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CH 203

Response Week 5

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**Group 1**

Frederick Douglass and George Fitzhugh both write about the experiences of slaves in the south. Fitzhugh makes statements, in similar permutations of the same words, such as “The negro slaves of the South are the happiest, and, in some sense, the freest people in the world” (Fitzhugh 18). Meanwhile Frederick Douglass provides innumerable examples to the contrary. Douglass communicates the sense of confusion he felt when he learned that free people thought that the songs slaves sang actually meant that they were happy in some way, stating “The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears” (Douglass Ch. 2). It could be argued that the only man of the two imparting a sense of disconnect is Fitzhugh. He, compared to Frederick Douglass, had only experienced freedom, and had never actually lived in slavedom. Frederick Douglass, on the other hand, had lived as both a slave and a self-emancipated free man. For Fitzhugh to even notion toward the idea that he had sufficient perspective to make claims such as “The negro men and stout boys work, on the average, in good weather, not more than nine hours a day. The balance of their time is spent in perfect abandon” (Fitzhugh 18) is a sign of his lack of awareness.

**Group 2, Question C**

It might be the way in which Frederick Douglass recounted the small, less obvious, aspects of being a slave that helped the readers back then empathize with him and other slaves. He wrote about how he, at a very young age, was forced to “steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes” (Douglass Ch. 5). Later, he writes about when he and his fellow slaves were put up for evaluation after their master had unexpectedly passed. He wrote that “A single word from the white men was enough—against all our wishes, prayers, and entreaties—to sunder forever the dearest friends, dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings” (Douglass Ch. 8). This type of imagery not only provides a feeling of overwhelming empathetic sadness, but really makes the reader question the reality of the country they live in, one in which this sort of horror could occur.

**Group 3, Question B**

Over the three speeches by president Abraham Lincoln provided as readings, we can see a definite shift in not only forcefulness of his writing, but in the general goals outlined. In his first inaugural address, Lincoln provides a verbose reaching out to both sides of the center issue facing the country at the time, that of slavery. He takes a neutral stance, explicitly stating “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists” (Lincoln 3). As the civil war he so much fought to prevent roared into action, he promoted the union, even though he cared significantly less strongly about abolishing slavery than he did keeping the country together. During the war Lincoln presents his famous Gettysburg Address. This concise speech takes a new stance. He starts out saying that “… our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” (Lincoln). Here he obviously takes a stance on the issue of slavery, sharing his opinion that all men should be treated as equal. He takes this strong stance partially to validate the deaths of the union soldiers at Gettysburg. Lincoln’s second inaugural was very short compared to his first. It serves as a “come together, one and all” speech. He wanted to make a point to show that the south would be welcomed back with open arms. This is shown in one of his final statements, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds” (Lincoln)

**Group 4, Question B**

One amendment’s wording that jumped out to me was in Article 2 “Right of Suffrage”, section 7 “Poll tax: Levy and purpose”. It was repealed only in 1966, and until then read “The Legislature shall provide by law for the payment of an annual poll tax of not less than two, nor exceeding four, dollars from each male resident in the State between the ages of twenty-one and sixty years (uncivilized American Indians excepted) to be expended for the maintenance and betterment of the public roads” (Constitution of the State of Nevada). This was surprising to me, as we live in a state so adverse to paying any sort of tax for any reason unless absolutely required. Well, that and the kind of gross wording concerning “American Indians”. Obviously this was repealed so the wording was already weird and probably deprecated widely, but it still kind of shocked me to see that.

Works Cited

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