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### Research & Writing #17: Just For Laughs

Slavery before the 1500s had been initiated due to the cultural characteristics of an individual, with examples being a military weakness, or due to their *barbaric* nature. Oftentimes, slaves during this time would vary, depending on the type of slavery, the reason behind their enslavement, and other factors which would relate to gender and even social status within the city - at least in consideration of how many of them there were. Once the slave trade had gained momentum and the number of slaves had taken up the majority of the population, there had to be a new construction of slavery. A leading factor to keep in mind here would have to be contributed to the slave master's greed in wanting to keep their slaves separate and oppressed.

Dehumanizing methods were continually supported and normalized in order to establish dominance in their elite power over them. In response to this, race was "established" in order to draw a line between who had power and who did not, creating even more segregation towards the enslaved for it was no longer about "who you were" but rather "how you were," which defined your identity. Within the plantations within the Caribbean, sugar was in high demand, which meant that the moral and ethical value of a slave diminished in the eyes of these plantation owners for "what would a few slaves mean to me if the rest were able to make me more money to replace them." These unethical thoughts were common and normalized because these enslaved individuals were no longer seen as humans but instead as a tool for one's production.

It amazes me to see this semester be filled to the brim with content about racial injustice and the remnants of slavery in America to this day. While at my local barbershop, waiting for my turn, there was an older television series called “Just For Laughs: GAGS” which would typically play on the screen. This show would have actors go around pranking the public, and having the whole thing caught on camera, they later reveal that it was “just for laughs.” Oftentimes, these pranks were silly and harmless to the people being pranked, leaving them to their own business thereafter. There was a particular prank where this mother leaves her young son to a stranger to watch as she goes to use the conveniently placed portapotty, only to have two actors drive up while dressed as cops, holding a briefcase full of money. In an attempt to retrieve the boy in what was understood to be a hostage situation for ransom, the people being pranked were left clueless as to what was going on. Having the child run to the cops with open arms, they soon reveal that it was “just for laughs.” Everything seemed fine as they would all laugh it off until they performed this prank on a black man.

The two actors who were dressed up as police, roll up to the child and the black man. In their procedure, I couldn't help but pay attention to what happened next. The thing that stuck with me was that this man was not reacting to how the rest of the other people reacted when being pranked. He just stood there and I couldn't help but wonder if this was out of genuine confusion, or fear. The fear of what the cops would do if he moved and if his nightmare was going to come to an end. The reason for bringing this up is because at the end of the prank would show a reel of all the people finding out that this was all just a prank, just laughing it off. It showed everyone except the black man. I couldn't help but question why and simply assume that things did not go the way these prankers had thought they would go.

The impacts of slavery have been inbred into this nation, countless times over, and it is a matter of time until we catch on that this is not how things were meant to be. This season of my education has been much more than picking up a book or writing an essay on the effects of racial injustice within this world, for God's will for us is to come together in order to worship Him, together as one body of Christ. It is much more than acknowledging these crooked systems of oppression it is fighting back in breaking down the walls of segregation. To rewire the mindsets of the next generation and to intentionally create more diversity within our nation so that we can fully reflect God's image for humanity. To answer the question as to if there are still remnants of slavery in the twenty-first century, it would be an understatement to describe the footprints of slavery as a remnant amount.