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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI



FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

THE QUESTION OF EDUCATION IN *NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AN AMERICAN SLAVE*

U.B.U.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents,

To you, little brothers and sister,

To all my relatives and friends;

May you feel, through this work, my attachment and immortal remembrance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work was possible due to the support of a number of people to whom I owe much gratitude.

First and foremost, my heartfelt appreciation goes to Dr. Eric S. Njeng, who accepted to supervise this work. I am immensely grateful to his constant availability, his criticisms and suggestions. May he find in this work, my deep and sincere recognition.

Second, I am grateful to my country and to all those who helped me to shape my mind from primary school to university by means of education.

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May the merciful God bless them.

ABSTRACT

This work examines the complex idea of education and its impact on slave determination to fight against slavery as captured in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. It examines how slaves were given an informal education which taught them to lead a submissive life and the painful and sorrowful condition endured by slaves under the delusion of serving an honest and rewarding God. However, this was not always the case as some slaves waked up from the slumber and created an informal education which informed and permitted them to revolt against the oppressive institution. Thus, the work supports the thesis that true education is the way to freedom. It is this enlightening education that exposed the malicious arguments put forward by slave-holders to maintain slavery and later on led to the abolition of slavery.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Among the great events that characterized the history of the United States of America, slavery stands out as the most outstanding. When the American continent was discovered by Christopher Colombus during the 16th century, many European countries became interested by the new discovered land and decided to settle it for the search of wealth. The exploitation of this land necessitated much labor which was almost impossible without the transportation of blacks. They came and took thousands of Blacks; some of them died mid way and were thrown into the Atlantic Ocean. A rough estimate would be that the death in the middle passage ranged from about 9 to 16 percent of all captives. But some of them reached the American soil to be used as cheap labor in the plantations. They worked mercilessly without salary, enough food, rest, gratitude, etc. They suffered several forms of atrocities; whipping, rape, killing, to mention a few.

Mostly, the inhuman treatments occurred in the south plantations. Slaves worked day and night to satisfy the aspirations of their slavers. They did all kinds of work: working in plantation and working at home. Working in plantation included cultivating sugar cane, tobacco, wheat, cotton, corn, etc., and working at home included shoemaking and mending, blacksmithing, weaving, grain-grinding, without forgetting the embellishment of masters' houses. Besides, slaves were reduced to animals or objects of commerce. In fact, slaves constituted the source of wealth as far as purchase is concerned. White purchasers perambulated the cities of the southern America looking for slaves to buy and sell. Men, women and children were sold to build the Whiteman's empires. Horrid, is the way they were chained and sold at the market. Through this analysis, we will see how religion and stereotyped ideologies were propounded to justify the exploitation of man by man. Indeed, religion played a

very important role in perpetration of slavery. Through religion, slave-holders justified black oppression by the fact that Blacks were the descendants of Ham who was cursed by his father Noah. Then, the servitude was just since it was the establishment of God the almighty. Similarly, religion played a great role in controlling the minds and bodies of Negroes. This religion thought them that they must accept their enslavement wholly-heartedly and bear the sufferings meekly as Jesus Christ did. Verses like this were cited to justify the atrocities of slaveholders:

> Servants, you must obey your masters and always show respect to them. Do this, not only to those who are kind and thoughtful, but also to those who are cruel. God will bless you, even if others treat you unfairly for being loyal to him. You don't gain anything by being punished for some wrong you have done. But, God will bless if you have to suffer for doing something good. After all, God chose you to suffer as you follow in the footsteps of Christ; who sets an example by suffering for you. (Peter 2:18-21).

As far as slavery is concerned, it had become more than a system of labor. It was also extended to a system of social control which aimed at establishing in the minds of blacks and whites the idea that blacks were inferior. Even for many centuries, most Western Historians had described the African continent, from which the first Black Americans came toward America, as a "dark continent" full of savage tribes, lacking history and any sign of civilization. They also extended it to its people to admit that they are dark as their mother continent. Hence, they are inferior. Thomas Jefferson in his philosophy declares that:

> I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the Blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time or circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind.(37)

Through this statement, we can infer that the ill-treatments inflicted upon the slaves came from this denigration of considering a blackman as a being of the low scale. We, even, cannot leave behind the idea that this is the reason why they treated slaves as they treated oxen and other animals in the plantations. According to their view, Africa had remained for a long period a cultural wasteland until Europeans came and brought civilization for the first time on her cultural "barren" shores. According to Ulrich B. Phillips,

> Slavery was a School in which the Black learned to imitate the vastly superior ways of the white man. Without the experience of slavery, the Black would have remained an illiterate, naked, and Africa a back-ward continent. (*American Negro Slavery*, 2)

Given the establishment of such cruel institution in the United States, awareness and abolition actions were unavoidable. The barbaric and horrid treatment on the plantations, the denial of education, the non-access to public places and institutions, the denial of citizenship; these physical and mental oppressions affected the mind of the Blackman and made him think of rescuing himself. As we shall later see through this analysis, Frederick Douglass emerges as a leading figure in the advocacy and liberation of his Negro brethren.

In *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave*, Douglass states that in the South plantations, he suffered despicable oppression and

denigration, which later pushed him to stand up and say no to the human exploitation. In this perspective, some questions appear: To what extent did slave-holders deny slaves an education? What are the ideologies of White supremacy to sustain slavery? How did Frederick Douglass respond to the slave institution? These questions will be answered in the course of our analysis.

For a better understanding of our study, readers may intend to know the significance of the key term of the topic; "education". *The compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* defines education as: "The systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life; by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adult age".

The present work aims at showing that the denial of an empowering education to the Blackman and his determination to study are the impacts of the slave institution. This work by discussing the issue of education intends to examine the painful and sorrowful conditions undergone by African-Americans during slavery under delusion of serving an honest and rewarding God. However, this was not always the case as some slaves awoke from the slumber and taught themselves an informal education and revolted against their masters. Thus, this work sets out to prove that education is the way to freedom. It is this education that had exposed the hidden arguments put forward to maintain slavery, and later on led to the abolition of slavery.

The New Historicism approach constitutes the theoretical framework of this study. The main proponent of the New Historicism is Stephen Greenblatt. He is a renaissance scholar and a key figure in the shift from literary to cultural poetics and from textual to contextual interpretation. Other exponents of new historicism are Michel Foucault, Louis Montrose, Clifford Greetz, to mention a few.

It is a theory applied to literature that suggests that literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. The theory arose in the 1980s. Unlike previous historical criticism which asked what a particular text means in and of itself, new historicism evaluates how the work is influenced by the time in which it was produced. It also examines the social sphere in which the author moved, the psychological background of the author, the books and theories that may have influenced him, and other factors which influenced the work of art.

New historicism denies that any social world is stable and the artworks are separated from the power struggle constituting social realities. For Greenblatt, artworks are fields of forces, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses. Others like Louis Montrose see an artwork as a vessel tossed in a social sea of competing interests, antagonistic values, and contradictions.

For this reason, they view literary works as players in the competition among various groups to gain their ends, a competition that takes place on many levels. Any given text is an attempted intervention in the ongoing struggle to influence or even dominate the cultural field. The critic's own work intervenes in his or her own present, responding to and striving to alter contemporary configurations of power. New historicists do not pay attention to the masterpiece or masterpieces; they attempt to understand the lived social reality of the era being studied. They also pay attention to how particular texts are addressed to other texts in the wider culture. They try to identify the key images – and the values, beliefs, practices and social structures that these images point toward – of a particular cultural moment. Literature is conceived as a mirror of the period beliefs from a safe distance. Having allied itself to such activist approaches as Marxism and Feminism, critics of this school hold

that within a society there is a dominant group that determines what is acceptable and unacceptable for a larger body; it defines cultural tasks and values. However, where there is dominance, there is also defiance that is impossible for the power in place to prevent change indefinitely. This is what happened in the United States where slaves who were excluded in the white community decided to operate a serious change by subverting the slaveholding hegemony that constituted the norm.

As new historicism is an approach that studies literature in a contextual interpretation of its time, it will help us to understand Frederick Douglass' narrative. It will show us that *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American slave* was a response of the conditions of slaves(subalterns) during the slave period.

Many critics have been interested in the slave experience and particularly their lives. Many critics have brought many arguments. This depends upon many factors, among which are their race, the situation in which they are writing, and even their concern to the dreadful and humiliating conditions which deprived mankind of his dignity. Marcus Garvey in his *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* argues that when a man is a slave, he has no liberty of action, no freedom of will; and is bound and controlled by the will of others. He manifested his radical protest against slavery by his commitment to repatriate the slaves to their motherland. This was the objective of his Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) and the Back-to-Africa movement which constituted the "zero option".

Andrew Hacker in *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* focuses deeply on the conditions that kept Blacks and Whites dangerously asunder in the ambition to achieve the "American Dream". He affirms that the

largest minority is outside of the mainstream of America's productive economy. After analyzing deeply the issue of race in America, he concludes that racism shapes the thinking of all Americans.

Douglas T. Miller in *Frederick Douglass and the Fight for Freedom* reveals Douglass' perception of his own life as role model for Blacks. He perceives Douglass' determination to fight the hell of persecution as a savior for Blacks. He affirms that:

> I cannot allow myself to be insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of any part of the great family of man. I am not only an American slave, but a man and as such, am bound to use my powers for the welfare of the whole human brotherhood. (46)

In the same profile, James M. Gregory in *Frederick Douglass: the Orator* compliments Douglass' honorable deeds in sacrificing himself for the cause and rights of the oppressed people. He proclaims that the cause of the Negro was a cause that needed great man. He further asserts that great crisis create great men and great men create great crisis. But, in this case he was stressing that the great crisis of slavery created great men such as Frederick Douglass to stand up and show his manhood.

Bruce Miroff in *Icons of Democracy: American Leaders as Heroes, Aristocrats, Dissenters, and Democrats* compliments Abraham Lincoln who proclaimed slave emancipation. He proves that Lincoln's leadership had democratic depths that still have much to teach. He further quotes Lincoln convincing white people that they cannot prevent people from evolving. He affirms that:

> ... it is to deny what the history of the world tells us is true, to suppose that men of ambition and talents will not continue to spring up among us. And, when they do, they will as naturally seek the gratification of their ruling passion, as others have so done before them. (86)

Martin Luther King, Jr in *Where do we go From Here: Chaos or Community?* focuses on education. He affirms that education is of paramount in social action to change the silly sophistries of the opponents. To him, education stimulates slave children to learn together with white children and acquire higher levels of skills and techniques. He makes us understand that the integration of people in the world and the sense of dignity are won by education. Again, education to him constituted his pacific liberation.

Booker T. Washington in *Up from slavery* emphasizes on industrial education. He saw industrial education as a way of gaining place and consideration in the United States. But, he was much criticized by other influential Blacks such as W.E.B. Dubois as a complete surrender of the demand for civil and political equality.

Boyi Henri in his thesis "The Afro American experience as reflected in Alex Haley's Roots" shows the consequences of slavery on the lives of slaves after emancipation. He declares that:

> After emancipation, the black poor man had no social freedom, no economic freedom, no political freedom and no cultural freedom. In the modern conception of this term, there is no social freedom where there is no political freedom and there is no political freedom

> where there is no economic freedom. In other words, it was necessary for the Afro-American to be free economically in order to be free politically and then settle his cultural and social freedom... (7)

CIMPAYE Dieudonné in his thesis "*Negro Spirituals as an Instrument of Slave Emancipation*" expresses the role of spiritual songs in the liberation of Blacks in bondage. He demonstrates that this special music was used to speak the misfortunes they were living in. He says that as they were forbidden to use any other form of expression to claim their rights, they chose this clandestine form of expression to conscientize all people – Blacks and Whites. He concludes that the slaves opted for this form to say that they were tired of the ills of white race, and that if opportunity presented itself, they would be free.

