

The journey of two american girls essay



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The Journey of Two American Girls Laura Logan ENG125: Introduction to Literature (AFG1301A) Instructor: Carla McGill February 4, 2013 How can an African American and a Hispanic girls be treated different when they are the same type of person? I chose the theme of race and ethnicity when I selected the poems “ What It’s Like to Be a Black Girl” by Patricia Smith and “ Child of the Americas” by Aurora Levin Morales. I am a Hispanic person with an African ancestry. I speak fluent Spanish and English and have experience life from both sides of the continent.

The poems show how African American and Hispanics American girls lives were affected based on their race and ethnicity. The life of the African American girl life was affected because of her race and racism; while the life of the Hispanic American girl life was (not) affected because of her ethnicity. While both the African American and Hispanic American girls were born on American soil, racism affected the African American girl’s way she lived her life while ethnicity (heritage) played a major role in Hispanic American girl’s life.

The poem “ What It’s Like to Be a Black Girl” is about a nine year old African American girl who life was immensely affected by racism and the fact that she was a girl did not help her either. The thing that I notice was missing is where is the girl’s parents during the time she was growing up; maybe it was the author intent not to mention the girl’s parents. Growing up is tough enough as a black girl, you add the absence of parents and throw in racism, this girl does not have a chance to live a successful life. According to the American Heritage College Dictionary, racism has two meanings.

First, racism is, " The belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others. " Second, racism is, " Discrimination or prejudice based on race. " The African American girl health was effected by racism, she was conditioned to be ashamed of her skin color, the texture of her hair and ethnicity. In her mind she think the only way the coccasion people will except her is if she look like them. According to Bhui, (2002) Racism is a fundamental cause of disparities in health.

Its myriad effects and links to other forms of social stratification lead to it being both obvious and masked. Its boundaries are indistinct because it is internal as well as external, individual as well as ecological, and shunned while being an integral part of dominant culture ideology. Its investigation is important and yet part of the spider's web that traps the best thinkers of ethnic minorities in contemplation instead of action and this brings us to the final paradox, understanding racism is a prerequisite of beating it (p. 3). I get the feeling that the black girl not only felt that at nine she was not finished, but perhaps she could into a different person other than the person she was then. The African American girl definitely had mental heath issues, she wanted white skin and blue eyes, something that was accepting of the culture of that time. According to Smith (1991) " It's being 9 years old and feeling like you're not finished," writes Smith, " like your edges are wild, like there's something, everything, wrong. " (line, 4).

According to Smith (1991) the " black girl" she refers to in her poem is feeling the awkwardness of her newly changing body and the hope of something different and maybe better to come (p 283). Some people would

say that the African American girl understands her body, but I would say that she is not ready for her body changes perhaps because of who she is or want to be and that is to look like the other girls in the society in which she lives. The life of the Hispanic girl in the " Child of the Americas" is so different from that of the black girl in the " What It's Like to Be a Black Girl".

I stated that I have live on both sides of the Americas, and like the Hispanic girl in " Child of the Americas" by Aurora Levin Morales, According to Dictionary. com ethnicity is ethnic traits, background, allegiance, or association; relating to or characteristic of a human group having racial, religious, linguistic, and certain other traits in common; relating to the classification of mankind into groups, especially on the basis of racial characteristics; denoting or deriving from the cultural traditions of a group of people.

I must say that I have experience little to know racism. In the Hispanic society we are free mentally and physically to be want ever we want to be without restrictions being place on us girls. The Hispanic girl understand who she is and where she comes from. The one thing I notice about the two poems is that the author in this poem mention the girl's mother and grandparents, which indicates that there is a support system in place to deal with life situation. The Hispanic girl unlike the African American girl was proud of her body and her light-skinned mestiza.

Morales (1986) states that I am a child of the Americas, a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean, a child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads. I am a U. S. Puerto Rican Jew, a product of the ghettos of

New York I have never known (p. 278). (Morales, 1) shows that this girl knows who she is and accepts that she is different than what she may see everyday. She is proud of her Puerto Rican heritage, proud to be of multi-racial descent, proud to be from the islands.

She knows where she comes from and where she has is going. In "Child of the America's", the girl proudly states she is, "a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean". (Morales, 2) The girl in this poem lets us know from the beginning that she is a girl of mixed race. She is strong and confident in her abilities. She enjoys life and appears to be well educated and well versed. Her social class could be middle class to wealthy with parents that worked their way out of poverty. "A product of the ghettos of New York I have never known". (Morales, 5) "I speak English with passion: it's the tongue of my consciousness, a flashing knife blade of cristal, my tool, my craft". (Morales, 7, 8) I remember when my daughter was in elementary school and she took a knife to school for protection and she was the tallest student in the school. Patrica Smith, the author of the poem "What's it like to be a Black Girl" discusses the challenges the African American girl has with identifying the changes her body is going through as she is growing up. The African American irl does not appear to know what is going on, or perhap just do not want to face the future because of who she is, the color of her skin, the texture of her hair and the color of her eyes. Smith (1991) states that "It's finding a space between your legs, a disturbance at your chest, and not knowing what to do with the whistles, it's jumping double dutch until your legs pop, it's sweat and Vaseline and bullets, it's growing tall and wearing a lot of white, it's smelling blood in your breakfast." (p. 278).

