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Politics of Identity and Embodiment in Coates's *Between the World and Me*

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Letter of Recommendation

Goma Thapa has completed the thesis entitled “Politics of Identity and Embodiment in Coates’s *Between the World and Me*” under my supervision. She carried out this research from Aug 4, 2017 to February 5, 2018. I hereby recommended her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Politics of Identity and Embodiment in Coates’s *Between the World and Me* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Goma Thapa has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Ta-Nehisi Coates's memoir, Between the World and Me is a personal narrative that can convey political message. The racial identity and embodiment are the issues of this research. This researcher attempts to explore how black identity is constructed in America and how black bodies are disembodied in the nation of racial injustice and prejudice. The researcher analyzes politics of identity and embodiment of the African American to find out how African Americans' physical structures are treated. Although there were many policies for the harmony and freedom of African American they have not put in implementation. African American people are still enforced to live in unjust society and created the situation of violence between two races. Precarious values and assumptions of the white American determine the African American identity. Coates's work serves as a revolutionary text that enables readers to perceive American experience through the eyes of individuals who have been marginalized by its culture. The suppressed identity and disembodiment correspond to African American that substantiate with the concept from Du Bois's theory of double consciousness. Double consciousness is the belief that the African Americans in the United States live with two conflicting identities those cannot be entirely merged together. This research also evaluates white peoples' treatment towards black people and African American's experience as it pertains to race. It also draws ideas from Stuart Hall's The Spectacle of the Others to examine white; perspectives towards the black people. This memoir is full of rich culture of empowerment and courage in the face of constant violence and othering.

Keywords: politics of identity, embodiment, disembodiment, double consciousness and spectacle others

Politics of identity refers to political positions based on the interest and perspectives of social groups with which people identify themselves. It is specially used by minority or oppressed groups. It is what other people do. Embodiment usually refers to the body and its interactive processes, such as perception or cultural acquisition through the senses, enhance or interfere with the development of human functioning. The body is seen as the centre of identity. The emphasis is on the relationship between physical experiences and identity within the context of America. This relationship is an interdependent one where meaning making is grounded in physical experience, through bodily form, body posture, gesture and facial expression. A person can also embody an identity by the way on moves, interacts, communicates and perceives. Embodiment is the term of expression of the body and in term of embodied identity, can also conceived of in represented bodies. The purpose of the present research is to examine the role of skin color, as it pertains to racial identity among African Americans.

Ta-Nehisi Coates is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*. He offers a powerful and new framework for understanding the American history and a current crisis. *Between the World and Me* is written in 2015. This memoir is about feelings, symbolism, and realities associated with being black in the United States. Coates recapitulates the American history and explains to his son the racist violence that has been woven into American culture. Coates's perspective is underpinned by a belief that race and racism is purely physical. So he approaches racism as an act of physicality enacted on the body. The body is the only reality to understand the brutal legacies. *Between the World and Me* not just as a deeply personal text in the way of traditional memoirs, but also as a public text written from the lens of a intimately engaged black people and father who has been brought to a place of crisis by the racial-historical trajectory that has come to define America. Coates's memoir provides an

urgently chastising, thoughtful look at a relationship with the black body alongside power and inequality. African American identity and the concept of the black body are tragically intertwined through what the residue of slavery has left behind in the form of body. A fixation over the black body is woven into identity. Coates probes into the collective identity associated with the black body in America. They often put in a strange limbo of racial identity. Coates implies his thoughts and examples of other black men's lives and using them in conjunction with his own. *Between the World and Me* is a declarative protest of how personal pain can stand as a political example for a mass community. Coates is able to make personal story political or public. By using literature to convey personal struggle, he gives agency to black voices and represents America through the eye of repressed. Besides being a powerful documentation of Coates's experiences, the epistolary memoir is a genre that can turn the personal into a political declaration.

This research based on the memoir *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates explores the issue of identity flux of African American in America. It analyzes those circumstantial factors that lead to the crisis of African American identities. White American represents Negroes having similar features with animals. African Americans are compared with beasts. Being black skinned people, the author does this to critique the political and social system in America. The main concern of this paper is why African Americans are viewed as lowest creatures, how black body defines embodiment. The author has fear and guilt of being black skinned people. He has experienced numerous events of discrimination from school to streets. The researcher analyzes how physical structure of Negroes shapes their identities and how they are brutally treated for unjust reasons.

The law of America is created to protect American citizens is often accused of targeting black citizens because of the colour of their skin. The author claims, "in America, the injury is not in being born with darker skin, with fuller lips, with a broader nose, but in

everything that happen after. In that single exchange with that young man, I was speaking the personal language of my people. It was the briefest intimacy, but it capture much of the beauty of my black world” (Bruce 120). The features of double consciousness are, that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul. One prevails now and the other prevails then. The Souls of Black Folk in which Du. Bois speaks of an African American “double consciousness, a ‘twoness’ of being ‘an American, a Negro; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder’” (298). By double consciousness he refers most importantly to an internal conflict in the African American individual between what is “African” and what is “American.”

