

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Racial Encroachment in *Fences*

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Letter of Recommendation

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CHAPTER ONE

Reflection of Racism in Wilson's *Fences*

August Wilson was born of inter-racial parents in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1945. His famous drama *Fences* (1985), amply deals with inter-racial and intra-racial issues. The background of this play is directly linked the events of the life of playwright with the events of the life of Troy Maxson, the protagonist of the play, due to racism.

The material poverty of Wilson's childhood was intensified by the racism that he suffered during his adolescence after his family moved to a heavily white dominated community in the Pittsburgh area. When Wilson was fifteen, he was accused of plagiarism at school when he wrote a sophisticated paper that the administration did not believe he could write. When Wilson's principal did not recognize the validity of Wilson's work, she suspended him and later ignored his attempts to come back to school. Thus, he had to quit his high school football team. The events of playwrights are similar to the events of his life to the life of protagonist of his play, Troy Maxson, who has to quit playing in the Major Leagues because of segregation towards blacks. The playwright has clearly shown the whites' encroachment upon blacks in their jobs and other opportunities like sports, etc. despite their abilities. In the play, the blacks are given the job of garbage collector.

The playwright has clearly shown the issues of intra-racial encroachment in his play *Fences*. Some of the issues reflect his life. Wilson's father abandoned him and other five siblings with his mother; the mother lived with a step father, David Bedford, and raised them in a two-room flat. Similar is the case in his protagonist of the play who has to suffer hard times when his father abandons him. The protagonist of the play, Troy Maxson says:

TROY. Sometimes I wish I hadn't known my daddy. He ain't cared nothing about no kids. A kid to him wasn't nothing. All he wanted was for you to learn how to walk so he could start you to working. When it come time for eating . . . he ate first. If there was anything left over, that's what you got. Man would sit down and eat two chickens and give you the wings (1.4.1374).

Though Troy has to suffer as the victim of the whites throughout his life he wants to suffer and encroach other weaker and innocent members of his own race. He does not want to sign on the permission paper when his son Cory wants to be recruited by a college football team. Troy marries another woman Alberta despite his wife Rose being a loving and a perfect woman.

It can be said that most of the events of *Fences* echo with the events of Wilson's life. In 1963, Wilson steeped himself in the black power movement and became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. He began to describe himself as a black nationalist. He joined the black aesthetic movement in the late 1960s and became the founder and director of Black Horizons Theatres in Pittsburgh. He devoted himself to writing a cycle of ten plays each set in a different decade of the 20th century about the experiences of black Americans. In the sixties, Wilson reinvented himself as a playwright. His work was nurtured through institutions like the Yale School of Drama, where the dean at that time was the theatre director, Lloyd Richards, who recognized his talents. Richards later collaborated with Wilson in New York on Broadway. *Fences* was Wilson's second play in his series that went to Broadway. It was performed in 1985 and published in 1986. It won the Pulitzer Prize for dramas in 1987 as well as four Tony awards including one for the best play. He won the Pulitzer Prize again in 1990 for his play '*The Piano Lesson*.' Having won

many prestigious national awards and Pulitzer Prize for his art, he achieved the status of theatrical historiographer.

Wilson is one of the most prolific writers of contemporary America, whose plays, like those written by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are produced throughout the USA on a regular basis. He has written seven plays - *Jitney*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running* and *Seven Guitars*. Traditionally in Wilson's plays the protagonist's personal past is the lens through which the present situation is seen. His authentic sounding characters have brought a new understanding of the black experience to audiences through a series of plays, each addressing people of color in each decade of the 20th century. These all plays are related to the experiences of Afro-Americans.

Wilson's mission in writing ten plays set in the 20th century is to re-write the history to tell the stories of the forgotten, misrepresented, silenced black masses. He concentrates on bringing the past into the present as a healing measure for all Americans today. His cycles of plays are intended to illuminate the shadowy past of the Afro-American by focusing on black issues. Wilson through his dreams encourages people not to forget who they are and where they are from. His plays deal with common people and are created with elements of mysticism, ritual and story telling. All of those elements, which are often found in African culture, are prominent in his play. His plays are about history in which his characters share their revelations with audiences across the country. His plays interpret periods of history through the stories of ordinary people. For each decade of the 20th century, Wilson has focused on a representative group of characters whose struggles and dreams reflect the events and attitudes of the large society.

Fences is about a trash collector whose dreams of playing professional baseball was frustrated by racism. Protagonist Maxson's frustration leads when he denies his son's possible athletic success. *Fences* has two acts and nine scenes, act one has four scenes and act two has five scenes. The setting of the play is of 1957. Wilson has attempted to picture the real life of Black Americans in the 1950s through this play. The play has the background of the suppression on of the blacks in the 20th century. The play is one of the project works of Wilson to politicize the black community living in America regarding the struggle to be made by the blacks against the Whites, who have become the fences on their way to progress. The voice of racial-discrimination clearly echoes in the play.

All of Wilson's plays take place in his hometown of Pittsburgh and *Fences* is no exception. Pittsburgh of the Maxson family is a town where Troy and other men of his generation fled from the savage conditions of sharecropping in the south. After reconstructions failed, many blacks walked north as far as they could go to become urban citizens. Having no resources or infrastructure to depend on, men like Bono and Troy found their way in the world by spending years living in shacks, stealing and in jail. Wilson's characters testify to the fact that the United States failed in the issues related to the blacks after Lincoln abolished slavery, and the government's failure, to make it effective legally through Jim Crow Laws and other lawful measures to ensure inequality, which affect many blacks' lives. Wilson portrays the 1950s as a time when new world of opportunity for blacks began to open up, leaving those like Troy who grew up in the first half of the century, to feel like a stranger in their own level.

The events of the play take place around Troy Maxson, the main character of the play, and his family. Troy is a garbage collector and later gets promoted to a driver to drive the garbage truck after he has complained his boss. So, he becomes the

first colored driver. He thinks that only his decisions are right and wants his family members and others to obey him. Here he wants to show his domination upon the other members of the family and friends. Jim Bono is Troy's close friend and co-worker. Rose is Troy's second wife who is forty-three years old. She is a loving, responsible wife cum mother. She believes in the change in time and the world. Cory is Troy and Rose's seventeen years old son who is recruited to play football by a college football team. But Troy does not sign the permission paper for Cory to play football as he recalls his past experience as a baseball player in the Negro Leagues when he had never got a chance to play in the Major Leagues as black players were not accepted at that time. He thinks that the white people will not let Cory go anywhere with the football team and so he should have a job other than sports to make a living and forces him to work at the local grocery store, the A & P. Rose claims a better future for Cory as a player as times have changed and the number of colored players have increased since Troy played baseball. But Troy gives an example to show the pitiable condition of black players in order to discourage Cory from joining the play team.

Lyons, a thirty-four year elder son of Troy by a previous marriage, comes to Troy's house to borrow money every Friday. He does not work but plays music. So Troy is not satisfied with him. Troy asks him to work on the rubbish to earn a living, besides playing music, but Lyons wants a decent job which he can not find. After criticizing his laid-back attitude towards work, Troy reluctantly loans him the \$10 he has requested.

Troy finds segregation in any sphere of life. According to him, though blacks are better than whites, who never let the blacks' chances play in the final matches. It is directed by the intention of whites rather than their skill and capacity. Again when

he goes to a restaurant he finds no good kind of services for blacks whereas the whites are treated well. Although Gabriel, the brother of Troy, fought in the Second World War in favour of his nation and had damaged his life, no one has recognized his bravery and sacrifice. Instead he is arrested and later Troy pays the police for his release.

Troy's another woman Alberta gives birth to a baby girl and Alberta dies. Rose accepts to take care of the baby but does not forgive Troy for his relationship with the other women.

Troy thinks that if Cory is set free, he will be successful in his mission and come out of his control, which is against his (Troy's) intention as he always wants to keep the youth under his control so that he might always be scared of him (father). The father (Troy) would not want his son to excel him in any matter. Cory further adds that Rose is also scared of Troy. Troy orders Cory to go out of his yard and leaves the house and Cory does so.

Eight years later, Troy dies of heart attack. Cory comes home after many years but denies attending Troy's funeral claiming that Troy was like a shadow that followed him everywhere and he needed to find a way to get rid of that shadow. Rose convinces Cory to attend the funeral saying that Troy meant to do better what you have thought though he was not always right. Gabriel who was hospitalized after he got seriously wounded in war is released from the hospital to attend the funeral.

Review of Literature

As the main concern of the present research work is to analyze Wilson's *Fences*, it is important to look into what other critics, reviewers have said about it. *Fences* has received bulk of critical commentaries and responses from many writers, scholars and critics. Some of them have commented on racial discrimination, black

cultural dimension. On the other hand, their commentaries are related with the portrayal of character, trend and tradition of Afro-American literature.

The play *Fences*, can be interpreted in different ways. The white people who hinder the Afro-Americans progress and development, their poverty that hinders them to cope with the growing necessities of the modern world and their illiteracy and lack of experience in skilled jobs which holds them backwards in every aspect of their lives are the major obstacles or fences that separate the Blacks from the whites.

