

# African struggle in the sphere of superior americans

Literature



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African Struggle in the Sphere of Superior Americans Africans had a storied past in America. They struggled to fit in the all-white superior Americans. During this process, the struggle had never been easy. This course in history of African-American concept was replete of bitter pills for attaining the much needed friendly relations to each other. And discrimination was the thing which African-Americans were unnecessarily suffering from the superior American race.

It was also revealed that to fit in the all-white superior Americans, Africans do wear the mask. It is the reality of concealing the true self and bearing artificial character—just for the sake of expressionistic façade at that. It can be a metaphor of one willingly robbed of his skin and blood by thieves. This is what Paul Laurence Dunbar's *We Wear the Mask* was all about. In a place which is predominantly white American, African-American unnecessarily act differently. In acting out differently, one suffers a moral dilemma of artificiality. Artificiality is the concept of doing otherwise from what normally one feels or adheres to. This may entail one to forcibly emanate a bright glow in the face of anxiety, or one to show optimism in the face of hunger. It adversely affects the intent to preserve one's culture and tradition. And there are other rippling effects which African-Americans had suffered in wearing the mask.

Working first for the African-American newspaper *Dayton Tattler*, Dunbar wrote many poems, earning him the accolade from the black American community. *We Wear the Mask*, which appeared first in his professionally published volume *Lyrics of Lowly Life* in 1896, is a piece replete with his thought in the need of wearing the mask.

It is interesting to note in his piece how did Dunbar accepted this as a way of life when he declared “ We wear the mask!”

Lines like “ We wear the mask that grins and lies / It hides our cheeks and shade our eyes,-” and “ Nay, let them only see us, while / we wear the mask,” are evocative of the historical, social and cultural apartheid structures when the black Americans are distinctly far-off in the public places and most, if not all, opportunities.

And lines like “ We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries / To thee from tortured souls arise,” are also evocative of the pain brought by discrimination which the black Americans had been suffering in their day-to-day lives. “ We sing, but oh the clay is vile,” is representative of the hardships in longing for the freedom from apartheid.

The “ mask” which is thrice written in the piece also represents in itself a higher symbol than the object of mask alone. The “ mask” referred to is the description of something which is artificial. It can be derived also that in poetry, specifically in plays, mask denotes an actor, who has to portray his given role-thus wearing the mask.

Inherent also in the piece is the line “ Why should the world be over-wise, / In counting all our tears and sighs.” This led us to assume the principle of two-ness by W. E. B. Du Bois’ concept of Double Consciousness in Dunbar’s We Wear the Mask.

Du Bois in his published book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) spoke of Double Consciousness as “ an American, a Negro; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”

Moreover, this is a concept of having a dual personality just for the sake of

accommodation.

This is another reason which provides coherence in the struggle of African-Americans under the Superior American race. The struggle to urgently fit in the environment tends to need more endurance of wearing the mask at all certainty. And sadly this is becoming an accepted norm among the black Americans.

In making acquaintances, one needs to be modest while being observed at by the white Americans. In social gatherings, one needs to hide away the sadness and disdain. In the public places, one needs to be pretentious. In the offices, one needs to show his/her limitations. In schools, one needs to show also his/her capabilities. And all these things at the expense of African-Americans just to level the playing field in the community.

If one is left out in job hiring, he/she needs to remain calm and not complain. If one is scorned because he's defeated in the basketball game, he/she needs to show poise. If one is not given due process, he/she has to accept. And all these things are making undue pain and hurt among African-Americans. But they can not complain; they have to care for the Americans too: their feelings and emotion. The state of affairs put in place a permanent status quo in dealing with both races.

At their quiet moments, African-Americans were eagerly looking forward to the time when they will stop all these struggles of artificiality and double consciousness which existed even before the time of Paul Laurence Dunbar.

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