

Role of society in everyday use short story

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



One Day Use

Final: Rewritten Narrative for “Everyday Use”

Society's investment in whiteness forces people of color to suppress elements of their cultural identities to comply with white uniformity. I believe that adding to the narrative of “Everyday Use” and illuminating the experiences of the character Dee, or Wangero, will present to the reader how this investment functions. Dee expresses this common act of people of color where they erase certain pieces of their identity in order to conform. In my narrative, not only is white conformity present for Dee, there is a need for her to conform to the Black community. These different parallels will be expressed through different periods of her life. I want to add to Dee's childhood and continue to her life before her visit back home from college. Familial relationships also help to illuminate this struggle of conformity and erasure of one's home life. I think it is important to reexamine the relationship between not only Dee and Mama but also introduce and explore the relationship between Grandmama and Dee. In order to express the ways Dee has suppressed pieces of her identity to match society's standards, I want to highlight her experiences with some of my own. Combining Dee's experiences with the expectations of society's definition of Blackness, one can better relate and view Dee's behavior through a clearer lense.

Greased fingers intertwined with hair all down her scalp, creating a pattern row after row. Dee remembered this time to keep still and to hold onto each section while Grandmama braided the other sections. “These will last you all week if you keep out that dirt. This is probably the best job I done, ” Grandmama told Dee as she smiled down at her. Dee excitedly sprinted to

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the mirror, almost running into it. She ran her hand down the back of her head, feeling the texture of the two tight braids.

“ Thank you Grandmama! I hope my new friends and my new teacher will like it.”

“ And if they don’t?” Grandmama asked.

“ Then they don’t have no sense!” Dee stated confidently with her one-toothed smile. Her eyes ran up and down her tiny figure in the mirror, catching the safety pin on her brown corduroy skirt that was two sizes too big and the black leather sandals. She was especially excited to wear the dark green sweater Mama got her for her first day. Dee noticed Grandmama had left the room and came back with a faded yellow turtleneck. “ I wanted you to wear this on your first day Dee. It was your mother’s when she was in school and I believe I seen’t lots of kids wearing ones just like it at the store yesterday. It got a little hole it in but you can’t tell.” Dee’s smile grew as she put it over her head and tugged it down to her waist. It was a perfect fit and helped her complete her perfect outfit for her first day. “ I love it Grandmama, thank you! I’m gonna have the sharpest outfit there.”

“ Yes you are.” Grandmama chuckled.

Dee was excited to start at the school that Mama claimed was for smart kids. Since Maggie was back, Mama said Dee was finally allowed to start school. Every time Maggie left, so did Mama, and Dee was left with Grandmama at the house. Sometimes Dee liked it better that way.

“ We best get going, your Mama will have a fit if you are late on your first day,” Grandmama called at her as she started to get ready to walk out the door. “ You know how that big ol’ woman gets when she’s mad.” Frightened from her mother’s past behaviors, Dee grabbed her lunch sack and ran out the door before Grandmama could say anything else.

As they walked to Dee’s new school, Grandmama had Dee count to 30 and then state all the colors of the rainbow, primary and secondary. By the time Dee was done, they were in front of a big white two-story building. Kids were on the playground adjacent to the building and running up the steps through the two big wooden doors. A pit in Dee’s stomach started to form, and she turned frantically to her Grandmama, asking with her eyes if she really had to go. Grandmama gave her a stern look back causing Dee to gulp and take a step forward.

“ Dee, I got to get back to Maggie. But, I’ll be right here waiting when you finish,” said Grandmama, “ so don’t you worry now, you will be just fine. Now, go make some friends and learn something new for Grandmama, alright Dee?” Dee nodded, and gulped again. She started up the large grey steps and took one last look at Grandmama before she walked through the doors. Grandmama smiled and waved as she turned back down the street towards home.

Dee walked through the doors, coming to a long hallway of classroom doors and lots of other children walking, laughing, and talking. They were dressed in numerous different shades of pinks, greens, blues and yellows. A large bell sound rang throughout the hallways and the children began to start entering

the classroom doors. Some glanced her way and some barely noticed her. Her eyes darted from door to door with different letters and numbers, which helped her remember the room that Mama told her to go to for her class.

“ 11B...11B...11B...” Dee whispered to herself as she passed 7A, then 9B, then finally 11B. The door was already open, with most kids inside already. A tall white woman was finishing up writing sentences on the chalkboard as Dee walked up to her.

“ He... hel-hello...” Dee almost whispered. The woman spun around and an insincere huge smile that was already planted on her face.

“ HI! WELCOME! WELCOME!” The woman jittered up and down with her hands pressed so tight together that her knuckles started to turn white. “ Are you Dee? You must be Dee.”

“ Yes... I am Dee,” she replied.