According to Myers (2002) African American women noted lower satisfaction with professional lives, differential and negative treatment from colleagues, and greater feelings of isolation on campus. Such isolation carries with it important implications: Literature shows that the rate of promotion and tenure among African American women is slower than that of African American men and white women. Isolation and lack of effective mentoring processes are direct influences in these low promotion and tenure rates as well as low retention rates among African American women in academia (Williams-Green and Singh, 1995).

The state of mine she was in due to racism and her lack of support from her family especially a father figure, made it very hard for her to be a good judge character when it came to her selecting or being selected by the male persuasion. The Hispanic girls life is total contrary to the African American girl's life. My young life was very similar to the Hispanic girl. She was very aware of her growing up and her body changes. She had a support around her as she was growing up and she was deeply rooted in her heritage and proud to shake it and speak her mind when needed.

It even sounds like the Hispanic girls even like literature as she like the singing of poetry. Morales (1986) indicated that Spanish is my flesh, Ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips: the language of garlic and mangoes, the singing of poetry, the flying gestures of my hands. I am of Latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my continent: I speak from that body p. 278). The author kind of implies that the Hispanic girls enjoys having a good time dancing and living the Latinoamerica life style.

The poem "What It's Like to Be a Black Girl" the girl is continually getting older and bigger and changing her clothing, to wear white clothing trying to look like the society who is showing racism toward her. She want to wear white like a new bride, which symbolize purity. She has seen a lot of racism in her life and based on the fact she want to be Caucasian or at least look like them. She only see African American in a negative way. The mood of the black girl is somber and sad because every phase in her life there is know one for her to talk to or lift her spirits.

The Hispanic girl in the poem "Child of the Americas" is happy about where she came from, like me, she is probably bilingual and loves the fact that she is Puerto Rican and unlike most Hispanics she is Jew. Accoring to Morales (1986) the girl is a U. S. Puerto Rican Jew, a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known. An immigrant and the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants. I speak English with passion: it's the tongue of my consciousness (p. 278). The Hispanic girl can relate to more than one culture and have multiple races to identify with; she has many races and loves them all.

The African American life will always be in termoil and does not know how to resist a man when they are not right for her. The first man that reaches out to her, she just gave in to him without any resistance. On the other hand, the Hispanic girl life was all line up for, like most Hispanic women she was determined in life and had the will power to resistance a bad situation and move away from it. The Hispanic girl was very secure about who she was and what she wanted to become and had the support of her family, unlike

the black girl who was not sure of who she was and how she was going to get there.

The poems were completely opposite when it came to the style as they sent different messages to the reader. The style is the mood or attitude reflected in a literary work. The "What it's like to be a black girl", the style is that of confusion, uncertainty, and sadness. She doesn't understand what's happening to her body or just do not want to except it because of the racism she has face in her life and why she look like the people who are mistreating her because she does not have blonde hair and blue eyes.

The style of "Child of the America's is that of a proud heritage, love of self, and accepting who you are and proud to be what you are. She loves who she has become and where she comes from. She understand her body and uses it to her advantgage. The biggest difference I see in the two girls is that one had no family support and really know heritage to fall back on and the other had great support and how they saw themselves. in the way they perceive themselves. The black girl did not know that black is beautiful and to be proud of your heritage and who you are.

She is lacking role models that she can live or look up. Unfortunate she lived in an era where racism was allow to thrive, which lead to discrimination because of the color of her skin. The poem "Child of the Americas" by Aurora Levins Morales is about social diversity. It is about a person like myself coming from Central America. I was born in Panama, where we did not experience racism until I came to the United States. According to Morales

(1) I am a child of the Americas, a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean, a child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads.

Like the character in the poem I to am the child of the Americas, except my skin is dark brown and I am proud of my Spanish heritage and teach it to my children. I have African in me, but I am not accepted as an African because I speak fluent Spanish and English. African Americans do not accept me as an African American because I speak Spanish. Morales (18) also indicates that “ I am new. History made me. My first language was Spanglish. I was born at the crossroads and I am whole” (p. 278).

Racism is a belief in racial superiority: the belief that people of different races have different qualities and abilities, and that some races are inherently superior or inferior. Racism affected how minority girls were treated and the lack of a good quality education. It separates us from our fellow man. Rather than trying to improve our society or our nation we are spending more time arguing with our neighbors who are of a different ethnic background. Racism divides us instead of bringing us closer together. We then create cities separated by race, and prefer to stay in our own city with fellow people of our race.

The country becomes further divided, one group of people on one side and another group of people on the other side. Prejudice is an irrational dislike of somebody: an unfounded hatred, fear, or mistrust of a person or group, especially one of a particular religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference, or social status. People had a preconceived notion about African American people which had a negative effect on the girls of that culture. The

African American girl experienced prejudice based on the fact of her being a person of color, not because of her actions.

