

Loomis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout history, many different groups of people have been oppressed and taking advantage of. However, the African diasporas during the middle passage and the oppression of the people following it stands out amongst the rest. The oppression of people of African descent is unique because the effects of such are still prominent in new generations.

August Wilson tackles the tones, moods, attitudes and feelings of generation after generation of oppressed people. In his play *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, he addresses the feelings and tones of the generation of African Americans that were struggling to find purpose and identity in the years after emancipation. Wilson illustrated a number of different attitudes and moods ranging from those of African Americans who were born free to those of the vulnerable African American women living during that time.

Wilson also highlighted the effects oppression had on African American spiritualism. He did so by illustrating the traumatizing effects oppression had on African Americans in the south. In the last scene of the play Wilson uses the character Herald Loomis to exemplify the linings of African Americans caused by the effects of the oppression of generation after generation.

Wilson uses the character Herald Loomis to shed light on the feelings of anger and anguish felt by generations of oppressed African Americans.

Herald Loomis was depicted as a cold and distant man.

He was beyond angry with the world around him after his ordeals. Wilson described him as, "... Unable to harmonize the forces that swirl around him and seeks to re-create the world into one that contains his image." Herald Loomis was angry with the world because he gave his life to God and the

hurt as a deacon, but was held captive as a slave by Joe Turner for seven years. In the process, Loomis lost his family and religion, He felt neglected by the God he served, hence his anger. In the final scene, a sense of anguish is illustrated by the drastic actions of Loomis.

Wilson depicts feelings of anger and anguish as Martha quotes a scripture to Herald after he brandishes a knife. For example, when Martha quotes, " Even though walk through the shadow of death?", Loomis' responds " That's just where I be walking I" Martha continues with, " I shall fear no evil. For Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. " Loomis responds "... L done been all across the valleys and the hills and the mountains and the oceans... And all I seen was a bunch of niggers dazed out of their woolly heads. And Mr.. Jesus Christ standing In the middle of them, grinning. It is evident that Loomis is upset with God for the experiences he has endured; which is similar to the feelings of many generations of black men who felt neglected by the God they praised because of severity of their traumatizing experiences. It becomes clear that his ordeal being led captive as a slave and his spiritual experiences being a deacon of a Christian church combined to have this effect on him. Like all the generations before and after the time in which the play takes place, the trauma of what black men have seen and the experiences they have been through creates feelings of anger and anguish.

Wilson uses Herald Loomis' character to exemplify the feeling of desperation for a purpose in the world, besides being a black man to white people, for generations. Herald Loomis felt like he would know his purpose once he got to re- unite with his wife. The gravity of such desperation is felt in the final

scene as Loomis commits to slashing himself. For instance, when Martha says " Jesus bled for you. He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. " Loomis replied " I don't need nobody to bleed for me! I can bleed for myself. One must truly be desperate for salvation and also have serious deep rooted anger to forsake Jesus Christ himself. Loomis' shedding of his own blood is a representation of the anger inside of black men caused by the effects of oppression. Like Loomis, black men of all enervation are angry and desperate for salvation for various reasons. However, majority of those reasons stem from the long term effects of oppression. Some go to church and seek the words of God, and then there are others whom have break downs and blow up and eventually hurt somebody or themselves as Loomis did.

In current times, there are too many angry black men hurting themselves and shedding each other's blood. They rather shed each other's blood than bathe in the blood of Jesus because, like Herald Loomis, they too feel neglected by God. The strong influence of the black church was diminished by the effects of oppression. Many young black men don't fear the wrath of God and couldn't care less about their karma for casting evil into word. This ruthless anger is a direct result of the suffering of black men that can be felt from generation to generation.

These young black men feel as if they have no purpose in the world like Herald Loomis before he found Martha. It is evident that all these angry and desperate young men need to find a purpose in this world, simply some where they can fit in. For example, in the final scene of the play when Martha tells Loomis, Mimi got to be something, Herald. You just can't be alive. Life

don't mean nothing if you don't got a meaning. " Loomis replies by continuing to rant as he slashes himself and rubs his blood on his face. This part of the scene is so dramatic because it is when Loomis finds his song, he finds a purpose.

Wilson illustrates, " Having found his song, the song of self-sufficiency, fully restricted, cleansed and given breath, free from any encumbrance other than the working of his own heart and the bonds of the flesh, having accepted the accessibility for his own presence in the world, he is free to soar above the environs that weighed him down and pushed his spirit into terrifying contractions. " This quote from the play works to cast a light upon the fact that one needs to let go of the hurt and pain and find their own presence in the world. When Benumb says, " Herald Loomis you shining! You shining like newmoney! , it leaves the reader with the sense that grounding oneself and finding one's purpose in the world can remedy some of the anger caused by the effects of oppression. By analyzing the character of Herald Loomis in the final scene of Joe Turner's Come and Gone, one will find why generations of oppressed African Americans felt, and still continue to feel such anger. The character Herald Loomis casts light on the effects the African diasporas through the Middle Passage had on African American men. Since the days of the Middle Passage, generations of black men have been traumatized by the same demons that haunted the generations before them.

After slavery was emancipated there was already so much damage done to the psyches of black men that they had to fight for their civil rights. After gaining civil rights, black men still endured the trauma of having those rights violated. The same problem still persists in current times. The trauma of being a black man goes

back many generations and still can be felt now by today's generations. Black men were stripped of their manhood when they were sold and auctioned as commodities, and couldn't protect their loved ones from being sold off, hurt or killed. The trauma of slavery is etched in the psyches of every generation of black men thereafter.