The present work differs from the above mentioned in that it sets out to prove how the slavers oppressed slaves by indoctrinating them with a disempowering education. It further exposes the slave-holding ideologies and presents Frederick Douglass as a leading figure in the process of slave emancipation.

Including the general introduction, this study is divided into five parts. The general introduction is followed by three chapters, and lastly a general conclusion.

The first chapter titled "An Overview of How Blacks were Denied an Education" reveals the chastisements inflicted upon the slaves. It further shows how the slave institution denied slaves an education that could open their way upward.

The second chapter – "Slaveholding Ideologies and Manipulation" – reveals the moral contradiction that characterized the South American religion. With the

help of the bible, the White preachers used the verses to brainwash slaves so that they could lead a subservient life. It further argues that these ideologies aimed at convincing the Negroes and White community that the Black race is a backward race.

The third chapter – "Frederick Douglass' informal Education and his strong Abolitionism" – portrays how some slaves, especially Frederick Douglass, decided to teach themselves through an informal education thereby subverting the racist discourse of slaveholders.

The conclusion summarizes the major arguments and justifies the hypothesis. It brings out recommendations and suggestions for future researchers.

CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND TO SLAVERY

This chapter attempts to briefly analyse the long-established patterns of white power and nonwhite powerlessness during the period of slavery. It analyses among other things how the White supremacy used torture as an informal education to maintain slaves in complete subservience. In fact, a change of any kind was not only undesirable, it was a threat, for it would be a total blow to the system as it was then instituted.

As a matter of fact, after the discovery of the New World, many Europeans set out to occupy the new discovered land. They found fertile soils which created the emergence of an international economy, which in return could be impossible without the creation of a constant labor. These fields created a nearly insatiable demand for cheap labor in the Americas to grow cash export crops. First, it was necessary that they tried Indian-Americans they found there but labor became too tough to them because they were leading a life totally different to the one they were being trained to. They died in a great number due to the great deal of hard physical labor, the agricultural crude tools, and diseases. Second, it was then imperative that they left the New world, and come to Africa to take strong black Africans who could do the work as it ought to be done. The technological revolution helped them to provide the means to transport forcibly millions of African across the sea to meet that demand.

We must ask the type of questions that enslaved Africans and generations of their progeny asked in their darkest hours of despair. Why? Why me? What have I done to deserve that? After being purchased on the coast, black Africans tried to resist the transportation but the use of violence obliged some of them to

surrender, and other preferred to risk their lives. On the use of violence, Drawning Blauner says that:

> A system of human domination has several fundamental components. First of all, it monopolizes the means of violence because violence is central to controlling and exploiting masses. Thus, through the monopolization of the means of violence, dominant groups control subordinates by making it clear that the iron of oppression will be utilized to crush resistance if necessary. (Qtd in *Race in America: The Struggle for Equality*, 20)

It is of paramount importance to note that these Africans were taken, embarked in the new world, and separated from their families forever. They were transported to the South America, British Caribbean (Jamaica, Barbados, St Vincent, St Lucia, Tobago and Trinidad, etc.), French Caribbean (St Domingo, Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, etc.), Spanish America (Cuba and Puerto-Rico), Danish Caribbean (Brazil, Atlantic Islands, etc.), and elsewhere. Nearly ten or twelve millions persons were kidnapped out of Africa and the total loss of lives involved in the slave trade is incalculable. Some died along the way, some fighting to defend their freedom in Africa, some killed trying to escape, some by suicide in captivity and many others died at sea during the hazards and horrors of the voyage to America.

All these people were going to be used as complex social machinery systematically designated to give the maximum of production and wealth. The means of violence was always to be used to control the mind, heart and body of the slave so that he could execute what he was told without objection. A slave

was routinely whipped and lashed for any real or imagined infraction. Douglass notes that "Behave well or behave ill, it is the duty of a master occasionally to whip a slave, to remind him of his master's authority" (40).

In the same light, they never knew when and why they were punished. Sometimes, they were punished before they committed any fault. On this point, Douglass in his narrative asserts that:

> The peculiar feature of his government was that of whipping slaves in advance of deserving it. He always manages to have one or more of his slaves to whip every Monday. He did this to alarm their fears, and strike terror. (41)

From the above analysis, we see clearly that there was no measure for punishment, and most frequently slaves were unjustly punished depending on the will of their masters. These fiendish and inhuman treatments were committed on the American plantations by white enslavers as witnessed by Frederick Douglass who used to be a bondman to several slave-holders and at different places. In regard with being a slave, he was also a plantation slave as well as a city slave. He offered the world a full picture of slavery itself in detailed manner about the villainies, undergone by powerless slaves. He stresses that:

> I am confident that it is essentially true in all its statements that nothing has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated, nothing drawn from the imagination; that it comes short of the reality, rather than overstates a simple fact in regard to slavery as it is. (4).

Throughout this chapter, we will explore the hardship perpetrated against Black Africans to build White masters' empires. The slave-holders sought wealth at all cost no matter what ways it comes from; be it robbing, selling Negroes, etc.

In an extract from Rochester July 5, 1821, an Ex-Senator Benton on the internal slave trade tells us that the price of men was never higher than that time. He exposes the deplorable and horrid situations in which slaves were held going to the market. He affirms that the internal slave trade was sustained by American politics and religion. He opines that:

> Behold the practical operation of this internal slave trade – the American slave trade – the American slave trade sustained by American politics and American religion! Here you will see men and women reared like swine for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. The flesh mongers perambulate the country, and crowded the high ways of the nation with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human – flesh – robbers, armed with pistol, whip, and bowic-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots to human purchasers. Follow this drove to New Orleans. Attend auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. The flesh-

> mongers gather up the victims by dozens, drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. (Qtd in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 437).

The act of selling slaves primarily constituted an economic basis because slaves were taken from Africa and brought to America. In Africa, the ships took slaves to America, and from America to Europe, they transported sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, wheat, etc. From Europe, the ships brought manufactured merchandises to Africa. This trade is called a triangular trade. A case in point is delivered by Sidney Mintz who recently showed how one slave-based industry contributed to the development of capitalist economies all over the world. He says that:

> One of the famous triangular trades that were the initial foundations of the economy involves New England merchants, mariners, slaves, molasses, and rum.
> Ships from New England, many of them based in Newport, Rhode Island, took slaves from Africa to the West Indies. There, they acquired cargoes of molasses – a-by-product of sugar refining – which, when brought to New England, were the basis for the manufacture of rum, some of which was exported to Africa and used as part of a new cargo. (*Coming to America: History of Migration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 56).

This statement serves as a convincing argument to someone who doubts that the slave system was not an integral part of Western European imperialism. The slave stimulated investment, abetted the growth of European merchant marines, and was crucial in the development of the mother countries particularly

England, France, Spain, Portuguese and the North-Eastern United States, to mention a few.

The second inhuman act of selling slaves was the prevention of social interaction between slaves. White masters dreaded that once these groups of Blacks continued to live together, there would be a kind of mutual exchange that could lead to mass insurrection or rebellion to refuse the white supremacy or domination. Hence, it was safe for the white master to prevent every kind of intimation between slaves. Every slave who was thought to do anything that was against the slave-holder's will was sold to slave purchasers to teach other remaining slaves to follow the line traced by the slave-holder.

In this regard, Douglass shows how a particular slave of Colonel Lloyd was sold for simply telling the truth that their master treated them harshly. That slave did not know his master and replied to him unknowingly. He was immediately chained and handcuffed and forever separated from his family and friends. In the Southern states, not only were recalcitrant adult slaves sold, but also it was a common situation to separate children from their mothers to prevent any affection between father, mother and their siblings. Douglass in *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* affirms that:

> My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it and hired on some farm a considerable distance off... For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder

> the development of the child's affection towards its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. (9)

Any man who has ever had a mother or any mother who has ever had a child could easily understand the extreme cruelty endured by slave families in South America. Similarly, it was not only the loss of mother and child, but also most slaves knew nothing about their fathers because most of the time some slave-holders could buy or hire a man to use him as a stallion to mate his slave females. As such, the child who was born in these conditions could never know his father. On this issue, Franklin Frazier in his book *The Negro in America* states that:

> At the same time, the character of the sexual contacts and family life of slaves was determined to some extend by the master's attitudes towards his slaves. Some masters with no regard for the preference of their slaves, mated them as they did their stock. There were instances where Negroes were used as stallions. (307)

For this statement, one cannot find proper terms to describe that inhumanity. It was a savage trauma towards the women who was physically raped by men they did not know. But, she could not do otherwise as it was an obligation from the "infallible White master".

In the same light, the colored man was brought to commit an undesired sexual intercourse, but on the other hand, it was his opportunity to test his sexual organs because Blackmen in the South were somehow castrated. Furthermore, a slave girl could also be raped by her own master if she was a good-looking girl.

Good-looking Black girls were sometimes envied by their masters. For this reason, they were taught to remain alone or at home and not to move with Blackmen. When it happened that one of these ladies was caught with a Blackman, she was severely beaten for disobeying her master's order. Douglass in his narrative states a concrete case of his aunt, Hester, who was cruelly beaten for being in company with a young Blackman in the name of Ned Roberts. He opines that:

> he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked. ... he then said to her, "Now, you'd... db... h, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!"... he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood came dripping to the floor.(11)

Through this statement, we see that the White master found all stratagems to appropriate everything and through torture, he gave the slaves instructions tending to teach them to behave according to his will. Douglass as a mulatto was born in the similar circumstances. When these mulatto children were born, the White masters could hire or sell them whenever they wished. They did not care whether they were their children or not. Douglass states a concrete example of a mulatto sold by his father Colonel Lloyd under the inspiration of his son Murray Lloyd. He describes him in these terms:

> he was about as White as anybody on the plantation; and in manliness of form, and comeliness of feature, he bore a very striking resemblance to Mr. Murray Lloyd. It was whispered, and pretty generally admitted as a fact, that William Wilks was a son of Colonel Lloyd by

> a highly favored slave-woman who was still on the plantation. He was sold to slave traders. (Qtd in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 195)

Those children of Whites did the same outrageous and shocking work as other Blacks, and were whipped in the same conditions as other enslaved niggers. The enslavers had no pity about their own sons and daughters. Douglass as many other mulatto slaves suffered the same despicable forms of torture and dehumanization. When the occasion happened that the sons and daughters of a slave-holder divided their inheritance, the slaves among other things like horses, dogs, cows, utensils were ranked to be given to each of the children. Douglass as a victim of that scandalous human degradation opines that:

> We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. (27)

From the above testimony, Douglass makes clear that slavery was a system of color, race and social degradation with the objective of brain-washing the mind of the slaves and convincing them that they were nothing in the eyes of their masters. The White master did everything to persuade the slave that his life depended on him. It is a demonstration that slaves were not in possession of their lives, but that they were the property of others. One's property can be sold, given or destroyed depending on one's will.

Similarly, a slave-holder in the plantations could give a slave to his friend, he could hire him and if a nigger is judged unpleasant to him, he could kill him by

knocking out his head, shooting him with a gun or killing him by a cowskin or lash. That is the evidence of reckless disregard of human life. While examining the devilish outrage and arbitrariness of slavery, one cannot leave behind the merciless whitemasters who could not feel the slightest thankfulness for the slaves who had enriched their plantations and embellished their houses. The slaves' strength, sweats and tears had enlarged their properties with immense wealth, but the slaves continued to eat insufficient and coarse food.

