

Family rootedness and racial dynamics

Family



Living in contemporary America is coupled with different challenges. The fast-paced industry, the cultural diversity, the financial crises, and the indifference among neighbors all cause to build up some form of alienation in most people. The Virginia Tech massacre and other cases of mad shooting illustrate the struggles of some people of different cultures to assimilate in the American society. In Barack Obama's "Dreams from My Father," the author provides some insights on the importance of rootedness to one's family and culture in order to survive and attain success in Contemporary America.

The experiences of the characters lead readers to realize that one can easily undertake struggles in life upon acceptance of family and racial origins. The author attempts to delineate a number of issues, among which is the problem caused by dysfunctional families, a common scenario in the contemporary American society. Children like Obama manage to survive despite the absence of their parents, in some cases both parents are absent, in others like Obama's, the father figure is vague.

Until after his death, Obama's father "remained a myth" (8) to him. He left when Barack was barely two years old, to go back to Kenya, his homeland. The last time he and his son saw each other was when Obama was ten. Due to this, Obama grew up quiet, with some coldness in the way he deals with people, although he always bears respect for others. His acquaintance with an old man who lived in the same building he occupied near Harlem demonstrates this attitude. Never, the absence of Obama's father made him what he is right now.

Although not clearly emphasized, the role of the grandfather in Obama's life, along with his grandmother Toot, compensated for the loss of his father. In a way, Obama lived in the comfort and care of his mother's family. Basically, the importance of family is demonstrated in the way his grandfather compensated the absence of his father. The family dynamics that he grew up with, was basically composed of loving and caring grandparents who usually told him stories of the past in order for him to know his father well, and a mother who served as inspiration and guide through the social service she rendered.

However, the importance of family is later more emphasized with the connectedness of his father's family—the extended family relationships that exist among his relatives in Kenya. Obama witnessed this when he met and visited his cousins. Even though he did not know them as a child, he easily got along with them, owing to belongingness to one family. Aside from the importance of family connectedness, rootedness to one's race and culture is also emphasized. When his father died, Obama had a chance to establish connection with his origins.

Prior to this, he felt he felt some void within him, and enmity towards his father. He wished to understand a lot of things, and saw it timely to go back to his roots. Unexpectedly, he found the answers in Kenya as he listened to stories about his father—his childhood, his struggles to prove himself, the reason why he went to America, and why he went back to Kenya. In the end, he found himself crying over the struggles his father fought, and for losing the man who remained in his shadow. Finding the answers to his questions about origins made Obama whole.

<https://assignbuster.com/family-rootedness-and-racial-dynamics/>

For a long time, he did not realize that his father shared the struggles he fought. Although they had different situations, he understood that what his father bore was a lot heavier than his. Specifically, his father's struggle to prove himself to the grandfather and to the rest of the world was double that of Obama when he was younger. For his father, going back to Kenya was the only way to regain himself though it was also a way to face his childhood fears. Despite the pains he tried to leave behind in relation to his past, the older Barack still went back to his people and chose to serve them.

Such rootedness to race and culture taught the son the importance of knowing one's origins. Clearly, the efforts Obama made to get to know his origins led him to what he is now. As he suggests, survival in contemporary American society is difficult. Racial discrimination, although it did not totally affect him, was rampant. Nevertheless, it made him long for his past. The presence of his mother was definitely not enough to fill in the father figure he missed, not to mention his mother's difficulty to raise him and his sister apart from Obama's grandparents.

At the end, he still needed to know both his father and the race that brought his father up in order to be whole. Knowing one's past is further emphasized as Barack struggles to build his own family. Lacking the father figure, he himself found it difficult to be an ideal father and husband that he wanted to be. His struggles can be rooted from his own experience, mainly due to the dysfunctional family that he came from. Nevertheless, when he finally gained the opportunity to know his roots, he found the courage to continue and reunite with his family.

Based on this, the author makes us realize the importance of rootedness to one's past and race relations. The familiarity of his aunt Nairobi as she calls her nephew Barry to inform him of his father's death demonstrates the connectedness of the Kenyans, which other cultures can learn from. For them, distance and unfamiliarity are not barriers to achieving unity and love. Rather, racial dynamics are too strong, enough to conquer physical and cultural boundaries.