The Russian theorist M.M. Bakhtin argues that “consciousness which also implies identity as a category of conscious is dialogical. That is always implicated in the process of social interaction” (qtd in Smith and Watson 34). For him identity is constructed through social interaction. Identity is production which is never complete and always in process as like discourse. Coates introduces his son about the larger social, economic and historical context of the fear within which black people in general, and young black men in particular, live in contemporary America. He narrates:

I am black, and have been plundered and have lost my body. Perhaps I too had the capacity for plunder, maybe I would take another human’s body to confirm myself in a community. Perhaps I already had. Hate gives identity. The nigger, the fag, the bitch illuminate the Dream of being white of being man. We name the hated strangers and are thus confirmed in the tribe. (60)

He shows that systemic oppression and institutional racism system that have become so ingrained and invisible that they are accepted as inevitable legacies of slavery in the United States. The author’s shows that white supremacy is an inextinguishable force, one black American will never erase, but they will always struggle against it. He recapitulates

American history of violence against black people and the enough policing of black youth.

Michelle Alexander's "Delivers a Searing Dispatch to His Son" explores:

Coates letter to his son seems to be written on the opposite side of the same coin.

Rather than urging his son to awaken to his own power, Coates emphasizes over and over the apparent permanence of racial injustice in America, the foolishness of believing that one person can make a change, and the danger of believing in the American dream. (*New York Times np*)

Black identity is always in crisis. Only racial harmony and justice law can fulfill the American dream of materiality, freedom and security. Single person cannot erase the racial segregation. Emancipation proclamation, Civil Right Act, Voting Right Act should be implemented for the harmony between two races in America.

The author goes through moral and psychological growth to analyze contemporary American society. Coates exposes his own experiences of adolescence and young adulthood as a means to communicate the reality of existing as a black man in America and how to guide for the young African Americans. This memoir is about author's growing consciousness of race and identity from his childhood to present. There are different identities of the author as he moves from being a thoughtful young boy in Baltimore to a student at university, husband, father, journalist in New York. In this letter Coates cleverly presents the insidious dehumanized activities. White supremacy and uncovers how believers of the American dream are perfectly complicit with the oppression of the black man. The first and most important identity is his childhood in Baltimore. He is expressing how he feels at the age of five after seeing two shirtless boys circling each other threatening, theatrically. He elaborates, "from then on, I knew that there was a ritual to street fights bylaws and codes that, in their very need attested to all the vulnerability of the blacks teenage bodies" (14). He has many experiences of racial segregation. His identity at that time is an innocent boy. No

one revolts against the law. This event clarifies that blacks are source of entertainment of white. There is no mercy in their pain. They are identified as a fighter and violent being. According to Meenakshi Thapan, “identity as an analytical concept and as a subjective reality of people has moved into centre space of our political vocabulary. What is less well recognized is that identity is essentially a concern for racialized and marginalized people for two reasons” (181). The politics of identity is not only his personal identity. This identity is personal to public. It carries the public issue. He and his son represent the whole African American identity of two generations.

The racial violence was at the peak during the author’s childhood. Being black in Baltimore of his youth was very critical. To be black means, one should always be ready to face the cruelties of whites including murder, rape and violence. They are treated as if they are naked though they wear clothes. There is no certainty of their security. They live in fear of being cracked, raped and killed anytime. Du Bois claims that, “we believe it the duty of Americans of Negro descent, as a body to maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility” (qtd in Alcoff 44). He claims that brotherhood and its practicality is needed for the racial justice. Racial harmony and emancipation only can maintain the race identity in America. Coates exposes the racial subjugation and disorder in his time in this way. He enunciates:

We spurned the holiday marketed by the people who wanted to be white. We would not stand for their anthems. We would not kneel before their god. And so I had no sense that any just god was on my side. “The meek shall inherit the earth” meant nothing to me. The meek were battered in West Baltimore, stomped out at Walbrook Junction, bashed up on Park Heights, and raped in the showers of the city jail. (28)

There is ego and conspiracy between two races instead of brotherhood, mutual relation and respect for each other. On the one hand, blacks try to challenge white domination and on the other hand, superior people kill and badly treat those innocent black. Being black is curse for them. It is not their fault. Racial identity is constructed. The nakedness is not their error, nor pathology. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live under the fear. The unjust law does not protect them. A few changes are there in son's age but not in full fledged way. The author compares his time and with his son's. His son's age is better than his. His age was worse in comparison to his son. The author does not think about black president and their freedom. To survive and save their bodies, they must learn another language and other facial expression, gestures including head nods and handshakes. These performances are imposed on them despite their interests.

This memoir illustrates how a person's skin color in fact is a vital factor for them to live freely. It heavily affects the ways of their lives. The author asserts the struggle of living as an American in a black body. He submits historical events of racism and relates them in to a memoir in order to represent a different American than the one that is planned as equal and homogenous. Coates's memoir examines Americans through the vision of risk citizens, through a black man's narrative that consists of fear for his own body and the body of his son. He falls in line with a long history. He presents the record of atrocity that blacks have been facing because of their skin color. The long history of writing examines how black bodies can survive in a country that is built on subjugating them. This is a memoir to his son, Samori about how one can bear discrimination. When daring the circumstances of his own existence author, "in accepting both the chaos of history and the fact of my total and I was freed to truly consider how I wished to live specifically, how do I live free in this black body" (12). Coates explores this question by exposing how America is fundamentally biased and how a black man must learn to be brave to adjust in that reality. The memoir argues that

organized racism is deeply rooted in America's unequal history, therefore, he believes that with little being done to change American ideology, one is left with the freedom to explore how to survive in a dystopia. The history of slavery becomes the problem of identity for the African Americans. Du Bois claims that "African Americans are obligated to retain their race identity is connected with his early view of the role of culture in the African American quest for social equality. In particular he maintained that the cultural integrity of African Americans is crucial for their gaining acceptance as social equal" (qtd in Alcoff 48). Africans have two identities, one their own cultural identity and another African American identity as the resident of America. But they are in forced to use pathological identity as suppressed, generation of slaves. American social policies do not accept them as people of that same country in equal to white people.