Douglas T. Miller in his work entitled *Frederick Douglass and the Fight for Freedom* describes the life at the Grand house at Colonel Lloyd as follows:

> At Wye house "great house" elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen feasted at tables laden with such delicious as fresh crabs, oysters, terrapins, wild ducks, geese, pheasants, venison, choice beef, veal, lamb, and from the plantation smokehouse, famed hickory – cured hams and bacon. Fine wines and brandies from France and Mandeira were offered with teas from China and coffee from Java. (7)

The above list includes few among other things which had been the result of slaveholding to enhance the well-being of white supremacy. On the other hand, the slave continued to starve with hunger. When the slave tried to steal or show an extreme want of food, the slave-holder to diminish his appetite gave him excessive food so that he could eat much of it and become ill. Consequently, the slave stopped asking for more food and accepts the already accustomed insufficient and coarse food. Douglass in his narrative proclaims that:

> For instance, a slave loves molasses, he steals some. His master, in many cases, goes off to town, and buys a large quantity; he returns, takes his whip, and commands the slave to eat the molasses, until the poor fellow is made sick at the very mention of it. The same mode is sometimes adopted to make the slave refrain from asking for more food than their regular allowance. (40)

The above statement constitutes a cruel education which aims at forbidding the slave every attempt of his own to lift up his life, but to accept the status quo as it was established by his master. It is a mode adopted to prevent the slave from wanting a change of any kind, but to accept the line traced by the slave-holder.

While examining the inhumanity of this education, one cannot leave behind the period between Christmas and New Year's Day. During this period, the slaves were not required to perform any labor, but these holidays were the most effective means in the hands of the slave-holder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection. The slave-holder wanted to have the slaves those days just in such a manner as to make them as glad of their ending as of their beginning. During this period, the slave-holders plunged the slaves into the lowest depths of dissipation. They gave them a lot of drinks to make them feel that their masters loved them. If they did not drink much, their masters made bets on their slaves, as to who can drink the most whisky without getting drunk; and in this way they succeeded in getting many slaves to drink to excess. In these circumstances, the slaves fell in the confusion to choose between freedom and slavery. In his narrative, Douglass proclaims that: "... many of us were led to think that there was little to choose between liberty and slavery" (40).

This strategy was an instructive way to teach the slaves to forget about freedom and serve their masters quietly thinking about the good things their masters offered them at the end of the year. They forgot the pain inflicted upon them.

In addition, instead of encouraging or rewarding the slaves for the admirable deeds, the enslavers continued to seek the methods by which he could give an education through torture that could reduce them to mere chattel of no value. They dared to whip mercilessly the slave who gave them the best efforts of their best years to increase their riches. They did not feel pity for old niggers who had spoiled their efforts in their behalf. In his narrative, Douglass showed Colonel Lloyd uncovering and whipping an old slave of more than fifty years of age:

> I have seen Lloyd make old Barney, a man between fifty and sixty years of age, uncover his bald head, kneel down upon the cold, damp ground, and receive upon his naked and toil-worn shoulders more than thirty lashes at the time. (15)

In this perspective, slavery stood as a real destroyer of moral values. It had no respect for adults before their children. Adults and children were considered on the same level. White masters could undress a mother before her children and could whip a father before his children. This stands as the most horrid degradation of the parental relation. Slave-holders showed adult slaves that they had no value before their children. In doing this, they thought that slaves did not see what was going on, but in his work *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass tells us that colored people were aware of what happened to them even though they were considered as mere chattel or brute. He asserts: "I was

more than that, ... I could talk and sing; I could laugh and weep; I could reason and remember; I could love and hate" (222).

But not all the negroes did conceive that they were not inferior. Some were taught to accept this inferiority because they had no choice over their lives and had nothing in possession that could increase their pride. Then, some of them believed that they were weak, ugly, inferior, mindless to mention a few. In a word, they were brought to hate themselves. On this point of self-hatred, Richard Wright in *The Mark of Oppression* states that: "Hated by Whites, and being an organic part of the culture that hated him, the Blackman grew in time to hate in himself what the other hated in him" (4).

The Blackman developed an unconscious self-hatred over time. He had been brain-washed to the extent that he could not see properly what was right or wrong. He could not take decisions because the White master reasoned in his behalf. He indicated the direction to follow by hook or by crook. He made him understand what was not understandable by the whip or killing depending on his mood. In the work *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass states that to kill a slave, or any colored person, in Talbot County, Maryland is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or the community (18). He gives more than two cases where Blacks were killed like mosquitoes. Mr. Gore an overseer killed a nigger Demby for disobeying his orders. In similar circumstances a cousin of Douglass' was murdered by a wife of a certain Mr. Giles Hicks and neither of the murders was treated by the American justice. The American legislature and justice were instruments of the American government. They were there to protect the White oppressor. Douglass in his narrative contends that:

> when I heard of numerous murders committed by slave-holders on the eastern shore of Maryland, I never knew a solitary instance in which a slave-holder was either hung or imprisoned for having murdered a slave. (19)

The arbitrariness of the American justice pushed further savage barbarism to be committed because the slave-holders saw that there was no obstacle to doing whatever they wanted no matter how bitter it was to the weak and defenseless Negro. As a matter of fact, if there were laws voted in favor of the enslaved, the supreme court of the United States declared them unconstitutional and void. On the other hand, laws in favor of White oppressors were voted unanimously.. Here, Frederick Douglass in his work *Life and Times* states a case where laws passed in the American Supreme Court because they concerned the slave-holders. These laws were against fugitive slaves. The clause of the constitution declared that:

> no person held to labor or service in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such labor or service, but shall be delivered upon claim of the part to whom such labor or service may be due. (975)

From this statement, we see clearly that Negroes had no single outlet where their voice could pass to be heard. All the doors were closed in such a way that they could not raise their heads to speak a single word. The above clause neither described nor applied to slave; it applied to persons owing service and labor.

If, however, a law in favor of blacks passed, it would make no difference in treatment of colored people; it remained a dead letter. The White who filled the House of Representatives or Supreme Court could not let it be implemented. Douglass in the same work *Life and Times* gives the fourteenth Amendment which had remained dead letter because it was in favor of every American citizen including the Black. The fourteenth amendment says:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abrade the privileges or immunities of citizens of America; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; or deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (970)

Furthermore, once the House of the Representatives voted a given law, the Supreme Court of the nation tried to do its best to reverse the action of the government or to nullify it or defeat the manifest purpose of the constitution placing itself on the side of prejudice, proscription, and persecution.

In addition, if the Supreme Court failed to stop the law, it did its best to prevent any improvement of the Black conditions. The White masters corrupted the Judge so that he can consign slaves to perpetual oppression as the Negro was denied the right to be a plaintiff or a defendant in the courts of Justice. Douglass in *My Bondage and My Freedom* affirms that an American Judge gets ten dollars for every victim he consigns to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so… His own testimony is nothing he can bring no witnesses for himself (439).

In other cases, the courts inflicted corporal punishment to slaves in order to forbid them from bringing claims into justice. In *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery*, Thomas Cobb opines that:

> In other states, to prevent slaves from harassing their masters with unfounded suits, the courts were allowed, in their discretion to cause corporal punishment to be inflicted upon claimant, if the jury should return a verdict to his claim of freedom. (247)

Apart from the already mentioned Negro obstacles found in the fugitive slave laws, the White enslavers established laws known as slave codes. These laws were segregation laws known as Jim Crow laws to teach the Black to be in his proper inferior position. They prevented the Blackman to be in the same places with the Whiteman. They segregated Negroes in railways, streetcars, waiting-rooms, boarding houses, restaurants, theaters, public parks, libraries, hospitals, schools, cemeteries, to mention a few.

In the same vein, the White oppressors established a movement known as Ku Klux Klan to intimidate colored people to flee from the South to the North. It also attacked and killed many influential Blacks. All those things were done to maintain the Black slave in the jaws of slavery and to make whites superior to Blacks. They went further convincing the White youth that they were superior and that America was created for White children and not for Blacks or Indians or any other inferior race. For that reason, they prevented slaves education, political offices, better health care, etc.

All these actions were meant to degrade the Black to the lowest position and to deny him the right to get American citizenship and afterwards enjoy its fruits as

it was professed in the American dream. In *The Lincoln-Douglass Debates* by Harold Holzer Douglas, a democrat candidate in the State of Illinois during the presidential campaign in 1858, refused that the Negro could be equal to White or get the American citizenship. He affirms that:

> I'm opposed to Negro citizenship in any form. I believe it was made by Whitemen for the benefit of Whitemen and their posterity forever; I'm in favor to confining the citizenship to Whitemen of European birth and European descent, instead of conferring it upon Negroes and Indians, and other inferior races. I don't question Mr. Lincoln's conscientious belief that the Negro was made his equal and hence is his brother. But, for my own part, I do not regard the Negro as my equal, and I positively deny that he is my brother, or any kin to me whatever. He said that Negro was endowed with equality by the almighty, and hence that no human power alone can deprive him of these rights which the almighty has guaranteed to him. I do not believe that the almighty ever intended the Negro to be equal of the Whiteman. For six thousands years the Negro has been a race upon the earth, and during these six thousand years – in all latitudes, and climates wherever the Negro has been – he has been inferior to whatever race adjoined him. The fact is he belongs to an inferior race and he must occupy an inferior position. (55)

The long system of oppression and degradation of the Blackman tended to emphasize the element of his character which made him a valuable brute. He

became submissive to the exploitive system. His courtesy became humility, his moral strength degenerated into submission. He was made to endure petty insults with a smile, shut his eyes to wrong and must not complain. His only refuge was to giving his soul to God and other supernatural forces to come to his aid.

Practically, slavery was to colored people the dark triumph of evil over him. All the hateful powers of the under-world were striving against him, and a spirit of revolt and revenge filled his heart and what he could do was to call upon those forces to come to his aid and rescue him. W.E.B. Dubois in *The Souls of Black Folk* states that:

> He called up all the sources of the heathenism to aid, – exorcism and witch-craft, the mysterious obi worship with its barbarous rites, spells, and blood-sacrifice even, now and then, of human victims. Weird midnight orgies and mystic conjurations were invoked, the witch-woman and the voodoo-priest became the center of Negro group life, and that vein of vague superstition which characterizes the un-lettering Negro even today was deepened and strengthened. (218)

Not only did the Black invoke supernatural forces to manifest his anger and unhappiness, but his sadness was brought out by singing sad songs which represented the sorrow of his heart and he was relieved by them. Every tone was a testimony against slavery and the grandeur of his suffering.

Douglass in his narrative says that: "I never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathy for my brethren in bonds" (14).

Slavery was a system filled with innumerable sorrows and tribulations and we can sympathize with William Lloyd Garrison who states that: "nothing has been left undone to cripple their intellect, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of relationship to mankind" (3).

In addition to the already mentioned systems of oppression, the White master denied the Blackman the opportunity to go to school so that his intellectual faculties might remain in total darkness. In fact, the Whiteman was aware of the importance of the knowledge in one's life. He knew that once the Negro learned to read and write, those skills could lead to the fashioning of world views which were inconsistent with slavery. He could see the exploitation of a man by another man. He was also aware that this knowledge in the long run could lead to revolt and refusal of the free labor. In *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, the illustrative case is that of Mr. Auld forbidding his wife to teach Douglass. He articulates that:

> learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. If you teach the nigger how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it would do him no good, but a great deal of harm. (22)

In this perspective, Mr. Auld brings out the whole matter of slavery. It is a system characterized by greed.

