

Response to berry essay



In *Berry* by Langston Hughes, Milberry Jones is crippled by his race. For example, Berry is taken advantage of by being paid less. When Berry arrives by train at Dr.

Renfield's Summer Home for Crippled Children, Mrs. Osborn, the housekeeper at the Home, discusses Berry's pay with Dr. Renfield, the doctor of the Home. Mrs. Osborn says the normal pay is ten dollars, but Dr. Renfield says " we'll give the darkie eight [dollars]" (180).

Berry is paid less because he is black, and he is unable to do anything about it. This points to the state of paralysis that Berry is in as a result of being a black man. The paralyzed kids at the Home are also taken advantage of by Dr. Renfield. Langston Hughes writes that the children are charged far too much for the care they receive at the Home. This helps the Berry relate to the crippled children at the home because, like himself, they are also taken advantage of at the Home.

Moreover, at Dr. Renfield's Summer Home for Cripple Children, Milberry is forced to do more than his share of work. Berry begins to notice that he is doing " too much work" (180) for his pay of eight dollars, and he realizes that " everybody was imposing on him in that taken-for-granted way white folks do with Negro help" (180-181). In addition to his underpaying work, Berry does the " handy-man's [work]" (181), and he always had to do " something extra that needed to be done" (181). The extra work is the imposition of the others at the Home that Berry refers to.

This also adds to the illegitimacy of Dr. Renfield's Summer Home for Crippled Children, which helps Berry to further relate to the paralyzed kids at the

Home because he says “ they couldn’t help it [either]” (182). Lastly, Milberry is blamed and then fired from the Home even though he was trying to save a crippled child from falling . While taking the paralyzed children down to the beach, Berry sees a crippled kid falling and tries to catch him, but in doing so, Berry drops the wheelchair with another child in it. This causes the child to fall out, which Berry is severely punished for letting happen.

Dr. Renfield does this when he tells Mrs. Osborn to “ get rid of [the fool nigger]” (188). The fact that Berry’s race was brought up during the conversation shows that he was fired, in part, due to his race.

This points to the helplessness and state of paralysis that Berry is in as a result of his race. This is very similar to the helplessness of the crippled children at the Home. By being of a different color than the white workers of Dr. Renfield’s Summer Home in Langston Hughes’ Berry, Milberry Jones is helpless to stop himself from being taken advantage of by the other workers; however, this helplessness helps Berry relate to the paralyzed children at the Home.