

Chapter I: Introduction

Richard Wright as a Protest Novelist

Richard Wright (1908-1960), an American novelist, is a successful black writer emerging during the period of racial oppression and economic hardships. He is one of those blacks who had been burdened of the fear of rejection and marginality. Wright's reputation ebbed during the 1950s as younger African American writer such as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. His place in American literature remains controversial that his writing is of sociological and historical rather than literary interest. In the judgment of many commentators, however, Wright remains the most influential African American protest writer in America. Ellison, in his essay "Twentieth Century Fiction and Black Mask of Humanity in Shadow and Act" says, "Wright converted the American Negro impulse toward self-annihilation and 'going underground' into a will to confront the world, to evaluate his experience honestly and throw his findings unashamedly into the guilty conscience of America" (24).

He is one of the earliest successful attempts to explain the racial divide in America in terms of the social conditions imposed on African Americans by the dominant white society. It also makes Wright the wealthiest black writer of his time and established him as a spokesperson for African American issues, and the "father of Black American literature" (Ellison 36). The novel centers on American racial discrimination and segregation previous to the Civil Rights Movement. While discrimination remains a reality in modern America, the racial tensions and separatist laws that spurred violence and fear between blacks and whites in early 20th century America. His own experiences with racial prejudices are two crucial components familiar with to enhance the dangerous psychological effects of racial oppression upon humanity.

Wright presents the role of African American writer, self identity of African Americans and an observation and analysis of American society. His personal life experience and social condition reflects together in his writings. He is unsatisfied with all that is available. The inhuman society run by segregation laws, the selfish communist policies are external forces and the unfulfilled youthful desires and myth of black sexual superiority are internal forces to shape the novel (*Native Son* 1940). Wright's *Native Son* portrays the struggle that one black man faces while trying to live in a segregated society. *Native Son* develops from many levels of conflict. Personal conflicts arise on superficial level, but conflicts about race, social status, and political viewpoints drive these superficial conflicts to the violent protest. Characters act out in rage due to the stress caused by social circumstances. The fear, hatred, and anger that racism has impressed upon Bigger Thomas savage his individuality so severely that his only means of self-expression is violence. After killing Mary Dalton, Bigger must contend with the law, the hatred of society, and his own destructive inner feelings. It is a powerful, intensively gripping story of a Negro boy driven to cry by reason of Chicago tenement environment and the pressure of racial injustice.

“Wright forced his readers to acknowledge his anger, and in that way, if no one other, he wrested for himself a sense of dignity as a man. He forced his readers to confront the disease of our culture, and to one of its most terrifying symptoms he gave the name of Bigger Thomas” (Howe 112).

In this novel Wright has presented the savage brutality of black boy “bad nigger” (*Native Son* 11). The protagonist is a social misfit; he is the victim of the adolescent lure of sex and money. Due to effects of racial suppression he is frustrated and neurotic. He is a victim of the environment created by the racial hierarchy of the era, and reacts naturally as a human to inhumane conditions. Because Bigger is black, his human qualities are never considered. The myths of blacks as being an inferior and dangerous group are widely

believed and perpetuated in novel as negative stereotypes. As Irving Howe says in his essay “Black boys and Native Son”;

“The day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever. No matter how much qualifying the book might later need, it made impossible a repetition of the old lies . . . brought out into the open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear, and violence that have crippled. . .” and may yet destroy our culture.” (361)

In the judgment of many commentators such as James Baldwin, Irving howe, however Wright remains a protest novelist of twentieth century America. Protest novels often delineate a relationship between the mainstream dominant society and the "Other," a character designate for his/her marginalization and oppression within that society. The differences between the mainstream society and oppression which determine marginalization form an irreconcilable relationship between them that are always at odds, sometimes violently so, with one another. These odds are defined by the societal standards to which members of the dominant society adhere and the Other's inability or lack of desire to assimilate within those values. The protest novel expands these ideas by examining how societal standards form prejudicial values and institutions, both private and public that favor individuals who assimilate to those standards and marginalize and oppress those who do not. Wright's novel, *Native Son*, for instance, examines how racism and poverty act as obstacles in his character's lives, often narrowing their choices to the basest forms of survival.

