

What is means to be an outsider in america?

Countries, United States



What is means to be an outsider in America? Throughout history, America has encountered battles of racism, discrimination, and segregation. Victory of these social battles did not guarantee that these issues still wouldn't occur. In America today, many people are still affected by racism, discrimination and segregation. American writers such as Langston Hughes, Aurora Levins Morales, and Gertrude Bonnin have experienced the feeling of being an outsider differently. Through their writings, we can begin to understand how it felt to be an outsider in their time period as well as the present where some of these issues still occur. Langston Hughes was not only an outcast in society but also in his home environment. Had this experience caused him to become a strong voice for the black community? Hughes was said to be the most original African American poet. In his writings, Hughes discussed the issues that had happened because of racism and made a personal connection. These personal connections made his writings unique. In his poem, " Negro, " Hughes discussed the issue of racism and how he had different roles as a black male. " I've been a slave... I've been a worker...I've been a singer...I've been a victim...I am a Negro. As an African-American in America, they were obligated to call to the white. In the line, " I've been a slave: Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean. " (Line4-5) Through this quote, we understand that he had to do what the whites had wanted. Hughes knew what it was to feel the way that these lines express. In order to be a successful African- American they had to be hard-working but no lose themselves in the struggles. In this quote, Hughes is showing how they could not lose a part of themselves they still had their culture with them, " I've been a singer: All the way from Africa to Georgia. "

We are all people and there shouldn't be a reason why someone should feel like they are being victimized. " I've been a victim: The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo. They lynch me still in Mississippi. " Hughes is showing that these violent things happen to blacks because of their skin color.

African-Americans experienced extreme cruelty because they are minorities.

These violent crimes still happen in today's world. Earlier this year, a young teenager was shot to death because of racial profiling. A man was accusing this young boy of looking suspicious simply because he was a young black male in a gated community. The man felt that this young boy was a threat to the community but in fact he was just visiting his father that lived there. Had it been a young white male that was unfamiliar to the community the outcome of this crime would have been different. In his poem, " I, Too, "

Hughes talks about the isolation and rejection that was felt just because of their skin color. " I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen. " (Lines 2-3)

African- Americans were put at a different social status therefore they did not have the right to be with whites because they were seen to be lower than them. Being a minority in America, I can relate to the hardships that Morales felt throughout her experiences. America is a country full of diversity and being that, we should not feel like we can't be ourselves.

Different cultures, religions, and traditions make up of America because immigrants settled here to find a better life for their families. There is no true American. Why should Morales feel the need to hide who she is? Is it acceptable to feel like we have to hide our true selves to fit in? " She could no longer keep her accent under lock and key. " (pg. 3470) Morales should be proud to show who she is. The accent should make her feel powerful

because she still hasn't let go of her true culture which makes her who she is, a Puerto Rican woman. " The Puertoricanness of which she had kept hidden all these years, " In this quote, Morales is clearly demonstrated how she had this desire to fit in even if that meant forgetting her culture. Similar to Morales, when I began school in Connecticut, I felt like I had to hide who I was. On my first day of first grade I couldn't have felt any worse. One of my classmates had asked me, " Why do you look different? " I didn't know how to respond to that because I was so young so I just stood quite. I would never forget those words because soon enough those words would shape the way I was in school. At first, I felt so proud that I was born in Puerto Rico and to me that was amazing. As years went by, I tried to hide my culture. I just wanted to fit in with everyone else. But as I grew older, I realized that I shouldn't have to hide who I was because being a Hispanic was who I was and I could not change it so I embraced my culture. In Puertoricanness, Morales says, " It was Puerto Rico waking up inside her, uncurling and shoving open the door she had kept nearly shut for years and years. " Unlike Langston Hughes, Morales was afraid to show who she was. In Zitkala-Sa's works, she demonstrates how she was an outsider as a Native American. One would think that since Native Americans settled in America first, they discrimination would not be so harsh. Native Americans were viewed as savages that had to be civilized. Native American young boys and girls were sent to boarding school to learn English and become Christian. In other words, their culture was ripped away from them. In the School Days of an Indian Girl, Zitkala-Sa talks about her experience in a boarding school in trying to keep one of the her culture and not let it disintegrate. The most significant part in this story

is when her hair was cut because all the children were required to have short hair. This was among one of the biggest dishonor for her. In the Indian tribe, long hair was a symbol for strength of their spirit. Zitkala-Sa's mother told her that, " only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards! " (1061) When her hair was cut it was devastating for her because a part of her was gone. Zitkala-Sa says, " For now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder. " (1061) through this statement, we can experience the feeling of hurt because she felt like she had nothing left of her Indian culture. After returning home after three years in boarding school, Zitkala-Sa felt much pain because she could not express to anyone how she felt because there was no one to relate to. None of her family members could relate to her feelings because none of them had attended a boarding school. She says, " My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write. I was ...neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. " She felt she didn't fit in anyplace and cried, but illuminating her suffering didn't help the situation. " After an uncertain solitude, I was suddenly aroused by a loud cry piercing the night. It was my mother's voice wailing among the barren hills which held the bones of buried warriors. She called aloud for her brothers' spirits to support her in her helpless misery. My fingers grew icy cold, as I realized that my unrestrained tears had betrayed my suffering to her, and she was grieving for me. " (1065) Zitkala- Sa took the suffering and hardships to empower her to become an educated young woman. Achieving all of these goals, her mother did not approve of because she had become

an Americanized teenager no longer relying on her parents. Just like Zitkala-Sa , Native Americans still experience hardships today. The majority of Native Americans don't have to attend boarding schools like Zitkala-Sa did but educational issues still happen. About more than half of Native Americans have dropped out of high school, making it more difficult to attain jobs which lead to a high rate of poverty in the reservations. Like Hughes, Zitkala-Sa stood up to the challenges she faced and became successful. Hughes and Zitkala-Sa were driven to achieve goals despite their race and any prejudices that came to them. America is known as the land of opportunity. America has been populated by immigrants as early as the 1800s. Being that America has been populated by immigrants why is it that we still are discriminated against because of our races, religion, culture, etc. There should not be a reason to feel like we don't belong when America is the " melting pot of cultures. " As time has passed and civil rights cases have been fought, we still see racism today. Children grow up in a society where we are looked at differently because of skin colors, when that should not be the case. As a United States, we should not allow anyone to feel that they are outsiders. In American literature, many writers and poets have dealt with the hardships because of their race. Langston Hughes and Zitkala-Sa did not feel ashamed of who they were, instead they were fighting against the prejudices and discriminations to prove to themselves along with everyone that they had the right to feel that they belonged. Morales tried to hide her culture and fit in but in the end, her culture came out. No one should be afraid to show who they really are to impress others. Hughes, Zitkala-Sa, and Morales have opened up Americans' eyes to see the way they felt being an

outsider in the United States. People have many different understandings of what it is to be an American. In the reality of it all, there is no true definition of what an American is; it is up to one's interpretation and perspective.