

Prejudice through time

Business



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Mark Twain once justified, "The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice." This quote exhibits that throughout history, the world has experienced a myriad of discrimination against diverse groups of people and they are all so related. It has been demonstrated by the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, which persisted for nearly two and a half centuries, yet slavery is one of the oldest traditions of mankind.

Slaves expected to be held captive for eternity, but prayed their children would have the opportunity to be free. In 1933, the profligate Nazis came to power as Adolf Hitler rapturously accepted the position of Chancellor of Germany. Within the next twelve years, the Nazis opened 20,000 concentration camps where they would murder ten million people, the majority being of Jewish faith. Each situation is illustrated to be unique, however American slavery and the Holocaust have manifested from the same composition- prejudice. Cruel prejudice in the New World began when Europeans first landed there, and they needed a large, preferably low-priced work force to carry out necessary duties on plantations. In the North American colony of Virginia, slaves were first imported in 1619 to the major city of Jamestown.

Nearly twelve million African slaves were imported to the Americas and 6% of all Africans across the globe were forcefully brought to the Americas! Africans in particular were chosen because they could be easily smuggled from West Africa, and across the Atlantic to be used as laborers. European colonists could have easily taken advantage of the Indians of the West Indies to be their laborers, yet they discovered they were only simple food gatherers, and grew sick under the harsh discipline of slavery. On the other

hand, Africans excelled in crafts, growing crops and raising animals. Also, they were immune to European diseases, accustomed to warm climate and high poverty in Africa increased the demand to be brought to the Americas. Africans were often purchased by slave traders or taken as prisoners of war to be shoved on tightly packed, enormous ships taken to newly found civilizations. When they reached America, they were usually bought at auctions where slave traders sold their slaves to the buyer who offered the most amount of money for the slave.

Slaves were men, women and even children. If a baby had been born to at least one parent that was a slave, the toddler would be stolen from their childhood to become a slave their self. Many slaves like Frederick Douglass were separated from their families and introduced to the privations of slavery, at around five years of age. Frederick Douglass only saw his mom about four times and was not permitted to attend to her funeral when he was a child. He had never known his father, but rumor had it that his father had been a white man, more specifically his own master Captain Anthony. Obviously their were exception, however slaves on plantations were given just enough food to survive, while city slaves like Frederick Douglass received a greater quantity of food but not nearly sufficient.

Additionally, slaves were often physically molested because masters believed that their slaves would work harder if they were scared of being punished. After the Civil War abolished slavery, most freed Africans continued to be enslaved. It was challenging to receive jobs because many companies often did not want to hire previously emancipated slaves without an education. Therefore slaves would have to endure such terrible conditions

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that were even more torturous than being enchained. All in all, Africans brooked many obstacles within slavery.

Unlike European colonists in the Americas whose purposes were apparent, the Nazis carried out their true intentions of the largest mass slaughter the world had ever seen by effortlessly concealing the "Final Solution". The Nazi's goals included to "purify the Aryan master race" under the authority of Hitler's regime and to extend their territory. When Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany, his purpose was publicly to assist the people in escaping economic struggles following World War I, therefore he created many jobs, strengthened the economy in Germany and introduced Jews as the enemy. When he had control over the Germans' lives, he then implemented the "Final Solution". From the start, Hitler had an intense odium toward Jews, because he grew up with Anti-Semitic beliefs throughout his childhood in Vienna.

Within a twelve year span, the Nazi's held hostage of Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma Gypsies, courageous resisters, priests and pastors, disabled, homosexuals, and people of African decent. Even those who married Jews were considered a threat. These targeted groups were shipped to concentration camps or death camps. In these death camps, strong boys and men could be taken to do labor while girls, women and the sick were unknowingly exterminated in gas chambers. Those in labor camps received the bare minimum of three meals a day and each meal the calories were calculated depending on the physical demand needed for their particular role. When the Nazis finally surrendered, allowing liberation of the Jews,

organizations throughout Europe were established to provide food, clothing and shelter to refugees.

Prior to the war, 1.6 million Jewish youth lived in Europe; unfortunately only 11% of them survived the genocide. While some purport that American slavery and the Holocaust have been verified to be completely different, they nevertheless consisted of similar visages. The European colonists and the Nazi's both believed they were superior to everyone else, so they wanted to evince their superiority by controlling over others' lives. The inferior races were both considered non-humans, as a justification to treat them unbearably, and these groups were striped of all unalienable rights.

In the case of American slavery, whites believed African were genetically not Homo sapiens, instead as commensurate to beasts. Africans were purchased and sold to land owners as part of their debased status in society, and thus considered property. Plantation owners in the 19th century defined slavery as "responsible domination over a less fortunate, less evolved group." In the Constitution, the building blocks for the new nation, the only mistake made by our prodigies were that African slaves were counted as 3/5 of a person in the census. On the other hand, the Nazi's supposed it was their duty to purify the gene pool in Germany, because Hitler's theories influenced them to comprehend that Jews were inhumane creatures. Alike, Africans and Jews were advertised as animals, in which there was no charge for executing one.

Another similarity between American slavery and the Holocaust were the living conditions of the substandard races. African slaves slept on bitter, murky floors in decaying shacks. In his youth, Frederick Douglass would steal

a bag used for hauling corn to slither into in order to keep himself warm each night. Often Jews were obligated to sleep on brick bunk beds, with straw mattresses, in structures with leaky roofs, and were transported to concentration camps in filthy cattle cars where many died before even arriving at the camps. In these conditions, Africans and Jews contracted many diseases from the filthy living spaces containing vermin, rats, mold and bacteria.

Living conditions varied depending on the particular camp or the status of the slave. The rest of the laborers loathed domestic slaves, who managed the slaves, because they lived in better quarters and received higher quality meals. These poor living conditions assassinated millions of Jews and Africans even without the influence of the “superior” races. As Frederick Douglass once illustrated, “Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither person nor property will be safe.” This quote very much pertains to these two events in history, because justice indeed was distant, famine was encouraged, and the leaders of the captivities were quite arrogant. American slavery and the Holocaust both required the sundering of people due to race, religion or ethnicity.

Woven into history, ineffable prejudice has appeared time and time again. Discrimination is a reappearing part of mankind, but we must redress prejudice in order to treat all fairly in our modern world. In his honor, Frederick Douglass educates us that challenges are most certainly challenging, but they allow us to improve ourselves; while facing no

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challenges hinders individuals from blossoming into the impudent humanitarians we were born to be.