

Free james baldwin's view of personal liberation with jamaica kincaid's term pape...

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Liberty. Among the most widely putative theories of liberty is that there must be a single predominant formula under which all the comprehensible locutions about personal freedom and liberation. The pervasiveness of this notion largely influences Gerald MacCallum's classic article, "Negative and Positive Freedom". The author provides that the need for freedom of an individual is realized once an element of constraint is determined. These elements of constraints prevent individuals from becoming or becoming something. Liberation is a triadic relation between individuals, constraints, and ends. To ensure full liberty, the constraints to the "ends" should be completely inexistent. These insights to freedom and liberty make people doubt the availability of freedom. However, Baldwin and Kincaid provide different thoughts on personal liberation.

Just who is Baldwin? Throughout his essays and other non-academic writing, the author himself explores this intriguing question. The bottom line- he is James Baldwin. Through his works, one identifies the author's desperate struggles to define his own identity as Black American author and a voice for the deprived people - his people. To know his person, the author had to examine his cultural roots because the coherence of the present is based on history. It is also important to ensure today's success, as it is tomorrow's history, to ensure prosperity in the future, but this is not the case for this paper. We seek to understand the approaches taken by Baldwin to define personal liberation. According to his writings, it is worthy to note that Baldwin took an initiative of identifying personal identity as the basis of "bargaining" for personal liberty.

Despite Baldwin's aversion for sociology, his essays are high related to social

studies – perhaps more related that the works of many professional sociologists. Although his works are apparently biased on the topic of the Black-White relations, the author's personal experiences and his liberty to write yield comprehensiveness and insight uncommon with sociologists. He defines the deprivation problem and its roots, for instance, providing a perspective that white literary scholars are left no room to critique. Baldwin continues to explore the aspect of personal liberation based on identity through showing proper knowledge of the African American community and their society. Broad in scope and perceptive, Baldwin's literary works denote a different means of classifying the African American community's responses to daily discrimination. These works depict a clear picture of the Black American structure. However, James Baldwin views on the subjects of personal liberation from the chains of social injustice are slightly scattered, regularly peripheral, and often contradictory.

Through synthesizing and abstracting James Baldwin's views on liberation through identity, it is possible to identify how he addresses the subsection of personal liberation, especially the black individuals. The achievement of personal liberation among the black individuals is achievable through the collective attainment of social liberation from the bondages of discrimination and inequality. The alleged "blackness" problem in America from the viewpoint of James Baldwin is not actually a black problem but a white issue. Not only have the white majority invented the situations that make being an African American problematic, but also a complicated syndrome of exploitation, deprivation, guilt, and fear. These are the constraints to the achievements of the "ends" discussed in the introduction. To attain personal

liberation, the black individuals should break away from these constraints through collective effort. Once these constraints are subdued and the ends achieved as a community, the individuals will be inspired to pursue personal liberation.

Recently, the cold-blood murder of Trayvon Martin encouraged many blacks who initially thought they had attained liberation as individuals to revise their social positions. Many, blacks, questioned the very tenets of freedom in a nation that is increasingly sinking in marginalization and incarceration. To paraphrase a passage from “ Emancipation Proclamation”, James Baldwin gives an interesting insight to the attainment of personal liberation. In the essay dedicated to his nephew, Baldwin warns him against trying to “ become like white men” and that it is fallacious for the young man to believe that the whites must “ accept” him.

Then, Baldwin gives an interesting twist to the whole “ caution” by stating that the nephew must accept the whites, “ very seriously”. This contributes towards the realization of personal liberation because individuals will begin believing in themselves and consider the value in them. Accepting the whites, as one, African American, would hope that “ they” accept them is a significant step towards realizing personal identity, which Baldwin provides as the basis of realizing personal liberation. Baldwin writes, “ You must accept them and accept them with love, for these innocent people have no other hope”, showing that blacks must think of themselves as “ superiors”, guardians, and moral figures to overcome the inferiority complex. All these are aimed towards the identification of the personal identity. As argued before and shown in Baldwin’s arguments and essays, realizing personal

liberation, individuals, in his case blacks, must overcome many constraints, including inferiority complexes, dejection, and other negative thought, to attain personal liberation.

