



12 Years a Slave

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Solomon Northup was born in New York state as a free man. He grew up with parents who were hard-working and established his own family as a young man. In 1841 he was a husband and father of three children who went to Washington DC in the hopes of earning some extra money to support them. Little did he know that his trip would result in him being drugged, beaten and sold into slavery.

Solomon didn't have any way of getting help and soon found that he was transported with others who had been captured south to New Orleans. There wasn't any respect for any of them and he witnessed families being torn apart, whippings and numerous forms of abuse all around him.

Over the years, Solomon didn't have any way of getting help and he was afraid to confront his owners about the fact that he was a free man as he knew that the punishment for doing so would be severe. He was treated so poorly by several masters who referred to him as Platt rather than as his real name.

Solomon was a gifted musician who used his skills on the violin to ease the situation that he found himself in. In fact, he was often told to play for others who would dance to his tunes and he found this satisfying. But the work that he was required to do was backbreaking and the fact that his owners would beat him and his co-workers severely for the least little thing was extremely disturbing to him.

Solomon was always looking for a way to seek his freedom but had to be very cautious as most of the people around him could not be trusted. Twice, however, he was able to motivate men to write letters on his behalf to his friends and family in New York with the hope that they would find him.

Finally, after considerable planning and with support from the government officials, Solomon was rescued from his captivity. After his return to New York and a period of time when he could reunite with family and friends he began writing about his experiences.

"12 Years a Slave" has not only become a powerful book with a Foreward written by Steve McQueen but it is also now a major motion picture.

As I read the true story of Solomon I was deeply saddened by the way that some humans treated other humans with such outright abuse and neglect. Most of the slave owners who Solomon wrote about were only interested in making money and did not have any interest in seeing their slaves as humans. They were just the means to accomplish the end result of making a profit. The way that the slaves were pushed for long hours with strict quotas and then physically beaten was devastating to read about.

Solomon wrote this narrative in a very detailed and honest manner. He provided an interesting perspective as he has lived as a free man and as a slave.

At times, the words in this book are very difficult to read and the whole concept of one human hurting another in such blatant ways is devastating to consider but, completing the read definitely is one that will educate, enlighten you and forever change your perspective about how things used to be in the south.