

Black laborers on a wharf, James River, Va.

Beyond reading or hearing stories through our lives, pictures remain the most priceless item's we have to re-tell our history. When we read or hear stories about the civil war we paint images in our mind of what we think it would have been like. Actually seeing the pictures of this war actually makes it very real for us. It leaves a very big impact in understanding what really happened or how it felt to live in that war.

I chose the Picture of Black Laborers on a wharf, in James River, VA. I looked through all of the pictures and as each one pulled on my heart string, no other picture had such an impact as this picture did. Looking at this picture my eyes want to go over it looking at everything again and again. I found myself intrigued by all the stories this one picture told. I imagine in my mind what each man seems to be thinking or feeling. It gives you actual images of what it must have been like. Even looking at what clothes they wore moved me, and what they had been through as black men in this era was written all over their faces and in their eyes. This picture was a perfect example of our history.

The inference I see in the picture, is the men sitting closest to the camera aren't participating. They were sitting on the ground on some wood planks looking opposite as the majority of the men were standing. They seem like the odd men out as they look more tired and worn out than the others. Also you see a white man sitting on each end of them. Were these black men the non-compliant ones of the group? It almost seems they were not worthy to stand in the picture. All but one man of the four black men sitting were not looking at the camera, and all of them have looks on their faces of despair and grief.

The African-American Civil War Museum in DC reopened in 2011. In this museum it examines the African American's struggle for freedom and civil rights. This would be the perfect place to go and learn about the Civil War concerning African American's. You will get to see re-enactments from the beginning of the war to the end. It would help to better understand the picture of the black laborers in James River, VA. "Every museum has a mission, and the African-American Civil War Museum makes the point that for some, the Civil War was about secession versus union, but for others, it was a matter of breaking human bondage". (www.viator.com) The museum is also located near the African-American Civil War Memorial. The museum and Memorial go hand in hand in understanding the picture and the struggle going on in the picture.

The picture reflects the black men were laborers during the war. "Most black soldiers, however, were assigned menial tasks behind the lines, such as digging trenches and transporting water". (The Unfinished Nation Pg. 345) In the picture these men are holding shovels and digging tools, some had them slung over their shoulders while others perched them in front of them. They are standing next to a wharf and a river and it is portrayed that they were working there. They look like they were possibly doing some kind of digging as well as working with water, perhaps with fish. This picture captures the black men doing exactly what the quote confirms in the book.

In conclusion, we can read a book and learn some very important facts about the Civil war. Pictures however are stories told with no words. Looking at people, not just their names, but actually witnessing the pain that is written in their eyes that words cannot express.