1/3/22 Winter Institute notes – Douglass, Declaration of Independence, Stanton, Jackson

Questions for students in advance of class: What is the point/purpose of this text? Context: what are some of the important things that were happening at the time of publication?

Possible discussion questions that came out of our discussion

What would Douglass and Stanton have to say about Jackson’s “The Lottery”?

Also, is not questioning citizenship an example of people blindly following tradition the same way that the villagers in The Lottery blindly follow tradition?

Do we actively or passively consent to our citizenship, and the social norms, laws, and constructs that shape society?

What is a community and what kind of community matters? What is a family and what obligations do you have to your family? To your parents? Does the question change if you ask, what does it mean to be a community member (vs. citizen, which implies a relationship with the state)?

What relationship does citizenship have with identity for us as individuals (related to, what do you give up if and when you consent to changing citizenship?)

What are the implications of dissent, from the state or from semi-compulsory social norms? When is dissent worth it? What makes it worth it?

To what extent is the Declaration of Independence a document of lofty, noble ideas about humanity?

How can we take and adapt ideals and visions (even if they are lacking e.g. excluding others), critique them, and then identify how we can evolve and create better visions and ideals that are more inclusive, equitable, etc.? How could we (each one of us and our students) would make it better and more noble?

What is the relative importance of the INTENTIONS of the framers of the Declaration vs. the EXECUTION vs. the CONTEMPORARY "meaning," whatever that is?

Why did Douglass write his narrative, and for whom was he writing?

In the Declaration: “all men” are created equal, but who are “all men?” Excludes people of color and all women and all white men without land. The text calls for freedom, but freedom of what and freedom from what?

Contextual notes about the Declaration of Independence: One of the reasons for declaring independence from Britain is because Britain was talking about banning the international slave trade. And because colonists wanted more soldiers to support their seizure of lands from Native peoples. Recommended book: Gerald Horn’s Counterrevolution of 1776. Also, the Haitian Declaration of Independence. Sioux Indian Treaties.