

Responsibility and creation of self identity

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The era of 1919-1920 was an era of Harlem Renaissance, an era that witnessed the stimulant growth of Independence in creativity and creation of self identity. It was also known as spiritual coming of age as African-Americans breaking all the shackles of subjugation and domination, could bring forward their inner feelings and open up their souls to pour the jargon of their heritage and their thoughts in the world of literature. Thus were produced the pieces of literary work of Art which reflects the writers struggle for self identity and Independence.

Richard Wright who was one of the greatest African-Americans in the twentieth century stimulated the thoughts of black leaders towards the freedom of self expression and Identity that Africans long cherished for, and through his protagonists in his " Black Boy" and " Naive Son", he shows the complexities and psychological turmoil in which the Black youths are finding themselves in and instead of getting out and finding the self independence they strangulate themselves by their unscrupulous deeds.

This what Bigger Thomas did in the " Native Son". The irony is itself here in the title whereby the Bigger Thomas is a son of his native race but how much bigger is he, can be clearly seen in the eyes of whites, racially abused and subjugated. On one hand, he is abused in the hands of the outside world and on the other hand his mother, who cannot withstand poverty, pressurizes him to take up a job as a Driver with Dalton, powerful and rich white family. He is pushed by his mother who wants him to do what she wants.

On the job he is pressurized by Mrs. Dalton who wants him to work according to her wishes, and another Mary Dalton who is a young mistress of the house

who always challenged him to stand and do the things which he is unable to understand. In all this turmoil, the anguish and anger that he shows is inscrutably beastly whereby he bully's even his friends, plot with them for undertaking petty crimes and in zest for independence and autonomy accidentally kills Marry.

The name Bigger depicts the word Niger and the social forces that are playing as an Invisible hand in all actions of Bigger. He is arrested and the true freedom he felt behind bars whereby he said, " Seems sort of Natural-like, me being here facing that death chair". Now I come to think of it, it seems like something like this just had to be. " He then faces his death sentence un-repentantly thinking " what I killed for, I am! " and understands the basic concept of brotherhood.

The rhythms of Bigger's life are " indifference and violence; periods of abstract brooding and periods of intense desire; moments of silence and moments of anger-like water ebbing and flowing from the tug of a far-away, invisible force. "(Wright, Para 9. online). His desire to prove himself and his pride and self interest pestered him to take risks that proved fatal for him. The metaphor of rat is also visualized as brutality and the final execution of Bigger.

Just as Bigger is a predator of rat, he is himself entrapped by the mob when every body hurled at him and described him as a primitive Jungle, ape and woolly black lizard. Though on the offset Bigger is described as a Negative character but he is a voice of Wright to whom many White Americans consider as a symbol of the entire black community, and which he later said

that " there are meanings in my books of which I was not aware until they literally spilled out upon the paper.

And in fact the Lawyer of Bigger even points out, " There is no escape from this destiny for his client or any other black American, since they are the necessary product of the society that raised them and No American Negro exists. The same is Jody's character that Zora Neale Hurston profoundly brought out in " Their Eyes towards God". Judy is cruel, selfish, conceited but this nature and aptitude on his part is due to the values that he holds and cherishes, but he forgets that in his quest for his self identity and power he is crushing his wife's Janie liberty and Independence.

He feels gratified in exerting his power over other people. In the words of Janie, " He needs to feel like a " Big voice", force of " irresistible maleness before whom the whole world bows. His whole life revolves around purchasing, building, bullying and making political gains. The Chapter four manifests itself the psychological effects that emerges out of the racism against blacks and how the blacks wishes to come out from these bonds into the free air.

When Jode, whose real name is Joe Starks comes to meet Janie, he told her plans to come down to Florida from Georgia as this new town would be run by all Black people, and where he is sure to impress people and realize his dreams of becoming a big voice as never in his life he was allowed to have a freedom of speaking. Jode was also a victim of racism and when he heard of the new town where there is a rule of Black people, he saw this as the golden opportunity to open the doors towards Freedom and power.

And the same fate beholds Jode too when he died in the end. Janie could not tolerate his inscrutable attitude, her hell broke loose. After so many years of subjugation in the hands of Jode, she could not tolerate it anymore and embarrasses and berates him horribly in front of whole townspeople who once respected him. As and as Jode's married life started deteriorating so his health. He started suffering from kidney failure and even in the last minute of his life Janie rebuked him for all the wrong Jode did to her and finally he died a miserable death.

After the Jode's death, Janie found her new freedom and Independence with Tea Cakes, though there she has to work on fields. At the age of forty, Janie now a free women can make decisions and live life to the full. " Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine," she declares (108). The statement of Lawyer of Bigger Thomas appears true with Jode too, " There is no escape from this destiny for his client or any other black American, since they are the necessary product of the society that raised them and No American Negro exists"; and so with all the Black Americans".

Though Janie is a main character and her characterization reveals the thirst for freedom, but it is the Jode who is a spirit of the Harlem Renaissance to which American's Africans belongs. Though Zora Neal Hurston advocates the voice for Blacks but it is the Blacks also she rebuked. When before the hurricane the Indians were passing by, the black workers called them stupid.

Zora expanded the new horizons which cuts the boundary of the past vision of the Society and brings to forth what C. Hugh Holman said, " Multi-Souths, a term developed in opposition to a monolithic and elitist notion of the

South,” what the Zora depicts the mutivocal, multicultural and multiracial narratives of the American South. The Native Son and Zora Neale Hurston’s, “ Their Eyes were watching God”, are both the products of Harlem Renaissance, whereby the writers raised their voice against racism on one hand and raised the question of the very existence of self identity on the other hand.

In the “ Native Son”, the protagonist became criminal but in “ Their Eyes were watching God”, characters were not criminals but defied their responsibilities in their quest for self identity, and in all this emerges yet another question, does the responsibility and self identity go hand in hand? If the answer is yes then there won’t be tragedy, but it is not so in real life. Self identity has to be compromised in front of the responsibility. This is what the essence of these two literary works of art.