Your Name

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Essay

Humans have undergone numerous experiences throughout their history. The worst of all has been ‘slavery', that is, when people are kept captivated by others. The most basic right of humans is ‘freedom', which must be protected at any cost. People have fought with heart and soul to win freedom; individually as well as collectively. Sometimes, an ‘individual' has a great impact on the ‘community' through hectic struggle, as demonstrated by the freedom fighters of different nations. Slavery becomes worse when it is associated with other discriminations, i.e., ‘race’, ‘gender’, etc. The nations who suffer from slavery lose their ‘identity’, and they often get dissolved in the ruling body’s ‘culture’. The former of the below-mentioned should be read by considering the difficulties in escaping of a poor girl from the captivation of cruel owners, and the latter must be read to understand how gender discrimination has had worst effects on the lives of certain groups of people. This essay explores the aforementioned themes of slavery vs. freedom, individual and community, gender discrimination, etc. taking into consideration: “Harriet Jacobs’ Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” and “Frederick Douglass’s Narrative of the Life”.

# **Harriet Jacobs’ “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”**

The story is an autobiography of “Harriet Jacobs”, which has been considered as a fiction by the critiques and researchers for a long time. Jacobs has made herself hidden by using another name, “Linda Brent”, for her as the narrator of the story. She becomes aware of her slavery for the first time at the age of six years when her mother dies and she is handed over to her first mistress. She lives with her and gets basic education from her until she reaches the age of twelve, and she is enslaved to another mistress who happens to be the niece of her first mistress. She starts living in the house of “Mr. Flint”. When Linda comes of age, Mr. Flint’s behavior becomes sexually harassing towards her. He teases her with his lusty stare and unethical talk. Linda opts for getting sexually engaged with a white man, Mr. Sands, who lives nearby. She is in pursuit of freedom. She does not want to let her become physically submissive to Mr. Flint at any cost. Linda gives birth to two children, "Benny" and "Ellen", and her complaints regarding slavery and its structure become intensified. She worries about their future and begins to think ways of escaping enslavement. She flees to a friend’s house leaving her children and thinks they would not be treated harshly by Mr. Flint in her absence. Her children are put into the jail along with her brother, “William”, to compel her appear before her owners, but she confines herself to hiding. Later, her children are transferred to her grandmother’s house. She does not think of fleeing to the North, as it seems to be impossible. She takes refuge in her grandmother’s house in a frightening place somewhere in the roof that is very small and uncomfortable where she cannot stand even. She lives there for years and it has very bad effects on her physique. Dr. Flint thinks she is in New York and searches for her multiple times but in vain. Linda finally finds a way to escape to the North. In New York, she finds a job at “Mrs. Hobbs” house as a nurse. Her children and brother also reach the North somehow. After a series of incidents, she gets her freedom at last. Her story is a narrative of her miseries. She describes skillfully how it feels like to be a property of others. She has also mentioned incidents of her observation of gender discrimination towards black slaves. “I admit that the black man is inferior. But what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live; it is the torturing whip that lashes manhood out of him; it is the fierce bloodhounds of the South, and the scarcely less cruel human bloodhounds of the north, who enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. They do the work (Levine et al.).” This is what she comments at one place.

# **Frederick Douglass’s “Narrative of the Life”**

This is a narrative of the life of an African American, Frederick Douglass, who spent his early life in slavery. He narrates incidents of his early life when he experienced extreme discrimination and torture. “It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.” He finally made out to set himself free at the age of twenty.

The main theme that has been the focus of his work is slavery and the brutalities associated with it. He also writes about the hypocritical attitudes and behaviors of the white people of his age. He asserts that the strengthening factor of enslaving practices is ‘ignorance’ and literacy, on the contrary, urges people to strive for freedom. He describes based on his personal experiences that an individual earns self-esteem when he/she is free from the burden of slavery. People who have once lived a life of captivation know very well the importance of independence and joys of being self-sufficient.

# **Conclusion**

The texts interpreted above depict harsh realities and brutalities of slavery. Their writings impart knowledge of what has been done to slaves in the history and compel the readers to eliminate all traces of discrimination from their hearts and minds. The narrative also highlights integrity, effort, and determination of the lead characters to make their destiny. Works Cited

Levine, Robert S., et al. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 2017. /z-wcorg/.