In *Native Son*, Wright presents “Bigger Thomas as a Protagonist, an oppressed victim of the White’s exploitative industrialized world. Because of their color, poverty and white Myth, “Bad Nigger” (11) shape Bigger Thomas’ attitude and action. The novel’s treatment of Bigger and his motivations conforms to the conventions of literary while not apologizing for Bigger’s crime. Wright is sympathetic to the systematic inevitability behind them. The novel

is a powerful statement about racial inequality and social injustices. It becomes nearly impossible to determine where societal expectations conditioning end and free will begins. As Bigger's lawyer points out, there is no escape from this destiny for his client or any other black American since they are the necessary product of the society that formed them and told them since "birth who exactly were supposed to be No American Negro exist" (Howe 357). Only through violence, he gathers a little meaning in life, pitifully little: "He had murdered and created a new life for himself." (20). Beyond that Bigger cannot go ahead. At first *Native Son* seems still another naturalistic novel, a novel of exposure and accumulation, charting the waste of the undersides of the American city. James Baldwin once writes;

"Who does not have his private Bigger Thomas living in his skull, Wright's courage is his work as an immense liberation and revelation for him. No longer mere victim or rebel, the Negro would stand free in a self-achieved humanity. . ." Wright confronts both the violence and the crippling limitations of Bigger Thomas. For Bigger the whites are not people at all, but something more, "a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead" (Baldwin 29)

Wright is influenced Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser on *An American Tragedy* presents the situations so oppressive that only violence can provide their victims with the hope of dignity. Like Dreiser, Wright wishes to pummel his readers into awareness and overpower them with the sense of society as an enclosing force. Yet the comparison is finally of limited value, and for the disconcerting reason that Dreiser had a white skin and Wright a black one. It is the novel in which the writer withdraws from a detested world and coldly piles up the evidence for detesting it. Baldwin also says:

"One writes out of one thing only--one's own experience. What, then, was the experience of a man with a black skin, what could it be in this country? How

could a Negro put pen to paper, how could he so much as think or breathe, without some impulsion to protest . . .” be it harsh or mild, political or private, released or buried?” (47)

Wright can write passionately and eloquently about the meaning of suffering in the life of oppressed and exploited people. Hence suffering is an integral part of his own life, Wright’s material success only seemed to intensify his awareness of the spirit. The Communist Party had one time offered him to write. But later on Wright left the Communist Party, when he understood that their social crusade for black was merely a fiddle to undermine the American government. The social upheavals teach him to hate the White people. As Richard Wright writes, “Every time I think about it I feel like somebody is poking a red hot iron down my throat” (23). The presence of the Bible is apparent in *Native Son*. Biblical allusions appear frequently throughout the novel, but they do not serve as an uplifting component of Bigger Thomas’s life. Instead, Richard Wright seems to allude to the Bible with irony. Bigger is exposed to Christianity through his religious mother, Reverend Hammond, a Catholic priest, and his encounter with the church. However, Bigger’s constant rejection of Christianity and the church reveals Wright’s negative tone toward the religion. He views Christianity as an opiate of the black masses. Bigger has several negative encounters with religion. In one instance, Bigger sees his mother singing a hymn when he sneaks into his flat to get his pistol to prepare for robbing Blum’s delicatessen. His mother is singing the words. “Lord I want to be a Christian, in my heart, in my heart” (73). Her hymns and prayers are wholly ineffective and do nothing to forestall his violence. Even toward the end of the novel, facing a possible death sentence, Bigger’s mother pleads with her son to pray to God for repentance. Reverend Hammond also preaches to Bigger, yet he does not understand the words of Reverend Hammond and does not pray for repentance. Instead, Bigger does the opposite and rejects Christianity. When he later sees the fiery cross that the

Ku Klux Klan displays, he tears off the cross from his neck which Reverend Hammond had given him and throws it to the ground. In yet another instance, Bigger overhears the church choir singing and ponders whether he should become Christian. However, his realization of changing his heart into a humble heart causes him to reject the idea because it meant, losing his hope of living in the world. And he would never do that thrown back to him. Rejecting Christianity and Communism Bigger finds the strength to die in the courageous acceptance. Howe asserts, “How a Negro could put pen to paper . . . without some impulsion to protest.” (353) the final statement of Max, “Bigger, the people who hate you feel just as you feel; only they’re on the other side of the fence. You’re black, but that’s only a part of it. You’re being black, as I told you before . . .” (460) that evokes a secondary tone of social protest in the final part of the novel.

Wright directly alludes to the Bible in the epigraph of *Native Son*. The epigraph states, “Even today is my complaint rebellious; my stroke is heavier than my groaning” (40). According to the Bible, Job is a faithful man of God. However, Job experienced immense suffering in his lifetime, losing his children and his great wealth. He was stricken with poverty and boils. In these afflictions, God was silent, leaving Job in a state of deep spiritual anguish. This tone of anguish and despair is established in the epigraph at the outset of *Native Son*, and emphasizes Bigger’s suffering. For the nourishment of their body Bigger worked at Dalton’s house although he doesn’t like. As Wright says in *How Bigger was born* “Negroes are rarely mentioned in the press unless they’ve committed some crime!” (17) Crime by blacks is the way of protesting against the government to have an identity and nationality. This is the belief Bigger finally acquires. With this belief comes a sense of comradeship with those whites such as Jan who have earned such comradeship in action.

