

Paper Two: Slave: My True Story

Summary

In the book, *Slave: My True Story* by Nazer and Lewis, Nazer describes how her whole world was flipped upside down when Arab Raiders invaded her village forcing her and other children into slavery (2003). Mende was born into a Muslim family in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan and was a part of the Karko tribe. Mende was second in her class in school and had high hopes to become a doctor, since there were no doctors in their village. She went to a school where the teachers only allowed the children to speak Arabic and would beat those who disobeyed and spoke in their native Nuba language. In the Nuba tribe, the more cows a person owned, determined how much money that person had. Mende's family did not have a lot of money as her father worked in the fields to produce food during harvest and made and sold rope to earn money. One night in their village, Mende's father heard a strange noise outside and saw that the village was on fire with people fleeing the scene. The family instantly knew that Arab raiders had invaded the village and were killing people. As Mende and her father were running away from the Arab raiders, a herd of cattle ran over Mende and trampled over her. An Arab raider, who covered her mouth with his hand, took her to his horse where he promised to take her back to her family if she kept quiet. He puts her on his horse and they begin riding to a camp. Along the way, the Arab raider begins fondling her and violating her. When she gets off the horse to go to the bathroom, the man proceeds to rape her while she fights him off. After arriving to the army camp, five girls, including Mende, are hauled off in the back of a pick-up truck to Khartoum by a man named Abdul Azzim. From there, Mende was sold to an Arab family, Rahab and Mustafa. Rahab would have many violent

episodes where she would beat up Mende, even if she did not do anything wrong. Rahab would call Mende yebit, which was a hateful derogatory insult meaning girl who deserves no name. Rahab would not allow Mende to touch anything, including their food or her children, out of fear that Mende was full of diseases because she was Nuba. Mende was only allowed to eat out of a certain bowl and cup. She was also given a spot in the corner to eat the leftovers after the family had finished eating. At the end of the night, she was locked in a cold basement downstairs and was woken up at early times in the morning to be forced to clean the entire house. As time went on, she was told to cook for the whole family and take care of the children, once Rahab believed she was clean to do so. Rahab would often have Mende lie to others, such as the nurses in the hospitals or embassy officials. Rahab would have her do this in order for others to not know that Mende was forced into slavery because this would ultimately have placed Rahab and her family in very big trouble. Rahab and her family seemed to know a lot of people and would bring many people to their home to talk with them. One day when Rahab was going to a wedding, Mende recognized another Nuba girl sitting in the back of Rahab's friends car. Mende and the girl, Kumal were so excited to see each other. Kumal told Mende that her family was all still alive after the raid and gave her the number of the boy who had told her that. This gave Mende newly found hope to escape and find her family. After being in slavery for about six years, Mende was sent to London to live with Rahab's sister Hanin and her husband Al Koronky. Mende's experience was much different here as she was able to sleep inside of the house, eat off the same plates that the family used, and was never beaten. The housework took a lot longer to do because Mende would have to wake up at six in the morning and then go back to bed real late at night. Around Christmas

time, Hanin and Rahab broke their promise to Mende when they sent her to a friend's house, instead of taking her back to Sudan with them for her to see her family. Their friends, Omer and Madina were very nice to her and she even allowed herself to confide in Omer about how she was never paid for her work and worked every single day without a day off. They allowed her to go shopping alone, which gave her many opportunities to find somebody who was Nuba to help her escape and find her family again. After a few failed attempts, she finally finds a man working on a car, who looks to be from Sudan and approaches him. She asked if he knew any Nuba people and he gave her a phone number for her to call. She called the man, Babo, and told him her story. Once she was back at Hanin and Al Koronky's house, they devised a plan where she was to act as if she was throwing away the garbage. After throwing away the garbage, she was to run down the driveway and Babo would be in a car ready to flee the scene. From this day forward, she was able to escape slavery and would go on to receive her citizenship to live in London three years later (Nazer & Lewis, 2003).

