

Racial segregation in brownies

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Segregation in “Brownies” The short story “Brownies” written by ZZ (Zuwena) Parker, takes place at Camp Crescendo, a summer camp for girl scouts. The story is primarily about the journey of fourth grade girls scouts from different schools, who are known as The Brownies. Each Brownie Troop is categorized by their different ethnicities. The story is told in the perspective of Laurel, an African American girl who is known to the girls in her Brownie troop as ‘Snot.’ On the first day of camp the Brownie girls stumble upon a troop of white girls and claim one of their members had address them with a racial slur.

Deeply offended by their own assumption, they plan on teaching the other girls, Brownie Troop 909, a lesson. As a result, the next day the Brownie troop picks a fight with every girl within Brownie Troop 909, not knowing that those girls are delayed learners. The central theme of the story “Brownies” is segregation and how it affects the mind and actions of the younger people. In the short story, racial segregation began from the misuse term “Caucasian” at Laurel’s school, Woodrow Wilson Elementary School. The school is located in the South suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, where there are very few whites who lives there in the East coast.

In fact, there is only one white student who is enrolled at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School; a boy name Dennis. Based on the history of the time and location “Brownies” was written in many people had little interaction with Caucasians, in this case, the students at Laurel’s elementary school. The troop and their classmates saw “Whites [as] baby pigeons: real and existing, but rarely seen or thought about” (Parker 179). With the comparison made

between baby pigeons and white people, this illustrates that the Brownie girls never experience being around white people as much.

For this reason, the children did not know the meaning of the term “Caucasian” or how the term is used correctly in a sentence. Thus, the children made fun of the word and used it in a jokingly manner by teasing each other. For example, from time to time the students would call one another “Caucasian” for the way their classmates acted and the way they were dressed. Weeks before the camping trip Arnetta, one of the Brownie girls, teased: A boy [for] wearing impossibly high-ankled floodwater jeans and said, ‘What are you? Caucasian?’ The word took off from there, and soon everything was Caucasian.

If you ate too fast you ate like a Caucasian, if you ate too slow you ate like a Caucasian. (Parker 179) With the term “Caucasian” constantly being used as a joke throughout the school, Dennis the only white kid in school joins in the act of making fun of the phrase, not knowing that it is about his own race. Racism continues when the Brownie Troop arrive at their camping destination. Still on the bus, the black girls Brownie troop judges the white girls Brownie Troop 909 for their different skin complexion and what they had brought along the camping trip.

At this point in the story the girls could care less of who the white girls are and where they have come from. Z. Z. (Zuwena) Parker starts off her story with a criticism narrated by ‘Snot’, the least respected girl in the black girls Brownie troop: Troop 909 was doomed from the first day of camp; they were white girls, their complexions a blend of ice cream: strawberry, vanilla. They turtle out from their bus in pairs, their rolled-up sleeping bags chromatized

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with Disney characters: Sleeping Beauty, SnowWhite, Mickey Mouse: or the generic ones cheap parents bought: washed-out rainbows, unicorns, curly-eyelashed frogs. 177) The quote is said to give a sense of labeling and singling out of troop 909, possibly out of jealousy. The Brownie Troop mainly joked among themselves about the white girls Brownie troop on their differences in ethnicity, skin tones, and how spoil each are by their parents. By the way ‘ Snot’ listed what troop 909 had brought along their camping trip; it may be assumed that ‘ Snot’ Brownie troops were envious of them. At another point of the short story, they even compared hair length and texture of each other.

The black Brownie troop racial acts continue when Arnetta made a false rumor about troop 909. Arnetta had convinced her gullible troop members that one of the white girls had called one of their troops by the name “ nigger”. Arnetta, who is known to be a leader-like to her Brownie troop for her tone of voice when she speak, was so insulted by her own rumor that she told her girls, “ We can’t let them get away with calling us niggers. I say we teach them a lesson” (Parker 181). This quote sets them up the main conflict of the story.

It was the beginning of the revenge the black girls Brownie troop plotted on the white girls Brownie troop 909. At the end of the short story, the black girls Brownie troop become conscious that they have made false assumptions on the other troop when the leader of troop 909 revealed to them that her girls have learning disabilities. The Brownie 909 troop leader had revealed that her ““ girls are not retarded. They are delayed learners...

from the Decatur Children's Academy. Many of them just have special needs'"(Parker 190).

Few of the girls in the white girls Brownie troop are echolalic. Echolalic is a learning disorder, which comes from a psychological term echolalia. When a person is diagnosed with echolalia, the individual tends to unintentionally repeats what they have heard from another person whether it is a bad or made-up word(s) or phrase(s). The black girls Brownie troop turn themselves to the victimizer when they accused Troop 909 for calling them a " nigger". To an extent, Z. Z. Parker's short story " Brownies" central theme of segregation is relevant to today's society.

Though segregation is still present in today's world, it is not the same as it was years ago when it was a severe matter. Compared to segregation back in history, where most people die fighting for their rights, individuals today mostly fight verbally through petitions and marches. One of the most common segregation disputes in the United States today is gay marriages being legalized. It is said that homosexual marriage is wrong because it ruin the meaning of " marriage". For decades, marriage has always been between a man and a woman.

In addition, homosexual marriage imposes its acceptance on all society and religion such as Christianity. Though some parts of the United States still disapprove of gay marriages, they cannot stop two individuals from loving each other. Overall, Segregation still exists in the world and will always exist, whether it is on race and or gender. Works Cited Parker, Zuwena. " Brownies. " /Back Literature. /4th Ed. Eds. V. J. Kennedy, Dana Gioia. Boston: Pearson, 2012. 177-194. Print.

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