Native Son contains several allusions to other works that were significant during Wright’s time. One of the major works that influence *Native Son* was Harriet Beecher

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This novel was published in 1852 and was not only the best-selling novel of the century but also played a major role in the abolitionist movement.

Wright's *Native Son* was published in 1940 and contains similarities to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Native Son* can be interpreted as an illustration of the harsh reality of racial injustice in the United States. James Baldwin, writing in the *Partisan Review*, boldly linked the two novels. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as well as in *Native Son*, racial injustice is a "pre-ordained pattern set upon the living reality." (Maurice 74) The similarity of the characters is to escape from racial discrimination. Both of these novels are a form of social protest and seek to disprove the idea that society neatly analyzes and treats race. In both of these works, African Americans emerge confused, dishonest, and panicked as they are trapped and immobilized as prisoners within the American dream. Thus, Rejecting Christianity and Communism Bigger find the strength to die in the courageous acceptance. It reveals the religious and social protest in the novel *Native Son*.

Wright also advocated the image of African Americans as members of the working class in his article in the New York Amsterdam News. Thus, Rejecting Christianity and Communism Bigger finds the strength to die in the courageous acceptance Wright's depiction of and belief in the figure of African-American workers and his depiction of Bigger Thomas as a worker showed evidence of communistic influence on *Native Son*. Analyzing Wright's notion of protest about racial discrimination and color persecution, Edward Margolies says; "Wright learnt as black living in the south that the rules; principles and institution of white America did not apply to him . . ." (68) *Native Son*, Wright has minutely presented the atmosphere of the racist society of the 20th century America. The main theme of this novel is the effect of racism on the oppressed; the effect of racism on the oppressor; the hypocrisy of justice and color persecution. As Wright says, "God I wish I had a flag and a country of my own" (16), he protests against the contemporary culture, religion and communism for his

identity and nationality. *Native Son* as a whole is a realistic and protest novel. Thus Richard Wright is a protest novelist and *Native Son* is a protest novel.

This thesis contains four chapters. The first chapter contains introduction of the research work. The second chapter presents methodological tool that is racism. The third chapter discusses and analyzes the text in order to prove the racial protest in *Native Son*. The four chapters conclude the research work.

Chapter II: Racism

An Introduction to Racism

Racism can be defined as a way of thinking that tries to link a group of unchangeable physical characteristics to its mental and moral characteristics. On the basis of the physical features, it distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups. Racism is a way of thinking and discrimination is its practice.

Racism is generally known as the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group. "Race has been a cause of more misunderstanding and human suffering than anything else that can be associated with a single word in language." (Brace 116) It is in fact a prejudice conditioned by perceptions. In America it has been the practice towards the black man. The practice as such is seen in two levels- individual and community. In individual level, individual whites act against individual blacks and in community level the total community acts against the black community. The first is related to death, injury or the violent destruction of property whereas the later is less destructive of human life and originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and this receives far less public condemnation than the first type. It is to dehumanize people by stereotyping them, by denying their variousness and complexity on the basis of their physical, mental, moral, social and various varieties, which is socially formed notion. It includes the superiority complex of one's own race or ethnic group over others. White society is regarded as superior to the black. This is because the power they have historically asserted. The fantasy of the world "word" has positive connotation (even in the liberal textbooks) that there are inevitable associations of white with light and therefore safety (and spirituals, cleanliness, purity, transcendence, virtues and number of positive terms) and black with black with dark and therefore danger (and dirt, sin and number of negative terms) and unfolds the concept of race.

Racism at personal level includes an individual belief that an entire racial group is inferior or superior on the basis of physical features linked with intellectual and moral characteristics. If these personal characteristics get connected with cultural institutions like religion, education and military institutions in order to exclude or include not a person but also an entire group, it takes the form of institutionalized racism.

When a black family moves into a home in the white neighborhood and is stoned, burned or routed out, they are the victims of the act of individual racism which is condemnable by many people. But when hundreds of babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, they are victims of the act of institutional racism. Institutional racism keeps black people locked in dilapidated slum tenements as subjects to the daily victims of exploitative slumlord, merchants and discriminatory real estate agents. The society either pretends it does not know of this latter situation or is in fact incapable of doing anything meaningful about it. A National Council of Churches work group has summarized this institutionalized racism:

Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political, environmental and military institutions of societies. Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude. (qtd. In Feagin 3)

Moreover, institutional racism relies on the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices. A sense of superior group prevails in this type of racism. The statement “Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free of fate nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same

government”(scot Helen 173) is a racist attitude and it permeates the society, on both the individual and institutional level.

