

Stranger in the village essay



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James Baldwin's, *A Stranger in the Village*, is a narrative set in a remote village in Switzerland. Baldwin realizes he is probably the only black person the villagers have ever seen. He brings a uniqueness that fascinates the natives, who ultimately come to accept him on his return visits but always look at him as some sort of natural wonder.

Baldwin begins to see from his experience in the village how racism against blacks has originated. The title of the essay portrays a black man (the stranger) to a village of unassuming white men. James Baldwin himself was a novelist, essayist, playwright, poet and social critic. He seemed to be staying in the village for peace and quiet and the affordability while he writes.

James Baldwin conveys the message of how racism was prevalent even in a small village far from the domineering influence of America: "yet they move with an authority which I shall never have; and they regard me, quite rightly, not only as a stranger in the village but as a suspect latecomer, bearing no credentials, to everything they have-however unconsciously-inherited" (Baldwin). He longs to be recognized for the person he is and not the oddity he has become in the remote village. He does not consider himself a stranger in America but by returning to the village he develops a deeper understanding that there was a time even in America where seeing a black man for the first time must have been just as shocking to them as it was to the villagers. That the racism actually was started by the Europeans being that America was made up of Europeans.

He believes there is a great difference between being the first white man to be seen by Africans and being the first black man to be seen by whites.

Baldwin believes that the white man was only there to “conquer and convert” the natives who were far inferior to them. The astonishment of the natives was seen only as tribute to the white man. Baldwin wants not to be seen as an “exotic rarity” but as a human being..

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