The slave-holders were afraid that once blackmen and Whitemen started learning together, they would start living together, working together, building a society where race did not limit destiny.

However, the affectionate treatment of Douglass by his Mistress Auld shows us that among the enslavers, there were those who were innocently victims of the slave system, but by nature were kind or who enjoyed the fruits of slavery without knowing its true source. The first treatment of Douglass proves the goodness or the wish of man to help another to progress in his life. But, there exists other forces which can change the natural goodness of one into a devilish being once trained. At this point, Douglass in his work *Life and Times* affirms that:

> nature never intended that men and women should be either slave or slave-holders, and nothing but rigid training, long persisted in, can perfect the character of the one or the other. (529)

Effectively, by nature Mrs. Auld was a good and kind noble woman. She loved godlike creatures who suffered or who were in need of material things. Frederick Douglass in the narrative opines that: "there was no sorrow or suffering for which she has no tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach" (24). This is also reflected in the White children who used to play with Douglass. They hated slavery and reassured him that he will not be a slave for life, but that he will be released. This shows, then that by nature human beings are alike, but that conditions and not nature play an important role in determining a man. People who want to subjugate others must create hatred between them, and find justification so that their objective can be reached. The white oppressors had made human beings enemies of each other so that their interests could be carried out. Nature had made Douglass and Mrs. Auld friends, and slavery made them enemies. Frederick Douglass does assume that he understands Mrs. Auld and does not blame her very much because she is a victim of the slave

system. He states: "We were both victims to the same overshadowing evil, she as mistress, I as a slave, I will not censure her harshly" (*Life and Times*, 535) In this state of things, Mrs. Auld and Douglass had opposite interests since what one loved was what the other hated. From the time Mrs. Auld was told that:

> a nigger should not know nothing except the will of his master and learn to obey it. ... If you teach him to read, he will want to know more how to write, and this accomplished, he will be running away with himself. (Qtd in *Life and Times*, 527)

She received the advice with an open mind. She undertook to prevent a nigger to evolve mentally by checking him in everything he did. Nothing seemed to make her angry than to see Douglass with a newspaper. She resolved to follow him in every move to accomplish the objective of her husband. She wanted to block the bright future of the Blackman as it was foreseen through education.

The fear of this possible appeal pushed the slave-owner to weaken the physical and mental life of the Blackman to secure the slave institution. Seeing how his mistress changed, Douglass suddenly understood that it was the Whiteman's power to dominate Blackmen. He realized that knowledge was the key that the slave-holder manipulated to maintain them in captivity. He found that education was a necessary thing for it was the pathway to weakening and overthrowing progressively the slave system. After hearing Mr. Auld's address to his wife, his ears opened and the words he uttered penetrated the depth of his heart. In *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, he opines that:

> these words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments with that slumbering, and called into

> existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. ... The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truth he was uttering. (22)

From the above words, Douglass discovered the true meaning of slavery. He discovered that it was not nature that had set up the slave system, but that it was the selfish drive of the Whiteman to enrich themselves.

We have seen so far that the Black experience in the Americas was characteristically filled with the painful sorrow, merciless work and other unutterable ill-treatments. These conditions were followed with an informal education in the form of torture to brainwash the minds of the slaves and make them accept the slave system as their life. The introduction of internal slave trade allowed the enslavers to detach children from their families and to prevent any mutual intimation between the Blackmen that could shake the system so established.

Later on, there were unjust laws established to separate Whitemen and Blackmen. Those laws were the introduction of Jim Crow laws with the objective of avoiding the slightest contact between those two races. They elevated the White people while they belittled the black people. In the same light, they banned them from pursuing a formal education which could help them to discover the lies that were embodied in the American religion and institutions.

CHAPTER TWO
SLAVEHOLDING IDEOLOGIES AND MANIPULATION

This chapter deals with the ideologies of White slavers which tended to persuade slaves that their oppression was right. In fact, religion and education during the period of Black enslavement played a crucial role in the perpetration of slavery.

As a matter of fact, in the plantations, the colored slave lived an experience far different from any other race on earth. His daily life was laboring with a whip on his back and nothing else. A Blackman was born lived his allocated number of years and died without being in control of anything during his whole life. The socio-political and economic system of the South planned it that way. His life became a round ritual: birth, existence and death.

The Whiteman to eternalize his power, not only physically oppressed the Blackmen, but also sought the means to make him understand the origin of that oppression. He wanted him to understand that he was not harming him, but that he was fulfilling God's commandment. However, they used these tactics to maintain Blackmen in complete mental oblivion so as to avoid their frustration, revolt or insurrection.

Furthermore, to fully manipulate the Negro, slave masters also found justifying accusations to show humanity that the Negro enslavement was just. Robert Buis in *Religious Belief and White Prejudice* affirms that:

> ... whenever interests are vigorously pursued, an ideology tends to be developed also to give meaning, reinforcement and justification to these interests. And

> this ideology is as 'real' as the real interests themselves, for ideology is an indispensable part of the life-process which is expressed in action. (27)

Through that ideology, the Whiteman invented his accusation on a biological or a cultural difference, from which he generalized to cover the whole of the defendant's personality, his life and the group to which he belonged. The individual trait and the collective trait is so to speak dialectic. Each of the defendant's real or supposed defects is extended to all his equals. This accusation aims at causing the exclusion, the separation by which the slave as victim is placed outside the community or even outside humanity. The slave-holder discriminated him to demonstrate the impossibility of including the slave in the community because he would be too biologically or culturally different, technically or politically inept.

On the issue of the exclusion of the Blackman, Thomas Jefferson in the *Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* strongly affirms that:

> his imagination is wild and extravagant, escapes incessantly from every restraint of reason and taste, and in the course of its vagaries, leaves a tract of thought as incoherent and eccentric as in the course of a meteor through the sky. His subjects should often have let him to process of sober reasoning; yet we find him always substituting sentiment for demonstration. I advance it therefore that Blacks are inferior to the Whites in the endowments both of body and mind. (130)

From the above statement, we see that the Whiteman's explanation is, after all, the most effective. It reassures and flatters him, excuses and strengthens him by reinforcing his individual and collective ego. He does not even have to boast; he merely belittles the other to set off his own qualities. His superiority does not have to be proven, since it is implied in the other man's inferiority. These tactics tended to exclude the Blackman into the Whiteman's cycle by assigning himself an upper position and the Blackman a lower position. The Blackman became a scapegoat of White lies so that he may be thought of an incapable being and, therefore hindered him profitable opportunities. The Whiteman was always there to invent wrong justifications proving the inadaptation of the Negro in the White realm. We find a concrete case in *An Inquiry into Law of Negro Slave in America* where Thomas cobb states that:

> the grand qualities which distinguish man from the animal, the generalizing powers of reason; the love of perfectibility; the desire to know the unknown; and last and greatest, the ability to observe new phenomena and new relations – these mental faculties are deficient or seem to be so in all dark races. But if it be so, how can they become civilized? What hope for their progress? ... The friends of useful and moral liberty should strive to maintain the supremacy of the white race, until the black race understands, loves, practices the duties and obligations of civilized life. (29)

Focusing on cobb's description of the Black's mind, we observe that this denigration is unjust and un-natural. It is fraudulent and tends to reverse the order of things since we know for sure that before slavery Africans knew to organize their families and societies correctly.

In the same way, cobb goes on inviting people to maintain white supremacy until the day the Blackman would know the duties of a civilized man. But, how could he improve his state of mind while in such conditions? He was kept and followed in every move by slave-holders and overseers. Moreover, he was prejudiced of being something between man and animal. He was said to be a being void of reflection to distinguish right from wrong. In *An Inquiry into Law of Negro Slave in America*, Cobb says that:

> The Negro is not malicious. His disposition is to forgive injuries, and to forget the past. His gratitude is sometimes enduring, and his fidelity often remarkable. His passions and affection are seldom very strong, and are never lasting. The dance will allay his most poignant grief, and a few days blow out the memory of his bitter bereavement. His natural affection is not strong, and consequently he is cruel to his siblings, and suffers little by separation from them. (39)

This stereotyped information was derived by White partisans of slavery to mislead the White community who might not have been in favor of slavery to make them accept that the Negro was a mere primitive being that has no reason about the world surrounding him. They said that his disposition is to forget injuries and to forget the past, by implication he was an animal void of intelligence and humanness.

In the same vein, to say that the dance will allay his most poignant grief, and a few days blow out the memory of his bitter bereavement is an exaggerated way based on false belief to make humanity feel that the Negro is a distinct race closed to the animal. That incendiary information tended to invite the White

community and its siblings to take into consideration the place of the Negro whenever they held or saw him.

Are they not likely to learn – by direct instruction, indirect and accidently – that the Negro was a mere brute? Even the children of quite "liberal" parents were likely to acquire such ideas as they come into contact with a wider circle of people in the neighborhood and at school. A concrete example is found in the house of Norris Moses who received Douglass in the street after he reached the North. When they arrived at his house, his children run and screamed: "Mother, mother, there is a nigger in the house! There is a nigger in the house!" (*Life and Times*, 892).

Holding that the Negro was an inferior race, the white partisans of slavery preached that slavery was a just way of civilizing the Negro. Chev. Lepsius holds that:

> ... the mere physical development of the negro is improved by his transportation and enslavement. As an animal in stature, in muscular energy, in activity, and strength, the Negro has arrived at his greatest development while in slavery. (*An Inquiry into Law of Negro Slave in America*, 49).

From the above testimony, we realize that to every inhuman act, the slave-holder found justifying argument or if it did not exist, he invented one to suit the case. He treated his godlike creature in harsh conditions and fearlessly admitted that he was improving his standards of living.

Worse than that, the proponents of Black enslavement tried to base the justification of slavery on the Bible especially the Old Testament. The main argument raised was based on the Hebraic legend of Ham and his father Noah.

In fact, Ham was cursed by his father Noah after Ham saw the nakedness of his father and told his elder brothers Shem and Japhet. The Genesis states:

> And Noah began to be a husbandman and he planted a vineyard. And he drunk of wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japhet took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father and their faces were backward and they didn't see their father's nakedness. And Noah awake from his wine and knew what his younger son has done to him, he said: cursed be Canaan a servant of servants, shall be into his brethren. And he said: blessed be the lord, God of Shem and Canaan shall be his servant God shall enlarge Japhet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem and Canaan shall be his servant. (Genesis IX, 20-27)

From this myth, slave-holders developed the argument that all Blacks were the descendants of Ham and that they belonged to a cursed race. Hence, they deserved enslavement. On the other hand, Shem and Japhet were the good race blessed by God, and from God's Covenant they were allowed to put into servility the cursed lineal descendant of Ham who exhibited disobedience towards his father.

Similarly, they went further saying that all misfortunes such as misery, poverty, distress were the consequences of disobedience. Then, Black enslavement was God's punishment and corollary the result of their sins. This argument was totally false since disobedience came from Adam, father of mankind; all men are born affected with his original sin.

Simply, it was an invented false belief to shut the Blackman's reasoning so that he could be controlled easily. Hill Jones in *Race in America: The Struggle for Equality* puts it in these words:

> Nevertheless, the real significance of such ideology lies in its ability to protect the interests of dominant groups by subtly manipulating and persuading the oppressed that the status quo is the best of all possible worlds. (21)

The slave system disguised itself in religion to achieve its goals. They interpreted the Bible to convince the oppressed that they were serving God while they were serving the slave-holders. The prevention of the Negro from the light of knowledge was tied up with the fear that once the Negro studied, he would read and discover the malicious lies that under girded the White interpretation. Evidently, White preachers used the Bible to attract slaves' confidence by telling them that to fulfill God's will as they were taught will bring them into eternal life, otherwise they will be thrown into a never ending fire.