Racism is not a stable ideological form consisting of the same assumptions for a long period. It accepts the new scholarly ideas to be maintained in the society. Rather rejecting all the epithets of singularity, it prefers different shapes and different political relations. “Racist ideologies and practices have distinct meanings bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle” (Gilroy 248). The struggle of racist ideology takes itself to the attachment with other forms of ideology. As a result, racism arises with its distinctive characteristics and shapes. Martin Luther King in this speech noted that:

One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation black people were still not free. Segregation and discrimination still ruled their lives, as did poverty. They were still treated as second-class citizens. He chastised America for defaulting on her promise to grant her citizens life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . . The Negro people had been given a "bad check" and one that had come back marked "insufficient funds." However, now it was time to cash the check: America had to make good on its promises. (102)

Contemporary form of racism i.e. new racism attaches to the concepts like patriotism, nationalism, gender differences, xenophobia, etc. These concepts give a way to a definition of race in terms of culture and identity. The notions like Negro race is inferior race which lacks social organization and social action, social fellow feeling, originality of thoughts and artistic qualities and shows no tendency toward higher development; the Negro race is powerful in physique, strong and normal in intellect and has not achieved a higher social and intellectual civilization, reflect the racist attitude. The principles of Race Orthodoxy like “the whites race must dominate; the Negroes 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 will

best fit to serve the white man; . . . let the lowest white man count for more than the highest Negro” (Bailey 16) are the essentials of racial creed and action. Regarding this Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton say, “Racist assumptions of white superiority have been so deeply engrained into the fiber of the society that they infuse the entire functioning of the national subconscious” (31) Thus, racism is ubiquitous and it informs every level of discourse in American society.

The American race situation is very important because it is the most complex and dynamic. It possesses every element of the other phases and more. Here it challenges the further progress of Christianity and civilization in the foremost democracy of the earth. Here it presents the acid test to the culture of the most modern and progressive branch of the white race. Reflecting the factors of American race prejudice George W. Ellis says:

In the United States race prejudice is predicated upon the belief that the colored race is naturally inferior to the white race, physically, intellectually, religiously, socially and morally. As a matter of fact it is an actually based upon the advantages, temporary and imaginary, which the white groups believe they derive from this superior attitude to the colored groups believe they derive from this superior attitude to the colored groups economically, politically and socially. A historical study of these beliefs discloses that two powerful factors have contributed above others to the abnormal American situation and that in their broadest sense they are ethnological and sociological. (299)

Thus, in America the practice of racism is much more deep-rooted. Though the society is itself plural, only the binary projection of whiteness and blackness is much more practiced. Afro-Americans are understood racially “Others” more strongly than the Native

Americans and the Asian Americans though the latter, too, are culturally different than Anglo-Americans.

Reflection of Racism in Literature

Literature is said to be the mirror of society. The racial matters found in the society are the main concerns of the study of race in literature. In the classical period, individual character counted rather than skin color to determine person's worth. Homer's *Iliad* and the works of pre-Socratic Sophists focused upon individual behavior as the important factor of individual's value. In nineteenth century race formed an important body of literary writing Appiah writes:

For literary purposes, the developments that begin at the turn of nineteenth century have another immediate consequence: race becomes important at the theme of great body of writing in Europe and North America- and indeed, in the rest of the world under the influence of 'western' cultures-and the concept often plays a crucial role in structuring plot. (279)

Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) concerns racial theme, the novel deals with love and compassion between Huck and Jim, between the Black and White. Huck, an escape slave and Jim float down the Mississippi River on a raft. During their trip in the various towns and villages along the way, Huck comes to know the evil of the world. Meanwhile, Huck faces a big moral problem because he is violating the laws of the white dominated society. He determines to break the Law, thinking that slave is also a human being, not a 'thing'.

The struggle of African-Americans for their human and social rights became one of the most important themes in twentieth century American history. Though Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery system of blacks, their position in American society remained very bad. African-Americans achieved the literary development in the forms of protest literature,

autobiography, sermons, songs, and poetry Booker T Washington, educator and prominent black leader of his day grew up as a slave. In “*The Souls of Black Folk*” 1903, E.B. Dubois famously described black Americans as possessing what he called a double consciousness, caught between a self conception as an American and as a person of African descent. He says; “The Negro ever feels his two-ness-an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strivings . . . two war ring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Mc whorter 8).

During the exuberant 1920s, Harlem became the national center of African American culture, including the arts of theatre, dance and music. The African American jazz became widely praised as beautiful music. Langston Hughes was one of the important poets of Harlem renaissance of the 1920s in the company of James Weldon Johnson, Claude Mc Kay and Counted Cullen. He popularized African American jazz rhythms. His poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” glorifies his African heritage. Zora Neale Hurston, one of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, in her work “Their Eyes Were Watching God” evokes the lives of African Americans in the South. Richard Wright in his *Uncle Tom’s Children* deals with the violence of the Southern white’s society against blacks. In his novel *Native Son*, he describes the violence in a black man. The central character, Bigger Thomas, murders a white woman and then murders his own lover. Until *Native Son*, black writers have always depicted blacks as victims of the white violence. He insists that the social status of blacks causes them to become violent, too. His short story “The Man Who Lived Underground” (1945) reinforces the theme of identity crisis of African American.