Comparing this approach to Jamaica Kincaid's tackling of personal liberation shows some differences and slight similarities. Liberation, from Kincaid's perspective focuses on gender and colonialism; legacy, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism. She also handles racism, power, and imperialism as the major themes in her works that will enable analysis of her views towards personal liberation. Through her numerous works, Kincaid blames colonialism and foreign domination as the main reasons for the absence of liberation in Antigua. Analyzing the anthology of works by Kincaid depicts the use of fiction in the advancement of the aforementioned themes.

Kincaid's prominent book that can be analyzed alongside James Baldwin's work vis a vis tackling personal liberation is "Annie John". This 1985 novel details of a young Antiguan girl growing up in the Island. The themes covered in the novel that will help in the analysis of personal liberation while comparing with James Baldwin are education, lesbianism, mother-daughter relationship, racism, and depression. Children growing far away from their parents attain a form of personal liberation. As a central theme of the book, though used symbolically, the author seems to advocate for gender equality. The feminist approach here shows the possibility of achieving personal liberation.

The resistance offered by the main character of this book is towards the resistance against colonial domination. Colonialism denied the colonized people freedom that is essential in the realization of self-set objectives. As

suggested by Kincaid, all the main characters in this novel represent her traits and unrelenting spirit. Determination, as shown in this novel, is a significant trait towards the realization of personal liberation. Towards the end of the novel, there is a theme of detachment from the community and adopting a different personality. This detachment is coincidental with the loss of a parent, a mother, from a child's life through a self-inflicted distancing and separation.

Another way through which Kincaid presents the attainment of personal liberation is through Lyotard's theory of speaking out to create the desired effect. Annie contests colonial discourse and attempts resistance against colonial domination through standing up to the colonial rule. Once Annie realizes the importance of pursuing her objectives without considering the magnitude of resistance from the constraints, she attains personal identity that is crucial in achieving personal liberation. Kincaid advocates for a slightly different approach towards the achievement of personal identity. After learning from her mother, Annie decides to detach herself - permanently - from the chains of familial barriers that might hold her back before she achieves personal liberation. She must be the "captain of her soul", no matter the magnitude of the resistance and imminent difficulty of the task.

According to the novel, Annie gains confidence and attains her identity. After the detachment, Annie gains confidence to narrate his own story to show a self-assured lass who took responsibility to shape her own destiny despite the difficulties that many of her peers would not have dared to face. Annie John's life becomes complicated after she opposes her parents and goes

against their expectation of a typical Caribbean daughter. Mother-daughter fights are common, but in many cases, daughters who cannot continue the antagonism give in to their parent's demands and conform to the social norms. According to the arguments presented by Kincaid and Baldwin, this prevents individuals from realizing their personal identities. Personal identities are achieved through following one's heart. This leads to the achievement of the much desired personal liberation.

Kincaid provides, through Annie, that personal liberation is achieved through resistance to the norms. She shows that the identity and liberation of Antigua from British colonialism is only achievable through resistance. Symbolically, Annie represents Antigua while the mother is a representation of the Queen of England who wants dominance of the little colonies. Antigua must be the "master" of her own destiny. This is only achievable through detachment from England's norms and rules to keep the support. This feminine mystique helps in encouraging the achievement of personal identity and liberation both to women in Antigua and in the Caribbean as well as the nation of Antigua to attain its autonomy.

However, Baldwin and Kincaid differ on many other thoughts concerning personal liberation. Evidently, while Baldwin argues for a reconciliatory and a "cool" approach towards the achievement of personal liberation, Kincaid opts for a rather violent tone. Characteristic of Kincaid's works, she often personalizes her themes and gives her opinions with finality. On the other hand, Baldwin argues for a calm approach towards the attainment of personal liberation. Baldwin argues that people must regard their constraints, not as enemies, but as part of them. This will help individual deal

with the constraints as part of their selves, which is more appropriate towards realization of liberation. Kincaid, on the contrary, argues through her novel that adversaries should be crashed to ensure the attainment of self-identity. Kincaid also takes a feminist dimension in her approach on liberation. This she does differently from Baldwin who argued on behalf of the entire African American community living under white domination. It is understandable that Kincaid might be bitter with the suffering Antiguan people, especially women, face under domination. She is an immigrant who might not know the effects of lacking liberation among the black community in America decades before she landed in America. The timelines might also be a factor for the difference seen in how the two authors handle the issue of liberation in their own contexts. Bottom-line, personal liberation is achievable through determination.

Works Cited

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