Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass: The Institution Of Slavery

Frederick Douglass describes the institution of slavery as an institution that dehumanizes people and hardens them through the hardships they go through, such as humiliation, pain, and brutality. He states that 'I was seldom whipped by my former master, and suffering everything little more than hunger and cold. I suffered much from hunger and much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing more than a coarse tow linen shirt reaching only on my knees" . This statement explains that the slaves are not born hard, but they are made carefully through the conditions which they are prepared to go through. For example, Mrs. Auld, who taught Douglass how to read and write, is hardened by slavery, and she no longer has sympathy for others, which makes her cruel and inhumane. Douglass recounts the conditions that slaves faced, such as the slave owners, who committed adultery with their female slaves, which threatened the unity of the slave family. The slaves were forced to work extra hard with no rest during the day and sleep on the floor, which was very cold and uncomfortable for them. Also, their slaves were raped, and they were forced to remain blind to the sins that were being committed in their households. According to Douglass, he said that food and clothing for the slaves were usually received on a monthly allowance, and it was a cornmeal and salt herring. Frederick Douglass received one bushel of corn meal and eight pounds of fish or pork while some plantation owners gave some slaves vegetables. The slaves' clothes consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, one jacket, one blanket but no bed, one pair of pants for winter which was made from coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings and a pair of shoes. Douglass thinks that the northerners believed the slaves were happy because they would sing spontaneous and wild songs that sounded both joyful and sad on their way to the Great House Farm.

Slaves who worked on farms were often whipped brutally, they would go for days without food, and they were rarely given enough clothing. Also, they would function without rest throughout the day and forced to sleep on the cold floor with no blankets. However, slaves who lived in the city were treated humanely, and it was a better and more accessible place for them to escape and find freedom. Slaves in the town would be taught how to read and write by the white children, and they were fed and clothed enough. Slaves who worked in the city had an easier time compared to those on the farm because they would meet with a wide variety of people who would help them to the road of freedom. Douglass believed this because he was supported by people who were not slaves owners.

However, Douglass learning how to read and write played a significant part in his life because it helped him to achieve his freedom, and it enlightened his mind to the kind of injustice and inhumanity that the slaves were going through. Besides, Douglass learning how to read and write enabled him to understand that the slaves were mistreated because of lack of education, and they were not allowed to learn because knowledge makes slaves unmanageable and discontented. Education allowed Douglass to find his freedom and later become the spokesman of the slaves. The ability to read helped him to open his eyes and see his wretched condition, which motivated him too long for independence for himself and other slaves. Reading ability gave Douglass a chance of leadership among his fellow slaves, and he as well began to teach the other slaves the power and benefit of reading and writing. Besides, he established a

Sabbath school, which attracted numerous slaves from the neighboring farms. Moreover, Douglas first acquired his writing and reading skills from Mrs. Sophia, Hugh's wife, who began by teaching him the alphabet. Also, Douglass managed to exchange items of food with brief lessons on how to read and write from poor and educated white children. “And eventually, he became the few slaves who learned how to read and write. With their kindly aid obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read and write ” .

According to Douglass, 'Mr. Covey's forte consisted of his power to deceive.' Mr. Covey is a cruel man because he brutally whips and tortures his slaves, whom he borrows from other slave owners. Also, Mr. Covey uses his religion to cover up for his ill behavior and treatment towards his slaves. He is also a poor farmer with a bad reputation of slave breaker because he would spend most of his time sneaking to his slaves, trying to catch them shirking on their work. Mr. Covey was known for spending most of his time sneaking around through the grass like a snake trying to find his slaves shirking o their work, and he was so good at it. Douglass says that none of his slaves ever knew where he would pop up next because he was all over all the time. Mr. Covey and Douglass interacted in different ways compared to other slaves, and this is because Douglass did not allow Mr. Covey to whip him as he was used to the other slaves. The interaction between Douglass and Mr. Covey was his turning point in his career as a slave. Douglass regained back his self-confidence, revived him the sense of his manhood, and inspired him to be determined to be free.

Douglass regards the role of religion to slavery as hypocritical, corrupt, and inhumane because he did not believe that one can both be a Christian and a slavery owner. The religious slave owners were way far worse than those who did not pretend to be Christians. Douglass considers the religious slaveholders to act in a more Christian way by abolishing slavery and treating every person in a fair and equal way. Douglass's view on religion was changed because he did not believe that Christians had the right to own slaves and at the same time, to be religious leaders. It made him challenge them and abolish slavery in their farms and neighborhood.

Douglass obtained his freedom on September 3, 1838, and during his escape, he found his calling as a leading voice in the abolitionist movement. Before his independence, he began as an abolitionist crusader who helped him to hide his identity from slave catchers. His supports helped him raise enough money for him to purchase his liberty and gain freedom in the eyes of the law. Douglass lived an entirely prosperous life as an abolitionist, activist, orator, and presidential advisor when he was a free man in America. The conditions as a freeman were favorable to Douglass because he managed to write his book Narrative of the life of Fredrick Douglass.