James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison reflect the African American experiences of the 1950s. Their characters suffer from the crisis of identity. Baldwin wrote *Another Country* exploring the racial issues and homosexuality. Similarly *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) incorporates a collection of passionate personal essays dealing with racial prejudice. Ralph

Ellison in *Indivisible Man* (1992) embodies the same concept as Wright used in the “The Man Who Lived Underground”. *The Invisible Man* is invisible because people blinded by prejudice cannot see him. Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* (1970) depicts the white hospitality on black characters whereas in her *Playing in the Dark* she says:

How the literature I revered, the literature I loathed, behaved in its encounter with racial ideology: American was complicit in the fabrication of racism . . . I want to see when literature was exploded, undermined it. (16)

In this way, the racial issues have become the constant themes of literature especially in the United States of America. American culture projects a hierarchy of white and black culture. The differences among people play a vital role in forming our values and identities. So long as the racial difference lasts, the literary study and production will rest upon the theme of race. Appiah writes:

Differences among peoples, like differences among communities within a single society, play a central role in our thinking about “who” we are, in structuring our values, and in determining the identities through which we live. . . . And so long as it continues it is likely that race will continue to be a preoccupation, not only of the literary history of nineteenth century and twentieth century, but also of future literary production and literary study. (287)

So, racial differences, prejudice and inequality have helped enrich the creative potentialities of the authors.

The Idea of Racial Antagonism

Racial antagonism is one of the most potent elements of contemporary socio-political unrest. It is one of the most dangerous elements surrounded by emotion, passion and fear. The Afro-American was first introduced in America as a slave in 1619. Afro Americans, the

then Negroes, as explores and as servants in large numbers came with the first Europeans as they set out to exploit the resources of the new World. From the sixteenth century onward Europeans ranged the earth conquering native peoples and establishing themselves as conquering and ruling aristocracies. Then, especially during the seventh century, ruling white man and subjugated black man became increasingly conscious of their racial differences.

Until the late 18th century thinking on race was distinguished chiefly by its verbosity. In theory, Christianity argued that all men are spiritually alike in the sight of god but in practice, all source of arguments could be found to prove the inferiority of the black man. By the late 18th century, the Enlightenment was in full swing, and efforts were made for the first time to assure a scientific understanding of race. Distinctions were made between higher and lower races. European whites were placed at the summit in the hierarchy of races. With the onset of imperialism in the late 19th century it became necessary to show that weaker race should die out to make room for the stronger. Racialism became more and more irrational. The only important thing was to prove the inferior races as “outsiders”, a kind of racial proletariat with the firm objective to keep them under subjugation.

The history of America began with the grabbing of the land from Native Americans and enforcing the blacks to cultivate the land. It consequently created hierarchies in color and division of land. The whites established a system of privilege in terms of oppression and exploitation. Harris and Ordono say:

The social divisions along the color line crossed class, nationality, language, and religious barriers. The simple fact of Whiteness meant the overall life, fortune and destiny of white people. White people were exempt from slavery, land grab, and genocide the first form of white privilege. White enjoys wide latitude of opportunities . . . personal freedom, and born and immigrant whites

were viciously exploited by rich white people, they were nit on the bottom.

The bottom was reserved for Indians, black, and other people of color. (27-28)

Thus, the American society was clearly based on exploitation. Previously rich white people and later on the whites in general excessively exploited Indians and especially blacks and marginalized them.

The black society is of oppression and migration. American geographical and cultural space has provided limitless potential to the whites since its settlement, but the blacks have been denied such spaces. Their African heritage and later the Southerners are repudiated by the large culture. Over the different historical events slavery, emancipation, migration and integration they tried to negotiate the relationship with their cultural traditions. But white race and its cultural heritage consistently marginalized them. Regarding political prejudice George W Ellis in his essay “The Psychology of American Race Prejudice” says:

The government of the United States represented at its birth the political dream of countries. By its constitution it substituted for the capacious of man the government of the people regulated by law. Founded upon the freedom and equality of all men, it invited to its shores the oppressed of every land. Its founders laid the foundations of a democracy that was supposed to be a political light to the nations of the earth. But before this government was established the institution of slavery had manufactured so much class prejudice in industry, education and religions, that at the adoption of the constitution, the white race was unable to make this government in fact what in theory it was unable to make this government in fact what in theory it was announced to the world. (308)

Thus, it is clear that there was ambivalence in American politics. On the one hand there was commitment for political equality and there was prejudice on the other. The

Negroes were restricted in the matter of political activity. As slaves, they were obviously outside the party system and could take no part in government. This situation continued even after the Civil War. Mc Whorter says:

The Civil Rights Act Freed blacks from legalized segregation, but once freed, blacks met a new intellectual and cultural climate that taught that the establishment was an agent of repression and that its norms must be suspect to any human and sophisticated American. This brand of thought tends strongly to exonerate the individual from responsibility for failings and weakness, and encourages blaming the powers that be as an urgent, and even enlightened (14).

