing that makes Douglass to once more completely hate slavery. This is because when his master died, Douglass together with the other slaves was left and they were all to be divided between the late master's son and daughter as assets left for inheritance.

Douglass' hatred towards this kind of treatment reveals that the act is bad and not fit for human beings. The slaves were also denied food on some occasion by their masters. Douglass reveals this when he narrates showing his happiness when he was lent out to another white man since he was sure of being fed.

It implies that he received no food from his initial master despite the fact that he worked so hard throughout (Douglass, " The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" 1). At the new master's home, his expectations are thwarted. He works under tough conditions and does heavy tasks with little appreciation. As if that is not enough, he receives whips almost every day just because he is a slave.

The suffering he undergoes day in day out makes him even collapse in the fields while working. This makes him to reach the point of no return. He

therefore chooses to heat back by engaging his master in a fight. All this that transpires is a clear indication that Douglass completely hated slavery and was a campaigner of its abolition. After such a long time of perseverance, the heating back at his master shows that he seeks revenge against the perpetrators of slavery. It shows that he is willing and very ready to do anything to abolish and totally terminate the reign of this inhuman practice.

This is further supported by the efforts of Douglass together with other friends to escape from the plantation where they were all slaves.

Unfortunately, they are seized and for this reason, Douglass is jailed. This is a sign of self sacrifice in order to see to it that slavery has been totally abolished. He risks his life to the point of even going to jail (Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" 1).

Douglass' efforts to resist slavery simply showed that the abolition of this dehumanizing character is possible. This is evidenced by the response of the slave master who was torturing Douglass until he fought back. The slave master stopped whipping Douglass after the fight. The slavery can end if there will be people who are bold enough to resist it.

This is the message that is seemingly being passed across. Douglass was proving the fact that the slave masters will give in to pressure against slavery if the activists against slavery do not give up in their struggle for freedom. This is further supported by Douglass' final success to freedom. He at last managed to escape from the slave rule with the help of some of his friends.

With a combined effort, it is very possible to terminate slave rule or such like types of torture in any given society (Murrin 103).

Conclusion: The basis of the argument

Douglass brings out his arguments in the narrative very clearly proving that slave practice is a crime which should be abolished. He bases his argument on the platforms of both religion and morality. In his speech dubbed the ‘The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro’, Douglass says it is acknowledged that the slave is a being who can be trusted with responsibility, he is moral and intellectual.

This proves the moral grounds that Douglass takes a stand on to argue out his facts. He says that the manhood of one who is a slave is agreed upon meaning that it is a global agreement that slaves are human beings like any other despite the race (Douglass, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” 1). On religious grounds, Douglass brings out his arguments using the story of the Bible where the children of Israel had been taken into exile by the Babylonians. The Israelites lament when they remember their home city Zion and refuse to sing a song in this foreign land contrary to what those who had taken them captive expected. This marks their grief about their captivity.

Douglass thus compares this with the situation that faced them as slaves in the land that was not their own too, as he tries to explain to his audience what encompassed them as slaves. He sides with God and other slaves are wounded to condemn the slavery perpetrators, something that is both sinful and shameful. This clearly points out the religious ground that Douglass

bases some of his argument (Douglass, " The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" 1).

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