

'The Slave Trade'

The Diary Of Kunta Kinte

The Life in Africa

The Life and conditions I lived in during the 16th and 17th century in Africa was good. Africa was a very hot country with high climates and therefore most people living in our village lived in mud huts and often people did not wear very much. Most days I wore a white cloth as shorts and wooden sandals made by the villagers living in the same area. I lived with my parents and family was an important feature in African life.

We, the African people had our own traditions, which all families chose to follow, we had many strict rules to obey, and most people in my village including myself were Muslims. At birth, when I was born I was brought up in to a caring family, normally the baby was given a name after 8 days of birth. Traditionally it was the fathers' job to name the child, usually the baby was named during the night, he would hold his baby in the air over a lake and would shout out the baby's new name in the name and blessing of God. Other traditions included the 'Sacred Manhood Training' this was a important feature in my life. One afternoon suddenly I was taken from my village I was covered with a yellow sack it was placed on top of my head, I don't remember much but we were forced to walk a long distance in with the sack covering out faces, we all held on to each other and walked in a line one after the other, I did not know was going to happen to us and what these people where going to do to us. At the age of 15 every boy is taken to a sacred part of the village, we are not told about this ceremony by our parents. 'Sacred Manhood Training' it is a tradition of a boy becoming a man. We are trained to hunt, fight, independence and living your life with out our parents. The leader Kantango taught us manhood. I was in a tribe called Mandika, I was proud and my life in Africa was enjoyable. One of the last ceremonies of the 'Sacred Manhood Training' is circumcision. Once this is completed we are ordered to return to our villages and collect our belongings and move to live independently, most of the fathers build a small hut for their son to live after the training.

Most villages living in Africa formed a tribe of warriors, many men in the villages worked as farmers this brought in money to support the family. Women looked after young children or either made little hand nits or ornaments. In the future I would like to become a warrior and work in a tribe but it takes a lot of work and dedication.

The Journey – 'The Middle Passage'

My experience of the distressing and shocking time with the white people when I was convicted in 'The Slave Trade' was an emotional and terrifying time but I stayed brave and I made a promise to myself that one day I would be able to return back to Africa and visit my family.

It all started about a year ago when I was in Africa, we were told to go and hunt for a bird as I searched in woods as I normally would, but I saw a white man with another black man I was very surprised to see them because they dressed and talked differently, I had never seen such different people. One of the white man carried many weapons I had never seen before either, as soon as I saw them I knew there was going to be trouble as I tried running back to the village one of the white man saw me, it seemed as if there were so many of them, they started to chase me I had never ran so fast in my entire life but it was too late...

The next thing I remember was other people falling on top of me, I looked around I was surrounded by lots of other black people locked in wooden cages, the cage were small, dirty and cramped and up to 20 of us were locked in them. I asked one of the men in the same cage as I was in what we were doing here he replied that we were captured, abused, beaten up and whipped with metal chains, as I looked around I saw the horrid site of white men throwing black people in to cages as if we heartless animals. Many of the people were kidnapped by raiding villages across Africa or along coasts I did not know was going to happen to us and what these people were going to do to us, I was frightened but I tried to stay brave and I knew nobody could tear me away from my family.

A couple of hours later we were moved from the cages and we were put in iron neck rings and linked together with our hands and ankles. We were later transported on to ships I had never been on ships or even seen the sea before, it was strange but also frightening. It took between forty and sixty days crossing from Africa to America. The white people often called us niggers and slaves. When a slave ship was due to leave many sailors loaded us as cargo of captives. On board we were stripped naked by white people. Men and women were placed on to separate compartments and many of us were chained in pairs to prevent us from escaping. Each compartment was approximately 1.52 meters long. It was uncomfortable and unhygienic. Many of the people chained together were coughing and this often spread diseases, people also suffered from sea sickness. The compartments were dark, damp and dirty. One of mornings on the journey we were washed they poured cold sea water on our bodies, this stung on my skin as I was covered

with many cuts and bruises. Out on the deck, it seemed as if we were inspected to see if we were still in good health. The following day we were forced to dance this would help us to keep fit and exercise. We were given food to eat but I refused I did not want to eat the white mans food. The meals were rice, yams and horse-beans mixed together, often the food was covered with slabber sauce, this was a mixture of palm oil, water and pepper other meals were old rotten meat with maggots. I felt it was hard for women to stay brave through this time because many women were sexually abused by sailors they would rape them, 'use and abuse' when it suited them.

We were abandoned in poor conditions many people tried to commit suicide or died of illnesses this included small pox which spread rapidly as there was no cure many died. The dead Africans were thrown overboard, also many people tried to end their own lives. Some hung themselves, others jumped overboard and some of the brave fought against the sailors, captains and crew. We tried to take over the ship, sometimes we failed but sometimes we succeed. During my time in the ship I was thinking about the things I would miss about my life back in Africa, different tribes did not mix but we were all chained up we and had no other choice than to help each other.

Arrival - Life as a Slave

As the journey to came to a end on the ships, we were cleaned and we were left outside in cages, one by one each one of us were whipped and then stamps of our initials were pressed against our backs with hot iron, this was painful but I realised if I ever wanted to return back to Africa I had to compromise and do as the white people told me. Later I was surrounded by rich looking wealth high class men and women, it seemed as if they were here to buy us, each of us where sold to these people. Many of them looked at our teeth and our health. Strong healthy black men were sold for \$2000. After the auction I was now property of someone else. Most of us who had just arrived had to be prepared for the harsh filed labour. I worked on farms and plantations, at first the farmers gave me simple work such as weeding, gathering stones and caring of animals, this was known as seasoning.

I began a new life in America my name was changed to Tobi, I was not allowed to call myself Kunta Kinte, I learnt how to speak, read and write English. Sometimes I think about how I wish people called me Kunta Kinte as that is who I am not Tobi. I have always made a promise that I would return to Africa and some day I will, to see my village, friends and family, working as a slave was not how I think people should live their life. Someday I know I will return to the tribe of Mandika.

The Slave Trade

Three years after my experience of the slave trade and the conditions I suffered in, I remember the time as if it was yesterday. I asked many people about the slave trade, The slave trade was a very profitable trade of many countries. In the 15th century Europe explored different lands and discovered Africa and their civilisation. The Europeans had planned to go to Africa and capture men and women as captives and transport them to America on ships. At the time African black people were considered as goods which were to be sold and brought, many often thought of them as animals. By the 18th century , many countries voted to end the slave trade. The abolition of slavery took place when the British began to build a committee together, as a group they all decided to put an end to slavery, as a result it took almost 10 to 15 years to abolish the trade. The slave trade was world wide event and the terrible effects the black people suffered should not be experienced again.

By Poonam Patel 9/4