It is from the time the Africans were first brought to America, the social body and mind of the white race had been acting against the Negro. It was supported by an active and increasingly hostile sentiment and emotion that constitute the historical cause of that abnormal social situation in the Unites States. The social situation was a threatening social malady. It embraced years of ethnological misinterpretation on the one hand and social customary practice on the other. Despite the fact that the Negro was involved from the very beginning in the problem of America, first as a group of colonies, then as a nation, the Negroes had been placed at the last rung of the social ladder.

The Afro-American lived in a state of constant humiliation. His/her dignity as an individual was not admitted and he got no respect from the white and even nonwhite people of the world. The Afro American was segregated from school, was deprived of public facilities and had to suffer excessive police brutality. The Afro American's true identity was only that of a wage earner and professional man in American society. Afro Americans were never privileged for more skilled jobs. Rather they continued to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs and most of them remained unemployed. They were living with both socially and

economically depressed status. It is due to the discrimination against them in training and employment opportunity offered by the armed services, discrimination against them in vocational and academic training, discrimination against them by labor organizations, discrimination against them in referral services rendered by state employment services, the Afro Americans were forced to live under the depressed status. Moreover, the Afro American students had been denied admission to the white school. Even if given admission, the student was not given equal treatment; he was required to sit at a separate table in the library and had a specific seat in the classroom.

It is believed that many Negroes were poor, uneducated and deficient in health, morals, and manners and thus were not very agreeable as social companions. It is also pointed out that Negroes were different in physical appearance even if they have the same basic mental capacity and moral propensities. Beside these beliefs centering on Negro, inferiority, there are a great number of other popular thoughts arranged to justify social segregation, the thoughts that Negroes like to be separated that they were happy in their humble status and will not like to be treated as equals. Another idea with the same function is that the separation was necessary in order to prevent friction between the groups.

When the civil war broke up, the slavery system was abolished and the Negro was emancipated, but he gained only partial freedom. Emancipation elevated him only to the position of a semi-independent being. As a laborers or tenant farmers, the Negroes were discriminated against and exploited.

Historical Roots of Race and Race Studies

Race is a notion for the division of human beings into physically, biologically, and genetically distinct groups. The idea of race divides humanity into unchanging natural types on the basis of physical features that are transmitted 'through the blood'. Moreover, the term

indicates that the mental and moral behavior of human beings, as well as individual personality, capacities, and ideas are related to racial matters. We find the practice and study of race in the earliest human writing. In the earliest human writing, Appiah says:

We find more or less well-articulated views about the differences between our own kind and the people of other cultures. These doctrines, like modern theories of race, have often placed a central emphasis on physical appearance in defining the ‘Other’ and on common ancestry in explaining why groups of people display differences in their attributes and aptitudes. (274)

Immanuel Kant on the "Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime" (1764) uses the German phrase for ‘races of mankind’. It was probably the first explicit use of the term for the classification of human beings into biologically physically distinct groups. Debates about whether human variation was caused by descent or environment continued violently throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The biological science ascended in the late nineteenth century. So, descent emerged as the predominant model of human distinctiveness. Despite scientific base and application, the notion ‘race’ has established the simplest model of human variation color difference. Color became the means of distinguishing and identifying human beings. French anatomist Cuvier was significant in the development of race theory. He divided of the whole of humanity into three groups seemed so vague for any kind of analysis. However, idea has become influential for the ideological reason that this topology is based upon a graduation from superior to inferior. The assumptions underlying this racial topology have remained persistent to the present day.

The categories are mere elaborately defined as ‘Caucasoid’, ‘Mongoloid’ and ‘Negroid’ primarily related to their form of hair color form of nose and shape of skull. First assumption is that variations in the individual behavior were linked to the different biological types. Secondly, differences between these types suggested variations in human cultures.