They would quote verses from the Old Testament as justification of slavery such as the possession of Abraham who was appointed by God as a man in whose "seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; who should be called "the friend of God", and "the father of all that believe". They quoted this verse

saying that: "God blessed him with flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men servants and maid-servants, camels and asses" (Genesis 24 : 35). They went further saying that God not only gave Abraham slaves as evidence of his blessing, but he commanded him to make slaves of the heathen round about them. Leviticus states that:

> of them shall ye buy bondmen, and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall be your possession; and you shall take them as inheritance for your children after you to inherit them for a possession. They shall be your bondmen forever. (Lev. 25 : 44-46)

If we analyze the above testimony, we infer that God had authorized them to own slaves as inheritance. But in other instances when the Jews oppressed or defrauded the hireling of the slaves' wages, the prophet of the Almighty did not wink at the offence, he came and said that:

> Thou shall not oppress hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of your brethren, or of your stranger that are in your land within your gates. At his day, you shall give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down up on it, for he is poor, and set his heart upon it: lest he cry against you into the Lord, and it be sin into you. (Deuteronomy 24: 14-15)

This statement of God's prophet came as a contradiction of the former in the sense that it obliges the master to give the wages to his slaves. It implies that the labor should not be robbed from its wage.

But, in the South plantations, the slave could not receive any cent for his toil. Sometimes he was hired to other slave-holders, and after payment, the slave-owner came and took the whole money. Douglass as a sufferer of that depravity in *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* states that:

> I could see no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly wages, he would after counting the money, look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and say, "is this all?" He was satisfied with nothing less than the last cent. (50)

The White master had no regard for the slave conditions. He did not care whether or not God obliged him to pay the labor he used to till his land or household. His concern was only to find several stratagems to hinder the slave to be aware of his noxious exploitation.

In this way, religion continued to be the key instrument of oppression based on racial discrimination and the meaningful justification of Black exploitation. For everything, if they did note quote verses in the Old Testament, they would quote verses from the New Testament said by Jesus or his apostles to justify it. From Christ, they would quote this verse:

> Which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat, and will not rather say into him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the

> things that were commanded him? I trow not. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? (Luke 17: 7-9)

And from the apostles, they would quote this verse regulating the relation of masters and slaves saying that:

> servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart... (Colossians 3: 22-24)

In this perspective, it cannot be inferred that Christ and his apostles recommended slavery, such as they saw it; or that these precepts exhorted the establishment of the institution of slavery where it does not exist or the continuance of it in all cases. Similarly, Jesus Christ and his apostles did not either authorize the use of the lash or whip during enslavement. They simply treated slavery as they treated all other civil governments, as of God, so longer as in his providence he permitted it to exist; and regulated, by precepts, the relation, as they did that of ruler and subject. The legitimate inference to be drawn is that the relation is not necessarily sinful because in all the institutions, there are subjects and rulers and their relation is not always unjust.

In the same respect, even though the savior did not openly prohibit the slave institution, he announced principles with which it is utterly inconsistent, and legitimate fruits of which must be its extinction. The principles are: "Thou shalt

love thy neighbor as thyself. And whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" (Luke 6: 31).

From this passage, we should act towards others, not as they act towards us, not as the laws of the land allows us to act, but as we would have them to act towards us, when our respective situations are reversed. How would we have them to act towards us in all cases? Evidently that we would have them to act towards us in the manner which would tend most to promote our real good and happiness, even though we could not ourselves see it. We should deal in the same way with the slaves because they are godlike creatures. We should act towards them, in all cases, in the manner which tends most to promote their good and happiness; in that manner which will most surely elevate them, physically, intellectually, and morally; for so, according to the golden rule, would we have them to act toward us.

If the slave institution does actually promote their real good and happiness, then we would enjoin it. If, on the contrary, it diminishes their real good, and does not promote their happiness, it runs counter to this great precept, and should cease to exist. If the great principles of Christianity were perfectly implanted in every heart of the Southerners, slavery would have stopped so far as that institution involves the idea of the oppression of the inferior by the superior and tended most to degrade him. If the Southerners followed the word found in the Bible that God gives different gifts to different people, the relation of master-slave would be perfect. The word said that "He gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one" (Mathew 25: 15).

By implication, God gave to one the gift of government, to another strength, to another to be a ruler, to another to be a subject, to name a few. If everyman in the community thoroughly appreciated his own gift, and was therewith content,

then each would, totally, assume that position in the scale of life to which his talent fitted. The ruler would be pointed out of God; the subjects would rejoice to obey. The master would recognize a brother in his servant; while the servant would take pleasure in the service of his lord. Nothing would be of constraint. Everything could be of free-will. To be such is to be Christ's freeman. If the slave-holder employed the Blackman in this sense, there would be no exploitation since the Negro would work on his free will to get money and the white master to get his labor.

The White master would treat the Blackman as his brother and the Blackman would be happy with his employment and master. The test then is, did the religion of negroslavery tend to promote the physical, intellectual, and moral growth of the Negro race? We find the real answer in *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave*, where Douglass satirizes the religion of the South in the following words:

> I can see no reason but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. Never was there a clear case of "stealing the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil... we have men stealers for ministries, women whippers for missionaries, ... The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, ... He who sells my sister, for the purpose of prostitution stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. (57)

From the above statement, the religion practiced in the South is far different from the true religion of Christ. This religion teaches brotherhood and puts chains and heavy burdens on people. It is contrary to the true religion that Douglass describes as follows: "I soberly affirms is true to the life, and without caricature or the slightest exaggeration" (*Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 59).

Douglass as a spokesman of Blackmen feels an urgent need to preach against this destructive religion which blindfolds slaves and made them believe in an endless hope without taking any action. He wanted them to wake up and see which kind of religion they were worshipping because some Blackmen believed in the false teachings of the white preachers. We find a concrete example in *Life and Times* where Frederick Douglass himself affirms that:

> I have met at the South many good religious colored people who were under the delusion that God required them to submit to slavery and to wear their chains with meekness, and humility. I could entertain no such nonsense as this, and I quite lost my patience when I found a colored man weak enough. (534)

Some slaves were brought to accept their conditions as an established order of God. They were told that God up in the sky knows what is best for everybody and that it was God that has made black people to be slaves and white people to be masters. Hence, they needed to be content with the conditions in which God has placed them. In the book of sermon and dialogues prepared by a minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland in 1843, to be used by masters and mistresses in their families, a slave in one of the dialogues says:

> God will reward me, and indeed, I have good reason to be content and thankful,... I can't help knowing my duty. I am to serve God in the State in which he has placed me I am to do what my master orders me to do. (Qtd in *Negro Church in America*, 19)

This cowardly belief was added to the illiteracy that haunted almost all the Negroes. An illiterate man is easier to manage because he will rely and believe in any interpretation of the scriptures and will not question it. Observation and criticism require the mind of an instructed man whereas the slave-holder had closed all entries to knowledge. Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* refers to these Christians as scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites in the following words:

> Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites! For ye are like white sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (59)

These are the kind of people that Douglass refers to as Chairmen of the religion of the South. The religion itself is not only true, but, by no implication can sin find an apology or excuse there in. The religion of the South is adulterated by slave-owners to justify their greed. Mr. Douglass mocks the situation in his presentation of Covey – the cruelest of the masters. Paradoxically, the latter was a professor of religion, "a pious soul", a member and a class leader in the Methodist church, and surprisingly he has got a reputation as a nigger-breaker.

Added to his cruelty, he was a servant of God, and Douglass says that he would make a short prayer in the morning, and a long prayer at night, and, strange as it may seem, few men would at times appear more devotional than he. This is the religion we are dealing with, which could sell people in praying, kill people in glorifying God, rape and impregnate slave women in adoring the holy God. Douglass goes further saying that:

> We see the thief preaching against theft, and adulterer against adultery. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babies sold to purchase Bibles for the poor heathen! All for the glory of God and the good of Souls! The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in each other, and the bitter cries of the heart broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. (58)

The above testimony expresses the most horrid hypocrisy that ever existed on earth. It shows the greed-oriented expression under the shadow of Christianity. In a way, the White masters used it to ease the suffering of Blackmen. This explains why at a certain moment some slaves opted to serve their masters whole-heartedly while awaiting reward from God. These slaves opted to believe in this God because the Whiteman had denied them to worship their own God in the sense that they were afraid of its impact on their intellect. The Whiteman knew that they could not allow themselves to follow the callous, arrogant, and vindictive White religion if ever they give them opportunity.

Though, they were denied to worship their God, they did not stop there. They decided to create a clandestine religion. It was a protestant religion against the hypocrisy of a system that expected Black to be virtuous and obedient to those

who themselves led a life of indolence and immorality in full view of the ones they purported to serve as examples. Elaborating on this fact, Gyrauds Wilmore in *The Black Religion and Black Radicalism* argues that:

> Even though they adopted the outward appearance of Christian conversion, they took from it only what proved efficacious for easing the burden of their captivity and gave little attention to the rest. They were aware that the God who demanded devotion and from whom came the spirit that infused their secret meeting and possessed their souls and bodies in the ecstasy of worship, was not the God of the slave master, with his whip and gun, nor the God of the plantation preacher, with his segregated services and injunction to servility and blind obedience. (11)

From this analysis, religion was an opposing institution to Black development. It was a force against change and progress, and a hideous instrument to Black exploitation. Black illiteracy has been a weakness that the white master seized to develop ideologies explaining and sustaining the importance of slavery. These ideologies sustained that the Negro race was an inferior race whose mind formed no definite ideas of effects from causes and consequently deserved enslavement to civilize them. As we will explore it in the following chapter, some slaves like Frederick Douglass discovered the true foundation of slavery and were determined to teach themselves and advocate for the liberation of their brethren in captivity.

CHAPTER THREE
FREDERICK DOUGLASS' INFORMAL EDUCATION AND HIS STRONG ABOLITIONISM

This chapter attempts to analyze Frederick Douglass' informal education and the role that he played for the welfare of his people.

Among the great men America has produced whose achievements will be narrated to posterity and remembered is Frederick Douglass. He was a leading African-American abolitionist in the nineteenth century who captivated his audience. He is known as one of the most powerful and influential men associated with the abolition of slavery and Black rights in the United States. As a matter of fact, during the period of slavery, his fellow Blacks were held in unutterable conditions as already mentioned in the previous chapters, and Frederick Douglass stood up as a hero to speak and fight for the weak and defenseless race. Douglass is one of the greatest men who responded to the exigencies of the world to secure the liberty of his countrymen. The name of Frederick Douglass will survive as a fugitive slave who became one of the most eloquent orators as well as profound thinker of his time.