One of the most important concepts in the memoir is the dream. Traditionally, American dream refers to the idea of freedom and the equality of opportunity built into the foundation of the country. Anyone can achieve prosperity in the United States as long as they work hard enough. But it is totally different. The author points out "you and I, my son, are that 'below.' That was true in 1776. It is true today. There is no them without you, and without the right to break you they most necessarily fall from the mountain, lose their divinity, and tumble out of the dream" (105). Coates emphasizes that the dream does not exist without racist injustice as material prosperity in the United States is inevitably tied to the exploitations of African Americans. The great divisions of the society are not the rich and poor, but white and black.

Coates follows a significant tradition in black culture by passing a survival guide to next generation. He describes his son to understand the injustice and the violent crimes that surround black men, and to use them to form a perspective about this nation that will enable

to him to endure it. The memoir includes the voices of those whose bodies are at risk on a daily basis and formulates their experience into one discussion. It emanates from the fear and hatred. Coates realizes after his friend, Prince Jones is wrongfully identified as a suspect in a crime and shot by a police officer. *Between the World and Me* proves that how America has always put black bodies at risk of being destroyed, both physically and socially. Many writers interact the issue of racist tradition throughout time, but Coates an atypical writer in that sense writes about American witness in divisive and crude ways that expose his reader's to new realities of experience. This provides a reassessment of systemic marginalization and just how deeply it is rooted in culture.

Coates evaluates American culture through the history of slavery. He states "I acknowledge these horrors [slavery and hate crimes] means turning away from the brightly rendered version of your country as it has always declared itself and turning towards something murkier and unknown" (98). The version of America that is depicted in the billboards, cinema and classrooms are not discriminatory nature. Today's American civilization, progress and economic success originated on the backs of slaves. Modern America has continued oppressing black Americans in ways that benefit rich, white citizens. Till now, black Americans are the highest number of impoverished citizens in America. By the statics it is unbelievable that Americans are given equal opportunities to attain American dream. African American dream is founded by a racially unfair "dream" created through slavery and violence. The American assumption claims that hard worker can succeed and can fulfill American dream. Real workers are blacks but profit owner are whites.

America can live in blissful ignorance, influenced by a "dream" and blind to its repressive characteristics that marginalized minority groups. Identity can be constructed with the help of discourse. It differs from places and positions. Blacks are exploited in the name of social equality, happiness, luxurious life, security and so on. Though they work hard day

and night, they do not become capable of achieving these things because the profit of their hard work is grabbed by whites. They can never rise up and be equal in comparison of the status of white people. This becomes like a postponed dream. The stereotype associated with blacks skin will never be erased no matter how hard they struggle for it. It is what people think they are white strive for and proclaim is a novel goal. Whites exercise disembodied behaviours towards blacks under the influence of already rooted up Jim Crow Law (1877-1954), historical slavery system and hollow proud of being white skinned people. The author's son lives relatively privileged life, goes to school and is friends with the white people of the community, and does not express any of the direct violence that author witnesses to when growing. Coates writes to his son to remind him of the struggle of the community and the years of oppression that generation of his family. That has brought him to the place that he is in at present, and reminds him that the struggle is not over yet. It has merely transformed and disguised itself. This memoir is dedicated to all young African American generation. This thesis explores how does Ta-Nehisi Coates use memoir to discuss white supremacy through a personal narrative. The identity of father and son is different. The perspectives to view black in Coates's time and son's period is somehow changed. American economy feed whites forces the black to struggle. American dream is prohibited for African American. The author explains with respect to the constitution, "in 1863 it [people]" did not mean your grandmother or your mother, and it did not mean you and me" (6). Discrimination is not due to the illiteracy in America. Law itself segregates black people. Although the way of living style of Negro is changed, their identity is determined by the cultural discourse and disembodied in negative way. The American dream is not conceived with the inclusion of African Americans. It has always existed linked to a history of othering and oppression. Hall argues:

The black experience”, as a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural differences between the different communities, became ‘hegemonic’ over other ethnic/ racial identities though the later did not, of course, disappear. Culturally this analysis formulated itself in terms of critique of the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible “other” of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourse. (90)

He uses the historical ideologies how they are oppressed. Racism has existed in America because racial discrimination and classification fueled American progress in its previous years. That is why, the author describes that a history is rooted in discrimination and exploitation of minority groups. This memoir is reflection of author’s memory, experiences and perception. The addressee is his fifteen years old son, Samori. The author weaves his personal, historical and intellectual development into his rumination on how a black man lives in America. Coates himself is one of the autobiographical ‘I’. Samori, Kenyatta, Dr. Mabel Jones, Prince Jones are other narrated ‘I’s. Coates characterizes his son as curious and sensitive person with a strong sense of justice.

