

Paper 5



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PAGE Return to freedom Paper 5 Outline Thesis ment: both contend that a white man’s world is a prison and a world from which they both seek escape.

I. Whiteman’s world is a prison

A. The American Indian’s enslavement

B. The negro woman’s enslavement

II. Freedom

A. The American Indian’s freedom

B. The negro woman’s freedom

III The journey

A. The American Indian’s journey - wavering

B. The negro woman’s journey - resolute

IV The Journey’s end - happiness

A. The American Indian’s happiness

B. The negro woman’s happiness.

Return to Freedom

Freedom is the right of all men but freedom can mean different things to different people; in Frances Harper’s poem ‘ She’s Free’ and Tom Whitecloud’s short story entitled ‘ Blue Winds Dancing’ the issue of freedom is foremost, both contend that a white man’s world is a prison and a world from which they both seek escape.

The narrator in ‘ Blue Winds Dancing’ is a native American Indian boy who has been living in a white man’s world in order to study at university and although in reality not a prisoner, in his own mind he is. He tells us that his “ home is beyond the mountains” (144) but he is not; he is in the white man’s world a world where trees are planted in “ military rows” (144) and although

all living things are beautiful “ it is the beauty of captivity.” His prison is the “ bluff of being civilized” a place where he has “ to do everything [he doesn’t] want to do” a place where he “ never [does] anything” he wants. (144) The narrator of “ She’s Free’ on the other hand, is a negro and has lived life in a white man’s world as a slave subjected “ by law ...[to] torture and chain” (line 1) solely because of the color of her skin, “ the hue of her face.” (line 2) Thus her enslavement is existent and tangible – she bears the signs of “ bondage and blood ... scourges and chains,” (line 7) whereas the Indian bears no physical signs of enslavement and is allowed to move around and exist without abuse, in his view he is imprisoned “ dancing to the strings of customs and traditions.” (144)

Both narrators seek escape from their imprisonment, he by returning to his homeland and people and she by escaping and running away. The difference however is that he is escaping to the familiarity and safety of his family and his people but she, “ with her arm on her child” (line 3) is escaping into the unknown world where “ the danger was fearful [and] the pathway was wild.”(line 4)

She is resolute in her journey preferring to be free from oppression even though her future is unknown; she is determined and tenacious in coping with what may come before her “ poverty, danger and death she can brave” (line 13) for the freedom of her child, “ for the child of her love is no loner a slave.” (line 14) The Indian however is not so unwavering. Although still “ twenty miles from home” (146) he begins to feel concern and “ afraid of being looked on as a stranger by [his] own people.” (146) He states that he doesn’t fit in either world, “ certainly not among the whites, and not among the older people” of his tribe. (146) As he draws near to his destination his

wavering diminishes and hearing the drums “ is like the pulse beat of the world.” (146)

When he finally arrives home he again wavers; “ Am I Indian, or am I white?” (147) he asks himself, and senses that “ nobody seems to notice” him (147) but then he remembers that they are not really ignoring him but rather “ sharing a mood” (147) “ without someone talking.” (147) At the end he declares “ I am happy. It is beautiful. I am home.”(147) In contrast, the slave woman does not reach a destination but is also happy. She is happy in the knowledge that she has outwitted her owner “ with her step on the ice” (line 3) and “ the hunter is rifled and foiled of his prey” (line 10) and she is happy in her freedom “ on liberty plain.” (line 12)

It is evident from the two texts discussed above that freedom has different denotations for different people. For the Indian American it is his return to his homeland and people for the slave woman it is an escape into an unknown freedom, but one thing is certain they both seek escape from a white man’s world.