Metzger advocates Wilson's ideas about the *Fences* between the races in these lines:

For blacks, the most difficult fence to scale, the one that restricts their achievements, the one that steals opportunities in the *Fences* that whites erect to keep blacks in a place away from mainstream success. This is the fence that Wilson wants his audience to see. This is the fence against which blacks are forced to struggle. (11)

Weals defines *Fences* as:

Set in "a Northern American industrial city" (i.e. Wilson's Pittsburgh) in 1957, it uses the metaphor of the fence which Troy builds around his backyard as title to a play about the fences between husband and wife, father and son, black and white. (321)

Similarly Bogumil interprets *Fences* as psychological manifestation of the protagonist's spirit rather than the structural partition. He says:

It is a psychological manifestation of his spirit for survival. A fence, therefore, becomes the central metaphor in the play. As Troy's friend Jim Bono claims, "Some people build fences to keep people out and other people build fences to keep people in". In the course of the play, Troy Maxson builds fences in order to exert control over all those

whom he encounters, including himself: fences between himself and his wife through his infidelity with Alberta-affection and refusal to sign Cory's football scholarship recruitment papers, between himself and his brother Gabriel (Gabe) through his signature on commitment papers he can not read; between himself and his best friend in the work place. Jim Bono, when he secures a job as a garbage truck driver instead of a collector and within himself when he drinks to dispel those demons of birth right, age and, most important, discrimination. (34-51)

The black culture and literary traditions of the 20th century American were also affected greatly by the racism which compelled contemporary Black writers to focus on how discrimination and torture prevailed in America. Similar is the case in *Fences* as Spring states:

From the oral traditions of slavery emerged in African American Literary traditions of the 20th century, both of which were shaped by a continuing state of oppression. The writings of Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison, to name but a few great authors in the African American tradition, all touched in some way in how black culture is shaped by the race line. The work of contemporary play wrights such as August Wilson and Engene Lee focuses on the development of modern day black culture in a racist society. (32-33)

Wilson portrays the dreadful economic position of Pittsburgh's Blacks in the late 1950s with the difference between the opportunities available to European immigrants and the descendents of African slaves. The protagonist of Wilson's play Troy Maxson is an example:

What should a realist expect of Troy Maxson, who was abandoned by his mother at age eight, fled a brutal, lustful father at age fourteen, began to steal for a living and served fifteen years on a murder charge? One can only hope for some measure of good and Troy exceeds a realist's expectations. He holds a steady but disagreeable job as garbage collector, supports a wife and son, stays sober six days a week, and wins his own private civil-rights battle to become a driver, and remains faithful to Rose for eighteen years before he falls.

(Wesslin 123)

It is easy to make the case that August Wilson's play *Fences* is a tragedy and that Troy Maxson is its tragic protagonist. He becomes the first black garbage truck driver at age fifty-three, after he asks why the job has to far been reserved for whites and finally succeeds in breaking the color barrier but the fact that he does not know how to read and drive, reminds us that the blacks lack the necessary training even if they get the opportunity. They are the victims of the evil system of racism at every sector of their lives whether it is in education, training or something else. Wilson has rightly tailored the condition of the African-Americans in *Fences*. "August Wilson wrote inter-connected plays exploring African American identity in the 20th century and accurately and brutal reality of innercity life". (Kurian 1:36)

The most prevalent image in August Wilson's *Fences* is baseball. It is the sport that defines Troy Maxson's and Cory's life and provides the measure of their success. Both Troy and Cory are good athletes but Troy restricts Cory to become a player because he has seen that even few exceptional black athletes could barely be provided for their families on an athlete's salary. It illustrates that racism prevailed in sports as

whites were supported by institutional funding while the blacks had to procure fund themselves. Metzger, a writer with speciality in drama-has opined:

The Negro league was not a source of viable income for its players; Troy could not have brought his home without the additional money from Gabriel's disability checks. In one of his complaints about the color line in baseball, Troy observes that he "saw Josh Gibson's daughter yesterday. She was walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet." He then compares Gibson's child to the child of a white major League player and declares "I bet you Selkirk's daughter ain't walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet." The reference is clear: Negro League Players cannot make enough money to support their families. (17)

Wilson plays were written to politicize the black community in America and *Fences* was intended to shed light on an older generation of black Americans who had suffered indignities but not want their children to suffer like themselves:

Troy Maxson is a black man in his early fifties, at once an authority figure and a garrulous, playful nice guy [. . .]. Although he was the strength to buck the system, to get him promote from garbage man to driver, he sees the world in terms of his own past. He has become a variation on the tyrant father he ran away to escape. He has come to believe that a black mans only choice is between jail, where he spent some youthful years and a steady job; he cannot see that there might be other possibilities in the 1950s, roads that were not open thirty years earlier. (Weales 320)

The relationship of Troy to his son Cory is of conflicting type. Troy wants Cory to settle for a workhorse trade guaranteeing a weekly paycheck but the boy resists. The younger Maxson is somehow convinced that the dreams of his black generation need not end in the city's mean alleys with the carting of white men's garbage. As Rich, the *New York Times* critic in his Review of *Fences* says:

The struggle between father and son over conflicting vision of black identity, aspirations and values is the plays narrative fulcrum and a paradigm of violent divisions that would later tear apart society. As written, the conflict is also didactic one, reminiscent of old-fashioned plays, blacks and writes about disputes between first-generation American parents and rebellious children. (951)

Troy's flaw is that he does not recognize that the world is changing:

Some of the negative views Troy espouses are of course anachronisms, for he tends to dwell on the past. When Troy insists that there are no black sports figures in baseball, Rose reminds him of Jackie Robinson. In fact, Troy often reminds both Rose and Cory that there will never be anyone to surpass him in skill. If it was not for the lack of opportunity and now his age, Troy believes that he would have been the best baseball player ever to play the game. Therefore, throughout the play the tense relationship between both Troy and Cory worsens because Cory lives in a changing America and Troy refuses to detect the change. (Bogumil 34-35)

Are personal and social progresses of African American at that time obstacles due to racism? What are the fences behind them? These are some of the problems that the present study seeks to explore. After reading different views in different books or

articles presented from varying perspectives this study tries to find out the causes of racial encroachments. Racial prejudice and stereotypical mentality of the American people are the main causes of the protagonist's suffering throughout the play. It is not only the whites' stereotype but also the deep rooted antagonism within the black community which is responsible for his suffering. So, it is clear that interracial as well as intra-racial encroachment is the main problem of this play.

In this way, *Fences* as a whole is a realistic play. It provides an alienated existence of the black individuals who are victimized by the formidable forces of racism and politics in a white dominated society. It reflects racial tension and social injustices of the contemporary society. So it would be appropriate to go through various Afro-American themes and different practices of racism as analyzing tool in this research.

CHAPTER TWO

Race and Racism

Race refers to the sub-division of species based on biological and physical characteristics within the whole human species i.e. Homosapiens. On the other hand, race can be defined as a socially constructed concept that divides human kind in different divisions on the basis of distinctive characteristics. Vidyarthi describes: "a large number of population may be differentiated genetically through radically observable as well as non-observable physical characteristics. These biological groupings within the human species are commonly termed as races" (52).

Similarly Tyson describes the concept of race as:

Indeed, the concept of race was originally introduced in the field of natural history merely as a convenient way to refer to groups of human beings in different geographic locations, not with the intention of separating human beings into physiologically distinct groups.

However, by the nineteenth century, scientists were fixing these groups in permanent categories and claiming that physical differences corresponded to a culture hierarchy based on biology: human beings, they asserted, belong to different races and some races-in particular, the white race-are superior to others. (374)

So the concept of race was originally introduced as a convenient way to refer to groups of human beings in different geographic locations, not with the intention of separating human beings into physiologically distinct groups. But later it was constructed in the society without any reason by the power politics with the purpose of exploiting and discriminating whites as superior and others as inferior race.

