# Physical And Mental Abuse In Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl

Slavery has dependably been the most horrifying event in history. As society continues to develop, the thought of slavery is looking down upon and is considered unethical. Sadly, this was not the situation, thinking back to the 1800s where slavery was favored among the south of the United States. Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl permits Harriet Jacobs, through Linda Brent, to uncover her purposes behind making her childhood story open to the public about subjugation and sexual misuse. Harriet Jacobs uses these main points to prove that not only black men were maltreated but also black women were likewise oppressed through physical and mental abuse.

In her narrative, Harriet Jacobs expresses, “Slavery is terrible for men, but it is far more terrible for women.”(Jacobs’s pg. 119) Jacobs' work shows the malice of slavery as something more horrible in the case of a woman because of the fundamentals of gender identity. Slave women experienced maltreatment remarkable to their sex. Men were punished through torment or death, yet added to those slave women were mental and verbal abuse. Harriet Jacobs explains this situation through her experience with Dr. Flint when she got pregnant again. She said that he was intensely irritated that he physically abused her and he promised her that he would not do it again but he did not keep his promises. The treatment that Jacobs received was oppressively constant, inevitable and much of the time unforeseeable. She was always afraid at nighttime because of what her envious mistress could do to her on the following day or the arrangements that Dr.Flint would make for her on the next day. She did not feel secure with him so she maintained a strategic distance from every possible sexual contact that she could have with him. At that point, Dr.Flint wanted to construct a house for their sexual encounters. She promised that she would never step into that house. Desperately for freedom, she chooses to have a child with a white man, Mr. Sands, in order to escape from Dr.Flint.

Jacobs also illustrates the difference between the social administrations of what were the right jobs for women and the way in which slavery prevented a woman from doing these jobs. Slave women would only take care of the house, work on the field, feed, and raise the children of the slaveholders. “A small number of slaves were skilled workers: weavers, seamstresses, carpenters, blacksmiths, and mechanics. More slave men than women achieved skilled status partly because many jobs considered appropriate for women, like cooking, were not thought of as skilled.”(Faragher pg.320-321) Incidents in the life of a slave girl delineate the contradictory standard of white women in contrast to dark women. Harriet Jacobs gives an example of the female's slaves that would like to have high moral standards however; the situations that they experienced prevent them from having these virtues. The expectation that they had for women in this period was the quality of being religious, freedom from immorality, family life, and being obedient. However, the females' slaves could not fulfill these expectations set by society. It was another way in which slavery strove to destroy the value and moral principles of slaves.

The life of pregnant slave women was very cruel. Their life as pregnant women demonstrates the harsh life that slave women lived and shows another impediment that made slave life increasingly troublesome for black women opposed to black men. Pregnant black women experienced conflicting requests from slaveholders, who needed them to be diligent while they

had children because that was a benefit for the slave owners; for each child slave, the wealth of the slave owners was expanded. Thus, on the basis that pregnant dark women were deficiently sustained worked excessively hard or were excessively pregnant, death rates for slave children increased. As a result, the slaveholders would frequently blame slave women of covering their babies by moving over them when they slept.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl features the horrendous encounters suffered by Jacobs. In the introduction to the book, Jacobs portrays her life as a slave from her initial years, when she did not realize she was a slave, to the brutality and abuse she suffered when she was young because of Dr. Flint, lastly to her repulsiveness at the man who bought her in order to free her. Jacobs says that slavery influences inconceivable for a dark woman to live a temperate, modest life. Jacobs additionally exhibits how slavery compromises and eradicate both white and dark women.