

Conflict and emotions



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CONFLICT AND EMOTIONS The central conflict in the two poems, How to see your brother die and Tu Do Street, is rooted in discrimination. In these two beautiful and poignant expressions of emotions, we come across two different but interlinked situations. The link is provided by the conflict that dominates both poems but doesn't lessen the impact of emotions. In the first poem which is about homosexual relationship and the hatred and challenge these people have to suffer in the world, emotions run very deep. It is not about the rush of emotions a person feels when his brother is dying but the influx of feelings that come with knowing that your brother was different and that he suffered. When the older brother hears the news, he rushes to see his younger brother at the hospital and realizes that he was married to a man. This was shocking news though it is clear that the older brother already knew about his brother's sexual orientation. The words spoken by the dead brother's lover clearly indicate this: " Forgive yourself for not wanting to know him/after he told you. He did." (1. 34-35). It means that these two brothers were at odds with each other when he came out of the closet. The conflict is all about discrimination and the way people treat those who they consider different. Different doesn't mean bad or evil, it just represents diversity and variety of approaches to life. This is what the poem is trying to tell us. The poem also elucidates the challenges that gay people have to encounter in their desire to live their lives their way. The commitment of a gay couple is shown to be even more intense because there are so many odds against them. The straight brother is unable to grasp this as he wonders "" How could anyone's commitment be deeper than a husband and wife" (1. 28) He cannot fathom the mystery. He goes back to his sheltered life where he knows his children will not be targeted or discriminated

against.

The same conflict of discrimination runs in the other poem, Tu Do Street but here discrimination is based on skin color instead of sexual orientation. The poet is talking about discrimination that he witnessed in Vietnam- thousands of miles away from the US. It saddens him to see that blacks are treated badly even in this land and this reminds him of his childhood as he thinks about " White Only signs & Hank Snow." The poet feels that even inside one nation, exists two different people. Since discrimination is so obvious, he feels that they are not all treated as Americans but rather like black and white Americans.

" There's more than a nation/inside us, as black & white/soldiers touch the same lovers." (7-9) The challenges that blacks faced can be compared to the challenges faced by gay people because deep down the conflict is rooted in their differences. In other words, just because these two groups are different than the popular sections of the society, they are treated badly and there is extreme hatred exhibited against them. The poets in both instances are trying to draw our attention to the discrimination experienced by them due to no fault of their own. There is little they can do to make the situation better for themselves because they wanted to be loved and accepted for who they are and as they are. However the world appears to have a mindset that doesn't allow them this freedom. This is where the conflict arises and though it is very painful, it is also the truth experienced by these people on a daily basis.