According to Delgado and Stefanicic, race can't be defined on the basis of physical features. They describe:

How can we define race as a matter of physical features when the physical differences between light skinned blacks and dark skinned whites, to cite just one example, are much fewer than the physical differences we often see among members of each group? (75)

Ferrante and Brown have presented the basis of racial categories by the U.S. Census Bureau between 1790 and 1920. According to them:

A look at the racial categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau between 1790 and 1920 (the census is taken every ten years) should show us rather clearly that racial categorization doesn't reflect biological reality but rather the current beliefs about race at different times. For example, from 1790 to 1810, the Census Bureau designated the following populations as different races: (1) free whites, (2) all other free persons except Indians not taxed and (3) slaves. From 1820 to 1840 racial categories were as follows: (1) free whites, (2) unnaturalized foreigners (Foreigners who were not U.S. citizens), (3) Free colored and (4) slaves. In 1850 and 1860 we had (1) whites, (2) blacks, (3) mulattos (half-white, half black), (4) Mulatto Slaves and (5) black slaves. From 1870 to 1920 we had (1) whites, (2) blacks, (3) Mulattos, (4) quadroons (one-quarter black), (5) Octoroons (one-eighth black), (6) Chinese, (7) Japanese and (8) Indians. In short, our definitions of race change as economic and social pressures change. (115-16)

This racial categories by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that racial categorization is not on the basis of biological reality but it is according to the economic and social pressure of the society at different times. Brown Jr. explains:

[A]ll of the people in the world today . . . regardless of their physical features readily exchange genes when they produce offspring. The variations in human traits . . . evident when we look at each other are anatomical and physiological adaptations . . . [to] particular environment NO particular set of traits is limited to any one group or "race" For example, while grey eyes are associated with a light complexion, they do occur among dark complexioned people - as do brown eyes and black eyes. In the same vein, curly hair is associated with dark skin but we all know light complexioned people who also have curly hair [N]o particular set of traits cluster together to form on group or "race". . . [Rather] [s]ome people share similar traits . . . because they live in social isolation, which limits the availability of potential mates. . . . [That is] [t]he social rules (customs, laws) of their society . . . prohibit them from mating with people whose features are different. (144-45)

In this way, most of the critics have reached a general agreement in recognizing that human kind is one and that all human beings belong to the same species. According to them the race persists as a powerful social and cultural concept to categorise people on the basis of perceived differences in physical appearances and behavior, in practice. They have also claimed that variations in physical features mainly are the result of the environmental adaptation.

Tyson describes 'Racism' as “the unequal power relations that grew from the socio-political domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices. For example, segregation, domination and persecution” (360). Similarly Carmichael defines racism as "the predication of decisions and policies on consideration of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group” (112). So racism can be defined as a way of thinking that treats people unfairly that belongs to different races. It distinguishes people into two different racial groups - superior and inferior groups. It is a way of thinking and discrimination is its practice.

But on the other hand, the socio-political development of 1970s and 1980s gave way to the postmodern liberal and multicultural society. Jacques Derrida's theory of Deconstruction challenged the concept of centre-margin and then the relation between mainstream culture and marginalized ethnic culture paved way for redefinition. Therefore, no culture, no nation now feels inferior to any other groups, rather they feel proud to be introduced in terms of their identities. Because of the development of multiculturalism, everyone is struggling to create any kind of identity on cultural, ethnic, social, religious and national background. In this context, conventional mode of racism has been replaced by New Racism.

New racism does not see the race as biological issue or heredity but as a cultural product. "New racism is primarily connected with mechanism of exclusion and inclusion" (Gilroy 250). The categorization of people under superior, inferior group is a false notion because race is not inherently meaningful category. But a socially constructed concept shaped by the power politics under different social institutions. So the critics like Amiri Baraka, Henry Louis Gates, Martin Luther King

Jr. and Lerry Neal seek the freedom from the power imposition in the social institutes that has inferiorized the powerless minority groups.

Racialism is the idea or concept that believes internal and external qualities of man as the biological product. Louis Tyson defines it as: "a word we don't often hear in everyday speech refers to the belief in racial superiority, inferiority and purity based on the conviction that moral intellectual characteristics just the physical characteristics, are biological properties that differentiates the races" (360).

There was little consciousness of race before colonial period but it developed into practice immensely in this period because of the unequal power relation mainly between the white and black race in America. In medieval period, antagonisms between people were motivated chiefly by cultural, religious and linguistic differences. From the sixteenth century onward, Europeans ranged the earth conquering native people and establishing themselves as superior ruling aristocrats. Race relations are the direct outgrowth of the long wave of European expansion belonging with the discovery of America. Because of more highly developed technology and economic-political organization, the European became able by military force to control over the colonies and influence around the world. They formed a colonies and influence around the world. They formed a colony in America and it was not in the interest of the colonial power to liberate the blacks from colonial discourse. Especially during the era of colonization, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, ruling whites and subjugated blacks, brown and red people became conscious of their racial differences. Until the late eighteenth century race was distinguished mainly by its verbosity. Theoretically Christianity argues that all men are spiritually same in the eyes of God, but in practice all sorts of arguments could be found to prove the inferiority of blacks. By the late eighteenth century, the period of reasoning, the

enlightenment, proliferated, emphasizing in the scientific understanding of race. The scientists of that time classified animals as well as human beings, and arranged falsely as a hierarchy. "Distinctions were made between higher and lower races. European whites were placed at the summit in the hierarchy of races" (Synder 92).

Movements against Racism in America

Black racism in American soil developed from the history of African slavery. When Europeans immensely developed in the field of science and technology in the period of Renaissance and after, they established great industries for mass production which needed the market as well as workers. Europeans supplied the workers for industries and fields from West Coast of Africa. After the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, they went to America with the purpose of finding raw materials, market of readymade goods and at last colonization. With the success of colonization, these Europeans regarded themselves 'chosen' and 'superior' white race then started to dominate those powerless black African slaves. Some of Europeans like Sir John Hakins including some Spanish and Portuguese started their business of slave trading. So, Afro-American people have the long history of their own troubles and experiences since they were brought from West Coast of Africa. Most of the slaves passed their lives in suffering, dominations, discriminations, exploitation, raping, slavery, etc.

Racism reached its height in America mainly with the relationship between the colonialism and slavery. Though the primary motive for such expansion of colonism was economic, they applied a strong psychological pattern to defeat others.

Exaggerated national self consciousness entered in superiority complex:

Racialism, with nationalism and imperialism, formed the third branch of historically significant trident. Although there was no justification

for asserting that one was intellectually superior to another, imperialists assumed that especial aptitudes were inherent in the mental make up of white Europeans. (Synder 95)

Euro-Americans created the false assumption, with of their superiority complex to dominate others giving the meaning to their assumption that the God had created unequal races. They imposed the ideology in the beginning that European whites were more intelligent than the African blacks. So the former had the right and duty to direct the labour of the later. Blacks were thought to be physically strong and mentally weak. So they would work better under Europeans' direction. Though there was no justification for this attitude they developed it further and institutionalized it. Non-Europeans were categorized as 'Other', 'barbarians', 'inferior', and 'savages' whereas Europeans defined themselves as 'superb', civilized, etc. This notion helped them to discriminate, dominate and marginalize others: blacks, Africans, yellow Chinese, Red Indians, etc. This false ideology was imposed upon black Africans and slaves more strongly than on other minority groups.

Afro-Americans mainly lived in the South, undeveloped region in comparison to north agrarian land, uncivilized. But in the early 20th century, they migrated to North searching employment and other opportunities. In the First World War their population spread mostly in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Texas. The living condition of blacks in Southern part was extremely dominated and exploited but even in the North, later, was no more mentionably better. Whether in South or in North, wherever the lives of Afro-American people was dominated politically, socially, economically and physically.

White society didn't accept them equally rather they inferiorized as the lower race. So they were not given permission to live equally with the whites. Blacks were

not allowed to go to the same parks, theatre, hotels, restaurants, hospitals where the whites could go. The bus, train to journey and the quality of things to use were not the same. They used to be called by the pejorative names like 'niger', 'gal', etc. The ghetto areas, poorly made without the facilities were the places for the blacks to live.

Politics was out of access of the blacks. Before Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. there was no one to do anything in favour of blacks in the parliament. African-American people raised their voice demanding that they should be given the right to vote and citizenship many times but that was totally or partially denied before 1965. In the time of Declaration of Independence 1774, many blacks were hopeful with the proclamation of Jefferson that "all men are created equal [. . .] with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To secure these rights, governments instituted among men"(2). But blacks were made exception from it so their dream did not come true. "Despite the sacrifice of 5000 blacks who served with the revolutionary forces that ended British Colonial rule and despite much talk about human equality and unalienable rights most states did not permit blacks to vote" (Johnes 78). The most heart breaking message in the history of African-Americans is that they were not treated as the citizen of the country rather they were living hellish life in domination as animals. First time in the history, the government clearly declared the voting right to blacks in 1865, after the success of Civil War. But this proclamation became the cheque without balance and license without vehicle like some of the previous acts. This is one of the major causes for black people to revolt many times for their freedom and equality.

Economically and physically also Afro-Americans were dominated and discriminated against. In the time when they were slaves, they were not given more than the least required things-food, clothes and place to remain, just for living. Huge

production due to the hard labour of blacks was the sweat return to whites by which they were being more and more wealthy, but the sweat and labour of blacks was not respected. Only the lower level works: working in the fields, cleaning floor and bathrooms, grazing cattle, carrying goods, working or labouring in industries, etc. were given to them. Even for the same work blacks were given lower payment and made them to work up to 20 hours daily. Especially, illiteracy and racial prejudice were the main causes to restrict economic opportunities for them. Severe physical torture even for the minor mistakes was usual in their lives. They used to be bitten, whipped, and ironed in the parts of body and sometimes the whites used to take the pleasure by making them fight each other physically. Celestin Walbis writes: "While they were discussing about the blood and colour of blacks, he said let's call a Niger and cut him then it won't be the subject of discussion (37)" It clearly visualizes that whites took that much an easy task to cut a black only for their pleasure. Sometimes black females used to be sexually abused or exploited before their guardians but they could do no more than tolerate it. The Mahabharata of black's miseries and sufferings, discrimination, exploitation by whites in America is almost impossible to mention fully. However, later they became conscious about their position in the foreign land. On the one hand, they became nostalgic for their native and past lives on the other they tried their best to revolt to be free from all these discrimination and dominations. There are four major movements against racism in America:

Civil Rights Movements

The history of Afro-Americans is the history of their struggle to liberate themselves from the white domination. They started their struggle and rebellion, since their slave life many times throughout their history up to now. The experience of Afro-Americans throughout their history is marked by the discrimination, domination

exploitation and their result for freedom, rights and justice. Powerful whites always inflicted severe punishment upon the powerless blacks. Whites treated them very inhumanly since the time of beginning of slavery. They were being transferred from one place to another to be sold, mostly as slaves. Because of the fear of possible revolt, whites would tie them with a chain so tightly that no one could move.

