

Diversity Event Paper 2: Slavery

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Self Reflection Paper

It is very clear that slavery is an issue that has had a deep impact on our country throughout history, and the consequences of such brutality can still be seen today. For this diversity event paper, I watched the slavery episode of Crash Course US History from our film assignment list. I chose this topic because it deals with diversity on a deep level, and it can teach us a lot about ourselves and how we view others. In this paper, I will give a summary of what I learned from the video, provide a connection to the concept of diversity in the context of this class, and I will end by reflecting on my opinion regarding this issue.

One of the things that I didn't know before watching the Crash Course video was that there were over 4 million slaves during the time that slavery was legal, making up one third of the population. Slavery lasted from 1619-1865, but the impact didn't end when slavery became illegal. It took a long time for the problems associated with slavery to resolve, and even now there is still a lasting impact from this time in our country's history. Racism will always be an issue, no matter how much time has passed. The basis of slavery can be defined by 3 words; intimidation, brutality and dehumanization (Green, 2013). Slave owners used intimidation and brutality to keep their slaves in line and force them to keep working. In addition, they were punished harshly, sometimes without reason. These things made slaves feel that they were less than human, which was the goal of the slave owners. Because of this, slaves relied heavily on family and faith for a sense of humanization and dignity. Some slaves who learned to read started to read the Bible, and eventually became preachers who spoke to other slaves to inspire movements. However, the slave owners saw these forms of humanization and made efforts to stop them. They broke up marriages and families by selling family members, and later forbade their slaves from reading to prevent them from preaching. Unfortunately, the violence, extreme racism, and brutality associated with slavery were perfectly legal. In fact, Louisiana law stated

that a slave “owes his master a respect without bounds, and an absolute obedience.” Another perspective on slavery was that black people were inherently inferior to whites, and that not keeping them as slaves would disrupt the “natural” order of things. The final perspective, the only one that had any positive connotation, was that slavery benefitted the industrialization of the north in the sense that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cotton they used to make textiles came from the south, and that cotton was harvested and processed because of slave labor. Without the cotton, the north would not have industrialized as quickly because textiles were one of the first industrially produced products (Green, 2013). In response to how they were being treated, slaves fought back in different ways. Some escaped to the north via the underground railroad, Harriet Tubman is a famous example of this. She returned over 20 times to help her friends and family to freedom. Some slaves started movements that led to full scale armed revolt, such as the Nat Turner killings in Virginia in 1831. This event and others like it resulted in punishments and slavery itself becoming harsher. Overall, the video was very informative and I learned some things I didn't previously know about slavery. Now that I have summarized my findings in the video, I'm going to connect these ideas to diversity and give my opinion on this issue.

Slavery is a diversity issue because slaves were black, and their owners were white. It is as simple as that. Maltreatment of someone on the basis of skin color is frankly ridiculous, and it is unfortunate that our country's reputation is marked by a time of such racism and brutality. As I mentioned previously, the consequences of slavery are still seen today. Acts of violence against people of color are too common, but unfortunately there will always be people who are racist and don't accept others for who they are. It is sickening to watch the news and see all the modern racism being played out in all kinds of ways. The prevalence of social media makes this issue worse, because people can be blatantly racist and cruel behind the safety of a screen. Overall,

slavery was a very unfortunate time in our history. It was violent and full of hate, and never should've happened. Watching that video taught me a lot about diversity and how we should and shouldn't treat others. This class has also given me great perspectives on these issues, which I will carry with me throughout my life.

References

Green, J. (2013, May 02). Slavery - Crash Course US History #13. Retrieved November 09, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajn9g5Gsv98>