He was born at Tuckahoe, in Talbot County, Maryland. His mother was Harriet Baily. Of his father he has no knowledge except that it was whispered that his father was Captain Anthony his master. He lived with his grandmother till he was five years of age, and during that period saw his mother only few times. He was now taken to the home plantation of Colonel Lloyd, about two miles from his birth place. Here, along with the other children, he was placed in the care of Aunt Katy. At the age of ten, he was sent to Baltimore to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, whose wife, Mrs. Sophia Auld was his first teacher. In this family, Frederick Douglass was brought to take care of their little son Thomas. Besides the fact of being a slave, this family treated him as he has never been treated

before. Mrs. Auld was not like other Mistresses; she was a kind-hearted woman who treated him not as a slave but as a human being. While describing her, he affirms that

> the crouching servility usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. (22)

The departure from Colonel Lloyd's plantation to Baltimore gave him another vision of the world. Going to Baltimore laid the foundation and opened the gateway to his subsequent prosperity. As a proof of the kindness of Mrs. Auld, very soon after Douglass went to live there, she began to teach him the alphabet. After Douglass had learned the alphabet, she continued to assist him to learn how to spell words. As he was progressing in the course of learning, Mr. Auld found out that his wife was teaching Douglass, and immediately forbade her to continue the instruction. He puts it in the following words:

> If you give a slave an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. If you teach him how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. (*The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 22)

Mrs. Auld quickly realized the destructive force she was bringing to destroy the slave system, and suddenly stopped the instruction. Moreover, the cheerful eye,

under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; the voice made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and the angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

She became more violent than her husband and nothing seemed to trouble her than seeing Douglass with a Newspaper. She undertook to suspect Frederick Douglass at every minute for having a book. Seeing the immediate change of her mistress, Douglass soon realized that education and slavery were incompatible with each other and that he must learn at all cost. He understood the importance of education and why his master Auld wanted him to remain ignorant. However, the denial of instruction did not stop him to continue the pathway from ignorance to knowledge. On this view, he opines that

> all this however, was entirely too late. The first, and not, to be replaced step had been taken. In teaching me the Alphabet, in the days of her simplicity and kindness, my mistress had given me "the inch" and now, no ordinary precaution could prevent me from taking "the ell". (22)

From the above testimony, we see that Mrs. Auld had stopped to instruct Douglass after he had already got the base that could enable him to build his mind. The plea which he mainly adopted, and the one by which he was most successful, was that of using his young white playmates, with whom he met in the street as teachers. Douglass used to carry almost constantly a copy of Webster's spelling book and bread in his pocket when sent of errands or when time was allowed him. He could sometimes give the boys bread for his instruction. In the work *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he states that

> I would step, with my young friends, aside, and take a lesson in spelling. I generally paid my tuition fee to boys, with bread, which I also carried in my pocket. For a single biscuit, any of my hungry little comrades would give me a lesson more valuable than bread. (24)

However, not all the boys gave him instruction because they wanted to help him or they wanted bread, but there were those who took pleasure in teaching him. No matter how these boys considered this instruction, Douglass as a miserable slave knew what he was doing and its importance in the years ahead. At that time, Douglass was twelve years of age.

When about thirteen years old, he bought a book entitled the "Columbian orator" with money earned by blacking boots. This book provided him with a lot of information. First, he got a conversation of a master and his slave who had tried to escape three times. The conversation took place on the third time the slave was retaken back. The master permitted him to speak for himself. The slave made a spirited defense of himself and thereafter the whole argument of slavery was brought out. The master was vanquished at every turn in the argument; and seeing himself to be vanquished, he generously and meekly emancipated the slave.

In addition to this rich information, he found Sheridan's mighty speeches on the subject of Catholic emancipation, Lord Chatham's speech on the American war and speeches by William Pitt, and Fox, which he read in this book, increasing his information and supply of words enabling him to give expression to the thought that now began to form in his mind. All these speeches were redolent of the principles of liberty, and poured floods of light on the nature and character of slavery. From the speeches of Sheridan, he got a bold and powerful

denounciation of oppression and a most brilliant vindication of the rights of man. They also allowed him to penetrate the secret of slavery and oppression and had ascertained their true foundation to be in the pride, the power and the avarice of man. As he continued to read these documents, Douglass accumulated great knowledge which afterwards changed him completely. His mind and heart started to perceive the world in another direction opposite to the former. He abhorred slavery in a way that is beyond our ability to describe. On this view, he affirms that

> I was no longer the light-hearted gleesome boy, full of mirth and play, as when I landed first at Baltimore. Knowledge had come, light had penetrated the moral dungeon where I dwell... The revelation haunted me, stung me, and made me gloomy and miserable... This knowledge opened my eyes to the horrid pit, and revealed the teeth of the frightful dragon that was ready to pounce upon me, but opened no way for my escape. (*My Bondage and My Freedom*, 227)

This illustrates that Douglass was in an extreme thoughtful state about how he can be free but saw no way to overcome this stage. He sometimes regretted his existence and wished himself a beast or a bird or wished himself dead. When he thought about liberty, he was distressed and tormented about this inestimable birth right of everyman. In his mind, only the word liberty circulated, thus reminding him of his wretched conditions. In his narrative, he articulates that:

> freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in everything. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my

> wretched conditions. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every mind, and moved in every storm. (25)

About this time, he also learned the meaning of the word "abolition" which the dictionary had refused him the proper meaning. The dictionary defined "abolition" as "the act of abolishing" and Douglass could not get its clear meaning. Furthermore, he became acquainted with a pious man by the name of Lawson, whom he visited at his home. Mr. Lawson inspired him in the search for knowledge by the assurance that: the lord has a great work for you to do, and you must prepare yourself for it (*Life and Times*, 539). These wise words from Lawson made a very deep impression upon Douglass and made him feel that such work was before him. Lawson fanned Douglass' already intense love of knowledge into a flame by assuring him that he was to be a useful man in the world. The only problem was that he could not see how he could ever engage in its performance. But, whenever Douglass asked him how and what he can do, Mr. Lawson told him: "Trust in lord" and when he replied him: "I am slave for life, how can I do anything?" He would quickly answer: "The lord can make you free, my dear; all things are possible with Him, only have faith in God. Ask, and it shall be given you. If you want liberty, ask the lord for it in faith, and he will give it to you" (*Life and Times*, 340).

Douglass assured and filled with the inspiration of hope, he decided to continue the quest of knowledge. It was soon after his acquaintance with this good natured man that he learned to write by copying letters with chalk on fences and pavements. Left in charge of the house, he wrote upon the vacant spaces of copybooks which his young master had used in school. He further continued his

studies, stead in the kitchen loft late at night when the other inmates of the household were asleep in transcribing from the Bible, the Methodist hymn book and other books, a barrel head serving him the purpose of a table.

Upon the death of his former owner, Douglass became the property of Mr. Thomas Auld, who then resided at St Michael's. Here he was cruelly treated, having insufficient and coarse food to satisfy his appetite. Several difficulties occurred between Mr. Auld and Douglass, in consequence of which Mr. Auld sent him to Covey, a notorious "negro breaker" in the neighborhood for discipline. He had not been long with Covey before he was subjected to the greatest cruelty. Mr. Covey treated him harshly in such a way that he had no time to rest and was frequently whipped. In *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, he affirms that

> I was made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery... It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hair or snow, too hard for us to work in the field... I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. (35)

But, as he continued to live with Mr. Covey bearing these whipping meekly, he decided to defend himself. In a fight, Mr. Covey was handled so roughly by the young man that he never again raised his hand against him. This fight with Covey had a most inspiring effect upon the young slave. By resistance, he asserted his manhood, increased his own self-respect, and confidence in himself. He realized that although someone else claimed to own his body, his spirit was his own. From that day on, he was never whipped while in slavery,

though he had several fights. After that fight, Douglass states this in his narrative that: "I was a changed man after that fight. I was nothing before. I WAS A MAN NOW" (37).

Leaving Covey in January, 1843, Frederick went to live with Mr. William Freeland, whom he found to be a very good man. This man was less cruel than other slave-owners he had been living with. It was in this place that he started his career to help his fellow slaves. At this time, he began to teach freely his brethren to read and write. He sometimes held his Sabbath school at the house of a free colored man, and other times he availed himself to teach Blackmen at home. He taught slaves of all ages; men and women because he wanted to better their conditions. Douglass in his narrative expresses the delight of teaching his fellow-slaves in these words:

> I look back to those Sundays with an amount of pleasure not to be expressed. They were great days to my soul. The work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was ever blessed. (42)

While at Mr. Freeland, the following year, he made up his mind to make an attempt to secure his liberty. He consulted with other slaves who would be willing to co-operate in this movement with him. But, they had in mind no definite place where they could go. Just as they were about to start, they found that they had been betrayed and their plan revealed. As a result of this discovery, they were all caught and driven off to the eastern jail. The slave-holders now demanded that Frederick Douglass be removed from the neighborhood. Captain Auld therefore sent him back to Baltimore to live with his brother Hugh, where he might learn a trade. Soon after going there, he was

hired to William Gardiner, a ship builder, for the purpose of learning to calk vessels. He made no progress in the business at this place. He was afterwards hired to Mr. Walter Price, where he learned calking, and soon commanded the highest wages.

During his leisure hours, he reflected much upon his condition; and the more he reflected, the more he hated slavery, and the more discontented he became. He therefore determined to make another attempt to secure his liberty, and, with this end in view, obtained from a friend a sailor's protection, which in this instance served the purpose of free papers. Disguised as a sailor, he left Baltimore, September 3, 1838, now twenty-one years of age, and made his way to New York, where he was introduced to Mr. Ruggles, Secretary of the New York vigilance committee. Soon afterwards, her affianced wife, Anna, came on, and they were married by the Rev. J.W.C. Pennington of the Presbyterian Church. Acting upon the advice of Mr. Ruggles, he went to New Bedford, and was kindly received by Mr. Nathan Johnson.

In slavery, Frederick's name was Frederick Augustus Bailey. At the suggestion of Mr. Johnson, his name was now changed to Frederick Douglass, by which name he has ever since been known. In New Bedford, he found employment in putting away coal, sawing wood, moving rubbish, sweeping chimney, or rolling oil casks; and thus earned means to support his family.

It was here that he became a subscriber of Mr. Garrison's paper, "the liberator". This Paper took a great place in his head, second only to the Bible. Not longer after subscribing for the liberator, he had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Garrison himself, and from this time on entertained, for the distinguished agitators the highest admiration. By reading the liberator, he came in possession of the principles of the abolition movement. He became convinced that he was not

alone in the long process of eradicating slavery. The spirit that animated the abolitionists in their efforts to put down human slavery had already been awakened with him. Douglas T. Miller quotes Frederick describing the pleasure he got from the liberator in the following words:

> It was literally the opening upon me of a new heaven and a new earth – the whole world had for me of a new heaven and new meaning. I saw myself a new man, and a new and happy future for my downtrodden and enslaved fellow countrymen. (Qtd in *Frederick Douglass and the Fight for Freedom*, 31)

The liberator served him an inspiration to the great work Lawson had predicted for him and assured him that he was not alone in that struggle. When he read the liberator, he found tranquilizing expressions about other abolitionists mainly the Garrisonian abolitionists. From that time, Douglass was ready to listen and attend any assemblage against slavery to equip himself with enough arguments against slavery.

