Slaves Made by History Article

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Introduction

The American history of slavery is broad and cumbersome. However, the understanding of freedom from slavery was not well developed until most Americans saw the jarring dash-cam video. This was dash-camera footage from a car, which showed a police officer, Jeronimo Yanez, aiming at Philando Castile while he was calmly reaching for his license. To make the matter complicated and shocking, Yanez was acquitted. Such a verdict was a direct demonstration of how the law of America has been formulated to oppress the powerless, hence protecting the powerful. However, though the legal system of America has significantly been constructed to keep the status quo, in return, it has aided change in the expansion of rights. This occurs in scenarios where courts have been used to weaponize the ideals in America, hence escaping oppression. Therefore, the paper below is an analysis of Made by History.

The author of the article has stated how debates began on the Constitution and how it adapted to the ideas of the Declaration of Independence on the reality of slavery. This, according to the article, was the first change to Massachusetts. Therefore, the American Constitution of 1780 was like the marker of an attempt to create new political and legal procedures. This gave the individual citizens of America the right to live in the newly liberated nation. However, according to the author of the article, in Massachusetts, just like the other colonies of America, the promise of the constitution that “all men are born free and equal” [1] did not apply to slaves who were African American. Such application of the law revealed the imbalance between the powerless and the powerful, creating boundaries between the included and the excluded. However, this contradiction was highlighted by two Massachusetts slaves.

Elizabeth Sheffield heard of the Massachusetts Constitution, which was read in a loud voice, and on the following day, she approached a local lawyer. Before the lawyer Theodore Sedgwick, she asked, “I heard that paper yesterday that says all men are created equal and that every man has a right to freedom. I’m not a dumb critter; won’t the law give me my freedom?” [2] Therefore, the lawyer Sedgwick took the case of Freeman.

Bett’s case was heard, and her master, Nathaniel Jenison, was sued. Walker, another slave, believing that he had rights against slavery, ran away from Jenison and started working on a neighbouring farm. Here, he got the chance to find a lawyer, with the aid of John and Seth Caldwell, and forward his case to Worcester County Court. This was like a turning point for slaves since the courts ruled in favour of

Walker and Freeman. Therefore, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, which is the highest legal authority of the state, was tasked with the enforcement of foundational laws in the application of the promised rights and freedom to every man or resident of America.

Therefore, these two slaves, who gained freedom for themselves, worked for all slaves in America. This is because the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, William Cushing, explained the ideals of the 1780 Constitution. According to the writing of the constitution, "All men are born free and equal" What he could only conclude is that slavery was "inconsistent with own conduct and Constitution." [3]

Within a decade, through the freedom of the two slaves and a decision from the courts alongside pressure from the community, masters of Massachusetts slaves willingly freed the slaves. This was followed by frequent changes in arrangements for wage labour. Therefore, it is clear that if it had not been for the courage of the two slaves, Freeman and Walker, there would not have been free slaves. However, the author has not acknowledged the contradiction in the context of rights and equality and the circumstances of slavery. It is supported by the fact that it is not the slaves who independently looked for their freedom. Instead, they used powerful allies, whereby, in our case, it was the use of lawyers.

Conclusion

The paper above is a summary of the article Made by History. The article discusses how two slaves, Freeman and Walker, made their way to freedom. First, Freeman heard the constitution read loudly, stating that every man is born equal and free. She, therefore, went to a lawyer, Sedgwick, to claim the meaning of the law and her freedom. On the other hand, Walker fled from his master to a neighbouring farm, where he later approached a lawyer claiming his freedom. The author of the article has acknowledged that it was through these two slaves that slaves got their freedom. However, the author has not made it clear that if it were not for the help of the lawyers, the slaves would not be free. This means that freedom was not attained independently but by using the superior power of lawyers.

Bibliography

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3. Botkin, Benjamin A. “Lay my burden down. A folk history of slavery.” (2016). ↑