Quotes and Application of Class Materials

“Then they all started discussing how nice it was not to have any housework to do. I stopped listening. A final piece of the jigsaw puzzle had just fallen into place for me. From what Rahab had told her friends, it seemed Abdul Azzim made a living out of selling girls like me to Arab families. Abdul Azzim had sold me to Rahab, and that was why Rahab believed that she ‘owned me’” (Nazer & Lewis, 2003, p. 204).

When Mende was captured by the Arab raiders she was only 12 years old and was always told that she would see her family again if she just obeyed them. Mende always had a feeling of loneliness and constantly wondered why Rahab would beat her when she made a mistake. She did not understand why she was taken away from her family and forced to work in a foreign country. She never knew why she was captured or what Abdul Azzim's job was. Not until she

became a little older did she understand the full extent to why she was kidnapped and sold to an Arab family who treated her like the ground they walked on. When she came to this realization, she couldn't believe that this was what her life had come to. She continued to pray to Allah (God) for some way out so she could escape and find her family.

In a child trafficking class reading, *Training Manual to Fight Trafficking Children for Labour, Sexual, and Other Forms of Exploitation*, poverty is a risk factor that increases the chances of somebody becoming a victim of child trafficking (2009, p. 23). The Arab raiders invaded Mende's village and took her and several other children far away from their families. She was then sold to an Arab family who forced her to do domestic work like cleaning, cooking, and taking care of her master's children. Mende showed many signs that she was a child trafficker. She went through numerous amounts of physical abuse from her 'owners' beating her and burning her for sometimes no reason at all. She was also a victim of sexual abuse by one of the Arab raiders and the other many attempts by men through the course of living in Khartoum. In the middle of the book, before she moves to London, she becomes very depressed because she feels there is no escape and feels hopeless that her family is no longer alive. She even has thoughts of suicide to get herself out of this situation ("Training Manual," 2009, p. 18).

"On my little table in the corner of the kitchen, I found that she had put the leftovers from their meal on my plate. I was so hungry I could have eaten anything.... In our village you would give a dog what you couldn't eat in a bowl in the corner of the room. That's exactly how these people were treating me" (Nazer & Lewis, 2003, p. 145).

Mende was often treated horribly by her 'owners' because to them she was not equal. The Arabs thought this because she was of Nuba decent and the Arabs felt more superior to those from Sudan. Mende always felt like there was something wrong with her because Rahab feared that she had some kind of disease due to being Nuba. Mende was always taught by her parents that Allah (God) made everyone the same and that everyone should be treated equally. Mende is

constantly confused by why some of the Arabs treat her as if she is not even human when in reality both the Nuba people and the Arabs believed in the same god.

In the class textbook, Chapter 3: Race, Gender, and Class, Wells explains that people are able to place each other into a race category just by looking at each other (2009, p. 63). Based on the color of Mende's skin, the Arab's felt like she was inferior to them and could treat her like they she was nothing. Wells also goes onto say that a person's social class can be associated with inequality (2003, p. 66). Mende came from a poor Nuba village in Sudan, which contributed to why the Arab raiders came and kidnapped the children. The Arabs seemed to have more money and lived in nicer houses with the latest technology compared to Mende's way of life. Therefore, since the Arab's felt as though they had more money, they felt more superior over the people from Sudan and could force them into slavery more easily.

Personal Reflection

I chose this book because it was a completely different culture from mine and I was interested on the child trafficking topic. I felt like her story was very eye opening and sad at the same time. The information in this story confirmed that human trafficking still occurs today, in first world countries and the importance of taking good care of your child is essential for their development. I recommend this book to anybody who wants to know more information about child trafficking and its process. I also would like to recommend this book to those people who do not believe that these kinds of things no longer occur today or in first world countries. I think many people would be surprised to know that people are being sold into this business under their own free will every day and it is sad that most never find a way to escape or die trying. Based on this book being a true story, it gives the reader the full extent of Mende's experience and gives us incite of what a child trafficker goes through once he or she is captured.