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History 7A

The New York Online Slavery Exhibit Review

Gallery 1. The very first gallery captured my attention with its monstrous and merciless numbers. It was impossible to wrap my head around the fact that Africans were captured in a ratio of 80 per day for 400 hundred years! We are talking about 80x365x400=11,680,000 human lives destroyed for the sake of industrial profits and enrichment of lives of those who enslaved them. Slavery has to be classified as a crime against humanity or it should fall under some kind of genocide sub-classification. In 1800 human rights movement (thankfully there were a few sensible and rational humans back in those days) started to emphasize on dehumanizing existence and treatment of slaves. However, it took long 88 years to abolish it completely, almost a century, but better late than never.

Gallery 3. The third gallery stood out to me with its list of slave laws. This list had more resemblance to a list of jail rules rather than laws. For laws are made based on certain principals of sensibility. For example in 1683 one of the laws that was enforced said: “No slaves shall gather on the Sabbath in any number greater than four.” Another draconian regulation was established in 1702 and it said: “No more than three slaves can meet together at any time or place. Forty lashes on the naked back if they are found to do so.” And the last one that completely outraged me said: “Masters may punish their slaves however they choose so long as they do not cut off their limbs or kill them.” All authors of such despicable regulations, in my opinion, deserved a Hague Tribunal. What a shame that not many of them were prosecuted…if any.

Gallery 4. Exhibit four was quite interesting to read about. It was refreshing to learn how slavery came to an end and “New York became a sanctuary for 10000 freedom-seeking African Americans from up and down the coast.” Finally slaves began to create their own small societies where they could debate about politics, engage into religious rituals, and somewhat taste the freedom that they have longed for. Nevertheless, slave-owners did not want to put with losing their servants. They tried to recapture some of the slaves, but thankfully British didn’t allow it and provided a safe passage for those slaves who chose to leave the USA.

Gallery 6. This gallery exposes its audience to how white and black citizens were learning to coexist together. On of the New York artists, Francis Guy, even painted a beautiful painting about how black people were taking part in one the New York city’s trading events doing the regular labor that a white person normally would do. Moreover, they were getting paid for their labor. Seeing such integration was very moving and showed that some members of society, despite the prejudice of the majority (who wanted to remove all freed blacks back to Africa), had a heart and conscience to treat these poor people somewhat as equals.

Gallery 8. This exhibit shows how towards the 1820s. Freed African-Americans began to use their liberty and independence to receive education in order to engage in various fields of social structures like politics, education and clergy work. There even began a light social separation between rich and not so rich blacks. Those who were rich were experiencing all luxuries they could afford and those who were living from one wage to another, hardly managed to make ends meet. However, their main goal of freedom and unity against what their previous generation of slaves went through didn’t allow any aggression or hostility to develop. They remained united with a sense of strong support for each and every one of them.

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