Thirdly, the nature of the type accepted the superiority of Europeans and Aryans in particular. Fourthly, innate characteristics play a vital role in the friction of nations and individuals of different type. This idea of race was superseded by the implications of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). (Darwinism 65)

Modern scientist, Kwame Anthony Appiah, "believes that such classification as Negro, Caucasian, and Mongoloid has no importance for biological purposes." (277) They do not take race as an important aspect of people's identity. Modern science does not believe in racial difference. The 1951 UNESCO statement of the Nature of Race and Racial Difference asserts that mental features should not be incorporated in the classification of human beings in terms of race and environment is more important factor than inherited genetic elements in forming behavior. However in the 1960s, there was a sudden rise in biological thinking about human behavior.

Fundamental issues of race relations concern the effects of contact. Some writers argue that increased contact between groups of different values and origins will cause heightened conflict. Wright in *Native Son* shows heightened conflict between the characters of two different racial groups. The scenes of crime in the story are the examples of violent conflict groups. But some others view that increases contact between such groups will decrease prejudice and fear and lead to intergroup harmony. Social science evidence supports neither of these extremes. Increased interaction between different groups can result in either greater discrimination and rejection or greater respect and acceptance depending upon the situation in which it happens. To sum up, race relations is used to describe and analyze the phenomena which result from the interaction of different racial groups. Interracial contact can result in either prejudice or conflict of harmony depending upon the situation in which it happens. Prejudice and discrimination are the practices of racism.

Identity becomes an issue when doubt and uncertainty displace something that is assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable. Identities are constantly producing themselves a new; they are not something once and for all. Cornel West conceives identity as ‘the matter of life and death’. He writes:

Identity is fundamentally about desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicated on how you construct desire for recognition; quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledged; a deep desire for association, then is profound desire for protection, for security, for safety, for surety. (15-16)

The meaning of personal identity has come under the examination of philosophers and psychologists. The philosophers have been concerned about identifying what dimensions of the individual provide the sense of sameness into the future. The concept of personal identity is important to philosophers because questions of morality and self-interest depend upon individuals having a sense of identity. An individual decides to sacrifice immediate satisfaction for later benefit. Therefore, he or she will be the one to benefit from the decision.

There are two more basic components of the sense of personal identity. In these both components the self is continuous over time and that self is unique, or distinct from others. The concept of the personal identity is inherent in the most interesting account of the philosophical problems. In the psychological literature, the senses of personal continuity and distinctness from other have drawn the attention of theorists. For William James, the sense of personal identity was most closely linked to the ‘I’ or the ‘self-as-knower’. James identified the period of adolescence as the lowest sense of personal continuity. A stable self-identity derives from a sense of the continuity of the self-as-knower. William James in *Psychology: The Brier Course* writes: “each of us spontaneously considers that by ‘I’ he means something always the same.” (63) James believes that “the worst alterations of the self” (207) are associated with disruptions in the sense of personal continuity. Very similar connotations

of identity can be found in Wright's work. Identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is self-sameness and continuity to the 'style of one's individuality' (qtd. in Hart 123).

A feeling of individuality or distinctness from others also derives from the subjective nature of the self-as-knower. According to James, "other men's experience, no matter how much I may know about them; never bear this vivid, this peculiar brand" (71). The special feeling linked to one's experience is the basis for the sense of personal uniqueness. An individual's identity remains in crisis when he is not allowed to act according to his own will for his visibility, recognition and protection. Racism is one of the causes of identity crisis for victims; Richard Wright's novel, *Native Son* shows invisibility and identity crisis of the protagonist as the effects of racism. Whatever has been written about race in this chapter shows a direct relation with *Native Son*. The point of all is that *Native Son* perfectly exemplifies these racial issues. It is largely a racial protest novel. The whole novel revolves around the periphery of racism. It portrays the danger of racial practice in society. Wright means to say that the practice of racism in society sometimes can be violent as in the case of Bigger Thomas. He warns that its dehumanizing effects are unbearable for both: the black and the white. It first creates a gap between these two groups and then a conflict which results in violent consequences. In order to justify the points Wright creates the white and black characters. The first one appears superior and powerful whereas the latter one as oppressed and helpless. He sets them in the background of a racist society where a black hero feels fear even to walk. He suffers from hunger, poverty, illiteracy, oppression, fear and lack of identity. The problems of racism are deeply resented by him. On the one hand, he has to work as a servant in the white family; on the other hand, the whites enjoy great richness and power. The white laws discriminate against the black. Thus the master slave relationship between the white and the black is reflected in the novel. Its central character suffers the crisis of identity.

He creates his identity by killing the white. He appears to be violent in the quest of his identity. By a matter of chance, his deeply resentful feeling burst into more violent protest. He takes such protest as a means to fight against the problems of racism.

