

Edi Masář

Jeffrey Alan Vanderziel

AJL17051

30 April 2021

Frederick Douglass, as many slaves would, had to live through his early childhood and many years after without a proper family until he created his own after acquiring freedom. Despite the fact that he states that the separation from their mother made it hard to recognize his siblings as such, his referring to them and other relatives by blood with words such as brother, sister, uncle and aunt hint that he still, to some degree, acknowledged the bonds that connected them.

Douglass was raised by his grandmother, but the first chance at having a complete family came to him when he moved to Baltimore, to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, his wife and their son. Upon meeting Mr. and Mrs. Auld Douglass had this to say: "And here I saw what I had never seen before; it was a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions; it was the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld." (Douglass 25) It was the first time he had experienced what seemed to him like genuine kindness from a white person. The way Mrs. Auld treated young Douglass could be compared to motherly love, something he'd been searching for. However, due to the interference of Master Hugh, lecturing his wife not to teach a slave anything lest it make him unfit for anything good and fit for everything bad, Mrs. Auld's treatment of young Douglass turned for the worse, with time she even became more cruel than her own husband. Later in his life, when Douglass was assaulted by young white men at the ship-yard where he was hired to, Master Hugh and his wife for a moment resembled caring parents again when he came home with injuries, Mrs. Auld intently treating Douglass' injuries and Master Hugh seeking revenge and punishment for those who wronged

him, and when he failed refusing to send Douglass back to not put him in more danger. This was, however, short lived, as Master Hugh went back to exploiting Douglass for his own benefit, only giving Douglass a taste of what a loving family would be like.

While Douglass might have been unsuccessful in trying to replace the parental figures that he lacked, he was far more successful in building relationships with fellow slaves that could be compared to those of biological siblings. This is evident many times when he contemplates his escape, stating that the thing holding him back the most is the fact he does not want to be separated from his friends. Indeed, when he is planning his escape from Master Freeland with a couple fellow slaves, we can see that they confide in each other and support each other, just like brothers would. One of them is even his biological uncle, and another is married to his aunt. He even goes as far as to say they were ready to die for each other. Even though these relationships were all cut short during the course of his life, he managed to finally settle down in New Bedford with his wife, Anna, and become a part of a community of colored people.

While Douglass may not have been successful in replacing the parental figures that he lacked, he managed to find many friends, some of which he became so close to so they could be described as his brothers and sisters. In the end he settled down and became a part of a community with his wife, thus not only finding many brothers and sisters joined by a similar fate, but also being able to create his own family, together with his wife.

Works Cited

Douglass, Frederick, and William L. Garrison. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Boston: Anti-slavery Office, 1845.