

Good example of quicksand essay

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In the scene in Chapter 3 where Helga Crane confronts the principal after deciding to leave Naxos, Larsen in *Graceland* heavily discusses the idea of ‘black uplift’ – the notion that black people should work to better themselves in order to deserve the same opportunities as whites. The Naxos school is ostensibly meant to be one of those places where blacks are able to teach other blacks the ways of the world; however, as Crane notices, this just turns the environment into a stifling one, with little color or innovation provided. In essence, these ‘black uplift’ schools merely seem to be a way to strip black people of any sort of character or differentiating features about them – effectively whitewashing them. As Crane notes, “ These people yapped loudly about race, of race consciousness, of race pride, and yet suppressed its most delightful manifestations” (Larsen, Chapter 3). Ostensibly, the idea of black uplift sounds good, but the way it is usually implemented in this time is complicated and problematic.

In this scene, our understanding of the historical movement for black uplift is called into question, allowing us to put the real motives of the administrators of schools like Naxos under a microscope. Crane goes to the school expecting to be able to explore her blackness and for the kids to do the same, but everything good about who they are is stifled under an old-fashioned white-centric idea of proper dress and conservative attitudes. Even the principal’s attempts to keep her reek of patronization and a desire to look at her as more than she is because she is black, though she admits her family life is terrible (and therefore she does not deserve to teach at Naxos). To that end, the idea of black uplift as a concept is complicated by the realities and conservatism of the real institutions as represented by Larsen in

Quicksand, showing that the very concept can be alienating, patronizing and ill-executed.

Works Cited

Larsen, Nella. Quicksand. Start Publishing LLC, 2013.