

Question 5: Racism and white supremacy

In the 16th to 17th centuries, the search for wealth and a conducive environment for farming and settlement were some of the key driving factors for ‘gold diggers’ to look for. On the other hand, survival was an urgent need for those who were already facing challenges in their very existence in the places they were. This scenario is what Virginia was experiencing during those ancient times. Virginia was an area with good conditions for farming. Elites and other colonial settlers were attracted to these lands to farm and acquire land for settling. Immigrants also wanted to go to front lands to get a better life but because they were poor, they ended up working on the colonial farms to earn a meager income. The demand for labor on these farms encouraged slavery with most of the victims being black (Africans Hopkins, 2016). These factors resulted to increase in population and intermarriages which led to a significant increase in the number of a ‘black’ and ‘white’ skin kind of community.

The elites and other colonial bodies saw themselves as wealthy and hardworking and therefore have an upper hand in owning land and even ruling. The laborers who were majorly Africans were taken as poor, lazy. The women and men were treated differently with black laborers facing fierce punishment from the landlords. As these differences progressed, discrimination grew and even political bodies that gave powers to the whites to rule the blacks developed. This is when racism got much influence. Thomas Jefferson in his documents wrote that all are equal but he was also depicted as a racist. During the racial protests, he was of the idea that ‘a little war here and there helps in setting the country free’. He also wanted to keep the country ‘white’ by stopping the slave trade and barring immigrants who were blacks.

The treatment of African American slaves was more of an animal than a human being. From Olaudah Equiano’s words, these slaves were handled by a fearsome crew whose hold was

filthy. The slaves had inadequate provisions that led some to commit suicide. Harriet Jacobs added that slave girls were raped every now and which led to the splitting of families (Pulido, 2015). Women had no rites to love, sex nor motherhood. Sex violence was a form of terrorism to make women work more and become more obedient to their masters.

Freedmen in the error of reconstruction were given papers to prove their employment. They were also given some rights to marry, own property, and make contracts. However, they could not be given militia positions nor give testimonies against the Whites. In the event of arrests, the freedmen were to be sold as slaves if they failed to pay the fines.

The situations of Reconstruction-error of freedmen like Joe Easley and situations of slaves like Equiano and Jacobs had differences in the way people were handled. Starting with freemen, the living standards were fair with aspects of employment in successful men. Some rights were also available for the freemen to enjoy in the environment with racism. They were also able to own some wealth. On the other hand, the slaves were like dogs (Pulido, 2015). Slave trade always took place with many slaves wasting their skins on metal and timber rods. There were cruel punishments for slaves who were thought to have offended their masters. Human rights were a dream to slaves with women facing the worst experience as far as sexual rites were concerned.

References

Hopkins, P. (2016). Gendering Islamophobia, racism and White supremacy: Gendered violence against those who look Muslim. *Dialogues in human geography*, 6(2), 186-189.

Pulido, L. (2015). Geographies of race and ethnicity 1: White supremacy vs white privilege in environmental racism research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(6), 809-817.