

The underground railroad by colson whitehead: rebellion and endurance



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How is the thing worse than rebellion its cause and how did slaves show that endurance is patience concentrated?

In the modern alternate history novel, *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead advocates that the ones who endure are the ones who conquer and that when tyranny becomes law, rebellion becomes a duty.

In his novel, Whitehead utilizes historical context to substantiate that the public in the 18th century harbored immense prejudice against slaves and that they were handled with the utmost brutality. To a slave, absconding the plantation or their masters would be but a distant dream and furthermore, “To escape the boundary of the plantation would be to escape the fundamental principles of your life: impossible” (Whitehead 8). This demonstrates that the majority populace of slaves did not harbor any whim of escaping, as to them, to escape would mean escaping from the philosophies of life itself. Moreover, to a slave, freedom from slavery is achieved only when an individual starts to feel and understand that he would favor death to life as a slave. Essentially, for a slave to obtain absolute freedom, the solitary route would be death. Another motive to not attempt to fly was due to the inhuman and savage retributions inflicted on the slaves who endeavored to escape. “If they were caught, any number of terrible things could happen to them. Many captured fugitive slaves were flogged, branded, jailed, sold back into slavery, or even killed” (Library of Congress American Memory and Exhibits). In the 1800s, slaves were regarded, as inferior beings; entities with no rights. In essence, society treated slaves as animals; maybe even worse. The preponderance of recaptured slaves was exposed to brutality beyond comprehension. The preeminent reason for this <https://assignbuster.com/the-underground-railroad-by-colson-whitehead-rebellion-and-endurance/>

being that the slave populace outstripped the white population by a majority, and the minority, who desired to keep slaves under their influence and keep from rebelling; therefore, implemented brutal decrees and restrictions to keep rebellions at bay. Nevertheless, ultimately, the limitations did naught but pour oil into the blaze. The minority populace was oblivious to the seed of odium that was gradually maturing into full-fledged pugnacity, and instead coerced more limitations on the slaves. “ The whole South was kind of an armed camp. There were obviously police forces around; there were slave patrols” (Library of Congress American Memory and Exhibits). The minority populace endeavored to fight fire with fire; they attempted to combat hostility with hostility. Nonetheless, the slave populace perceived this state of affairs in an adverse way; they presumed that their masters were attempting to make life more callous for them. This gave rise to more slaves absconding their masters; more slaves dissenting and thereby, the destruction of slavery. On top of it all, the white population had an enormous amount of prejudice towards slaves. The minority had a preconceived notion that the majority were predestined to oblige, had no privileges; desired no privileges and chiefly, were just superfluous, expendable goods. Slaves had not an iota of the rights that whites had, and in addition, there were no laws for the governing of chastisements given to slaves. They were lodged in places that were little less than hovels, were given food that was of a little less quality than that given to animals and all things considered, were fundamentally treated like vermin.

In addition, Whitehead also uses historical context to show that the finish of rebellion is liberation, while the finish of revolution is the establishment of

freedom and that for a slave, endurance is patience concentrated. In the 1800s, much of the populace had major favoritism towards slaves, but there was a minute quantity of good apples amongst the white masses. There were a few entities that loathed slavery and would do whatever to terminate it. Among the slave populace, too, there existed a few who would do whatsoever it took to unfetter slaves and cease slavery. " This was an example of black and white people working together in a common cause, to promote the cause of liberty" (Eric Foner). A substantial illustration of this would be the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad wouldn't have endured if there hadn't been whites in on it. To the slaves, having the sustenance of the minority in their attempts to abolish slavery was a major plus point. Whites had dispensations that slaves couldn't imagine in their remotest dreams. On the other hand, the slaves had masses. This amalgamation set the founding stones for rebellion and the overthrow of slavery. Nonetheless, some slaves utilized carnage and bloodshed to ward off whites. Perhaps the most notable illustration of this would be Nat Turner. Nat Turner's rebellion was one of the biggest slave unrests ever to happen in the United States, and it assumed a momentous job in the improvement of an antebellum slave society. The depictions from his rebellion - of outfitted dark men wandering the farmland slaughtering white men, ladies, and kids - haunted white southerners and indicated slave proprietors how helpless they were. Following the insubordination, whites all through the South were resolute to foresee any further slave revolts, and they fixed the efficiently cruel slave codes to keep African Americans, slave and free, in an acquiescent situation. " He sought not only his own freedom, but to dismantle the entire system of slavery and liberate African Americans from <https://assignbuster.com/the-underground-railroad-by-colson-whitehead-rebellion-and-endurance/>

white tyranny” (L. Maren Wood). Nat Turner’s rebellion was a godsend for the slave population; a tribulation to the white population. Nevertheless, these rebellions would’ve never have arisen, and slavery would’ve still been in continuation if it wasn’t for the fortitude that the slaves possessed. They endured massive physical and psychological torture from their controllers. Years of abuse turned slaves into automatons with no feelings. They possessed inhuman patience, and this was one of the chief causative factors for their motives to be so fruitful. These individualities permitted slaves to wait for years on end until the circumstances were ripe for rebellion. Slaves, more than any other entity, possessed immense moral fortitude. “ She wondered where he had escaped from, how bad it was, and how far he traveled before he put it behind him” (Cora 313). This is supplemented in Colson Whitehead’s book *The Underground Railroad* . The protagonist, Cora went to Hades and back again in her quest for freedom. In due course, she found liberty after a long and arduous journey, exemplifying the saying that endurance is patience concentrated.

In so doing, ample exemplification is provided to base the contentions that the finish of rebellion is liberation, while the finish of revolution is the establishment of freedom and that for a slave, endurance is patience concentrated. In all honesty, without the dissent of slaves, and their indomitable efforts to abrogate slavery, contemporary civilization would be experiencing an extremely different state of affairs than what it is today.

Works Cited

- Foner, Eric. “‘Gateway To Freedom’: Heroes, Danger And Loss On The Underground Railroad.” ‘ *Gateway To Freedom’: Heroes, Danger And* <https://assignbuster.com/the-underground-railroad-by-colson-whitehead-rebellion-and-endurance/>

Loss On The Underground Railroad | WBUR News, WBUR, 19 Jan. 2015, www.wbur.org/npr/377606644/gateway-to-freedom-heroes-danger-and-loss-on-the-underground-railroad.

- Wood, L. Maren, and David Walbert. "NCpedia." *NCpedia*, www.ncpedia.org/anchor/nat-turners-rebellion.
- "EIU Teaching with Primary Sources." *Underground Railroad: A Path to Freedom*, Eastern Illinois University, www.eiu.edu/eiutps/underground_railroad.php.