They tortured the slaves very severely by ironing, raping, whipping, kicking, etc. Douglas presents a heart touching scene of how the Negro slaves were tortured:

I have often been awakened at the dawn of the day by the most heart rendering shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a post and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood [. . .]. He would whip her to make scream and whip her to make her hush, and not until overcome by fatigue, would be ceased to swing the blood dotted skin. (15)

This type of torture was the daily experience of blacks. Black people being obsessed by such domination started to fight against the whites.

Afro-Americans started the rebellion to be free from discrimination, exploitation and slavery since long back. They mainly started their organized political struggle for equality, justice, freedom and the end of slavery as they were their aims in this political struggle. Blacks took part in the Civil War, performing their best for the first time in their history. They were committed to their mission more aggressively with their demand of equal rights. They confidently thought that they were equal to the whites, since all human beings are creation of God. Harding writes:

Reason and revelation join to declare that we are the creature of that god who made one of blood, and kindred all the nations of Earth; we perceive by our own reflection, that we are endowed with the same

fancies with our masters and there is nothing that leads us to itself or suspicion that we are any more we obliged to serve them, they us and the more consider of this matter the more we are convinced by our right . . . to be free . . . and can never be convinced that we are made to be slaves. (25)

Blacks felt that there was no reason to be the slave forever. The more they thought about it, the more they were convinced to struggle for their rights. All they thought, they were treated unequally and dominated unjustly. Though they were not less competent than the whites, they were exploited. The blacks worked in the field, but they didn't get the chance to harvest. Similarly, they struggled many times but they couldn't harvest their rights. Blacks laboured hard for the whole day and night but its fruit was not given to them. Blacks worked in America but could not get anything than the domination. Harding writes:

And the black seed of Africa was ruthlessly casted into the winds, into the hungry soil, into mines, into river and sands, into the eyes and minds and white night nightmares of North and South America. And the harvest has not yet come. (24)

Whites never saw blacks with the equality rather they casted them to work in the fields mines, sands, forests, etc. However, blacks were hopeful that they could develop their position as the seed grows on the fertile soil. They were hopeful to use the challenge as the opportunity. Black people were always haunted by their history since they were brought from the west coast of Africa to make the slaves.

Discriminated social practice they realized as the burden of their progress. Whites imposed the European Laws upon them to take advantage exploiting their labour. But

the blacks protested such inhuman practice of slavery and exploitation in the different areas where the blacks were ghettoized.

Afro-American men and women were no more ready to accept such imprisonment of white categories and laws in Virginia, South Carolina and New York. They had been prepared for their uprising. In the heart of prison states - South, Virginia, Mississippi, etc. the experience was elaborated and expanded. Gradually, the black awakening became an unrelenting reality in the New World. It is not surprising that the movement of black struggle quickly leaped from the slave ships to American prisons-states. Naturally, its shape and forms often corresponded to the categories of whites' oppression and evoked memories of the shipboard experiences. Soon the struggle for black freedom in the states began to resemble a small river gathering its early force, moving against the domination of whites' power.

The struggle resisted the debilitating definitions of white society against the control of black lives by Euro-Americans and its system of slavery and racism. They raised the most profound questions about the nature of white society and the legitimacy of its power to control and define black people. They challenged the whites, often creating the tentative new communities outside the domination of white masters. They struggled not to follow and only demand their rights but to create an alternative- the life without the domination of whites; it could be in new territory also. Male and female, old and young, individual and group took part in rebellion. Harding remarks:

They often created an alternative community outside the domination of white masters [. . .] and they organizing not only a source of strength of their active resistance; their action moved forward toward the creation of alternatives. Admittedly, these alternatives were often

temporary, rugged and dangerous, but they clearly challenged existing order of slave society with another self determining black way [. . .] Most participants in the movement toward freedom were not really organized. Rather, the mainstream of the river was filled with innumerable individual acts of protest rebellion. Today there is a tendency to place such individual action outside the compass of black struggle, but that is the wrong. (40)

Most of the blacks contributed to the struggle for the freedom with an organized institution and some blacks contributed individually. Either in organized form or individually, they strongly committed to fight for the sake of their freedom. They blindly declared to choose one liberty or death but not to compromise for “Freedom and honour and dignity for these slaves at any cost” (Harding 47). The blacks very aggressively took part in the Civil War with the great hope of freedom. They did not see anything more than the freedom itself. The more they were suppressed the more aggressively they resisted and got involved in the destruction. Because of the long struggle of blacks, they were given the right to vote in 1865, but partially. Many amendments were passed only to deceive them. Only a limited and contingent freedom was offered in President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and was supplanted by the general unconditioned emancipation of the thirteenth amendment in 1865. Three years later, black citizenship was guaranteed by the fourteenth amendment and in 1870 the right to vote by the fifteenth amendment.

Many Bills, Amendments and an Emancipation Proclamation were passed; however, the black could not be completely free in the practice. Emancipation Proclamation became a false cheque immediately after Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. Even after this, they did not lose their hope and confidence; rather they

continued their struggle to bring it in practice. Blacks were hopeful searching their freedom and equality, and it was their right since they served many years in America. After the Civil War, neither they could be free nor satisfied. Only some of the blacks got the right to vote but the majority was living in the ghetto areas where they had no right to vote.

They were equally victimized as they had been earlier by the whites. They passed their lives under domination, discrimination and white brutality, but they never felt humiliated. The most important thing is that they did not stop their struggle for the journey towards freedom. Harding writes:

The river of black struggle held all these speaking acting and enlivening words, all these bold, challenging heroic lives and it was always moving, rising in the midst of the slave community. Therefore this was not a community without hope. It lived with brutality but did not become brutish. Often it was treated inhumanly but it clung to its humanity. There was too much in the river which suggested other possibilities, announced new comings and hurled restless movement against the dam of white oppression. Always under the surface of slavery, the river of black struggle flowed with, was created by a black community that moved actively in search of freedom, integrity, and home a community that could not be dehumanized. (74)

This struggle was like the river which always moved to the black communities with the hope of raising the possibility of freedom. It convinced all the black communities that the river of black struggle towards their freedom could not be stopped.

Harlem Renaissance

The majority of blacks who were living in the ghetto areas where their search for freedom through native awareness suffered failure many times. Once again they made attempts to revive their original culture as a token of new life for them. One of their great festivals flourished in 1920s, as Harlem Renaissance. Harlem, a Ghetto area near the New York City became the national center of African American culture, including the arts of theater, music, literature and dance. They revived their original native culture to search their identity, root and dance. New Negro appeared in Harlem with the original African cultural awareness and in the black literature as the revolutionary character. New Negro was a conscious black character who radically resisted the white domination and influences. Such characters glorified their original native culture. In literature New Negro seemed revolutionary against the whites. New Negro played an important role to arouse the sense of liberation and inspired to fight against the inequality. These black characters did not feel themselves inferior to the white Americans in any fields. The era produced "a phenomenal race consciousness and race assertion" (Huggin 83). Harlem was making it all happen because black people were coming together there, some intending to build a cultural capital of black world. So, "Harlem intellectuals looking at themselves thought of renaissance" (83). The sudden emergence of immense number of gifted black writers appeared to search for their freedom as the force on the American literary scene, using the literature and art as the weapon. Scott writes:

Third force in the American Literary Scene and since by reason of its closeness to the nerve center of the countries cultural ferment and the hospitality it offered radical movements in Negro life. New York City's Harlem was for the generation of Negro intellectuals a kind of

Mecca toward which they gravitated in spirit if not as actual residents, the movement has long been spoken of as the Harlem Renaissance.

(288)

Negro Americans of this period first encountered a large expression in lyric form of their ancestral memories and of the strange, bitter experiences with their fated involvement in the American reality. All the Afro-Americans had the common sensibility to create a new Negro, a black hero/heroine who resists the white influence upon them and heroically fights against them. In this New Negro Movement of Harlem Renaissance blacks flourished their cultural and literary activities. Many prominent writers like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Conntee Cullen, etc. enjoyed their renaissance and developed the sense of resistance through literature for the search of identity and freedom. Among them, Langston Hughes had a longest productive career to develop the black sensibility among all. In his poem collection *Dream Variations*, he cozes out an experience of a black under the oppressive circumstances. They had a dream to be free but it was altered by the inhumanity and orthodox of whites.

