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In Frederick Douglass' autobiography *My Bondage, My Freedom* he describes his experiences both as a slave and as a freeman. His ultimate reform vision is for the universal, unconditional emancipation of slavery. His early life experiences, his education, his confrontation with Mr. Covey, and finally his trip to England lead him to his primary reform vision of the total emancipation of slavery.

The experiences of Douglass' early life taught him the brutality and inhumanity that slavery inflicts upon everyone involved. Near the beginning of the novel, Douglass describes his experience having to leave his grandmother and meeting his siblings for the first time stating, "brothers and sisters we were by blood but slavery had made us strangers...robbed these terms of their true meaning" (Douglass 39). He also describes how he has been separated from his mother and how he never even met his father, leaving him alone in the world. Douglass states, "There is not, an enemy so destructive as slavery...left me without a single intelligible beginning in the world" (Douglass 47). This separation and ripping apart of families is an essential part of the slave system. Separating slaves was a tool used to break a slave down, leaving him vulnerable and complacent. This was Douglass' first encounter with the harsh realities of his life as a slave.

More harsh realities were in store for Douglass that led to his continued questioning of the slave system. While living on Col. Lloyd's plantation, Douglass experienced many situations that cause him to believe, "the slaveholder, as well as the slave, is the victim of the slave system" (Douglass 61). An instance that demonstrated this to Douglass was when a women slave, who

had been badly beaten and abused by the overseer, came to Douglass' master for help and was immediately refused. This sparked something in Douglass, he describes, "it is one of the damning characteristics of the slave system that it robs its victims of every earthly incentive to holy life" (Douglass 66). From this episode, Douglass believed that slavery turned slave masters into ugly, inhumane beings with no compassion or regard for human life. He believes that it is the slave system that causes humans to behave this way. His master had no choice he could never disobey the overseer, he was forced to stand his ground and show no compassion or humility. This experience contributed to Douglass' idea that everyone is damaged by the slave system, and that something must change because it is wrong on so many different levels.

While, the experiences in his early life teach him the brutalities of slavery, it is his experiences in Baltimore that start him on the path to fighting for the extermination of the system. In Baltimore, Douglass learns to read and write from his mistress Miss. Sophia Auld and when she stops teaching him he continues to learn from his white playmates. This experience teaches him the importance of knowledge, he states, "Knowledge had come; light had penetrated the moral dungeon where I dwelt" (Douglass 118). From Douglass' ability to read and write he begins to understand more of the nuances in slavery, specifically how slave-owners try to manipulate religion and knowledge to keep slaves complacent. Upon learning these things it sparks more hatred for the slave system and causes him to continue to question and look for a way out. Also while he continues to question slavery, after learning how to read, he begins to understand that opening slaves up to knowledge and teaching them how to read and write will give them tools that will show them that slavery is wrong and may help them escape slavery as well. Thus, this experience was crucial in Douglass' life in two ways. It caused him to hate

slavery even more and continue the fight for its emancipation and showed him that spreading knowledge is an essential tool that he should use to do this.

An incident that is an pivotal turning point in Douglass' life is his experience with Mr. Covey. After Douglass' traumatic experiences of continually being beaten over and over again on Mr. Covey's plantation, he was empowered to fight. In an exciting episode Douglass fights back when Mr. Covey is beating him and ultimately causes Mr. Covey to submit to him. This event meant a great deal to Douglass he describes, "it rekindled in my breast the smoldering embers of liberty; it brought up my Baltimore dreams...I was nothing before; I WAS A MAN NOW" (Douglass 180). This event was the last time that he was ever submissive to Covey, he always knew they were equals and he finally stood up to Covey to prove it. He was inspired from this moment, to continue to fight for his freedom and the freedom of all slaves. It led to his ability to believe that he could escape and enjoy a life of freedom and that all slaves had the right to do so.

Shortly after his experiences with Mr. Covey, Douglass escapes from slavery and continues to push for the extermination of slavery. He joins a group of abolitionists and travels around Great Britain lecturing to appeal to the people to lend moral aid for the abolition of slavery (Douglass 278). The way Douglass was treated in Britain was completely different from the United States. He was treated as an equal. Color was of no importance, he explains in a letter to Garrison, "I find no difficulty here in obtaining admission into any place of worship, instruction, or amusement, on equal terms with people as white as any I ever saw" (Douglass 273).

Douglass is pleased with the treatment he receives in Britain, for him it emulates how society should be. He goes on to describe, “they measure and esteem men according to their moral and intellectual worth, and not according to the color of their skin” (Douglass 274). For Douglass, this is how he wants the U.S. to be - for blacks and whites to be equal on all accounts. This trip to Great Britain showed him that this world of equality is possible and if the British, who were known for bringing slaves to the U.S, can operate on a system of equality than America should be able to. This experience contributed to his image of equality for all and for this to be accomplished he knew it needed to begin with the abolition of slavery. His episode in Britain reiterated the increasing need for the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and once returning to the U.S. this is what Douglass continued to preach and fight for.

Douglass’ reform vision is for the absolute abolition of slavery, although there are many other aspects that go along with that vision. For instance, many could argue that his vision of reform is empowering equality for all people of color. While it is true that this was one of Douglass’ many visions, this goal could not ever be attained without first abolishing slavery, which is why the abolition of slavery was Douglass’ primary reform. This can also be said of the argument that his reform goal is the ability for everyone to have an education. Although, this may be what Douglass wanted for all, it can not first be achieved without resources, and the way to gain all these resources is to first abolish slavery. Therefore, I argue that Douglass’ primary reform vision is for the universal, unconditional abolition of slavery and that he came to establish this vision through his life experiences both as a slave and as a freeman.