

## McCarthy Clip 6 Transcript

STUDENT: And this was something that was mentioned in the class much earlier, how certain people's stories just aren't documented and can't be documents, by virtue of a lot of reasons. So what are we missing? What is not being properly conveyed? And then to bounce off of that, how work can be done and how much progress can be made if you don't understand all these unspoken stories and unspoken horrors.

TIMOTHY PATRICK MCCARTHY: You know, this is awesome. You're all stirring things up in my head and heart and soul right now. And one of the things that just occurred to me, which I never thought of before in precisely this way-- that several of your comments have been made crystal clear to me, is that there is a disproportionate number of the slave narrators, the authors of these stories, were of mixed racial parentage. And the reality of that, within a system of slavery, is that they were the products of sexual violence, of rapes by white men of enslaved black women.

And I think it is worth-- to your point about intersectionality and about the differences and experiences and also the ways in which these texts can and can't bear witness-- is that if you think about that, the disproportionate number of these slave narrators were of mixed racial parentage, at the core of their literally the production of their selves was a practice of racial and sexual violence that was central to slavery. Then to what extent can these texts bear witness to that? Or to what extent are they silent or incapable of speaking to this?

Because Douglass does speak to it, but again at the very beginning there's a way in which he talks about these intersections of race, and gender, and parentage, and violence, and so forth, and then moves on. So how did these texts bear witness and not-- we'll come back around to this actually, because *12 Years a Slave* does this in a

different way than these texts do, and in a fuller way, in some ways, in a more complicated way.

And then of course, we're going to read both Harry Wilson and Harriet Jacobs later on, which are talking about these things in the context of both locations of slavery and freedom. And so there are going to be multiple ways, I think, to keep exploring this as we move on in the next couple weeks. But this is triggering something in me that I think is really an important connection.

STUDENT: I was going to say something similar to that, going back to earlier is like, how do we reconcile the idea of these authors as representatives for entire peoples' histories? When they all are not-- not all, but a number of them that we've read and that exist have similar bi-racial, man learned to read, either before or after they're enslaved and these are all-- they're anomalies in that sense, in that they're able to tell us their stories.