The title of this memoir is inspired by Richard Wright’s poem “Between the World and Me.” “Between the World and Me” is an effective example because it describes images of whiteness and black bodies and the experiences of death by lynching. It creates the representation of one’s body in the world. Coates addresses the memoir to his son in order to identify the past to the new generation. This empowers the black culture to challenge American’s repressive and racist nature. The aim of this memoir is to encourage young African American generation to carry that legacy throughout their life. This becomes a strategy popularly used by many of the great civil rights activists and writers in American history. As Coates explains, “destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include frisking, detaining, beatings, and humiliation. All of these are common

to black people” (9). The black man is habituated to a culture that succeeds in repressing them. The author illustrates how persistent and abusive marginalizing, physically harmful and conquering that person’s ability to have control or agency formulates the process of destroying someone. All techniques he lists are ways of stripping a person of their humanity, power and security. So, they become obedient, unconcerned and small. People believe that America is a democratic country. Believing in a fair society is untruthful because minority groups are not given same honors to succeed in America as white Americans are given. Emancipation proclamation has not properly been implemented in America. Freedom has never been truly awarded to the black people. They still live in a world that dehumanizes them for dictatorial reasons. Famous African American writer, Baldwin abolishes notion of equal opportunity. He urges, “it is only ‘the so called American Negro’ who remains trapped, disinherited, and despised in the nation that has kept him in bondage for nearly four hundred years and is still unable to recognize him as a human being” (73). The long history of white superiority has dominated the ways in which even liberal white Americans may feel a responsibility to act. He pays tribute to black men in his life who have suffered from the systematic racism in America. The author’s pessimistic voice throughout the text identifies the plight of black men but also the pride he feels for black culture and literature. Baldwin exposes the racist discrepancies of American politics through this memoir. Like Baldwin Coates also becomes frank about the realities of being black in America. Both authors use aggressive description of how black Americans are treated to distinguish the black American experience from the way white people live. Similarly Baldwin suggesting that black Americans have the ability to see themselves the way that white American sees them, or the way that their fellow black Americans do. He suggests that the way you construct your perspective is a choice.

Abolition of slavery and Civil Right Movement can be taught in schools. But American society allows privileged white Americans to retreat and live in their like-minded bubbles, ignoring the unfairness of society. Coates exposes this ignorance to Samori so that, his son can be clear that America never protects black bodies the way they deserve. He narrates, “You would be a man one day, and I could not save you from the unbridgeable distance between you and your future peers and colleagues, who might try to convince you that everything I knew, all of the things I’m sharing with you here, are an illusion, or a fact of a distant past that need not be discussed” (90). The white American can continue living their lives being unconcerned, unaffected lives while black Americans continue to endure subjugation. Alcoff claims that, “our race in America renders this attitude impossible; that our role hope of salvation lies in our being able to lose our race identity in the commingled blood of the nation; that any other course would merely increase the fiction of races which we call race prejudice, and against which we have so long and earnestly fought” (45). White Americans simply discount racial injustice that exists for African Americans on a regular basis. This is where Coates’s pessimistic language is most intelligent, most effective, and most valid.

The author condemns the country and declares that, society wishes to remain unaware of what their fellow American experience. White Americans lives in joyful ignorance. Black lives are undervalued and whites are told to stop victimizing them. In this way *Between the World and Me* discredits any notion of one, homogenous American identity and instead explores the United States through the lenses of the subjugation. Coates explains that this idea of whiteness and superiority is arbitrary. He states, “I am black, and have been plundered and have lost my body. But perhaps I too had capacity for plunder, maybe I would take another human’s body to confirm myself in a community. Perhaps I already had. Hate gives identity. The nigger, the fag, the bitch illuminate the dream of being white, of being a

man” (60). Black people are plundered. They lose their body. Biological structure is disembodied. They have dream to be a real man like a white. Hatred gives them identity. Ideologically stereotyped identity becomes burden for them. One day, white American discourse is used as the most effective way of attaining total control over all other people for economic and social gain but they do not tell about this in classrooms when black children are taught about slavery. Du Boise claims non American are born with the veil and gifted with second sight in the American world. This world provides blacks false selfconsciousness. He exposes:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain the self consciousness manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an America, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (3)

African American’s history is the history of conflict. African Americans have strong desire to achieve their self consciousness. It is better to merge their double self into true self. They do not like to avoid their older selves. They celebrate their color. This is their property. They are not interested to remove their African heritage in a flood of America. He wishes to make it possible for a African American to be both Negro and American without any physical and psychological torture. African American prefers to live with double identity. On one hand, they are happy with their own African culture and physical structure. On the other hand, they also want to be American. They have two souls, thoughts, disharmonized struggles, hostile ideals in one dark body.

