

Themes of incidents in the life of a slave girl and the souls of black folk

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The Life of a Slave Girl is the story about the process of discovery, growing up, survival and mentorship. The author portrays mentor figures, scenes of violence and frightening depiction of slavery. Jacobs presents family as an unattainable dream. It can be achieved if only the main heroine escaped from slavery. The author also raises the issues of modernization as portrayed in industrialized societies that discover capitalism. She describes different ways of how the society deals with these issues both directly and symbolically. Through dealing with these issues, victims of slavery encounter violence, sexual abuse, suffering and denial of rights (Jacobs, 99). In The Life of a Slave Girl, sexuality is a major theme that affected a large number of slave women, while in The Souls of Black Folk, the main topic is humanity and its influence on the black men in the society.

Jacobs writes authentically on sexuality from her real-life experience. Her main aim is to arouse slave women. Jacobs wants the society to change its attitude towards the condition of slave women. For example, a large percentage of women suffered in the hands of white people, and the black society could not take any action, because there was a law that supported the act of slavery in several states. Most African-American women were in bondage and experienced the most ruthless suffering in the hands of white people through beatings and sexual abuse. Since the law stated clearly that slavery was permitted in some states, nothing could be done to free slaves. Even though there were several attempts to liberate slaves in certain acts that Montessori introduced, the court always compromised this acts and officially declared slavery in the states once again. As a result, few slaves

who had been freed were captured and brought back to slavery once again (Jacobs, 102).

According to the author, such things as purity, domesticity and piety were not common for slave women. Their lives were controlled by the masters. Slavery denied people their basic human rights. Consequently, slave women barely had the chance to choose what paths to take. They had to obey unwillingly their masters without questions. As a result, rape became the usual thing. To top it all, violence became a routine for the white people. They constantly made their slaves suffer. The white people were not interested in taking care of their slaves, but instead, they thought only about their own satisfaction. Slaves were ordered to ask permission of their owners before acting under own free will. In most cases, masters denied these requests making slaves helpless and hopeless at every idea and solutions they had (Jacobs, 104).

For a few merciful white people who treated their slaves with concern, the slaves were indebted to give more services. Therefore, the white people claimed that slaves were their properties and nothing more than the subjects. For this reason slave women had to offer their purity against their free will or stand the humiliation of being flogged in public. In addition to this, they could not refuse or disobey because they had nowhere to turn for protection. There was no shadow of law to protect slaves from being abused by their masters. What is more, insults and beatings could even lead to death. On the other hand, young girls were raped and their innocence was never valued by the white men whose main mission was to enslave them.

The young girls suffered from sexual abuse while older women became only victims of slavery. In most cases, girls became the mistresses of several men and their duty was to fulfill their sexual desires (Jacobs, 109).

However, the young girl who became mistress of the white men had no right to confide in anyone, whether it was the relative or guardian. This means that slaves had no protection whatsoever except for the older slaves who could plead on their behalf. The slave girls grew up in fear of the unknown future. They did not know who would be the next to claim them or whether their future abuser would be more severe than the previous owner. Some would bribe them with presents before buying from the previous owner. Nevertheless,, young girls had no wisdom to decline and avoid facing severe forms of abuse because of their tender age. For this reason, a lot of girls became the victims of severe tortures. What is more, they could serve from one to eight men at the same time. Frequently, the wives of white men hated the slave girl despite the fact that sexual contact was made against her will. The mistresses accused slave girls of sleeping with their husbands (Jacobs, 112). As a result, young girls suffered brutal tortures that were inflicted by both master and mistress.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, humanity is a major theme of the book. The author narrates about the lives of black men and their masters, the tortures and sexual abuse. Some were brutalized and lived in constant fear of their masters. In order to please their owners, some slaves had to bring sexual satisfaction to their mistresses. In addition, they would also offer their daughters for sexual satisfacction and doing various chores. The author

argued that it proved the fact that the black man belonged to the beings of an inferior order. Therefore, they were born and raised as slaves and their children also followed the same trend. Their ancestral groups also had an enslaved past. These actions that the black men took were the result of the whipping torture which removed their manhood and the bloodhounds they encountered. Because of the slave law that was passed to the public by the court, black men did not have another option that to be a slaves (Bois, 121-123).

Slavery changed the lives of black people. They learnt virtues such as kindness and humility. However, at the same time, slavery had a negative influence on their children. For example, the girls slave who is accustomed to serve and wait for the orders of her mistress and master lives with the feeling of hatred. Their behavior and actions of the violence encourage racism; the black child slave will prefer to stay with his/her people than with the white men. In addition, most of the girl slaves would want to understand the reason for their suffering and continuous outbreaks of jealous passion between the whites and the blacks. In such a way, they will grow up knowing only the language of racism and violence. They may either be fearful of every white person around them or hate every white man. Their experience in slavery filled them with distrust because modernists ignored the sufferings of slaves and paid attention to producing stories that would defend the actions of white people. As a result, slaves lost their confidence and value of identity (Bois, 124).

In conclusion, according to the reports on the experience of slaves, slavery is a curse for both black and white people. Therefore, it makes white people licentious, cruel, violent, sensual and wretched. It degrades the value of colored people in the society. In view of these issues, men and women who were free intervened on several attempts to free their other members in vain. This was to help them know how to exercise and maintain their rights so that they could have more ability to have a peculiar sensation of their identity. Consequently, they would not have to bear double conscience of depending on other people's opinion to believe in their abilities and uniqueness. While slavery changed the lives of black people, they learnt different virtues such as kindness; it damaged their sense of imagination and pursuing impossibilities. Therefore, they developed two personalities: American and African. In order to demolish this feeling, they had to seek the reconciliation.