On the 11th of August, 1841, an anti-slavery convention was held at Nantucket. Many distinguished abolitionists were present among whom was Garrison. Being invited to speak, Douglass at first declined to say anything. Urged by a friend, he at last came forward with great reluctance and embarrassment, and addressed the meeting. So great was the impression made upon the audience by his eloquent words. In the work *Frederick Douglass: the Orator*, Lloyd Garrison affirms that:

> I shall never forget his first speech at the convention – the extraordinary emotion it excited in my mind – the

> powerful impression it created upon a crowded auditory, completely taken by surprise – the applause which followed from the beginning to the end of his felicitous remarks. I think I never hated slavery so intensively as at that moment, certainly my perception of the enormous outrage which is inflicted by it on the God-like nature of its victims, was rendered far more clearer than ever. (98)

This opportunity to speak to the convention was the means of opening to him that field in which he has won so many laurels as a platform speaker and orator. After the convention, Garrison and Mr. John A. Collins both abolitionists instilled hope and courage into his mind and asked him if he could engage in that noble mission. From then, he was appointed a lecturing agent of the anti-slavery society. He decided to dedicate his life to the cause of liberty which conceived as follows:

> Misapprehensions of what truth is have their beginnings and their endings. They pass away as the race moves onward. But the truth is from everlasting to everlasting, and can never pass away. Such is the truth of man's right to liberty. It existed in the very idea of man's creation. It was "his" ever before he comprehends it. He was created in it, endowed with it, and it can never be taken from him. No laws, no statures, no compacts, no covenants, no compromises, no constitution can abrogate or destroy it. It is beyond the reach of the strongest earth arm and smiles at the ravings of tyrants from its hiding place in the bosom of God. Men may

> hinder its exercises, they may act in disregard of it, they are even permitted to war against it; but they fight against heaven, and their career must be short for eternal providence will speedily vindicate the right. The existence of its truth is self-evident. It is written upon all the powers and faculties of man. The desire for it is the deepest and strongest of all the powers of the human soul. Earth, sea, and air, – great nature with her thousand voices, proclaim it. (Qtd in *Frederick Douglass: the Orator*, 102)

As a lecturing agent of the anti-slavery society, he began to preach against slavery in every place, whether he found hall or not. He could go in the streets of the Northern America calling people to come to listen to the horrid and heavy burdens held by slaves he left in the South.

Besides preaching in the streets, Douglass was assigned to travel with other abolitionists to secure subscribers to the anti-slavery Standard and the liberator. During these lectures, much interest was awakened – and large meetings assembled. People came in great number to see a Negro speaking. Many came, no doubt from curiosity to hear what a Negro could speak in his own cause. Douglass led the fight for freedom with a heavy burden of prejudice, denigration and humiliation, but he continued because he knew what his goal was. During these meetings, he was introduced as a brute and bore it meekly so that his message could penetrate the audience with conviction. On this point, he opines that

> I was generally introduced as a "chattel", a "thing" – a piece of Southern property – the chairman assuring the

> audience that it could speak. Fugitive slaves were rare then, and as a fugitive slave lecturer, I had the advantage of being a "bran new fact" – the first one out. (*Life and times*, 662)

Some of his colored friends in New Bedford thought very badly of his wisdom in, thus, exposing and degrading himself. They thought of him as a tool for White abolitionists. This, however, did not dishearten him but, instead empowered him to continue the long process.

He took part in the campaigns organized to denounce slavery. He took a leading part in what was known as "the hundred conventions" which in the year 1843 were held in New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania and other places. In these parts of America, he constantly experienced the difficulty in procuring places in which to speak, and often he was compelled to hold his meetings in the open air or in the woods.

It is better to mention that he did not only encounter difficult related to places in which to hold the assemblage, but also sometimes the mobs rushed upon and assaulted him and his audience. In the fight against Black oppression, Frederick Douglass tackled different domains mainly the abolition of slavery, the fight against race and skin color prejudice, black segregation in public places and institutions, and afterwards fought for the right for Black education, to vote, for Black enrollment into the American army, woman emancipation, to mention a few. The means by which he adopted were to deliver speeches and orations; writing editorial essays and newspapers by his journal; and his autobiographical writings.

A more important feature in Douglass' idealism was a strong belief in the inevitability and desirability of historical change and what he considered its corollary – human progress. He considered slavery to be an evil so monstrous, so abhorrent to human enlightenment, therefore, the anti-slavery movement inevitably had to triumph. Douglass believed in the victory and instilled hope to others in the sacred duty of Black liberation. He would utilize any meager "sign" of progress in the anti-slavery cause as a means of busting confidence and perseverance. On this, he points out this:

> We had always survived the terribleness of the past, we are well equipped to face the inflexible realities of the present... We should not as an oppressed people grow despondent... Fear and despondency prevent us from working... With that hopeful spirit which causes us to keep our head above water. If we can at the present crisis, catch but one soft, low whisper of peace to our troubled souls, let us cling to it. Let us rejoice in hope. (http://books.google.com/book?)

Filled with this hope, Douglass continued the fight for Black emancipation with much energy and earnestness. His eloquence and oration led many to doubt that he was a former slave. He responded by composing a detailed account of his slave life and published it in pamphlet form. These pamphlets were widely circulated and read, and they, together with the addresses he had delivered at Nantucket Convention as agent of the anti-slavery society, attracted to himself the attention of the country. For this reason, he was now in danger of being seized and carried back into slavery. With the view of avoiding the possibility of such a misfortune, he was induced to seek refuge in England. The visit he made to England was of much interest to him, as it gave him opportunity of

seeing the great cities, of studying the character of its people and their institutions, and most importantly of hearing the great orators of the age and reformers of the day. He was kindly and hospitably entertained by eminent men in England, Scotland and Ireland.

The visit gave him a great opportunity to influence British public opinion against slavery. On the 7th of August, 1846, the world's temperance convention was held in Covent Garden Theater, London. To Mr. Douglass was extended an invitation to speak, with which he complied his remarks having special reference to the conditions of the colored people in America. During his oration, he also criticized the American religion which supported the slave-holders and failed to criticize the slave-owners who used alcohol to pacify their slaves. Slavery was thoroughly discussed, and its pernicious practices exposed. Much good results resulted from that agitation. But, the American church representatives who attended the convention were extremely hurt by the address of Douglass to the convention. Here, is what the Rev. Samuel Hanson Cox, of Brooklyn, N.Y., said about Douglass in a letter from him which appeared in the New York Evangelist, the organ of his domination, he says that:

> ... I say it is a streak of meanness. It is abominable. On this occasion, Mr. Douglass allowed himself to denounce America and all its temperance societies together as a grinding community of enemies of his people; said evil with no alloy of good concerning the whole of us; was perfectly indiscriminate in his severities; talked on the American delegate and to them as if he had been our school master and we his docile and devoted pupils; and launched his revengeful missiles at our country without one palliative, and as if

> not a Christian or a true anti-slavery man lived in the whole of America... All the delegates from our country were together wounded and indignant... We all wanted to reply, but it was too late. The whole theater seemed taken with the spirit of the Ephesian uproar; they were furious and boisterous in the extreme. (*Life and Times*, 672)

In the year 1847, Douglass returned in America, where his work remained to free his people in bondage. After his return in America, he realized that the speeches he delivered alone are not sufficiently enough and that he must establish a newspaper. His idea being that a newspaper in the hand of a colored man, if properly conducted, would greatly assist in creating public sentiment for the overthrow of slavery. At that time, there was no newspaper in America under the control of a colored man. The name given to the paper which he subsequently published at Rochester in New York was the "North Star", but it was afterwards called Frederick Douglass' Paper.

The object of the "North Star" was to attack slavery in all its forms and aspects; advocate universal emancipation and exalt the standards of the colored. "The North Star" allowed Douglass to report on problems facing Blacks across the country.

In the midst of all these duties, Douglass also took part in another organized form of action against slavery – the underground rail road. Himself a run away, he was in sympathy with those who made an attempt for freedom. He found time to act as a conductor of the underground railroad. It was his business to receive fugitives, secure them, raise means, and send them to Canada. The fees from many of his lectures went to aid fugitives. Douglass articulates in the *Life*

and Time that: "on one occasion, I had eleven fugitives at the same time under my roof, and it was necessary to them to remain with me until I could collect sufficient money to get them on to Canada" (741).

Later on, when the civil war broke up, and the government decided to accept colored volunteers, Douglass played a very important role in supporting and encouraging Negroes to enlist. Too old to bear arms himself, he served as a recruiting agent, traveling through the North exhorting Negroes to sign up. Mr. Douglass gave a most eloquent appeal through his paper to the colored people of the North to enlist as he reports: "I urge you to fly to the army and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave" (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2967.htm). Douglass not only urged and induced others to go, but gave his two sons, Lewis and Charles, to the cause. As a success, two colored regiments were put in the field, the 54th and 55th. Some time later, his third and last son, Frederick Jr., also entered the service. It was proposed in Pennsylvania to raise ten regiments, and Mr. Douglass was again requested to give his assistance in the work of recruiting.

His work in the Black's enrollment did not stop there, he also continued the fight so that the black soldiers should receive the same treatment that was accorded to white soldiers. The government, however, did not do in this respect what was expected of it; on which account Mr. Douglass went to Washington and presented the matter to the president and secretary of war. James M. Gregory quotes Douglass reporting what he told President Abraham Lincoln in these terms:

> I told him the object of my visit; that I was assisting to raise colored troops; that several months before I have

> been very successful in getting men to enlist, but that now it was not easy to induce the colored men to enter the service, because there was a feeling among them in several respects. Mr. Lincoln asked me to state particulars. I replied that there were three particulars which I wished to bring to his attention. First, that colored soldiers ought to receive the same wages as those paid to white soldiers. Second, the colored soldiers ought to receive the same protection when taken prisoners, and be exchanged as readily, on the same terms, as other prisoners, if Jefferson Davis should shoot or hang colored soldiers in cold blood, the American government should retaliate in kind and degree without delay upon confederate prisoners in its hand. Third, when colored soldiers, seeking the 'bauble reputation at the cannon's mouth', performed great and uncommon service on the battle field, they should be rewarded by distinction and promotion precisely as white soldiers are rewarded for like services. (*Frederick Douglass, the Orator*, 53)

Mr. Lincoln was impressed with the arguments of Mr. Douglass, and in few years later, the problem of distinction between white and black soldiers was over.

Tirelessly, Frederick Douglass embraced the fight for emancipation with a group of the pioneering nineteenth century American women who espoused feminism – the doctrine of equality between sexes, of woman's need for self definition and self-determination and the struggle to achieve these goals.

The group of these women included Sarah Grimké, Maria W. Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Maria Weston Chapman, Lucretia Mott, Angelina, and others. Douglass and these women had early realized that the problem of woman was similar to slave's problem, and that they could collaborate for the eradication of this latter. The argument of woman's emancipation, like that for the slave's emancipation constituted an integral component of the larger struggle for human rights and a truly democratic America.

As a matter of fact, women have been victimized by discrimination in education, employment, and social services. Women were constrained to remain in their homes without taking any action in political, economic, and social life.

In addition, they were denied the right to vote as men during colonial times: voting was limited to adult males who owned property. Many people thought that property owners had the strongest interests in good government, therefore, they were the best qualified to make decisions. Women were left poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised. They resolved to make appeals, speeches, conventions, and petitions speaking about natural rights, egalitarian and humanistic concepts. Frederick Douglass attended almost all the conventions held by the woman suffrage movement. Most importantly, he delivered speeches ad wrote in the North Star the importance of woman emancipation. In one convention held in New York in 1853, Douglass articulates this:

> Should the female of New York be placed on a level of equality with males before the law? If so, let us petition for this impartial justice for women. In order to insure this equal justice, should the female of New York, like the male, have a voice in appointing the lawmakers and

> the law administrators? If so, let us petition for woman's right to suffrage. (http://womenshistort.Aboutcom/od/quotes/a/douglass.htm/)

This testimony shows us clearly that Frederick Douglas was filled with the principles of liberty between all races and sexes. He was determined to seize any opportunity accorded to him to speak evil about the American institutions to expose the evils inflicted upon his people, and the immediate change of political conduct. The efforts Douglass spent on the Negro cause exhibited its fruits by the formal and solemn declaration of emancipation by President Abraham Lincoln on the first January, 1863. This proclamation changed everything and gave new direction to everything. Lincoln was known to be a man of tender heart and boundless patience, but hitherto, he had not shown himself a man of heroic measures than that day. The proclamation must be the end of all compromises with slavery- a declaration that thereafter the war was to be conducted on a new principle, with a new aim.