Coates shows how America has foundation on violence and then promised equality to those who made it what it is today. To live as a black American is to carry that burden with them everywhere they go, every time they hear about police wrongfully shooting a black individual. They do not tell black that destruction is accomplished by, “the rape of mothers; the sale of children; and various acts, first and foremost to deny you and me the right to secure and govern our own bodies” (8). Every time they see the look on their friends of colors, faces when other jokes about the validity of white privilege. Coates argues that this world is designed to destroy black American. He ignores and assures us that America is not America without racist and violent history that still forcefully lives on. The construction of white identity and the ideology of racial hierarchy are intimately tied to the evolution and expansion of the system of slavery. Cheryl L. Harris argues about unjust laws of America. African Americans are not equally treated in law. He urges, “many laws parceled out differential treatment based on racial categories: blacks were not permits, to own weapons- nor were they to be educated. Racial identity was further merged with stratified social and legal status: “black” racial identity marked who was “free” or, at minimum, not a slave” (qtd in Alcoff 77). Blacks are not allowed to buy weapons. They are restricted from education. Their identity is merged with class and legal status though they are free from slavery system.

The introduction proper begins with the author’s response to the question of an interviewer about the relationship between violence and being black in America and continuous with analyses of the root causes of violence. Coates begins this memoir by telling his son about an interview he had shortly after writing *Between the World and Me*. He laments, “but at the end of the segment, the host flashed a widely shared picture of an eleven years old tearfully hugging a white police officer. Then she asked me about ‘hope.’ And I know then that I had failed” (10). Media plays vital role. It can broadcast fake news as it is

real one. In this statement, host flashed a widely shared picture of black boy hugging white police officer. This picture depicts racial harmony but in reality can never be fulfilled. This flashed picture determines that one white police officer hugging a black boy means that there is more love and acceptance than racism in the country that completely contradicts Coates's intention of this memoir. If African Americans are consoled by these types of images and fake news, an embodied text for black Americans fails. The image what he sees goes beyond the reality and suggests a lie about American society. Baldwin advocates, "most of mankind is not all of mankind,' therefore the reverse is true as well" (Lott 52). One police man holding a black boy is not all police man exhibiting equality. This sort of closure or reward in one photo ignores the hundreds thousands of black people being destroyed in America. In addition, to read Coates rebellious memoir, to hear him tell his son that this world is designed to destroy him, and to talk of hope because this time an officer is not pointing gun at that black boy.

Coates disrupts conventional perceptions of United States by describing how historical moments resolute with an individual in different ways. He writes powerful description of September 11 as a representation of this concept. He declares, "I kept thinking how southern Manhattan had always been Ground Zero for us. They auctioned our bodies down there" (86). Coates identifies these days much differently than others have described it. He claims that, Manhattan had always been Ground Zero for African American. It proves a stark difference between white and black American. The author takes a popular city that represents life, production, and diversity, and discovers its exclusive and oppressive history. New York is a place of torture and quarrel. Financial district has history of destruction within it. The term ground zero is given to the city after the towers crashed down but author refuses this definition. Instead the city did not become a changeable place because of one terrorist attack, it stood as a location to buy and sell the black bodies. September 11 does not mean the

same thing to every American because Manhattan and America for that matter do not have a universal definition. Public space can and do hurt certain people, and black Americans are consistently threatened and shattered in all parts of America. Manhattan is a space that always means ruin for people; it is just not publicly identified for its racist and violent history rather its culture that is only accessible to rich Americans.

Coates protests universal appreciation for police officers by identifying what those uniforms mean to the black American. All Americans praise policeman for their service in the wake of a terrorist attack, but Coates opposes:

What we know that his superiors sent this officer to follow Prince from Maryland, through Washington, D.C., and into Virginia, where the officer shot Prince several times. We know that the officer confronted Prince with his gun drawn, and no badge. We know that the officer claims he shot because Prince tried to run him over with his jeep. We know the authorities charged with investigating this shooting did everything in their power to investigate Prince Jones. (80)

This event echoes that of the little boy hugging the police officer. It illustrates the other side of American perception towards police. African American hesitate to praise police because the ethics behind the force have always been contradictive when it comes to black Americans and police have always controlled how much freedom a black man is able to feel. The objectives of using a word police throughout the memoir is to demonstrate the effects and destruction of unregulated power against minorities. Society has viewed while many police go without influence for violent behavior, especially towards minority groups. Pseudo brotherhood is shown in relation with black. In the real manner they treat them differently. Their surface look and inner structure are different. White Americans are always ready to destroy black identity. Alain Locke indicates the real policies of white American. He proves,

More and more, however, an intelligent realization of the great discrepancy between the American social creed and the American social practice forces upon the Negro the taking of the moral advantage that is his. Only the steady and sobering effect of a truly characteristic gentleness of spirit prevents the rapid rise of definite cynicism and encounter –hate and defiant superiority feeling. (qtd in Alcoff 53)

Numerous laws and policies are made in America for the betterment of Negro people. Emancipation Proclamation, Civil Right Act and Voting Right Act are only folded in the constitution. There is vast contrast in their rules and activities. There must be proper implementation of rules and regulation to give African American respectful identity.

Coates is trying to make his son aware of the cruelty of white police. He identifies black Americans anxieties as fear of being ‘shattered’ for the color of their skin. Coates uses this word to describe how fragile and vulnerable a black individual is in public spaces. A body that can be shattered is an individual that must step lightly, speak quietly, and live silently in order to survive. It exposes the very segregation that Coates argues Manhattan embodies. Police brutality causes African Americans to deal with an anxiety that their children cannot survive in America. Police choose to continue evoking the same type of fear every time that an officer shoots a black American without investigations. The author expresses, “I watched ridiculous pageantry of flags, the machismo of fireman, the overwrought slogans. Damn it all. Prince Jones was dead. All hell upon those who tell us to be twice as good and shoot us no matter. Hell for ancestral fear that put black parents under horror” (87). Ancestral fear marks a lifetime for black citizens to wonder when the terror attack will be. It does not need to come from overseas, it happens with every individual who are promised to protect American bodies.

