
The Land Of Free's History

Land of the Free?: A Look at Oppression in Americas past

Throughout the past, oppression has been a part of Human relations, from the treatment of siblings to the enslavement of an entire race of people, to everything in between. This is empirically proven through the non-fictional autobiographies of two men; Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass, both of which tell about the oppression of their time, due to several factors. These two people had quite an interesting perspective on the tragic institution of Oppression, Frederick Douglass being a former slave who escaped to freedom, and Benjamin Franklin being a young white man from a slightly abusive family who struggled, and finally made it out on his own. So, by comparing and contrasting these two great figures of American thought and reason, I will talk about oppression throughout the history of America. So, despite the differences in the family life of the two men, their obvious racial differences, and the lack of real-life education that both of these men both suffered through, they each suffered through oppression.

First off, I am going to talk about the family lives of the two men, starting with Frederick Douglass, then moving on to Benjamin Franklin. The family life of Frederick Douglass was rather, shattered, he didnt even know his own age, I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. (21) . This is a sign of oppression, in that they used the lack of knowledge to keep the slaves down, and make their history uncertain giving the farm where they worked the only sense of home theyd ever know. While Benjamin Franklin did know his age, his brother physically abused him, for the blows of his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me (86) . This brings about the topic of siblings, something which Douglass was fairly certain that he had, being a half-breed in the world of slaves and white men, although he was never truly certain, The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. (21) , and since his Master had children, it was quite possible that he did, in fact, have siblings. These are both forms of oppression, in that physical abuse would make you frightened to express your opinions, which is a form of oppression. Whereas, the with holding of information as to the nature of ones siblings, limits freedom by disallowing you to know fully who your parents were, and be forced to live in ignorance as to your true roots. So, now that we have looked at their family lives, and the oppression prevalent in them, I shall move on to their racial differences and how each contributed it its own sort of oppression.

The oppression factor, which I am going to talk about now, is one of race. Most people do not view being a white man, during the colonial times as oppressive, but I am fairly sure that

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Benjamin Franklin thought so, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. (91) , this is evidence to the fact that white men had to cut a certain kind of figure, look a certain way, and conform with society in order to be accepted. This is a form of oppression, as it limits one's ability to be their own person, which is one of the worst forms of oppression in the history of mankind. Next, let's look to Douglass, a mulatto slave whose father was most likely his master, this in itself brought on its own oppressions outside of the usual ones that accompany slavery. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so (23) , this supports the idea that they mulatto slaves were treated much worse than the full African American ones, showing that they are sold more often than not, as opposed to being able to live on the farm with those whom they grew up with at least for a few years. Now that I have spoken on the racial oppressions that reared their ugly heads during Franklin and Douglass time periods, I will move on to the lack of real-life education.

First, let me start off with Douglass, having been a slave he was supposed to be kept in ignorance, held back, not even taught to read or write, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A,B,C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point in my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further (49) , this only reinforces the fact that they were not supposed to learn how to read or write, which is oppression through ignorance. Next, let's look at how amazed he was when he went into a city, being trapped on a farm all his life the wonders of the city must have seemed as grand as the Taj Mahal, especially with all the people working together, white and black even though most blacks were still slaves, they were allowed to work along side the white man. So, having been kept in ignorance, he was disallowed the knowledge of possible escape routes, as well as being denied access to any sort of mind-expanding art or human interaction outside of the farm where he lived. Now, let's move on to Franklin, having a rather good schooling, he was kept in ignorance as to how to compose himself in the city, as well as how to find a good means of travel throughout the places where he needed to go. Remember when he went to Philadelphia, and was quite ignorant as to how the money system worked there, so not considering of knowing the difference of money, and the great cheapness nor the names of his bread, (91) , in fact, he hardly knew how to order a loaf of bread in the town, despite the language and government being the exact same. This shows that his parents or maybe his siblings kept Franklin in ignorance, in order to keep him home to work on the printing press or perhaps for some other unknown reason. So, now that I have spoken on the lack of real-world education, let's wrap it up.

First, I am going to go back over the oppression of their family lives, Franklin with his abusive brother, and Douglass with his lack of parental emotion, as well as a lack of emotion for those who might or might not be his brother and sisters. Both were subjects of oppression during their

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lives do to that, as well as the racial oppressions. Remember that Franklin, as a white man was forced to put forth a certain image, and hold a certain amount of respectability when it came to how he acted around others. Whereas Douglass was enslaved, and unfairly treated by his master due to his mulatto background, both of which are forms of oppression. Now, back to the real-world education problems, neither of them seemed to truly understand much when they first changed cities, and Douglass was truly amazed when he came off of the farm. These two things point to the fact that both of them were oppressed, by their betters keeping them in the dark in order to keep them under control. So, now that I have covered these two mens autobiographies, and even gone even more in depth through analytical statements of how they were both treated, I will end this essay.

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