History 1120

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Reading Log #5

Throughout the years of slavery, resistance was the most important aspect that took place almost every day. Throughout Afua Coopers article about African Americans and the slavery experience she touches on resistance, why it took place, and a story about a young girl who was given away against her will.

Resistance was an important component to slavery because it showed how the African Americans would have done anything to get out of the awful situations they were forced into because of the color of their skin. There were two forms of resistance that Cooper talks about, short term and long term resistance. Short term resistance consisted of “breaking of tools, destruction of livestock and other moveable property, work stoppage, talking back to their owners, malingering, temporary marronnage [absenting oneself temporarily], and so forth” (p. 6). Whereas, long term resistance can be seen as “arson, permanent marronnage [permanent self-emancipation], armed rebellions and revolts, and homicide.” (page 6). Often times, when a slave was resisting work it could be done in groups or just as an individual.

When looking back to the times of slavery and one race being more “superior” than the other, I never imagined resistance to be such a common theme amongst the African Americans. I believed they complied with what the masters said and they never thought twice about it. Most movies, there is always one person who tries to escape, so I never thought they use to come together and make plans on how to resist of escape.

On the next page, Cooper talks about why people resisted and why white people felt the need to participate in these awful acts of slavery. Overall, white people did this because it gave them a sense of power and it was socially acceptable. Gender played a big role in slavery as well, girls and women were often treated differently from the boys and men of the yard because the women were often raped/taken advantage of, simply because the “master” could. Adding onto the fact of women slaves being raped and mistreated in different ways than the men were, Cooper also writes a passage about a young girl named Chloe Cooley. This young African American was dragged across the Niagara river by another black man, Peter Martin. He forcefully binded her, violently and forcibly moved her across the river in order to give her to a man against her will. As strange and cruel as this sounds to us now, Cooper touches on it in a way that it seemed like an everyday event for them back in the day.

When it came to slave control in Canada, Cooper touches on how there were different “codes” for different slave regions. For example, the French code was called the “Code Noir” and the English had their own code as well. The French and English laws defined the slaves as chattel, which means they are their personal possession. “Masters thus used the full arsenal of the legal apparatus to control their slaves. They had them arrested, thrown in prison, taken before the courts, whipped, braded, placed in stocks, and legally murdered (for example, hanged)” (page 8).

Overall, I think this article is very important for us to read because it can open any one’s eyes to how awful things were back then because of white people and the power they let get to their head. There are many aspects I didn’t know about this time that this article has opened me up to and I’m glad it did. Coopers paper is very reliable because of the amount of footnotes she had per page as well as the quotations.