There is always fear for black parents to raise children. American belief about growing up in a nation of freedom, liberty or justice is not for all. It is only for white.

Coates's father used to beat him for his misbehaviors. He takes a form of abuse and transformation into a form of protection. Black bodies face violence and pain as a means of preventing more suffering. Description of how black bodies are hurt and broken illustrates a tradition of brutality that black Americans are endured at the hand of American system. Coates argues that families teach their children to avoid the attention of authorities, and children recognize that the color of their skin makes them more likely to be investigated by the police. Coates comments, "to challenge the police is to challenge the American people who send into the ghettos armed with the same self-generated fears that compelled the people who think they are white to flee the cities into the dream" (79). The police serve as a symbol of American unity and security, but they threaten those very ideals of black communities. Du Bois argues that black Americans live under the veil that produces a double consciousness. The veil depicts a fragmented self in which black identity and American identity cannot converge. He claims:

We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not sgo. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of criterion has slept, but half awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland. (qtd in Lott 51)

Although African American shares the same language, religion, and political ideals with other Americans, they have special mission in terms of a distinct cultural contribution. He speaks about the duty of African Americans to conserve their race identity in order to make a cultural contribution. This African American culture seems especially problematic when we consider some of his remarks regarding African American identity.

The differences however are that most of Americans would allow that oppression to continue rather than to identify the police force as a destructive system. Coates reveals his

anger by saying that the America is ruled by majoritarian pigs. The memoir declares America as inherently biased and violent towards the black identity. Du Bois entertained the question of the fate and destiny of African Americans as a group asking somewhat rhetorically, “Does my black body place upon me any more obligation to assert my nationality than German, or Irish Italian blood would? His answer was that it is “duty to the Americans of Negro descent, as a body, to maintain their race identity” (qtd in Alcoff 48). Bois emphasizes on the African identity. He interrogates for his nationality. He prioritizes on the duty of African American. The duty of black is to maintain their race identity in the prejudice country. It is an embodiment of the lives that have been shattered by slavery, police brutality, economic inequality and fear. *Between the World and Me* is a declarative protest of how personal pain can stand as a political example of mass community.

This work demonstrates that blackness a perfect representative of their quality and idea. The body becomes site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied. Black people are embodiment of crime, uncivilized and slave. The visible in the form of body is called embodiment. Body is the center of discussion. Black body has experienced certain ideas and those ideas are reflected in the narratives. African American embodiment is not completely accepted in America. So, the author depicts their bodily identity opposite to the community. Their bodies are presented in negative way. Color becomes the determinant of identity of African American from history to present. The critic, Brit Bennett clarifies the condition of black people in America. Black people have relentless fear from generation to generation. Blacks’ numerous participation in the development of America is permeable. Black physical body is impermeable. He argues:

His relentless fear is striking, jutting up against the popular American vision of black men as impervious to fear. Black male bodies are unfeeling, superhumanly strong, and dangerous. Michael Brown was a demon who charged a hailstorm of bullets

towards an officer's gun. Treyvon Martin, a lanky teenager, bashed a grown man's head into concrete with the strength of an M.M.A fighter. (*New Yorker* np)

Humanity towards African Americans is almost dead. White Americans treat Negro as non-biotic. They believe that blacks have evil body and spirit. Their feeling and desire are not given priority. The disembodied quality tagged by white people are unfeeling, superhumanly and dangerous to the African American. Although the way of living of black is changed, the cultural discourse determines their identity as black and embodiment as violent, criminal and barbarians. This memoir is full of a rich culture of empowerment and courage in the face of constant violence and othering. It exposes the tradition of author who embodies struggle and triumph regardless of the genre it is written in.

This memoir demystifies the rage of black person and opens the eye to something that everyone has gone through. This voice needs to be heard. His entire being is defined by his body and it is color, and it is his body that is subject to reduction, obliteration, and theft. Therefore, the greatest threat to his being is disembodiment. Every act of discrimination that he faces, and that anyone who has faced any kind of suffering of maltreatment, has been subject to intentional disembodiment. Coates relates this humanistic understanding of the body to the condition of the black in America. This also focuses on Coates voice for the experience of black American. It illustrates a legacy of black writing and its connection to America's racist history. Coates writes an embodied discourse that expresses the experience of black American during racism. So, the text is not simply a representation of one man's strife in an oppressive society rather a help to a people of community who have faced violence and hatred throughout American history. History becomes instrument to give agency to people and carries with individual throughout time.