Popularity of Jazz music, black art, blues songs, revolutionary literature to create a New Negro and the search of blacks' identity and freedom were the achievements of Harlem Renaissance. This sensibility contributed to go further towards their struggle. The question of black freedom was running like the blood through the veins of the blacks. In 1950s American critics were not with Black Nationalism. Many students were marching against the racial discrimination and for the search of freedom in America. This sensibility proliferated as the Black Civil Rights Movement heralded by Martin Luther King Jr. in the year 1963 when the

blacks celebrated their hundredth anniversary of their Emancipation Proclamations.

On the same occasion, Martin Luther King delivered a famous Gutesburg Speech:

... But one hundred years later, a Negro is till not free. One hundred years later, the life of Negro is sadly crippled by the manacles of segregations and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. (qtd. in Urofsky 230)

This speech clearly shows that still the blacks are not free. King fought himself and encouraged others to struggle for the political and cultural freedom. Even in the late twentieth century blacks were under the shadow of slavery and they were deprived of the right to vote. But these struggles of the blacks did not stop rather their awareness exploded in the Black Aesthetic Movement in late 1960s. The literary figures of that period did not like the political, cultural, literary and any other kinds of influences upon them.

Black Aestheticism

Afro-Americans resisted the mainstream literary norms and values in 1960s to glorify their own literature and culture. They separated themselves from the main stream literature, culture and the standard of judgment in order to develop a uniquely blackness in those fields. The enriched cultural awareness in Harlem Renaissance inspired them to search their root, culture, literature and the standard of judgment. The black literary figures of that time did not like to judge their literature in relation to white mainstream trend; rather they developed their black literary universe for judgment. Their history and the experience were the main sources of their literature.

So they argued that there should be the black ways of judging Afro-American Literature. Black Aesthetic perspective was an appropriate tool to approach the black literature in their views.

Separatists did not feel themselves as a marginal literary group, instead they thought equally important, and glorify their experiences, and history was equally important to them as the white mainstream. So, the Afro-American critics emphasized on their own way of judgment for the literature created by themselves about black experience:

The Separatists argued that there had to be uniquely black ways of judging and seeing literature and that not a trace of this method could be effectively implemented in a system that compared writing by blacks to the writing of very white "oppressors" the blacks were writing against. . . . prominent black writers such as Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin argued for 'university' of their own writings as well as those of other blacks, while at the same time inspiring on some uniquely black messages and indexes in their texts. They saw no reason to eschew comparisons between their works and the works of other. (Martin 296)

The concept of 'separatism' developed as the Black Aesthetic Movement in the same decade. This movement is the celebration of African- American literature, culture and their experiences. Most of the Afro-American intellectuals in that time tried to search aestheticism in their own literary and cultural possessions. They tried to feel the pleasure in their own literature that spoke of their extremely painful experiences during slavery and white domination. Afro-American Literature filled with agony, torture, bitter experiences suffering, etc. was the source of pleasure to

them. These experiences and the cultural issues have made the Afro- American literature rich. Though their experiences were full of bitter realities, they found the actual identity of blackness and aesthetic pleasure in them.

Since the Afro-American literature possesses the blackness and celebrates it, they thought it unnecessary to see and judge their literature in relation to the mainstream white trend. They thought it important to make a separate black universe of literature and culture for the judgment. Black universe in the sense that, they created their literature from their own experiences and tried to judge their literature within the black parameter. So this movement is a kind of literary resistance in which they thought to make their own world of literature, culture and the standard of judgment.

Through the Black Aesthetic Movement, Afro-Americans attacked the whites and supported the revolution. They encouraged the native African culture, language and traditions. So it was the movement to celebrate the African tradition, encouraging the African against whites influence. Just like the radical feminists, the Afro- American authors like Amiri Baraka, Lerry Neal, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Charles Johnson, etc. created their works on the basis of their experiences. They felt the pleasure to play with their experiences, history and native culture. Black experiences were sufficient to them for their literary subject matter. They argued that there was uniquely blackness in their literary works and arts which couldn't be judged in relation to white mainstream. Only the black critics could judge their literature appropriately. These scholars undermined the white mainstream trend. In literature, they sought aesthetic pleasure from their real life experiences. By rewriting their history they aimed to reconstruct the society based on justice and equality. So, they could feel freedom. Their aim was to make a separate black literary world where they could

enjoy themselves. Addison Gayle conceived the Black Aesthetics to be “a corrective - a means of helping black people out of polluted mainstream of Americanism” (qtd. in Hoffman 307). The black writers and critics believed that whites could not feel and understand the black literature. So it was the responsibility of blacks to produce the criticism themselves on their literature. John Killen’s comments: “White critics are totally- and I mean totally-incapable of criticizing the black writers. They don't understand Afro- Americans” (qtd. in Hoffman 310).

Black scholars used their history as the subject matter in literature to glorify black culture and tradition. Black characters in such literature asserted their identity with the help of unique black experience. These characters strongly resisted against the white domination and they struggled for their freedom. This is the central issue in black literature. Toni Morrison, one of the prominent black scholars says, “The contemplation of this black presence is central to any understanding of our national literature and should not be permitted to hover at the margins of the literary imaginations” (5). It was a positive point that, to glorify their literary universe, they did not devalue others. They wanted to break the hierarchy of center-margin but not to constitute another center. Morrison further says:

I do not want to alter one hierarchy in order to institute another. It is true that I don't want to encourage those totalizing approaches to African-American scholarship which have no drive other than the exchange of domination-dominant Euro-centric scholarship. Replaced by dominant Afro-centric scholarship. More interesting is . . . what forces help establish the parameter of criticism. (8)

The dominated blacks since the long past searched their liberation through literature. They did not want to be called dominated. By rejecting the other

subject matter, they refreshed their past in order to search their root and identity. Black scholars tried to understand their identity and position in relation to the universe. Whatever their past might be the black slavery and their experiences enriched the creative potentiality. The black scholars used these as their tools which they searched for their identity and freedom in the present. The literature by Afro-Americans, about their experiences, to be judged by themselves and the glorification of their culture helped to develop the concept of Africanism. This was the real black aesthetics and the source of their black literary universe. Some of the writers explored their history and experiences. It was one of the means to search their freedom and identity.

Further Morrison puts her view as:

Africanism is the vehicle by which the African self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless but licensed and powerful; not history less, but historical; not damned but innocence; not a blind accident of devolution but a progressive fulfillment of destiny. (52)

As the New Negro of Harlem Renaissance was very progressive and revolutionary, the literary figures of Black Aesthetic movement were radical. They emphasized on context of blacks' experiences event from history important to understand the Afro-American literature. They created, recreated and re-approached the texts from the perspective of Afro-Americanism. Re-approaching the texts through this perspective, they saw rose in their whippings, creation in raping, pleasure in tortures, possibilities in silence and the freedom in slavery. So the contemporary Afro-American writers reminded their history to reinforce blacks to search their

identity, freedom and pleasure by re-approaching the texts, history and experiences through the spirit of Black Aestheticism.

Many blacks were trying very hard to establish a black canonicity by pronouncing a need for Black Aesthetics. They were aware of racial order of society and as a result, they embarked on existence of this Aesthetics as a source for black identity and freedom. The concept of black Aesthetics appeared in the writings by Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Mari Evans, and Don L. Lee etc. The contributors of this movement and the students involved in the Black consciousness Movement in early 1970s further rejected the western traditions. They felt important to express and expand the traditional Native African cultures and values to establish their identity and freedom.

The long history of their struggle for freedom suggests that the blacks have always been under the discrimination and domination. Now the relation between whites and blacks is studied in relation to multicultural and multiethnic power relations. Socio-anthropological and post modern perspectives have replaced the earlier mode of perception. Interdisciplinary approach and Foucauldian power politics has been the tool to study the text, which has paved the way to redraw the earlier boundaries. Now the critics agree that blacks were discriminated against since the time of slavery because of unequal power relation. "Unequal power relation is the major cause for the racial discriminations since the primitive time" (Robinson 108). In the present time, Afro-Americans are struggling for search of culture, freedom and their root. They do not feel America to be their own motherland rather they are foreigner in their own country, America. Bitter segregation, exploitation and life in slavery of the past haunt them in the present. Such past experiences remind the blacks to feel the white Americans as their oppressors. Many critics and the literary figures

bring the references of the past experience, their native land, Africa, and the events from the history to refresh the reality with the hope of reinforcing and encouraging the blacks to do something for their complete freedom from white dominations. So the writers create the texts in such a way to encourage people by producing the aggressively protestant characters. It is important to study the “representation of black characters and the blackness in the literature” (Bertens 111). The writers have produced the radical characters as the struggle against bondage on black mother conveyed these lessons in such a way that her daughter never forgot. “She warned: I'll kill you gal, if you don't stand up for yourself,[. . .] fight and if you can't fight, kick, if you can't kick, then bite” (Johnes 86).

In this way contemporary writers have produced such literature with the hope to create identity and freedom.

