



2019 Save Texas History Essay Contest

7th Grade Winner

Texas General Land Office
George P. Bush, Commissioner



Aiden Williams

South Houston Intermediate School
Houston, Texas

Freedmen's Town Bricks

To my generation history is something we could look back on to know how the past generation lived and how life was for our ancestors. When we studied history, our country was involved in some of the bloodiest wars. Also, we learned that slavery was a crucial part of our history. History teaches about slavery and about the lives of the Freedmen. After the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation our country experienced a time of segregation. Schools, restaurants, water fountains and almost every other public place were segregated. It even got so bad that Rosa Parks, an African American woman, was sent to the back of a city bus because they did not want African Americans in the front. The reason she had to move seats is because an Anglo American wanted her seat and she refused to give it up. The United States had some good periods in history and some bad periods in history. It is important that we remember the good and bad times.

Freedmen's Town is located in the Fourth Ward of Houston, Texas. This is a section of town that was settled by Freedmen in the mid to late 1800s. In the early 20th century the citizens of Freedmen's Town asked the city to pave the streets. The City of Houston refused the request. The people of Freedmen's Town decided to make their own bricks and lay their own street. This street became known as the Freedmen's Town Bricks. These citizens were freed slaves. These bricks are important to me because I love any topic dealing with slaves. These bricks were laid by the slaves that were freed in the 1800s. Two years ago, the City of Houston needed to fix the sewer and power lines underneath the Freedmen's Town Bricks. They fixed the sewer and power lines, but they never put the bricks back on the ground. Our community was upset because these bricks are a part of our Texas History and the history of freed slaves. These bricks were extremely important to the citizens of the Fourth Ward where the bricks had become part of the community. They wanted to be able to walk outside or look out the window and be able to see what the Freedmen had built. The history of the Freedmen's Town Bricks shows how resourceful the freed slaves were when faced with challenging times. The city would not build the streets, so the freedmen built the





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streets. The story of freedmen's towns across Texas is important to Texas history. We need to preserve as much of this history as possible. My topic values history in a strong way. The Freedmen's Town bricks value history because it is a piece of evidence to show us what the past generation could build and do.

I feel that we should save the Freedmen's Town bricks. For instance, we should advertise the bricks on the news often. I chose the news because I know a lot of people who watch the news morning, evening, and night. So, I believe the people who watch the news would probably care about the history of the bricks. If the Freedmen's Town Bricks were to have a donation fund online, people could donate to keep the bricks preserved. I could be the host of a class about Texas History and promote saving the bricks. The amount to get in my class would be no more than \$10 and the money would be donated to the restoration and preservation of the Freedmen's Town Bricks. As stated above, I really love these bricks and I would want them to stay safe and clean. The community members of the Fourth Ward felt the same way about the bricks. They protested to the City of Houston stating that the bricks needed to be returned to their original location. The City of Houston saw the value of the bricks, so they cleaned up the bricks and put them back on the ground. It is important that these bricks stay here forever to commemorate the demanding work and lifestyle of the citizens of Freedmen's Town.

In conclusion, it is important to save these bricks because it shows us what the people in the past generations could build, create, and their interests. If the Freedmen's bricks are not saved, then all of the effort and time the freed slaves put into those bricks would go to waste and it would be a piece of

Texas History lost and forgotten. I feel that some people should care about my essay because they could find another perspective or feelings about the bricks they did not have before. These bricks should be deemed a historical landmark so that the bricks remain protected from future efforts to remove them.

