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## Evaluation Essay On The Narrative Of Life Of Frederick Douglass

In the Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, Douglass stated, "all of the white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege." The quote from the Narrative would hit home to many slaves, this is one of the many ways that slaves were dehumanized and treated more like cattle than human beings. Even though some slaves managed to escape from the south there is proof throughout the Life of Frederick Douglass that slavery never completely leaves the person. As William Lloyd Garrison, a famous abolitionist, said, "A black man can escape from the South, but he can never escape from slavery." In the Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, Douglass discusses; what exactly life as a slave was like in extreme detail, along with the dehumanization of not only the slave but the slaveholder, and lastly what exactly freedom is to Douglass. The three major categories of the narrative work together to tell readers each and every little detail in order to properly tell Frederick Douglass' story, and how hard it was each and every day.

Douglass was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, although his exact date of birth is unknown, he was born into slavery and separated from his mother when he was only an infant, his mother passed when he was only 10 years old. Douglass was taught to read and write by his white slave owners wife Sophia Auld, she taught him the alphabet and small words before her husband forbid her from teaching Douglass anymore. "The dangerous position of the use of irresponsible power was already in her (Sophia's) hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. Her cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became flooded with rage, changed to one of her harsh and horrid disregards and this gave an angelic face to that of a demon." Sophia was not used to being in charge, let alone owning someone, Douglass talks about her "irresponsible power" and how this corrupts her. Douglass refers to her face as angelic but also a demon, she was once so innocent and having complete control over another human-made her into a demon. Among many things that happened while Douglass was enslaved, he experienced the singing sorrows. "I have often sung to drown my sorrow, it was rare that it expressed happiness. Crying for joy and singing for joy were among the uncommon things when in the jaws of slavery." The slaves did not sing when they were happy they sang at the worst of times when things were getting so bad they had nothing else to turn to. They sang in order to get out the emotions that they were feeling without having to stop working if they were to stop and talk to each other the slaves would be punished or scolded.

The dehumanization of slaves was extremely brutal, slaves were forbidden from knowing anything personal about themselves. According to Douglas slaves were not the only ones being

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dehumanized, the slave owners were also dehumanizing themselves along the way. "I found that making a contented slave, it is necessary to make them a thoughtless one. Necessary to darken their moral and mental vision and as far as possible, take away the power of reason. Must be able to have no inconsistencies in slavery, must be made to feel that slavery is right." Douglass makes this point in order to prove slaves had to be manipulated into believing that their enslavement is for the right reasons, no person in a sane state of mind would ever believe this. This being the reason the slave owners had to destroy the minds of each and every slave that they owned. Freedom can be classified as many things, just simply being able to say what one wants, go wherever one wants without being told otherwise, or the right to believe in whatever religion one chooses. Frederick Douglass was willing to die in order to gain his freedom, he believed that freedom was the ultimate gift. His slave owner was also dehumanized throughout this process, "Slavery proved to be as injurious to her as it did to me. When I first went there, she was a warm and tender woman. But, slavery soon proved its great abilities to remove these heavenly qualities from her, her tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness."

Douglass talks about how slavery had changed his slave owner's wife from her sweet "tender-hearted" self who cared about the ones who were suffering and made her into a slave master with a hardened heart who became as vicious as a tiger. Touching on the quote by William Lloyd "A black man can escape from the South, but he can never escape from slavery." Slaves feared one thing most in their lives which was their slave owners, living in fear all the time not being able to say or act out of line and if they did they would face the consequences. When a slave escapes from the south successfully, they are not immediately relieved from the pain they previously went through. Forced to live in fear, fear of being found and brought back to where they escaped from and not having the chance to escape again to live the life these people deserve.

In conclusion, Frederick Douglass wrote a very powerful narrative, giving readers almost too much information throughout it. Douglass discussed his terms of freedom, his journey throughout slavery, his escape and small hints about his struggle to keep a positive mindset even after he was free. Douglass knew there was always a small chance that he could be found and taken back to his rightful "owner." In my opinion, the Douglass narrative supports the sentiment by William Lloyd, the reason I believe this is because of all of the quotes and information behind it. I would say Douglass had some sort of PTSD because he could never fully let go of what he went through, he was forced to live in fear that he would be found and brought back. Overall Frederick Douglass was using this as a way to get his story out and also as a way for him to move on with his life and be free from fear.

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