

Black like me research paper sample

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Black like me

Plato, one of the most famed philosophy, reiterated that it is only in the light of justice that we can be able to truly define the real measure of an individual's view; whether it existed or not. He further reflected that the non-existence of justice is the non-existence of what defines one as a man. This statement manages to capture what author Griffin faced during his self imposed experiment. In addition, the saying covers the widespread racial discrimination when he was writing his book; black like me. During this time, justice was a mirage to the black community in the United States. This resulted in the existence of a divide between the black and white community. Blacks only accepted other blacks while white respected other whites and disregarded all the other people. To this end, this paper aims at looking into how race is constructed in the book ' Black Like Me'. In addition, the paper will look into how this construction conforms to or challenges existing dominant ideologies of race in the United States.

In his story, Griffin was able to switch colors; between white and black. At some point, he decided on carrying out a full blown experiment whereby he would change his color to black. After changing to black, he was able to experience racism as a first class black man. In his experiment, black was subdued to stereotypes of the black man being of a lesser caliber than a white man. This led to the inception of segregation laws that prevented him from accessing amenities that he had undertaken for granted; as a white man. In the book, the act of lesser individuals is widely portrayed. In one instance in the book, Griffin states that, ' The white man continued to stare

at me, his mouth agape with loathing’ This was before Griffin was told to wait in a colored only waiting room. In another scene, Griffin fails to secure a job, and a cashier refuses to cash his checks. All these acts of discrimination arise due to Griffin’s color.

With respect to Griffin, he was able to find out that there existed a wide rift between blacks and whites. Black people could only share with white people while the whites kept to their fellow whites. In one scene, a black man takes Griffin to his home and even offers hospitality. The black people talk to him a warm way due to his being black. The same also happens when he turns white. However, all this warmth offered by the blacks disappear the moment he turns back white. This picture of the existence of a rift in America between blacks and whites conforms to a dominant idea of the existence of a rift. Even after the end of an era of open hostility towards the blacks, loathing of blacks is still in existence. In a recent article, Trevor Tompson and Ron Fournier, of the associated press, reflected that a third of individuals supporting the Democratic Party harbored negative feelings towards black people. The journalist reiterated that the individuals considered the blacks as being lazy, violent, and as the major contributors to their individual problems.

In retrospective, Griffin is able to explore the issue of racism in ways that other authors could not comprehend. This is derived from the fact that he managed to relive what being black meant. In addition, Griffin had the experience of being white. Thus, Griffin was, and still is, the best positioned author on the issue. In relation to authors Lipsitz and Du Bois, Griffin

manages to propagate their view of being black. According to Lipsitz, being white meant that one had a higher chance of excelling in life. This is based on the fact that the existing system was designed to work for the whites. This means that blacks were excluded from everything that can be termed as desirable. In the book, white individuals were given priority over other colored individuals.

In the case of Du Bois, he expressly brought about the issue of two-ness in an individual. Du Bois explained that issue of two-ness arose in a situation whereby an individual tended to view themselves as being one in two. In the case of a black individual, one could see themselves as being American and a Negro. This issue is widely reflected by Griffin. All blacks, in the book, are American citizens. However, they face widespread discrimination based on the fact that they are Negroes. In those times, a Negro was considered as being a second class citizen. Until current times, the blacks also came to believe this aspect of two-ness. They saw themselves as Americans, but were afraid to fight for positions of power, excel in prestigious fields, and widely relay their feelings regarding the various matters. To some extent, blacks considered themselves as being lesser to other people.

In addition, some books that I have read wrote about this clandestine existence of the blacks during these turbulent times. One of them is Dick Gregory who later on wrote a book entitled ' Nigger'. The book revolves around the author's life as a black man. During this time, the term ' nigger' was considered as the accepted term for referring to a black person. Gregory even starts jokingly by stating that, ' Dear Momma—Wherever you are, if

ever you hear the word " nigger" again, remember they are advertising my book' The writer then goes on to describe instances of segregation and mistreatment based on color. Another book that revolves on the same issue is Maya Angelou's-' I know why the caged bird sings'. The book is an autobiography of Maya and discusses her earlier life as a black girl. The author talks about racism, rape, and identity. She brings out the aspect of blacks being considered as lesser human beings. In addition, she wrote about women living in a society that was privy to male domination.

In conclusion, Griffin's construction of race reflects what exists in the American society today. However, the difference is seen where it was a widely expected proposition that black people were not to be heard during Griffin's time. In the current times, the issue of racism is widely construed to represent something different. In this case, the society indirectly accepts the limitation of the black person. In addition, colored people are able to access a majority of amenities that were not open to blacks. The reflections of Griffin parallel those of other writers like Du Bois, Lipsitz, Maya Angelou, and Dick Gregory. Thus, Griffin's construction of race is a reflection of the current situation; although indirectly.

References

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