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English 101

Essay 2 Douglass

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## Freedom Fight

What is the “pathway from slavery to freedom”? (Douglass para. 3) Douglass had to ponder that question for years as he grew

up in slavery. Suddenly the idea hit him like lightning. Reading is the pathway to freedom, he thought, because his master Mr. Auld said this: “It is unlawful and unsafe to teach a slave to read. If you give a nigger 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. Now, if you teach that 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 could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy” (Douglass para 3).

When Douglass heard those words from Mr. Auld, he didn't understand how truly prophetic those words were. Without reading ignorance of the world is all one has. This is one specific lesson Douglass learned. When Douglass was twelve, for example, he got hold of a book called the

Columbian Orator. This was a book of articles. Upon reading about an apparent intense dislike about slavery from a host of people, including a few big ones in his day, Douglass got even more discontented and saw “the pit of despair without a ladder”.

(para. 11) This pit would make Douglass even more discontented until he would hear the “silver trump of freedom” (para. 11)

Because he was smart enough to catch on to his master’s words, Douglass fought back.

He insisted on learning to read and expanding his mind.

Douglass, because of the feeling of discontent, hoped not to be mentally confined, but to expand by learning to write as well. Douglass thought he would learn to write. If he learned to write, Douglass thought that he might be able to “write his own pass.” (para. 11) Douglass did write his own pass. He was able to buy his freedom after a lot of hard work. He forged

some papers to get aboard ship and then worked as an orator.

The feeling of discontentment in Douglass spawned a fight in Douglass that made a revolution come to pass. We are free now not slaves. Douglass' insight still has lots of validity today. I think that Douglass probably influenced a lot of other revolutions against other injustices such as the women's suffrage movement, the civil rights movement of the 1960's, who knows

maybe even the feminist movement soon after. Because of Douglass, we as a whole, probably enjoy lots of other freedoms that maybe we wouldn't have if he didn't exist. Such an idea as Douglass' can only cause controversy if the injustice is widely accepted and wanted; however, such a problem is just a stepping stone to victory. Eventually, justice will prevail if enough people see and want it.

I think that today we have and will use Douglass' experience to say "He did it!"

Why can't we/I? The problem here is  
courage my friends. There are people in this  
world that still might be in a prison without  
walls. This means free, but not free. If one  
cannot read or write, it is probable that  
chaos will reign and disaster will soon  
follow because a person victimize by this  
silent but deadly trap won't have the skills to  
avoid getting duped by greedy humans who,  
frankly, don't care about anything but  
selfish things.

Some people may be trapped by their own laziness or ignorance of the importance of reading and writing. They are the very ones probably going to be trapped by the above thought of a “prison without walls.”

These people may be taking it easy in this sometimes comfortable prison, but it is still a trap. These people probably won't do much with their lives. If these people get discontented like Douglass did, they will have the beginning of the means to free themselves from a wasted life. However,

even the people that can't or won't learn to read or write are good teachers because they are so simple. They are so simple in fact, that they sometimes teach us to take time not to be so busy.

Being myself disabled, my circle is disabilities. These people include: other visual impairments, people in wheelchairs, people who don't speak well, and even those who can't do anything much for themselves. In the severe cases listed above, meaning the retarded, lack of reading and writing is

common, or else reading and writing is extremely hampered. I have seen it.

These mentally challenged people have nothing but time on their hands. This time, the way I see it, helps because they listen to others more. These people in many cases are indeed trapped though. They won't have good paying jobs, they are always subservient to others, and depend on everyone else for support. For example, one cannot read the newspaper for current events, nor can he/she do well in the

workforce because most jobs require at least some reading skills. A person cannot count say paper money, nor measure for a delicate recipe, or sometimes play games that involve reading. Because these poor people don't have a living, they start needing handouts or aid from government means, even when able-bodied.

This will hopefully spark the lazy person to think 'Why wouldn't I want to learn to read and write if I were capable, which I am? I don't want to get trapped in a comfortable

prison all of my life.’ This is what a person like Douglass hoped people would think like.

In summary, I feel that Douglass was very correct in learning to read, write and causing a revolution to take place. His insight into a very sticky problem has led to other revolutions and is helping others enslaved. He has improved both directly and indirectly the lives of people in the past present and most likely, the future. It looks

extremely bright if humanity has more  
people like Douglass.