Black Consciousness

Though black people could do no more than tolerate the suppression imposed by the whites in the earlier phases, the more they became conscious about their position, the more strongly they resisted against the white domination and discriminations. So they started Black Consciousness Movement in early 1970s for their freedom. The developed consciousness not only made them nostalgic, for their motherland, Africa, but also inspired them to resist differently liberating themselves. Pityana writes:

The Black Consciousness Movement is a term of convenience that refers not only to the organizations that sprung up in South Africa after 1968 but also to the widespread mode of black pride that encompasses the Blackman's commitment to a search for human dignity and

liberation from all those forces that seek to oppress him
psychologically and physically. (161)

So the consciousness was to lead the blacks towards the liberation of them to be completely free from white's influences. Initially, this mood was a less organized political movement that moved from protest to open revolt. This movement is an attitude of the mind or the way of life giving shape and direction to the feelings of anger and resentment that imbedded in the psyche of the ordinary people. It is awareness by black people of the power they wield as a group both economically and politically.

Those who suffered the victimization at the hands of oppressor had the only option to identify themselves as a unit. The question of color and race was one of the major factors in seeking unification of all oppressed people towards a national consciousness. It did not exclude the clear possibility that there could be factors which might cause some blacks, otherwise fit themselves into earlier category. So it helped identify themselves with the aspiration of other blacks and their struggle for liberation. This message of oppressed class was spread to reach all sectors of black community. It helped for the developments in the commitment by black people to the total. The aim of the Liberation of the black people was the total liberation of the black community. Black consciousness mainly started from the resistance of educational curriculum of America prepared for blacks and paved way for resistance in economic, political, cultural, literary spheres as well.

South African students' organization expressed this commitment as representing the interest of students in all issues that affect them in their academic and community situation. The students resisted the education system that was available in that time for black people in terms of Bantu, coloured and Indian Education

departments of government. They didn't like the imposed arrogant white education system, which in the eyes of blacks was defined to conquer the minds of black people from colonial days. In the Bantu education policy, syllabuses were prepared by the white in the way to impose their ideology. Students evaluated that syllabus designed by the oppressor merely presents the oppressor's view and blind the blacks to realize their condition and rights. Whites feared the possible demand by blacks for equality. So they imposed their ideology to dominate blacks. Christian national education stated education should enable the young to take over from their cultural heritage everything that is good, beautiful and noble, develop it in accordance with their own gifts. However, the national policy of the whites was just the opposite:

Native education should be based on the principles of the trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; its aim to include the white man's point of view of life, especially that of the Boer nation which is the senior trustee. Education must train and touch people in accordance with their opportunities in life according to the sphere in which they live national education should be in accordance with the policy of state

(Pityana 165)

This shameless discrimination in the education system was not accepted by the college students of South-African students' organization. They protested against the Bantu education and rejected the right of National Government to hold the monopoly of total policy in the education of African child. They tried to establish an alternative system of education rejecting the apartheid motives of the government. The students' president Majola once said:

We will fight on until we have attended our rights. Only one brick need fall to send the whole pillar of apartheid crashing to the ground [. . .]

on this earth where we now stand, our freedom was taken away, on this very earth we can gain the knowledge to free ourselves again.

(Pityana169)

This obviously indicates that whites tried to deprive the blacks of appropriate syllabus, which means they tried not to make the blacks educated. Having the failure mentality of oppressors, whites were afraid that if the blacks made them educated their selfish interest to discriminate and exploit them will end soon. Despite their efforts blacks revolted to achieve the education, means of their freedom. The blacks understood, despite the imposed false ideology, that access to education meant to freedom. So this educational consciousness is the basic means by which they became strong for political, literary, socio-economic resistance. Such awareness encouraged them to resist the white domination for their freedom. Racism, therefore, a socially constructed concept by power relation, studies mainly the relation between the races. It is the broader term that encompasses the elements of history, past experience, literary representation, socio-political situation etc. Black racism is a burning issue, mainly in America where the blacks are exploring their relation with the whites in terms of power politics. The relationship between the whites and the blacks in America is mostly based on the discrimination made by the whites on the basis of race, colour, language etc. where the discrimination is the product of prejudice and stereotypical mode of thoughts, or assumption mainly based on traditional concepts of race of colour. Tyson says:

Basically Afro-American literature focuses on a number of recurring historical and sociological themes, all of which reflect the politics- the realities of political, social and economic power of black American experiences. Among these themes are the following: reclaiming the

African past; surviving the horrors of the Middle Passage. Surviving the ordeal of slavery; the quest for freedom from slavery and other forms of suppression; the quest for literacy, the experiences of African-Americans during the Civil War and Reconstruction; surviving in the South under segregation; the problems and conflict in a racist society; the difficulties of economic survival [. . .] quest to reconcile double consciousness; importance of cultural heritage (388-89)

Afro-American authors write on racial issues to raise their racial voices against whites. They don't feel themselves inferior in the contemporary time rather proudly search their root, freedom and identity. Now the traditional mode of racism, which focuses on the race as biological products is challenged and replaced by the 20th century science and the concept of New Racism, which believe the race as the social construction shaped by the power, politics and ideologies of the powerful group or race. In such contemporary context, black authors write with the purpose of liberating the Afro-American people completely from such discriminations, exploitations and encroachment imposed by the whites. Though the past of black race was dark, now they are hopefully struggling for the bright future to live equally and freely among all. Black literature produces the positive literary resistance and focuses on their history and experiences to freedom.

CHAPTER THREE

Two Types of Racial Encroachment

Intra - Racial Encroachment

In the play *Fences* the encroachment is seen not only between two different races but it is also found even within the same race. Dominant members seem to be the fence for the upliftment of the weaker member of the same race. The weaker members suffer throughout their lives due to the cause of dominant member of the family as well as the society. They have to live in a kind of oppression in the family and society. It is not caused by the whites; some black figures in the drama are also responsible for it. Some of the black figures in the drama think that black people can raise the standard of life by working with the company of the white. In the drama, Cory wants to be recruited by a college football team together with the white players. But his father, Troy does not want to sign on the permission paper when the coach Zellman tells him to sign on it. Troy discourages his son instead of empowering him.

CORY. I get good grades, pop. That's why the recruiter wants to talk with you .You got to keep your grades to get recruited .This way I'll be going to college. I'll get a change....

TROY. First you goanna got your butt down there to the A&P and got your job back. (1.3.1366)

Cory tries to convince his father that he will get good grades and chances if he gets recruited to the college. But his father stops him going to the college to be recruited. Cory has seen the good earning and prestige of the professional players of that time but Troy is unable to come to an understanding of the change in time. He takes away Cory's dream to be successful player and earn a good living despite his ability and honor given to him.

To back up Cory's interest in football, Rose insists that Troy sign the paper considering honour given to Cory.

ROSE. He isn't talking about making no living play football. It's just something the boys in school do. They gonna send them goanna to send a recruiter by to talk to you. He'll tell you he ain't taking about making no living playing football. It's an honour to be recruited.

(1.1.1350)

Rose is conscious of the change in time, people and the world, and has asked Troy to cope with the change since when he was young. Troy is unable to see a little change because he is illiterate and uneducated. This is another problem which affects the lives of the African-American at that time. Troy cannot recognize the change in time, even though he himself gets promoted to become the first colored driver. He was so deeply shocked by the white people, who had not allowed him to play baseball in the major leagues despite his ability to play excellently. He cannot believe that the change in time is going to provide the black players with equal status, though there are lots of colored boys playing baseball and football, their status is different. Similarly, Troy wants to be the boss and threatens the others as:

TROY. You a bigger fool than I thought. To let somebody take away your job so you can play some football. Where you goanna get your money to take out your girl friend and what not? What kind of foolishness is that to let somebody take away your job?

CORY. I'm still goanna be working weekends.

TROY. naw . . . naw. You getting your butt out of here and finding you another job.

CORY. Come on, pop! I got to practice. I can't work after school and

play football too. The team needs me. That's what couches Zellman say . . .

TROY. I don't care what nobody else says. I'm the boss . . . you understand? I'm the boss around here I do the only saying what counts. (1.3.1366)

Here Troy is inclined to the corrupting tendency of the dominating and ruling over the innocent and weaker members of the same family. Troy has threatened not to give any money to Cory if he does not do as his father intends. He has also expressed that he is the boss around there and everybody should move as he wishes.

We can also find another reference of encroachment on the weaker side by the stronger one within the same race. TROY. We had better pitching in the Negro Leagues. I hit seven home runs off of satchel Paige. You can't get any better than that! (1.3.1366) This reference shows how cold and domineering Troy is.

Tory insists that Cory has no ability to play well in the league, but it is obvious that the latter has enough ability to do very well if he gets chances to be recruited in the league. In this case, Tory appears to be a fence for the better opportunity of Cory. This is one of the instances of intra-racial encroachment. Troy expresses the inability of Cory. But in fact if he gets to be recruited to the league he can do well. Here Troy seems to be the fence for the better opportunities of Cory.

The male figures in Negro society dominate the females Troy's expression, "You suppose to come when I call you, woman . . . (1.4.1370). "This reference indicates that women are treated as dogs in Negro society.

