

Sonnys blues essay



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The characters in the book *Sonny Blues* seems to be physically and emotionally imprisoned. All over the story, the narrator of the book and Sonny seems to be undergoing a great struggle to overcome constant barriers that have appeared in their lives. According to the story, sonny is seen to be imprisoned physically in jail as well as being in the drug imprisonment. The addiction that he has to drugs seems to be a great prison in his live because he cannot do anything without the drugs that had succumbed and intertwined his life. Some of the imprisonment that the narrator undergoes in the story is the confinement that he is under in Harlem and in the housing projects that according to him he detests. We see that he is unable to express himself therefore creating personal and emotional imprisonment. In addition, he is unable to live up to the expectation of himself especially as a brother. It is not until the death of his daughter that gave him motivation that he is required to change and come out of the prison that he has been in.

Looking at the housing project, it creates a great imprisonment of the idea that never worked. The project shows a symbol of how Harlem has been imprisoned by its decline and fall. According to Baldwin 1957, he describes the project as “rocks in the middle of a boiling sea.” This is because it was a noble project that was out to provide affordable housing, however, drug dealers inhabited them. Therefore, the whole project has turned to be a great jail that housed awful conditions of life that had no difference with the prisoners themselves. Just as Baldwin has described them as rocks in boiling sea, they were massive buildings that lay lifelessly as misery surrounded

them. This describes the nature the building were in holding, brutal and cold just as prison are.

The characters in ‘ Sonny’s Blues ’ are mostly in circumstances that shows that they are trapped both physically as well as mentally. In the whole of the story, first and foremost, the narrator who happens to be Sonny’s elder brother and Sonny are arrested emotionally. This is based on the fact that, they are ever dealing with the ways that will make them free from one chain or the other. On the other hand, Sonny had been physically imprisoned in jail, apart from being imprisoned physically by drug addiction.

In addition to these points the narrator himself has been confined to Harlem, and to be more specifically, to the projects that were dealing with housing, though he clearly detests. Another instance is that, the narrator has also been trapped by his own conscience. This is shown particularly in his actions and practices. To be more specific, he is not able to express his own minds or emotions. In Addition, he is not in a position to live up to his responsibilities as a brother; however, the death of his daughter freed him from this bondage by giving him a sense that motivates him to realize that he is supposed to change, (Baldwin, 1957).

The narrator in the story and Sonny in exactly opposite ways, are imprisoned and free at the same time. By the time Sonny was in Prison for example, he was physically locked up. But by looking on the other side of the coin however, one can realize that, other than being the young one, he had the capability of doing what his elder brother has never had such capabilities of doing. Some of his marvelous deeds were; he escaped from Harlem, and

went a head creating his own life. But on the other side of the coin, also the narrator is free physically; this is based on the fact that, he was not in jail as compared to his young brother Sonny. Apart from that, unlike Sonny and other young men in their society, the narrator is also free as he has not been addicted to drugs.

All the same he is trapped inside Harlem along with its projects that deal with housing. Being a person who can be termed as a musician, Sonny has the capability of expressing his frustrations and rage that has been used as a driver in part of his imprisonment through music. By the time he is playing the piano, he gains the capability of breaking loose, which helps him to live as any other free person. The narrator of the story, on the other hand, lives his life that is trapped inside him himself. This is based on the fact that, he is always faced with a very difficult time when communicating with his brother Sonny, and even ends up fail in doing so, he lacks the capabilities of holding his own emotions that emanate as a result of their communication. However, in the end, ends up being freed temporarily as an effect off Sonny's Music, this is based on the fact that, Sonny's music has the ability to offer him with a very rare glimpse to himself.

Both the narrator and Sonny the majjor characters in the story of ' Sonny's Blues' are imprisoned in darkness. This is because, in their lives, light and darkness are in constant tension in the entire story of ' Sonny's Blues'. As a matter of fact, the characters are threatened by constant opposition of light and darkness. Darkness represents a list of both social and personal problems. It is true that the figures in the story are imprisoned by darkness. Sonny is faced with addiction problem, which can be considered as a

personal problem, while the narrator is faced with the problems of housing projects.

Apart from characters, the story itself seems to be narrated in a setting that has been imprisoned. This is based on the reason that, the actions of the story seem to happen before the civil rights movements were gained. The setting is imprisoned in dark days that were filled with a lot of segregation and separate. However, the setting was free from equal accommodations in most public institutions. For instances, it is noticed that, the narrator and his brother Sonny grew up in a predominantly poor and black neighborhood of Harlem “ the sons of a working-class, embittered father whose pride and optimism have been worn down by his own brother’s violent death at the hands of rural Southern whites and the ensuing years of struggling to support a family in an overtly racist Northern urban community” (Baldwin, 1957). The setting is imprisoned with lots of insecurity. This is because; everyone was subjected to violence and drug addiction, segregation as well as discrimination.

Inclusion, imprisonment as a theme in the story of ‘ Sony’s Blues,’ is brought up with the aim of gloom, despair, hope and warmth that the lives of characters in the story undergoes. Being free from imprisonment shows all hopeful and positive that are just part of life. It represents moral life in the society. On the other hand, imprisonment shows despair and gloomy life that main figures in the story undergoes through. The two have been used to symbolize that, at times, life is too hard and enjoyable, while there are times when it is opposite. So as a matter of fact, the identification of imprisonment situations, was based on situations that characters have found themselves

in, but the situation is of despair, and there is no way of getting out of it, there is no or little control over it.