

Davins Manasse

Dr. Nathaniel Perez

SOC147NOS

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The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross

The documentary PBS The African Americans: [Many Rivers to Cross](#) was insightful and enlightening regarding slavery. It brought many perspectives to the culprit of the slave trade and the awful tragedy African Americans went through to be where they are today. Watching the documentary was indeed emotional and heartbreaking. As an immigrant from Haiti, I connected in ways that triggered what my ancestors also went through with the french. There are many things that the documentary brought enlightenment upon. Primarily, we learned the Europeans did not invent slavery. Instead, it was a system that was there during ancient civilization. I was astonished to discover that even the Africans were slave merchants themselves. However, the Europeans made it about race, while the Africans made it about political power, economic power, and tribes. As in ancient days, when a nation was conquered by its enemies, the conqueror enslaved its people to make them work. It was not a matter of their skin color.

Sierra Leone was the epicenter of the slave trade. Europeans came to enslave people due to their need for workers for plantations. Africans saw it as a lucrative business. In exchange, Africans received fine linen clothing, alcohol, tobacco, and other things. One of the African Americans mentioned in the documentary was from Virginia, and his name was Anthony Johnson. He was an asset to his masters. In return, he was set free with his land. After a while, he made a fortune from plantations, especially tobacco. His business was lucrative. However, after

he died, Virginia considered him a negro and seized his land. That gave the colonizers the idea of enslaving Africans to work their plantations because they saw the ability of blacks to produce such success.

In Virginia, the tobacco business was soaring and profitable. However, there arose an issue that needed to be resolved. They needed more people to work the plantations. So their brilliant idea was to buy enslaved people to work the fields. That compelled a high demand for enslaved people because they played a significant role in the profitability of their businesses. So enslaved people were imported from all over the world. Sadly they were not considered human beings and had no worth except as workers. The Europeans tried their best to rip them off their identity by intentionally not using their last name. If you don't have a last name, you don't have a family to refer back to. That seemed to work on the enslaved people. It's as if there's no end to their suffering and oppression. What the Europeans had agreed on that intrigued me was they would never enslave each other. They can fight and kill each other, but freedom amongst themselves is one of the moral codes.

Wherever we see oppression, there will be some rebellion sooner or later. Fort Mose was the promised land for the enslaved people. If they were to cross that river, they would be free. They traveled about 300 miles to reach their freedom. When the enslavers became aware, they punished the enslaved people severely so they would be afraid to run away. They would execute them and cut their heads off. The first time they ran away, they would cut off two of their toes; the second time, they would chop their ears off. And the third time, castrate them. A group of 20 Africans from Congo, some had army training, revolted, making their way to Fort Mose, killing a few men with guns, and started burning plantations and playing drums to recruit other Africans to join their rebellion. Unfortunately, they were found and executed. Some of their heads were

hung on a stick on highways to scare off other enslaved people who might want to plan a rebellious attack.