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History 1700-026

Response Assignment #2

4/3/14

1. What do you think freedom meant to African Americans during the period depicted in the film, *Slavery & the Making of America: The challenge of Freedom?* What was the meaning of freedom to white southerners during the same period? Explain, using material from the entire film (and our class discussion, if applicable).

Freedom to African Americans, in the time frame from the film, was much different than what white southerners thought freedom meant. With President Lincoln being president in the time before the film African Americans had high hopes for becoming free, and becoming citizens. Like Lincoln Andrew Johnson fought for the freedoms of African Americans. When Johnson stepped into office directly after Lincoln was assassinated he made a requirement that all confederate states must accept the thirteenth amendment to be let back into the Union. After the war ended blacks in the south were wondering the roads looking for family and friends that had been separated or sold away because of the war. Before the war and during the war the South was still pro slavery. The African Americans in the South would do anything to escape the bondage.

A man named Robert Smalls had a plan for him and his family to escape the Confederacy. He planned with a group of men that were working on a sailing vessel owned by the confederacy that him and his friends would highjack the vessel in the night when all of the confederate soldiers had left the boat. They loaded up their families and started sailing The Planter toward the Union port. When Smalls got closer they lowered the Confederate flag and hung a white sheet, which Smalls wife had brought with, on the flag pole signaling they were friendly. His family and friends made it over and became free men. He was wanted by the confederate army for thievery. He enlisted in the Union army and became very famous to white and black men alike. He was in inspiration to blacks in the North and South to either escape the south and become soldiers or just become soldiers. During the length of the war 200,000 African Americans were enlisted in the Union military, 180,000 army and 20,000 Navy soldiers. These men saw that enlisting in the Union army was sort of like revenge on the Confederacy and their old slave owners.

Robert Smalls was later allowed into politics following the 14th and 15th amendments, people born in the US are citizens, and cannot deny someone the right to vote. He was elected into the South Carolina State House of Representatives, which was dominated by African Americans. I feel that Robert smalls led the way for African Americans to stand up and fight for their freedom. To them it was about being treated equally as the white people. They wanted to be able to work for pay, be able to have a voice in government, run for government jobs, and enroll their children in school, and so on. The acts of Robert Smalls and many other brave African Americans set the way for the change that was so desperately needed in the South and the North for African American equality.

The views of White Southerners, on the other hand, was much different. They did not believe that African Americans should be treated equally, or for that matter treated like human beings at all. Many confederate states did not want to join the Union because they didn’t want to recognize the 13th amendment. After the war ended Southern whites did not want to accept the fact that Robert Smalls and many other black men were in government positions. They made a cult called the Ku Klux Klan that was brutally violent, murdering, blowing up, and trying to entirely eliminate these so called threatening blacks and anyone else that stood in their way. A man named Elliot tried to stop the clan in 1970 when he was elected to the US Congress and the Klan’s leaders were jailed in 1871.

Other Southern Whites made other clubs one of which was a rifle club called the Red Shirts. It was a club composed of Confederate veterans under the same officers as during the war. They were very brutal too, violating Southern Republicans. They chased people out of their houses and killed them, and many other awful things to show that they were in charge in the South.

As you can see African Americans and Southern Whites viewed freedom very differently. African Americans just wanted the same liberties given to white people. Southern Whites felt that they could do anything they wanted because they already had their freedoms and no one could take that from them. They took advantage of it and became outlaws murdering innocent people, white black, southern, and northern. They didn’t care who was involved in the opposing side they just tried to eliminate the threat to their way of life. Of course these goals of Southern white people didn’t work out. They were jailed and eventually the confederacy joined the Union.

1. Voices of Freedom Chapter 9. What does the contrast between these two documents suggest about the impact of the market revolution on American thought?

I believe that Ralph Waldo Emerson’s piece of writing is suggesting that in order to move forward every man must work for himself. They should not have to lean on someone else to accomplish what they want. He showed this statement in the third paragraph when he quoted Pestalozzi. He also explained that America is its own country and we need to quit listening to what Europe has to say about how we run our own country. Europe was judging America and its men as weak and timid, as he said in his last paragraph.

In the factory life article I believe that this woman has a very strong opinion about how terribly her and her colleagues are being treated by their bosses. This is demonstrated in the second sentence we she asks the question of speaking their minds and giving their opinions. This woman believes that if they are the ones making the products shouldn’t they get the freedoms to enjoy those products just as much as everyone else? She feels like she is being taken advantage of, religiously, morally, and culturally. Stated in the second paragraph. She believes that if these women stand up for themselves long enough there will be enough attention from the communities for a change to happen in the way factories are run.

The contrast of these two documents was difficult for me to find and understand. As I understand it Emerson suggests that all men need to strive for excellence, meaning open their own factories or businesses and make a profitable living. Man doesn’t need help from other men to do what he believes in, and to become rich he must do it on his own. On the other hand the operative from the factory article believed that women had the right to oppose the strong hand of man, and fight for what SHE believed in. Women shouldn’t be undermined just because they are women. She believes that women can have as much freedom as men and they will fight for it as long as it takes. These two points are different but they come together about the same topics, each person deserves an equal say in how they want to live their own life.