

**Title of Project:** “Resistance via Cultural Armor”

**Research Questions:**

- 1) In what ways did Black culture (food/clothes/language/music/hair) challenge white slave society? How did these aspects act as a form of resistance?
- 2) How did US slave society respond to Black assertions of culture?
- 3) How do these ignited responses from white society still affect Black Americans today?
- 4) What then is the significance of cultural appropriation of Black identity, given the roots in slavery?

**Statement of Purpose:** I think researching this topic will shed light on how Black Americans resisted against a racist society in everyday life, in small but measurable ways. At the same time I believe this analysis will show us ways said society responded toward such resistance.

**Background:** I have taken the ICS10 and HIST18B courses. I’m interested in this topic as a biracial Black person because I know that aspects of Black identity to this day are still considered inferior when accompanied by Black-ness, but superior when put upon white-ness. On a personal level I have often felt pressured to assimilate different aspects of myself, notably my hair, with the implication of “looking better” or “fitting in”. With these experiences in mind I wish to better understand how aspects of Black identity were used as a way to resist slavery and how that is still emulated today.

**Significance:** I feel like this topic is worth analyzing because it often goes unexplored. Everyday struggles and efforts of resistance are often downplayed as unplanned or insignificant when juxtaposed with slave revolts and rebellions. Being able to be culturally free, or literally free of bondage was and still is a struggle Black Americans face. In my analysis I hope to find out how these aspects of cultural armor were used as resistance, as well as better understanding the significance of systemic and induced “culturally neutral” processes that oppress/ed Black people, as well as then the significance of culture to Black identity today.

**Answer the following questions:** The instructor should let me select this topic because I believe I can do it justice with a combination of external research as well as personal experiences with the topic. I hope to learn how these various aspects of culture threatened slave society and how the responses to these assertions were systemic and still affect Black Americans today. This topic deepens our understanding of the Black American experience by showing us that even the assertion of culture was deemed as damnable, let alone the assertion of humanity. My analysis of this topic will build a better understanding of how Black Americans were and are constantly fighting against a society that damns their culture and denies them humanity. It will comprehensively tie in themes of originality, resistance, white rage, and perseverance within a society that is against you simply being.

**Description:** I will primarily do internet based research for this project. I hope to use slave narratives if I can find any on the importance of culture broadly. I also will primarily use historical/educational sites, such as PBS branch sites, or slavery-specific historical sites in my research. Lastly for comparison, I will look into cultural bans put into place then and now. If I indeed cannot find the importance of culture as a form of resistance in the antebellum South, I can widen my research to include Black Americans of today.