Instead of raising voices for the promotion of all members of his race, Troy complains for the promotion of himself and finally he gets promoted as a driver from garbage collector.

TROY. Look here, Rose . . . Mr. Rand called me into his office today when I got back from talking to them people down there . . . it come from up top ... he called me in and told me. Troy was making me a driver.

ROSE. Troy, you kidding!

TROY. No, I am not. Ask Bono.

ROSE. Well, that's great, Troy. Now you don't have to hassle them people no more. (1.4.1371)

The above scene implies how the strongest members of the black community take advantage from other members of the same race. Troy's wife Rose suggests her husband not to go against the whites who promoted him to a driver from garbage collector. As a dominant member of the community he has to raise the voice for the promotion of other members with the promotion of him. Similarly, the elder, powerful members of the family show their domineering manners towards the children:

TROY. Sometimes I wish I hadn't known my daddy. He ain't cared nothing about no kids. A kid to him wasn't anything. All he wanted was for you to learn how to walk so he could start you to learn how to working. When it came time for eating . . . he ate first. If there was anything left over, that's what you got. Man would sit down and eat two chickens and give you the wing. (1.4.1374)

This scene shows the irresponsibility and carelessness of the father of Troy towards his children. As a father he has the responsibility to care and rear his children in a proper manner.

Troy was accused of killing the man and was put in the penitentiary and locked up for fifteen years. During this period Rose struggled much to feed the baby

and live by herself without him. Later on, he was released from the jail. Rose was doing her best to maintain her family. But she was shocked when her husband disclosed the love for another woman called Alberta;

ROSE. We're not talking about baseball!! We are talking about you going off to lie in bed with another woman . . . and then bring it home to me. That's what we're talking about. We aren't talking about any baseball.

TROY. Rose, you're not listening to me. I'm trying the best I can to explain it to you. It's not easy for me to admit that I been standing in the same place for eighteen years.

ROSE. I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me? Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forgot about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? You not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Troy. I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams . . . and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never goanna bloom. But I held on to you, Troy. I held you fighter. You were my husband I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . .

(2.1.1386-1387).

According to Rose, she buried all her feelings wants and needs, her dreams inside her husband while he was in jail. She struggled hard to bring up the baby and survive herself. She was totally loyal and devoted to her husband. She planted herself inside her husband and waited for the happy life. But she was badly shocked when she knew that her husband would bring another woman home as the second wife. It is the example of great injustice to females in the black community. It is also the instance of extreme form of inhuman treatment and a kind of encroachment of the dominant member upon the weaker members which ultimately helps to build up the hostile situation within the same community.

Rose reminds the careless of Troy towards his wife and son. Troy can't listen it and hurts Rose. Cory is also there at that time. Then there is the fierce fight between the father and son about such a minor affair.

CORY. Mama!

ROSE. Troy. You're hurting me.

TROY. Don't you tell me about no taking and giving.

(Cory comes up behind Troy and grabs him just as Cory throws a glancing blow that catches him in the chest and knocks him down.

Troy is stunned, as is Cory.)

ROSE. Troy. Troy. No!

(Troy gets to his feet and starts at Cory) .

(TROY. . . . no. please! Troy!)

Rose pulls on Troy to hold him back. Troy stops himself.

TROY. [to Cory] All right. That's strike two. You stay away from around me, boy. Don't you strike out. You living with a full count.

Don't you strike out. (2.1.1387)

The fight between father and son, two black members in a family, implies that even between blacks there is the problem of understanding to each other which hinders them to uplift the standard of their lives. Similarly the following extract shows dominant members of the family impose authority upon the weaker members of the same race:

CORY. You talking about what you did for me . . . what'd you ever give me?

TROY. Them feet and bones! That pumping heart, nigger! I give you more than anything else is ever goanna give you.

CORY. You ain't never gave me nothing! You ain't never done anything but hold me back. Afraid I was goanna be better than you. All you ever did was try and make me scared of you. I used to tremble every time you called my name. Every time I heard your foot steps in the house wondering all the time . . . what's papa goanna say if I do this? . . . What's papa goanna say if I turn on the radio? And Mama, too . . . she tries . . . but she's scared of you.

(2.4.1395-96)

The text is an example of how the adult black people try to dominate and suppress the members of their own race instead of encouraging them to get united to fight against the white encroachment. The quote clearly reveals how the lives of the junior are encroached by the seniors in the community.

This scene also shows the clash between father and son, the members of the same race. Instead of working together against whites, they are blaming each other in

personal matters. According to Cory, he used to tremble every time when his father called his name and his life but always scared of him.

Even though Troy is the father of Cory, he engages in fighting with his son. It is his weakness to fight with the son instead of convincing him by another way.

Cory and Troy struggle over the bat. The struggle is fierce and fully engaged. Troy is stronger and takes the bat from Cory and stands over him ready to swing.

Troy stops himself and says: "Go on and get away from my house. Cory stung by his defeat, picks himself up, walks slowly out of the yard and up the alley" (2.4.1397).

This extract shows the extreme form of inhuman and animalistic behaviour by fighting each other very fiercely. This is the reference for the problem of understanding of the dominant member of the intra-racial problem in the text. There is a kind of fence in between them. Troy as the strongest member of the community takes advantage from other members as Gabriel Cory in favour of Gabriel says: "CORY. I ain't your yard! You took Uncle Gabe's money he got from the army to buy this house and then you put him out" (2.4.1396).

Gabriel had received some of the money when he got half his head blown off when he was fighting for the whites. Troy, the brother of Gabe, took that money to buy the house. From the given extract it seems that Troy puts him out of the house. It is taken as one of the reference of encroachment upon the weaker members by the strongest member of the same race. Instead of developing the situation of love and co-operation within the same race to fight against the whites, they seem to have the corrupting tendency which makes it easier for the whites to subordinate and encroach the blacks in every sphere of life.

Inter-racial Encroachment

The present world is made up of a multi-racial society. Racial harmony is rarely found in racist society because of its false practices. Prejudice and discrimination are the two different practices of racism which ultimately turns into racial encroachment by the so called superior races upon the inferior. The whites have the prejudice of superior and Negroes as inferior. According to Ellis:

The principle of race orthodoxy like the whites race must dominate; the Negro is inferior and will remain so, this is a white man's country; no social equality; no political equality, let there be such industrial education of the Negro as well as will best fit to serve the Whiteman. 16)

This extract shows the racial creed and actions based on prejudice. There is the denial of equality based on personal characteristics due to racist attitude.

In the play *Fences* Troy complains to Mr. Rand, his boss about the nature of work the blacks are given. He asks Mr. Rand why he gives the Blacks only the job of lifting the garbage and the Whites driving the truck as everybody can drive a truck. Troy is not satisfied with his job as garbage collector and wants to drive the truck but there are not any Negroes driving trucks. They are the victims of the system:

TROY. Now what he look like getting mad cause he see the man from the union talking to Mr. Rand?

BONO. He came to me talking about . . . "Maxson gonna get us fired." I told him to get away from me with that he walked away from me calling you a trouble maker. What Mr. Rand say?

TROY. Ain't said nothing. He told me to go down the commissioner's office next Friday. They called me down there to see them.

BONO. Well, as long as you got your complaint filed, they can't fire

you. That's what one of them white fellows tell me.

TROY. I ain't worried about them firing me. They goanna fire me cause I asked a question? That's all I did. I went to Mr. Rand and asked him, 'Why? Why you got the white men driving and the colored lifting?' Told him, "What's the matter, don't I count? You think only white fellows got sense enough to drive a truck. That ain't no pater job! Hell, anybody can drive a truck. How come you got all whites driving and the coloured lifting?" He told me "take it to the union." Well, hell, that's what I done! Now they wanna come up with this pack of lies. (1.1.1346)

This is a kind of encroachment of whites upon blacks in their job. Troy wants to end such type of encroachment of whites and finally gets success and becomes the first colored driver to drive the garbage truck. This indicates the African-American's gradual uprising from their inferior status.

Though the Negroes are better skilled or having similar capacities they are not accepted as whites' companions. They are deprived of better opportunities as Troy Opines:

ROSE. Cory done went and got recruited by a college football team.

TROY. I told that boy about that football stuff. The white man aren't goanna let him get nowhere with that football. I told him when he first comes to me with it. Now you come telling me he done went and got more tied up in it. . . .

Troy. Selkirk! That's it! Man batting. 269, understand? 269, what kind of sense that make? I was hitting. 432 with thirty-seven home runs! Man batting. 269 and

playing right field for the Yankees! I saw Josh Gibson's daughter yesterday she was walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet. Now I bet you Selkirk's daughter ain't walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet! I bet you that! (1.1.1349-50)

It shows that Troy's experience in the football match is directed by the intention of the whites. According to him, the whites never let the blacks to have chances to play in the Major Leagues despite their ability to play excellent. Troy tries to show the pitiable condition of the family of excellent black players such as Josh Gibson (1911-1947) at that time but white players are living in a good position even though they are not as qualified as the blacks. So he insists that his son gets recruited to a job about how to fix cars or of something where he can make a living.