“ Dee is in 11B! Doesn't that have a ring to it?” Dee started to look around the room as the children began to pay attention to the hyper woman. “ I am Ms. Daley, your teacher. I am so excited that you will be joining us.” She turned towards the children in the class.

“ Okay y'all, class is starting, let's get to our seats. I have some super exciting news for you all.” She said as she leaned in towards the class.

She wailed her arms out towards the class and introduced Dee. “ This is Dee, she will be joining our class a little late, but I trust you all will bring her up to speed.”

“ Why do your hair look like that?” one of the girls in the front of the classroom immediately blurted out. “ My momma got a extra pressing comb if you want someone to fix that mess on your head.” The class giggled while Dee’s eyes shot down to the floor in embarrassment.

Ms. Daley turned to the girl and scolded her. “ Shirley! We will be respectful to our new student.” Ms. Daley tightly clasped Dee’s shoulder and gave her a firm shake. She nudged Dee towards a desk in the third row. “ Go ahead and have a seat so we can begin.”

While eyes followed her to the third row, Dee plopped down in the seat and sighed. As Ms. Daley went over the colors of the rainbow, Dee snuck looks at the other children inside the room. As she did in the hallway, she saw nothing but bright colors on clothing pieces like freshly pressed dresses, frilly socks, fancy blouses, flared bottoms and jumpers.

The extravagant clothing around her forced her to look down at her own outfit, especially her frumpy brown shoes. A crumpled piece of paper was thrown at her feet. She looked up and saw Shirley making a face, her eyes darting from Dee to the note. Dee picked it up and unraveled it revealing scribbled writing that said:

My momma said those shoes are made for little girls who are poor. Also, you got big feet.

After the class was dismissed for recess, Dee was reluctant to get up right away, embarrassed by her dull outfit. Her fingers grasped her sweater as she finally got the courage to walk with the class. She stood out amongst her

classmates like a weed in a bed of roses. Dee followed the children to the playground and paid special attention to the other Black girls. She watched the movement of their sleek, dark hair and watched them play double dutch with the shiny patent shoes on their feet. The happiness expressed on their faces with their gleaming smiles reminded Dee of the way Mama smiles when Maggie is home.

She walked to the bathroom, taking out the braids Grandmama placed in her head that morning. She raked her hands through her coarse hair and tried to pull the strands of her hair down and pull her kinks and curls straight with her fingers. She smoothed down the sides of her hair, just like how the other girls did it. She took a look at the gaping hole in her turtleneck, as if it was waiting to be filled by something more than just cloth and thread.

When school was over, Grandmama was waiting for for Dee exactly where she said she would be.

“ See you tomorrow Shirley! And don’t forget to ask your momma.” Dee yelled as she waved and walked away from her new friend and towards her Grandmama.

“ You made a friend? And ask her momma about what now?” Grandmama questioned as Dee handed her lunch box to her.

“ Shirley said her momma gots a hot comb that I could use for my hair. She said it’s too nappy but she can fix it with the hot comb if I come over her house.”

“ You don’t need to fix nothing, your hair is beautiful as is. You better not let nobody tell you different.” Grandmama told her, but Dee’s mind was somewhere else. She was thinking of what she could wear tomorrow to match the other kids at school. She had a blue skirt she could wear that looked like Shirley’s and a orange blouse that belonged to Maggie that she borrowed sometimes.

“ Dee?” Grandmama tried to get her attention. “ Dee?”

“ Hold on Grandmama, I’m thinking.” Grandmama sighed and looked around at the other children, reminding her to pick up Maggie’s prescription before they went home.

“ Well I hope you had a good first day.”

“ I did.” Dee replied. While Grandmama glanced down at Dee she noticed a familiar shade of yellow in the corner of her eye off in the distance. As she looked closer, she realized it was the yellow turtleneck on the ground in the mud, as if it was meant to be hidden. She turned back to Dee and saw the dried up mud on the sides of her shoes.

“ Dee, what happened to that turtleneck I gave you earlier?”

“ Oh, I spilled something on it and I lost it.” Dee said, while careful not to move her gaze in the direction of the turtleneck on the floor.

Grandmama said nothing more and turned away from Dee as tears started to form in her eyes. “ So, if Shirley’s momma says I can come over, can I go get my hair pressed?” Dee asked.

“ Of course, baby.” Grandmama replied, not able to make eye contact with her granddaughter.

“ Mama!” Dee called out. “ Maggie!” There was no reply. “ We are going to be late. I’m going to be late.”

Dee paced back and forth, her eyes avoiding the portrait of Grandmama on the wall. Years later, and the house still felt different without her presence, however nothing has changed. On the walls, the same pictures were still hanging, and the burgundy couch with three rips and one hole in it remained at the center of the room. Dee was still the only one who used the couch, even though every time she sat down the rip grew bigger. Dee frantically ran up a few stairs in her chunky black kitten heels and yelled up the staircase, “ Hello? I know you guys can hear me. I refuse to be late.”