The effect of this announcement was startling beyond description, and the scene was wild and grand. Joy and gladness exhausted all forms of expression, from shouts of praise to sobs and tears. It was a plain contest of civilization against barbarism. However, this announcement was badly received by pro-slavery whites in some parts of the country. As an example, for three days and three nights New York was in the hands of ferocious mob. The mob poured its fierceness upon colored people and friends. It spared neither age nor sex; it hanged Negroes simply because they were Negroes. Even the President Lincoln lost his life during these difficult events. From the proclamation took away his own life by shut of a bullet. Even if the mob was there to prevent the Negroes

from being free, it was too late because the draft had been signed and announced publicly and at all cost was to be enacted.

After emancipation, Mr. Douglass saw that the greatest protection of the colored man would be the ballot – in fact, it could prove him safety. He had realized that the Negro after his emancipation was precisely left in the state of destitution. The law on the side of freedom is of great advantage only where there is power to make that law respected. Also, the government had made him free, but none of the conditions for self-preservation or self-respect were given to him. He had neither money, property, nor friends. He was free from the plantations, but he had nothing except the road under his feet and the open sky. Douglass, soon, realized that the Negro had still a cause and that he needed his voice and pen to plead for. He, therefore, was among the very first to begin the agitation of the question "suffrage for the Negro". Douglass saw that no chance of bettering the condition of the freedman until he should cease to be merely a freedman and should became a citizen. He insisted that there was no safety for him or for anybody else in America outside the American government; that to guard, protect and maintain his liberty the freedman should have the ballot; that the liberties of the American people were dependent upon the ballot-box. Without the ballot, no class of people could live and flourish in that country. When Douglass and his cohort went ahead asking for the enfranchisement of the freedmen, it was resisted in many grounds, but Douglass says that they were resisted mainly on two grounds:

> First, the tendency of the measure to bring the freedmen into conflict with old master-class and the white people of the South generally; secondly, the unfitness, by reason of their ignorance, servility and degradation, to

> exercise over the destinies of this great nation so great a power as the ballot. (*Life and Times*, 818)

These justifications were void of truth because the white as in individual had to live his own life and the Negro his. Simply, the old master saw the enfranchisement as an offence to find the Negro whom he lately possessed the right to enslave possessing a ballot equal to his own. The Whiteman was heartedly injured seeing that the free labor was over and now he was going to toil for it or pay for it. As a consequence many Whitemen were perplexed and asked themselves:

> So much our money is invested in land and in slaves that many planters have to live on credit from one harvest to the next. If we free the slaves, who will cultivate our fields? The abolitionists say that we could hire the slaves back as free laborers but where would we get the money to pay them. (Qtd in *Five Centuries in America*, 365)

Mr. Douglass' concern was not whether the White will get the labor or not, but his main object was to see his people fully liberated from the captivity and given the ballot. The ballot in the hands of the Negro was necessary to open the doors of the school-house, and to unlock for him the treasures of its knowledge. Hence, the accusation that he was ignorant would be sent to grave. When the Whiteman continued to deny the Negro the ballot, Douglass stood and said:

> If the negro knows enough to fight for his country, he knows enough to vote; if he knows to pay taxes for the support of the government, he knows enough to vote, if

> he knows as much when sober, as Irishman knows when drunk, he knows enough to vote. (*Life and Times*, 819)

Douglass could not understand how the colored man could continue to be denied the right to vote while he was capable of accomplishing all the obligations of the government. On the view that the Negro was ignorant, Douglass affirms that: "the young child has staged on his little legs, and has sometimes fallen and hurt his head in the fall, but then he has learned to walk" (150). Douglass fought for the enfranchisement till the end. In this achievement, Douglass with a delegation of colored people decided to go to meet President Andrew Johnson. The interview they made with President Johnson will take its place in history as one of the first steps. On that occasion, President Johnson refused to listen to any reply on the part of the delegation. As a consequence, they wrote him a brief reply stating that:

> Mr. President: In consideration of a delicate sense of property as well as of your own repeated intimations of indisposition to discuss or listen to a reply to the views and opinions you pleased to express to us in your elaborate speech today, the undersigned would respectfully take this method of replying thereto. Believing as we do that the views and opinions you expressed in that address are entirely unsound and prejudicial to the highest interest of our race as well as to our country at large, we cannot do other than expose the same and, as far as maybe in our power, arrest their dangerous influence... Peace is not to be secured by degrading one race and exalting another; by giving power to one race and with holding it from another; but

> by maintaining a state of equal justice between all classes. (*Life and Times*, 822)

Douglass and the delegation did not stop the fight for the ballot in front of the presidency, but they also addressed a memorial to the senate of the country:

> To the honorable the Senate of the United States: The undersigned, being a delegation representing the colored people of the several states, and now sojourning in Washington, charged with the duty to look after the best interests of the recently emancipated, would most respectfully, but earnestly, pray your honorable body to favor no amendment of the constitution of the United States which will grant anyone or all of the states of the Union to disfranchise any class of citizens on the ground of race or color, for any consideration whatever. (824)

Douglass continued the search for the ballot in taking the lead as a delegate from Rochester into another marked step in affecting the enfranchisement of the negro which was made at the "National Loyalist's Convention", held at Philadelphia, in September 1866. This body was composed of delegates from the South, North, and West. Its object was to diffuse clear views of the situation of affairs at the South and to indicate the principles by it deemed advisable to be observed in the reconstruction of society in the Southern States.

During this Nationalist Loyalist's Convention, white participants had wished to prevent Douglass from marching with them because he was the only Black and were afraid that his presence would create prejudice of the people of Philadelphia, as to cause the procession to be mobbed. At that day, Mr.

Douglass told them that he had to attend it by all means. In *Life and Times*, he opines:

> Gentlemen, with all respect, you might as well ask me to put a loaded pistol to my head and blow my brain out as to ask me to keep out of this convention, to which I have been duly elected. Then, gentlemen, what would you gain by this exclusion? Would not the charge of cowardice, certain to be brought against you, prove more than that of amalgamation? Would you not be branded all over the land as dastardly hypocrites, professing principles which you have no wish or intention of carrying out? (827)

Hearing these words, the participants decided to let Douglass march with them, and the convention was held without the slightest prejudice.

Unlike the movement of the abolition of slavery, the success of the efforts for the enfranchisement of the freedmen was not long delayed. It was another illustration of how any advance in pursuance of a right principle prepares and makes easy the way to another. The question of suffrage of Negroes was taken out of the hands of colored delegation and became a part of the policy of the republic party.

After the President Andrew Johnson, came President Us. Grant, with his characteristic nerve and clear perception of justice, promptly recommended the great amendment to the constitution by which colored men are today invested with complete citizenship – the right to vote and to be voted for in the American Republic. This amendment came as a fulfillment of the ideal that Douglass had longed for years.

After this amendment, he did not remain long in Rochester, he moved to Washington with the intention to establish a large weekly Newspaper in that city which should be devoted to the defense and enlightenment of the newly-emancipated and enfranchised people. That Newspaper was called the New National Era. This newspaper was finally turned over to his sons Lewis and Frederick, Jr.

About this time, Frederick Douglass was elected president of the freedmen's bank, an institution intended as a secure depository for the savings of the colored people. Douglass did not understand himself as a president of a bank comparatively with Frederick Douglass a slave in Maryland.

However, he later found after careful investigation the facts in reference to the condition of the bank, that it was insolvent and could not recover from its losses. To use his own words, he notes that "I was married to a corpse."

From that time, Frederick Douglass entered the diplomatic career. He has been appointed by President Grant in his first term a member of the council of the District of Columbia. When Mr. Rutherford B. Hayes became President, he appointed Douglass Marshal of the District. In that office, he was required to introduce guests to the president on state occasions. On such occasions, he was always treated with great respect and courtesy by the chief magistrates. When Mr. James A. Garfield became President in 1881, he appointed Mr. Douglass recorder of deeds of the District of Columbia. Last, Douglass was appointed by President Benjamin Harrison in 1889 Minister resident and counsil general to Hayti, and after holding the office for two years, he resigned.

Nevertheless, though we mention the political career of Frederick Douglass, he was not the only Black who entered in the American administration since the

enfranchisement, but he had opened the gate to his fellow Blackmen. In *Life and Times* of Frederick Douglass, he states: "Where one goes, the others are apt to follow... I have opened the gate to the way upward, for people with whom I am identified" (955).

In a nutshell, we have seen so far that Frederick Douglass was an extraordinary self-made man who happened to climb over the ladders of slaveholding. This can be seen through his informal education to free his mind, and understand the vices underlying the American religion and institutions during slavery. This knowledge permitted him to engage in a noble fight which afterwards ended in the emancipation of millions of African-Americans in the hands of ferocious masters.

CONCLUSION

This work is an attempt to research on the Negro subjugation in the Americas during slavery with special focus on the question of education in *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. It depicts how slaves were taught to obey the exploitation of the slave-holders through torture and the means such as the Bible and alcohol to serve them whole-heartedly. The most obstinate objective of the slavers was to perpetrate slavery while on the other hand the great desire of the slave was freedom.

The first chapter was an attempt to help the reader get a clear view of the manner in which the slaves were taught through torture to lead a subservient life. In fact, the whole time of the slave was spent working in properties of the White masters and nothing else. He was to serve his master with lashes on his back, coarse food, torn clothes, without shelter, salary, to name a few. He was not allowed to attempt or think of anything related to his own life improvement. Formal education was one thing that could uplift his conditions, but the White masters judged it inconsistent with slavery as it could help the slaves to revolt. By using torture and physical deprivation, the slave was being taught to know and accept the destiny as a slave.

The second chapter examines the ideologies put forward by the institution to justify and make the Blacks believe that their oppression was just. To achieve this, they adopted different methods. They justified the slave system as an establishment of God. They based their argument on the curse of Ham by God. Hence, all the slaves as descendants of Ham deserved enslavement. Through the preaching given by white ministers, they must accept their enslavement wholly-heartedly and bear the sufferings meekly while awaiting reward at the end of the final judgment. Similarly, they had extended slavery to a system of social

control with special purpose of convincing Blacks and Whites that Blacks are inferior to the Whites in the endowment of both the body and the mind.

The final focus of this study was a response of slaves especially Frederick Douglass to the already mentioned horrid treatments in the South plantations. In fact, we have realized that slaves were physically and mentally oppressed by the slave system. This extreme torture was a school which afterwards led some slaves to discover its true meaning. Douglass emerges from this school and taught himself an informal education and later on became the voice of his people.

As we have seen in the third chapter, he helped the enrollment of Negroes into the army and most importantly, he helped in the enactment of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments.

Slavery is a multifaceted domain. It is not an easy task to explore all its angles. The present study has put a pace further in the continuation of long debates on slave education in the Americas during the slave period. For further researchers, scholars or students this work doubtlessly, will contribute to their success.

Though we have proved that education plays an important role in social change, we have not exhausted the study of all the aspects of Negro education. Thus, further discussion is opened to whoever is interested in the subject. Further researchers then might set out not only to carry out an analysis on such a phenomenon, but also they should propose ways and means which would lead to the abolition of exploitation of mankind. To uproot slavery forevermore, they should plead for the construction of many schools around the world so that every human being should study and comprehend the world around us. They should also plead for a legal compensation under the supervision of the United

Nations, of the African nations that were deprived of their sons and daughters during the slave trade.

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