

Free essay on rudolf fisher and the new negro movement

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Introduction

When Rudolf Fisher returned to his predominantly-black town called Harlem after five years, he found many unanticipated changes. Whites dominated many social places including those that were previously controlled, run and frequented by black people. Many black-owned cabaret groups had changed their names and turned to white ideals in order to match-up to the entertainment demands and styles of whites who had settled in Harlem. This situation affected the works of black artists and intellectuals in furthering the ideals that were associated with the New Negro Movement.

The situation caused the Negro artists and intellectuals to take a back seat in the running of their own affairs. White settlement in Harlem disrupted the ideals of the Negro Movement. The movement valued black music and cabarets were integral in the entertainment of black Harlem residents (Patton, Venetria & Maureen, 45). There was no cover-charge for one to attend a cabaret and a bottle of Whistle worth fifteen-cents used to last an hour (Fisher, 393). This shows the extreme love for cabarets and the dedication with which black people immersed themselves in entertainment. The Negroes movement viewed cabarets as the ideal way to celebrate the

heroes who had returned from war. Black people deeply valued some activities and places and they gave them identity. An entertainment spot known as Lybia was the ultimate place for blacks who wanted to belong! “The people you saw in church in the morning, you met them at Lybia ant night” (Fisher, 393). Fisher mentions black people of all classes such as Fritz pollard an All-American halfback, preacher Harry Bragg, Harvard’s Jimmie Maclendon as some high-profile blacks who used to frequent Lybia (394). Such was the strong attachment of black people and their social life that their ideal life was modeled along popular entertainers such as Henry Creamer, Paul Robeson and Turner Layton among others (Fisher, 394). Young black girls idealized older black musicians who sang with throaty roughness that was so characteristic voice of black female musicians. These among other ideals were the pillars upon which the New Negro Movement was founded and thrived prior to their town being taken over by white people.

White invasion of Harlem pushed blacks to the periphery of their ideals. Places that they used to dominate have been taken over by whites and they now enjoy less social life. According to Fisher, in the past blacks used to go to some entertainment and social spots night after night but after the whites took over Harlem, “ it is I (Fisher-a black person) who go occasionally and white people who go night after night” (394).

Prior to Whites taking over Harlem, blacks used to earn livelihoods through entertainment, businesses and basically control the economy of Harlem. Blacks were patrons in black-owned businesses however after the whites took over the place, “ manager do not hesitate to say that it is upon these

predominant whites that they depend for success". According to (Patton, Venetria & Maureen, 48) whites now seem to own the place. He confesses that unlike in the past when he was comfortable mingling with fellow black people in Harlem, he is now " stared at" (Fisher, 395).

Black people have been compelled to the status of mere " spectators" in a place where they used to be the sole actors. In the past white people used to visit cabarets to see black people act but now black people visited cabarets to see white people act.

Talented black artists have cowed under the racial changes that have occurred in Harlem. Artists such as Eddie Hunter who used to amuse people " by making a goat of others in instead of making a goat of himself" now lives in denial (Fisher, 396). He tried in vain to get first class showing at Broadway but he and other blacks of his caliber were not lucky. Black artists who participate in cabarets at Harlem get the opportunity courtesy of " those special Negro features which have a particular and peculiar appeal". This leaves out many other artists who are equally talented and as such kills the talent among black people living in Harlem.

The fad associated with black entertainment groups has died down. Fisher mentions how waning interest and internal dispensation hastened disruption in a certain artists' group. Sissle and Blake used to write the songs while Miller and Lyles made the songs famous. The two parties differed on the sharing of proceeds probably because their demand had declined and they were struggling to make money when whites started demanding less of entertainment from Black artists. This situation led to a deadlock and an ultimate split of the group.

The invasion of Harlem by white people compelled black artists whose demand had declined to seek greener pastures elsewhere. Creamer and Layton split up with Creamer being left to run the Cotton Club while Layton left for England (Fisher, 397). Other blacks such as Hayes and Robeson were making names for themselves on English soil and this provided an avenue for Black American artists to redeem their lost glory. Black artists found out that they were in high demand in Britain and they used to “earn more in a week than they used to earn over there (Harlem when white people took over its operations)” (Fisher, 397).

Conclusion

When Rudolf Fisher left his town-Harlem, cabarets were the choice entertainment for blacks. However, when he came back, whites had settled in his town and taken over almost every aspect of the previously black-dominated town. Black identity entertainment spots such as Edmonds, Lybia, and the Hayne’s among other now catered to white patrons. Black entertainers were also compelled to entertain whites and the glamour of black-run cabarets was gone. Many black entertainers such as Layton, Hayes and Robeson went to England where their music was appreciated and they made better livelihoods. Whites took over the dances and the black cabaret entertainment and with it the many ideals of the New Negro Movement. The disruption of black entertainment and social lives affected the works of black artists and intellectuals in furthering the ideals that were associated with the New Negro Movement.

Works Cited

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