“ We coming.” Mama said, but she thought to herself of what she really wanted to say to Dee. ‘ You better calm yourself down, I don’t know who in the hell you think you’re talking to. Just because you are entering college now don’t mean jackshit, I will still slap you into next week if you disrespect me girl.’ Every stair creaked as she placed each foot down.

“ Okay, but in order to make orientation on time, we have to leave now. The car still needs to be packed as well.” Dee was extremely nervous, and while she didn’t mean to take it out on Mama and Maggie, they were making it easy to do so. She turned back towards the staircase. “ Where is Maggie?”

“ Right here, let’s go.” Maggie said as she ran down the stairs and planted herself in front of the door.

“ Alright let’s get moving then.” Mama told them both. As Mama loaded the car, Dee slid on her yellow peacoat. She was proud of her outfit, with a cream colored pressed skirt and a new white blouse from that new department store that opened up down the street at the mall. Her hair was pressed, as usual, to a bone-straight style with a heavenly vanilla scent. She decided on a muted pink lipstick and a touch of blush to her cheeks.

Dee was not only nervous, but also excited to be starting school at a Historically Black College, where she would be surrounded by other Black people with similar goals and aspirations as her. Future Black lawyers and doctors excited her, compared to the Blacks at her high school who just wanted to be apart of that Panther group that always started trouble. She was excited to finally be around people like her.

The whole two hour drive Dee listened to her favorite Paul McCartney tape and tried to predict what her new institution would look like and what it would embody. She didn’t know the exact discipline she wanted to study, but she know that she was going to be successful in doing so.

Once they got to their destination of Dee’s new school, Mama unloaded the car and they all said their goodbyes. Dee watched the car drive off in the distance as she was left to check-in and move into her room.

Dee entered the large room of melanated people and her eyes instantly met with a pair of hazel ones about five feet away. It was a man who was dressed in all-black, a leather jacket and a yellow beret. He smirked as crinkles formed in the corner of his eyes. Dee smiled back. His hands were wrapped

around a camera, which he lifted up to his eyes and pressed his index finger to the shutter button. Snap! The sound of the shutter made a click as a flash temporarily blinded Dee. She felt her face grow hot as his smile grew while he assessed the photo. He nodded towards her, then turned in another direction walking away.

She watched as he snapped pictures of other women with large afros, extremely revealing cropped shirts, flared jeans and sky-high platforms. “ Beautiful!” He even shouted out to one of the women. Dee’s eyes wandered around the room as she noticed it was filled with afros and bared midriffs. She could not find a single head of pressed hair, neither pressed pencil skirts and heels. She ran her fingers through her hair surveying the room one last time. How were all these students going to be lawyers and doctors if they looked this way? Dee thought to herself, perplexed. She ran her finger through her straight hair one last time before spinning around on her kitten heels and walking out the door.

It was a little after midnight when Dee heard a knock on her door. She put down the magazine she was flipping through and looked around startled. She just finished wrapping her hair and changing into her nightgown; it was the one that she took from Grandmama’s drawer when she passed. Dee frantically walked around the room and then finally ended up at the door. As she creeped opened the door, she hoped that it wasn’t anyone important seeing her in this state. She was met with a familiar pair of hazel eyes and a yellow beret.

“ Hey.” He said as his eyes landed on her nightgown, causing him to chuckle.

“ I wanted to give you this.”

Dee was still in shock from her unexpected visitor to where she barely noticed his hand reached out to her holding something small and square. She glanced down and saw it was the photograph he took of her earlier. There were others around her all dressed up in colorful and trendy outfits and she was there in her peacoat and pressed skirt out of place. A frown started to form as she realized she was again, a weed in a bed of roses. The man saw Dee’s reaction and said, “ Damn my skills that bad?”

“ No, no. Not at all.” Dee said as feelings of distress came over her. “ I’m just unsure if I made the right decision to come here. I don’t think I fit in here and it isn’t what I expected.”

“ I don’t see why, your tignon is looking groovy as hell girl.”

“ Tignon?”

“ Your headwrap?”

Dee touched her headscarf and realized what he actually mean. “ Oh, yeah. My grandma taught me how to tie it when I was younger.” Dee made a mental note to research what a tignon was.

“ She was definitely doing something.” He smiled and snapped another picture of her. “ If you don’t mind, I’m gonna keep this one. What’s your name by the way beautiful?”

“ Dee.”

“ Well goodnight Dee.”

“ Goodnight!” She called after the nameless man as he strolled away. She walked up to the mirror in her room and traced her fingertips along the scarf and smiled. Grandma most certainly did do something.