The author shows the idea of disembodiment. Embodiment of black is stereotyped. It is intentionally destroyed. Coates claims that identities of black people are remaining no

longer. It is destroyed every time and everywhere. So, he thinks that black people are being killed by black is more fruitful than by white. *Between the World and Me* is a message of consciousness, directed to his son as he approaches adolescence and to us as we rise to moral and civic maturity. This consciousness is answer to the struggle for survival and a design to live with a black body. Awareness of fear, vulnerability and fragility are created by the police. Their fear up leads them to poverty. Coates argues that, “black people love their children with a kind of obsession. You are all we have, and you come to us endangered. I think I would like to kill you ourselves before seeing you killed by the streets that America made. That is a philosophy of disembodied” (82). The memoir illustrates the anger and hopelessness parents in a society where their bodies and their children’s bodies are threatened. This quote suggests that black parents do not have power to protect their children from the danger of being blacks in America. People can be bought and sold in America. An oppressed individual does not have the ability to protect their children from being destroyed. The author wrestles with how can black whose bodies and being are the subjects of violence, hate of unfreedom can ever truly be free.

The author exposes the brutality within his own community as people try to protect their bodies and the bodies of those they love against all the easy ways which can be destroyed. This is the war for the possession of black bodies. To Coates to be black in white supremacist society is to live in constant fear of disembodiment. The fear of losing their body steal their freedom every time. Coates depicts this fear throughout the narrative. It haunts him from Waste Baltimore to New York city. Black body must be careful every time. Author suggests his son saying that:

But you are black boy, and you must be responsible for your body in a way that other boys cannot know. Indeed, you must be responsible for the worst action of other black bodies which somehow, will always be assigned to you. And you must be responsible

for the bodies of the powerful the policeman who cracks you with a nightstick will quickly find his excuse in your favourite movements. (71)

Black female bodies are also vulnerable whether in the presence of police in their community or in their own homes. Black women are disproportionately to be victims of violent crimes, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault. Coates depicts utter fragility of black body. It can be destroyed in the streets. Inhabiting black body is particularly fraught these days. They become victim of undid mistakes.

Majority of American historian think of slavery in the United States primarily as a system of race relation though the slavery system is the production of white supremacy. One of the salient components of this statement is that the black body is constantly under the threat. Throughout the American history black men and women are shackled, beaten, tortured, lynched, raped. Today's black people experience police brutality and senseless shooting. Black bodies do not feel comfort in public places. Author presents the numerous events of segregation of black bodies. He criticizes:

In America it is traditional to destroy the black it is heritage. Enslavement was not merely the antiseptic borrowing of labor. It is not so easy to get a human being to commit their body against its own enslavement interest. And so enslavement must be causal wrath and random mangleings, the gashing of heads and brains blown out over the river as the body seeks to escape. (102)

Author does not just focus on the present; he also dips back into the history of America. Slavery is the first horrific example of America destroying and plundering the black bodies. He claims that there are uncountable number of people are enslaved in America. Many women are raped, huge amount of children are being sailed for servant.

Black people become the matter of commodification. They are taken as objects. In the mass media also they are presented as matter of laughing. Stereotyping of their body and

dominating them are white's spectacles. This way writer presents the condition of black "the black people in this films seemed to love the worst thing in life, love dog that rent their children apart, the tear gas that clawed at their lungs, the fire hoses that tore off their clothes and tumbled them into the streets" (32). Violence is constant in racially divided America. Living under the weight of American dream can be difficult for black men and women. America has always viewed itself as exceptional and champion of democracy. Coates wants. Coates opposes to this exceptional moral standard. Hall argues:

To reverse the stereotype is not necessarily to overturn or subvert it. Escaping the grip of one stereotypical extreme (blacks are poor, childish, subservient, always shown as servants, everlasting 'good', in menial positions, differential to whites, never the heroes, cut out of the glamour, the pleasure, and the rewards, sexual and financial) may simply mean being trapped in its stereotypical 'other.' (Hall 272)

America has problem with race but not in quite way as it assume by people. Race is not an indubitable reality; it has been constructed, altered, and reinforced. America is country of problem and hypocrisy.

The author is searching the answer of how one should live with a black body in a country where their dreams are. It remains mysterious. He discovers:

I have searched for answers in nationalist myth, in classroom, out on the streets, and on other continents. The question is unanswerable, which is not to say futile. The greatest reward of this constant interrogation, of confrontation with the brutality of my country, is that has freed me from ghosts and girded me against the sheer terror of disembodiment. (12)

Journalist asks author about embodiment of black in negative way. Author is familiar with intelligent people who are asking about condition of his black body without realizing the

nature of request. Black people are original people. Coates makes his point through personal accounts and emphasizes on what it means to be devalued and at a loss of agency. His insight on horrors of watching black child can be subjected to discrimination and to deal with the life of a friend being taken purely on the basis of his color are obvious signs of disembodiment.

He exposes:

Forgiving the killer of Prince Jones would have seemed irrelevant to me. the killer was the direct expression of all his country's beliefs. ... I believed, and still do, that our bodies are our selves, that, my soul is the voltage conducted through neurons and nerves, that is my spirit is my flesh. Prince Jones was a one of one and they had destroyed his body... when the assembled mourners bowed their heads in prayer, I was divided from them because I believed that the void would not answer back. (26)

African Americans whole bodies are defined by their skin color. Their black skinned body is subject of destruction. The notion of humanity is denied. Their existence begins and ends with their physical bodies. White supremacy and advancement should be the subject of from the violent exploitation of black human bodies. Whites are figured as champion, noble and black are identified as terrorists, despots, barbarians and other enemies of civilization. All of his relatives did not die of natural death. All are murdered and each of these instances was unnatural. Black never gets chance of peace, security and self respect.