The theme in the poem "What it's like to be a black girl", is that of confusion, uncertainty, and sadness. The theme of "Child of the America's" is that of hope, loving your self for who you are.. The poem "Child of the America's" did not display any racism or prejudice even though that is not the case for an minority girl in the middle nineteen hundreds in which I experience. The Hispanic girl was just the opposite, there were no boundaries place on her because of her skin color and what ever she dream she wanted to become she could of without prejudice.

Her family taught her to be proud of her Hispanic heritage, to be very prideful of the fact that she is bi-lingual and from the island of Puerto Rico. I was raise to very proud of where I am from and do not forget my family heritage. According to Morales this girl is proud of her Hispanic background and her religious affiliation (1 - 6) I am a child of The Americas, a light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean, a child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads. I am a U. S.

Puerto Rican Jew, a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known (p. 278). The girl in the poem "Child of the America's" proudly explain that Spanish is in her flesh as Morales (1986) states that In recognition of the Spanish influence and in credit of the land that used to be part of the America from which people of Spanish and American descent have intermingled and shared their culture. Spanish influences such as religion, tradition, and food are treasured by Latin Americans who are very proud of

their heritage. They are Americans (n. p. Morales also indicated that the girl was proud of the other countries she was a part of to include Africa, Europe. We all know that soon that will be a minority of people from America because of it is a melting pot and their will be no typical American because Americans came from a melting pot of culture. Their multiple cultural heritage, tradition, and influences and there are a combination of people to form the American culture. The African American girl seem to be unaware of the changes her body was going through, perhaps because of her situation she was into.

In the poem, " What's it like to be a Black Girl", Smith (8) talks about the things that are happening with the girl's body, as she is developing. " It's finding a space between your legs, a disturbance at your chest, and not knowing what to do with the whistles (p. 283). The Puerto Rican girl was very aware of her body and proud to show it off and with the African American girl it was the total opposite perhaps because of the way she was treated and not allow to grow up without restriction place on her through racism and prejudice.

One might wonder how will that affect her mindset as she get older, if I am mentally free in my mind to do what I want to do, my whole outlook on life will be different. The poem " What It's Like to Be a Black Girl" Smith says," the girl is getting bigger and taller and want to wear white clothing to supplement how she is feeling and while wearing white clothing everyone will accept her. The white clothing represent the good things in her life and black represent everything that is bad in her life.

The African American girl, now a woman and married at the end of the poem, her life appeared headed for trouble because of the upbringing she had.

There seem to to be know one lift up the girl when she was going through the trouble time of her young life and all the obstacles that was in her way.

The disparity between the two girls is very obvious in the way they saw themselves. It was very sad that the African American girl did not have a good role model to tell her that black is beautiful and be happy with who you are. It would of been nice for her to have a big sister she could of looks up.

The poem never really identified a support person she could count on even though we know there was someone there for her. Living in the 1950' s was already rough for all minorities, especially before the Civil Rights Movement. The girl in " Child of the America's", seem to always have a great support net around her at times and you could see it in her attitude and the way she carried herself. The question I will continue to ask myself is who or what is responsible for the way minority girls viewed themselves? One girls seem to have a good support group around her and the other one did not.

What cause the struggles of an African American girl an a girl who is from the territorial of the USA so differently? The racism and prejudice minority had a major affect on how African American and Hispanic girls viewed themselves. The big question is who or what affected the girls the most in their growth from a young girl to a young woman. References: Clugston, R. W. (2010) Journey into Literature. Bridgeport Education: San Diego, CA. <http://www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=122370> <http://mybestessays.com/what-its-like-to-be-a-black/> <http://leecustodio.hubpages.com/hub/Child-of-the-Americas-An-analysis-on-a-Poem> Difference Between Ethnicity and <https://assignbuster.com/the-journey-of-two-american-girls-essay/>

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Style in poetry involves the method which a poet uses to convey meaning, tone, and emotion in his/her poem. Content, now, gets a little more tricky. Content is idea-based and means: What the artist meant to portray, what the artist actually did portray and how we react, as individuals, to both the intended and actual messages. Additionally, content includes ways in which a work was influenced-by religion, or politics, or society in general, or even the artist's use of hallucinogenic substances-at the time it was created.

All of these factors, together, make up the content side of art. Form means: The elements of art, the principles of design and the actual, physical materials that the artist has used. Form, in this context, is concrete and fairly easily described-no matter which piece of art is under scrutiny. What type of prejudices did minority girls went through in the mid nineteen hundreds. Who or what is responsible for the way minority girls viewed themselves? How was the struggles of an African American girl an a girl who is from the territorial of the USA so differently?

The racism and prejudice minority had a major affect on how African American and Hispanic girls viewed themselves. The big question is who or

what affected the girls the most in their growth from a young girl to a young woman. pointed out or The young African American girl felt as though she had to dye her hair blonde and wear contacts to be excepted by the society of that time. She is growing up trying to live a life as someone else what her to look without truly knowing herself and her heritage.