

Reflection

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Lecturer's Introduction Sara Baartman lived a life full of degradation, mistreatment and abuse but she is still a legend fondly remembered till today. She was a Khoikhoi woman born in 1790 and was later on taken to Europe to be exhibited as a freak show attraction. Being African, she had an extremely curvacious body contrary to her European counterparts. Simply, the Europeans had never seen anything like it before. She was then nicknamed Hottentot Venus. Hottentot referring to the Khoi people and Venus who was the Greek goddess of love.

Gender

The exploitation of Sara symbolised the kind of exploitation women of all races go through. She was objectified and deemed only good for her physical features. A trend that has been a vice in all generations. Our music nowadays is full of explicit content. Songs describing women in a graphic and vile manner has filled our airwaves. What is even more distressing is that women seem to enjoy this negative attention thus encouraging the men. Sara Baartman same as most Khoi-San women was well rounded with large buttocks, large breasts and an elongated labia. One can understand that the typical African woman in those days was a sight to behold but beauty should be admired and not ridiculed. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made and in the image of God. His work should not be the subject of mockery and ridicule but we should simply marvel at it and be in complete awe. It is important to ask ourselves why men rarely are the subject of such acts of exploitation and abuse.

Race

Sara Baartman was born in South Africa and even while there she lived as a

slave to a Dutch farmer in Cape Town. Sara was then promised great wealth if she moved to England Africa was by then referred to as the black continent mostly because its inhabitants were black. Even while she was living in her motherland she was still being subjected to racial discrimination as she worked as a slave, a role mainly played by Africans who were seen as the inferior race. It was unheard of that a white would be a black man's slave. While in Europe, racial discrimination was at its peak at the time and Sara felt its full brunt. To the Europeans she was simply a weird specimen that was to be observed to satisfy their curiosity. No one amongst them ever made an attempt to learn about the Hottentot Venus as a person. Did she have a sense of humour? Was she temperamental? Was she intelligent? Very few attempts if any were made to learn more about her inner self. The curiosity was on her extraordinary physical features. But you have to wonder, because the Europeans also came to live in Africa during that time, were they subjected to such ridicule and mockery. Does history tell us of any white woman or man who was placed for display to all sundry in order for people to observe them?

Class

The Europeans were deemed to be a class above the Africans and this was aided by the fact that Africans were in awe of the whites. They had never before seen humans with their skin color and hair and therefore immediately assumed that they were demi-gods. The Europeans' superiority complex was fed by the Africans' inferiority complex. That is why it was very easy for Sara to be duped into thinking that by going to England she was going to become rich.

While we read Sara's story with a lot of sympathy, one has to wonder why she never said no to all this inhumane treatment. She never said enough is enough. History tells us that after the English had satisfied their curiosity, she was sold to a Frenchman. This means that she was then moved to France where people were in awe once again of her features.

Nationality

The Hottentot Venus was from South Africa. Upon her death, to signify how wild, inhumane, brutal and callous humans can be, a scientist cut parts of her body in order to examine them and find out what they contained. Her genitals, skull and brain were placed in a museum in France and it took 8 years of constant badgering and requesting by the African National Congress for her remains to be sent back to her motherland for a dignified burial.

Conclusion

Human beings should learn to live with one another despite our differences. It is high time we see each other as brothers and sisters. What would the world be like if we all looked the same and had no way of telling each other apart? The world would be a boring place. Even identical twins have certain characteristics that set them apart from one another. We should also learn to respect ourselves and regard our bodies as temples. Our bodies are holy and should therefore not be subjected to degradation and abuse.

Genesis 1: 27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Psalms 139: 14: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

References

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