African-Americans were never provided more skilled job rather they continued to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs and most of them remained unemployed. The situation is expressed in the following text:

LYONS. Aw, pop, you know I can't find no decent job. Where am I goanna get a job at? You know I can't find no job.

TROY. I told you I know some people down there. I can get you on the rubbish if you want to work. I told you that the last time you came by here asking me for something.

LYONS. Naw, pop . . . thanks. That ain't for me. I don't wanna be carrying nobody's rubbish. I don't wanna be punching nobody's time clock. (1.1.1355)

It shows that it is difficult for the blacks to find a decent job. Despite the growing challenges and aspirations, the young generation either has to accept the job the

whites do not want to do or remain idle. It can be taken as the example of whites' encroachment upon the blacks.

Blacks are discriminated against even in the public places like restaurants, buses and cinemas. The discrimination is reflected in the following text:

TROY. Had good sense, I'll say that for him. He ain't throwed his money away. I seen nigger hit the numbers and go through two thousand dollars in four days. Man bought him that restaurant down there . . . fixed it up real nice . . . and then didn't want nobody to come in it! A Negro go in there and can't get no kind of service. I seen a white fellow come in there and order a bowl of stew. Pope picked all the meat out the pot for him. Man ain't had nothing but the potatoes and carrots. Talking about what numbers do for people, you picked a wrong example. Ain't done nothing but make a worst fool out of him than he was before. (1.2.1358)

In this extract Troy is really upset that the poor Negroes spend their money in number and if they get lucky occasionally, even then the benefit is not for their people but for the whites. In the restaurant, Negro gets no kind of good service. When a white fellow orders a bowl of stew, the staff of the restaurant picks all the meat out the pot for him whereas Negro gets only the potatoes and carrots.

The hopes, aspirations and desires of Afro-Americans were never materialized rather they turned into frustration and disgust. The theme of white encroachment is shown with the response given to Gabriel. The conversation between Rose and Troy reveals it:

ROSE. He ain't eating right. Miss Pearl say she can't get him to eat nothing.

TROY. What you want me to do about it, Rose? I did everything I can for the man. I can't make him get well. Man got half his head blown away . . . what you expect?

ROSE. Seem like something ought to be done to help him.

TROY. Man don't bother nobody. He just mixed up from that metal plate he got in his head. Ain't no sense for him to go back into the hospital.

ROSE. Least he be eating right. They can help him take of himself.

TROY. Don't nobody wanna be locked up, Rose. What you wanna lock him up for? Man go over there and fight the war . . . messin' around with them Japs, get half his head blown off . . . and they give him a lousy three thousand dollars. And I had to swoop down on that.

(1.2.1361)

This episode is also another reference of the whites' encroachment upon the blacks. Gabriel was injured in Second World War and has a metal plate in his head. He fought for his nation and lost his half sanity. But his contributions are not well recognized as he is frequently arrested by the police and left free when they got money. He received a lousy sum of three thousand dollars for his maintenance by the government.

The economic condition of Negroes is very poor due to whites' encroachment. They are unable to buy a television which Cory insists his father to buy. It can be noticed from the expressions below:

CORY. Hey, pop ... why don't you buy a TV?

TROY. What I want with a TV? What I want one of them for?

CORY. Everybody got one. Earl, Ba Bra . . . Jesse!

TROY. I ain't asked you who had one. I say what I want with one?

CORY. So you can watch it. They got lots of things on TV. Baseball games and everything. We could watch the World Series.

TROY. Two hundred dollars, huh?

CORY. That ain't that much, pop.

TROY. Naw, it's just two hundred dollars. See that roof you got over your head at night? Let me tell you something about that roof. It's been over ten years since that roof was last tarred. See now . . . the snow come this winter and it's goanna seep inside. It's just gonna be leaking all over the house. Then the wood rot from all that water and you goanna need a whole new roof. Now, how much you think it cost to get that roof. Now, how much you think it cost to get that roof tarred?

CORY. I don't know.

TROY. Two hundred and sixty four dollars . . . cash money. While you thinking about a TV, I got to be thinking about the roof . . . and whatever else go wrong around here. Now if you had two hundred dollars, what would you do . . . fix the roof or buy a TV?

CORY. I'd buy a TV. Then when the roof started to leak . . . when it needed fixing . . . I'd fix it.

TROY. Where you goanna get the money from? You done spent it for a TV. You goanna sit up and watch the water run all over your brand new TV. (1.3.1363-64)

The writer has tried to show that the income of Troy does not meet to buy a television. He wants to repair the roof which is leaking and has not tarred for over ten years and build a fence around the yard. His son Cory wants to buy a television instead of repairing the roof and build a fence around the yard. It seems that he is unable to fulfill the wants and desires of his son.

The poor economic condition, illiteracy and the effect of white encroachment have disintegrated the lives of the blacks.

TROY. I told you ain't signed nothing woman! The only thing I signed was the release form. Hell, I can't read, I don't know what they had on that paper! Ain't signed nothing about sending Gabe away.

ROSE. I said send him to the hospital . . . you said let him be free . . . now you done went down there and signed him to the hospital for half his money. You went back on yourself, Troy. You goanna have to answer for that.

TROY. See now . . .you been over there talking to Miss Pearl. She done got mad cause she isn't getting Gabe's rent money. That's all it is. She's liable to say anything.

ROSE. Troy I seen where you signed the paper.

TROY. You ain't seen nothing I signed. What she doing got papers on my mother anyway? Miss Pearl telling a big fat lie. And I 'm goanna tell her about it too! You ain't seen nothing I signed. say . . . you ain't seen nothing. (2.2.1389)

In this given scene it seems that Gabriel had received some of the money from the government when he got half his head blown off. He was in the hospital. He was unable to manage it by himself. Hospital asked his brother Troy to sign on the paper

telling him it was form for release. Troy could not read and trusted them. But in fact it was the paper about to send half of Gabe's money to the hospital. Troy signed on it thinking that it was the release form. Later on it came to be known that it was not what it was said to be. It is one of the examples of corruption as well as the encroachment of the whites upon the blacks.

CHAPTER FOUR

Racial Encroachment and its Consequences

Through the analysis of *Fences*, we come to know that there is the encroachment between blacks-blacks and blacks-whites. It concerns about the burning issue of the black people regarding their poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social discrimination injustice and individual victimization by the economic and political forces and prevailing power relationships. It reveals the lack of sympathy and co-operation within the people of the same race to fight against their common enemy. So this can be taken as one of the intra-racial problems in the text. In the play *Fences* the main character, Troy Maxson is the victim of the whites and he himself behaves in such a way that victimizes the weaker member of his own race Cory, Rose, Gabriel, etc. Cory has seen the good earning and prestige of the professional players of that time but Troy, the dominant character stands up as a fence for the better chances of his son, Cory. He doesn't sign the permission paper because he is unable to come to an understanding of the change in time. He takes away Cory's dream of becoming a successful player and earning good living despite his ability and honour given to him. Though Troy is the strongest member of the family, he engages himself in fighting with his son Cory time and again. According to Cory, he used to tremble every time when his father called his name and father gave nothing for the favour of his life but always scared him (Troy). It shows the extreme form of inhuman and animalistic behavior with the member of the same race which hinders them to uplift the standard of their life. Gabriel, the brother of Troy had received some of the money from the government when he got half of his head blown off when he was fighting for the state. Troy took that money to buy the house. But Troy put him out of the house. It is also

taken as one of the references of encroachment upon the weaker member in the same race.

When economic status and the color of skin are labeled as the measuring rod of social acceptance, the blacks get systematically exploited and encroached. Troy and Bono do a job as garbage collector, a job of low social status. This is a kind of encroachment of the whites on the blacks and finally Troy gets success and becomes the first colored driver to drive the garbage truck. Lyons cannot find a decent job and has to stay unemployed because he is a black man who has only a few choices in the selection of his job. Cory is not allowed to play football by Troy who himself is the victim of race discrimination in sports during his time and at present time also he sees unfair treatment to the colored players by not providing proper chances to play which deprive the blacks of developing the economic status of the players. Gabriel had fought in Second World War in the military force for the favour of whites, where he got a head injury but received only a lousy sum of money. These are some of the references of whites' encroachment upon blacks as a form of economic and social encroachment.

In the play *Fences* the whites don't want to see the progress of the blacks. They always want to dominate and encroach as much as possible. The racist attitude of the whites is creating lots of trouble in the lives of the blacks. On the other hand, there is the lack of love and co-operation within the black community themselves. As they are the strongest and dominant members, they seem to dominate and encroach the other weaker members of the same community. Instead of joining hands to fight against the common enemy they themselves have the intra-racial problem which never leads the society of success full of equality.

The playwright, Wilson has tried to depict the African-American life experience and the racial encroachment i.e. intra-racial and inter-racial encroachment in the 1950s. Lack of love and co-operation within themselves, illiteracy, poverty and the perception of whites against the African-Americans in social, economic, educational and political life are the major factors to hinder the lives of African-Americans. Wilson has shown the gradual rising perception of self-assertion in the black community among the younger generation.

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