Blacks are rubbed by white and they are taken as enemies of them. They are suppressed by American in different ways. Coates narrates that all of Christian, Muslims and atheists live in fear of the truth. He claims that disembodiment is the worst thing in America. "Disembodiment is a kind of terrorism, and the threat of it alters the orbit of all our lives and, like terrorism, this distortion is intentional. Disembodiment. The dragon that compelled the boys I knew, way back, into extravagant theater of ownership. Disembodiment" (114).

Disembodiment for the black is not less than terrorism. It threatens the people. It is intentional.

Their culture has been culturally appropriated for financial and social gain, and many blacks American are left without ability to assume economic benefits that comes from the mass production of rape, fashion, comedy and so on. The critic, Alcoff encounters the disembodied notion of blacks. Blacks are not only the criminals, illiterate, and so on. They have perfect history of civilization. They are mastered in education and others many respected fields. He argues:

Negroes are savages, brutes, illustrates. But in my own case I knew that these statements were false. This was a myth of Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs. The time had long since passed when a Negro priest was an occasion for wonder. We had physician, professors, statesmen. Yes, but something out of the ordinary still clung to such cases. "We have a Senegalese history teacher. He is quite bright... our doctor is colored. He is very gentle. (qtd in Alcoff 65)

He depicts the clear evidences of Negro and their good qualities. He is able to falsify the disembodied notion that is stereotyped to black Americans. Black culture has made ample contributions to American identity, racism is still strongly alive and is constantly marginalizing minorities by othering. James Baldwin also raises the issue of embodiment of black in America. He uses the word "innocent" similarly, Coates also uses "the dreamers". It is purposefully facetious and yet, still evokes encouragement to pass on to his nephew. "This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which in fact it intended that you should perish" (7). Baldwin's anger and fear towards the nation is illustrated by his description of the systemic hierarchy that pulls black American from succeeding. White authority does not need any criminal history to arrest and kill people on the streets of United States. Only their skin color, visual body is enough for their destruction. Coates writes an embodied discourse for every African Americans who have existed through dread and vulnerability because of their black body. His embodied text not only means giving priority to people, but also providing a

representation of how their physical bodies are affected by racism. African Americans have remained displaced because of slavery and Jim Crow law. Still there remains life economic inequality, gang, violence, police brutality and overall prejudices based on skin color. Coates uses slavery to suggest how the African American people must exist in two times periods, the present and the history of oppressions that exists in his ancestry. This social marginalization has influenced literary efforts within black culture to claim identity and agency in the face of destruction and disaster. Author uses his letter as a mechanism to convey struggle and experience as a marginalized individual.

In *Between the World and Me*, author tells his son how to survive in an America that is designed to avoid his existence. He argues, “I am writing you because this was the year you saw Eric Garner choked to death for selling cigarettes because you know now that Renisha Mc Bide was how, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body” (9). Once again this violent, suggestive language reaffirms inherent biases against black bodies. That threat to black body is constant. Destroying a black, rather than killing it, implies a sense of extreme aggression and irrationalism. If something must be destroyed, the destroyer will go to all ends of the Earth to find out how that can be done. Author writes letter to enable the readers to interpret the social marginalization of black people suppressed in America and the heritage of their own race. Coates found his identity through his African roots not just by reading black experiences on an intimate level that helped point his own place within a rich culture. He has used story to assert one’s identity as a tool in contributing to a discourse racial repressing. Didier Fassin argues that the body is apparently the obvious signifier of race as well as ultimate evidence proved by science and state. He claims:

It is deeply embedded in a bodily experience: we can call it racial embodiment. But a crucial point must be underlined here, as there is often misinterpretation. Racial

embodiment does not only concern those who had the ultimate conviction of the reality of the discrimination. It also affects those who did not believe in it. To use more explicit language, it is about whiteness whether made visible (in the case of blacks) or kept invisible (in the case of whites), the body is the site of racial experience. (420)

Racial embodiment is deeply set in an experience of black body. It does not only concern those who have maximum confidence of the reality of the discrimination. Racial prejudices also affect those people who do not believe on it. Black body is targeted for disembodiment. It is visible. But in the case of white, their bodies become invisible for embodiment. He uses this word frequently to describe the state of black bodies in America. He claims that it is futile hopeless America as a land of racial harmony and equality.

Between the World and Me is a symbol of how African Americans protect themselves from being destroyed in order to keep lineages alive and to give agency to black culture. Racism is primarily enforced through the plundering and subjugation of black body. The memoir serves as a method for black Americans to expose a common knowledge amongst most marginalized citizens in which one's existence is reliant upon the ability to survive inevitable victimization. The identity of African American is based on the interest and perspectives of white American. The African American body becomes the center of their present identity. The black struggle in the United States has a dualist tradition. It expresses opposing visions of the social destiny of black people. African Americans have a double consciousness, one of pride and agency for their body and ancestry, and another history of oppression. Coates invokes the body as the fundamental event of human existence and also explores the ways that nonwhite bodies have functioned in the building of America. He analyzes about black and they are losing control of their bodies in society due to racism. The black body is constantly under threat.

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