SA 101 D100

Introduction to Anthropology

Midterm Take Home Essay

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Goldstein describes how Gloria and her Afro-Brazilian friend, Darlene, found the situation in where Darlene was secretly a prostitute as a humorous situation. Darlene’s husband, Antonio, believed that she was a domestic worker like Gloria, but they both made sure that his suspicions were never found. Gloria would tell Antonio that Darlene is a domestic worker and Darlene would use stories and experiences that Gloria told as her own. They found it humorous that domestic work paid so little, that one of them had to resort to prostitution for a more desirable working arrangement. They joke about this topic and deem it acceptable to make a living, since they are unable to find better opportunities for them and others in their social class to find a better job. Goldstein is able to remove her personal connection and provide an anthropological analysis.

Goldstein is able to understand that though the two women find it humorous, that they are clearly dissatisfied with the poor working conditions women in their social class have to struggle through to make a livable wage. Rather than show her concern for Darlene’s working conditions and choice in life, Goldstein is able to focus on the impact of her decisions on her life and how it represents others in a similar situation. Darlene would joke about how she was able to work fewer hours and do less work for the same wage as Gloria (Goldstein, 2003, p. 99). Antonio deemed that she should be a domestic worker like Gloria, but Darlene found that it was not the type of job that she wanted and found that the wage was not acceptable (Goldstein, 2003, p. 100). Due to her limitations in social mobility and education, she resorted to soliciting her body for money. Both women agree that they must do what is necessary to support their children and found it ridiculous that they had to support a family with such a constrained wage. Goldstein saw this this behavior as “women’s oppositional culture”, in which women may be seeking social mobility through seeking white men, older men or through religious conversion (Goldstein, 2003, p. 100). Darlene and others are limited in social mobility by their race and lack of education. She found her working conditions more favorable than Gloria’s, since she worked independently, not having to work for anyone, and was able to work fewer hours and do considerably less work and labor for the same wage.

Goldstein found that Darlene’s situation foreshadowed the feelings of the younger generation, who would do anything to avoid being a domestic worker (Goldstein, 2003, p. 100). This idea is relatable to Gloria’s son, Pedro Paulo, who chose to go into criminal activity, rather than be a slave for someone else (Goldstein, 2003, p. 143). Goldstein describes that he felt that they had been “cheated out of their own futures” due to their race and social backgrounds (Goldstein, 2003, p. 143). This need to have the “good life”, leads to many youths choosing to partake in criminal activity, rather than be a domestic worker for a minimum wage (Goldstein, 2003, p. 100). Goldstein is able to use this specific example and link to it other social issues that she witnessed throughout her travel and link it to a broader social issues within the country. This is also an example of the racial issues and hardships that Afro-Brazilian’s face.

Goldstein observes that racial tensions and segregation is still rampant within Brazil. Those of African decent are seen at a lower social standing than those of white heritage. She is able to see how Gloria and her friends illustrate valuations of color and possibilities of social mobility occur daily in relationships and interactions (Goldstein, 2003, p. 106). She goes on to question how their lives may provide insight into the socioeconomic conditions, which withhold the support for black consciousness movement in Brazil (Goldstein, 2003, p. 106). The upper classes are visually separated by their living space, since the poor were pushed to the hillsides in Favelas, and ability to consume goods leisurely (Goldstein, 2003, p. 90). Afro-Brazilians faced slavery for decades and once slavery was demolished, domestic works still had a similar relationship to their employers as before. Gloria and many others in her position had to be nannies or be domestic workers in households at a young age, which restricted their ability to gain a proper education. The resentment that Darlene and Pedro Paulo had towards domestic work is a result of their poor working conditions and lack of independence and dignity. Furthermore, their inability for social mobility, due to their skin color being associated with slavery and unattractiveness, has led to “the gradual whitening of the African population through miscegenation”, slowly removing the aspect of pride in African racial origins (Goldstein, 2003, p. 106). With such racial tensions, social mobility for Afro-Brazilians, especially those in the lower class, are significantly limited.

Education and schooling is segregated, with high-class children not inter-mingled with other classes. Goldstein describes that classes for the lower class are over packed and do not have the necessary supplies for students (Goldstein, 2003, p. 94). She connects the notion that domestic workers are necessary for these privileged households, since their children are not allowed to learn how to do housework and is left for domestic workers (Goldstein, 2003, p. 95). Due to the severe lack of a proper education or the ability for social mobility, Gloria and her friends are limited to the career choices they are able to obtain to provide for their large families. This need for domestic workers in wealthy homes provides an opportunity for undereducated and under privileged people to earn a living, despite the fact they are barely capable of surviving. The lack of a proper education though leads to the inability for those in this social class to have a chance at social mobility through their own methods.

Goldstein is able to analyze the choice that Darlene became a prostitute over being a domestic worker like Gloria and how they found the decision humorous, due to their inability at social mobility, racial restrictions and lack of education. They are able to talk about their issues and laugh about the fact that they have very limited opportunities to provide for their families. She is able to discuss how younger generations, specifically woman, face many hardships and have to overcome illegal activities to earn a decent wage without losing their independence.

Resources:

Goldstein, D. (2003). *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality*

*in a Rio Shantytown.* University of California Press.