Thus, the novel depicts an antagonistic relationship between the white and the black. Wright's Characters seem to be the metaphors of colors: black and white. They embody the idea of race relations, racial identity, racial conflict, color persecution and racism as a whole. The novel in this sense is a manifesto of racism. It reflects the very essence of the entire theory in the story of a black hero whose protest is always directed against the white racist society. It is, therefore, worthwhile to analyze *Native Son* in the light of racism. The detailed racial analysis of the text is followed in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Racial Protest in *Native Son*

Bigger's Protest against the White Racial Society

This topic tries to show that there are various reasons for Bigger's protest in *Native Son*. The first and the foremost reason that creates abroad ground for his protest in the novel is racial segregation. Secondly, it is master slave relationship between the whites and the blacks, the rich and the poor. The last but not the least important ground of protest projected in his part of research is the court and its injustice to the blacks. Thus, this whole topic runs through the course of protest, especially against the discrimination of color, class and the court. All these are racially analyzed here with the help of the text itself. This whole unit is the racial study of *Native Son*.

Richard Wright converts the myth of "Bad Nigger" into Bigger and myth of "captive" into native, thus resulting in the title *Native Son*. 'Native' in the novel refers to his black hero Bigger Thomas whom the whites call a "bad nigger" and treat as a captive: "There was Bigger No.3, whom the white folks called a "bad nigger" (Wright x). It is not only to Bigger but also to all the blacks the white people call so and behave so. Wright asserts : "Taken collectively, they are not simply twelve million people; in reality they constitute a separate nation stunted, stripped, and held captive within this nation, devoid of political, social, economic and property rights" (364).

Thus, in the depth, Bigger Thomas stands for all the suppressed and exploited blacks who have to bear the fate of discrimination, depression, poverty, hunger, violence, ignorance, crime, and backwardness. These are the identities of overall blacks and Thomas is an individualized metaphor for millions of blacks in America:

Multiply Bigger Thomas twelve-million times, allowing for environmental and temperamental variations, and for those Negroes who are completely under the influence of the church, and you have the psychology of the Negro

people. But once you see them as a whole, once your eyes leave the individual and encompass the mass, a new quality comes into the picture. (364)

Bigger is the product of dislocated society; he is a dispossessed and disinherited man. He lives amid the greatest possibility plenty on earth and he is looking and feeling for a way out. He is an American because he is a native son: he is also a Negro nationalist, because he is not allowed to live as an American. What makes Bigger's social consciousness most complex is that fact he is a hovering unwanted between two worlds: The powerful American and his own stunted place, what Wright calls it a "No Man's Land" (xxiv). In a conversation with his fellow black, Bigger Thomas states: "I'll could fly a plane if I had a chance," Bigger said, "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane", Gus said. "They don't let us do nothing . . . The white folks." (22)

Racial attitudes are not ancestral inheritance rather they are social construct. These unjust attitudes are the catalysts to develop Bigger Thomas and his protest against the authority. The rigid society of racist people on the other hand is against him and his race. It seems that the racists are plotting against Bigger to deprive him completely from the opportunities. The authority, the media and moreover the social treatments stand against him. The pathetic voice of Bigger shows that as a black boy he is helpless; he is an outsider, and only a prisoner:

Every time I think about it I feel like somebody's poking a red-hot iron down my throat. Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We blacks and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knot-hole in the fence . . . (23) .

This is how Bigger attaches his black skin in his heart that sends forth a protest. As a black boy he is always driven by fear and hatred of the white people. The social atmosphere is such that it only creates an antagonistic feeling but no harmony. There is division in the name of color. Bigger is, therefore, much conscious of his black skin and that black skin is the main cause of his protest. His overall development is inspired by the repression of white racist society. In the core of his heart, Bigger has a burning resentment against the white race which seems to thwart his ambitions at every turn and keeps his family in abject misery. His fear is, by all means, the subjective reaction to his alienation from urban American capitalism and racism. Deprived of opportunity to live free and full life because he is poor black, Bigger, a racial black individual, who heroically defies the power of whites, uses protest as an act of self-affirmation.

Bigger Wright explores the limits of individual responsibility for protest and crime. Many of his actions suggest an overriding response to fear, which stems from his exposure to a harsh social climate in which a clear line between acceptable behavior for whites and blacks exists. His swift anger and his destructive impulse stem from that fear and is apparent in his fierce attack on a huge rat, vicious attack on his friend Gus and the brutal murders he commits. Abram and Kardiner write: "He must operate on the assumption that the world is hostile" (308).

Bigger's life takes a significant turn when he lands his first job as a chauffeur for rich white Dalton family. Mr. Dalton seems to have a giant like face. On the one hand, he does not allow the blacks to use his property outside the ghetto and, on the other hand, he prides himself on giving unprivileged colored folks a chance. He donates millions of dollar to pro-black institutions and schools, but doesn't employ the youths, that are educated, thereby intensifying their frustration and compounding his complicity in their plight. He only employs uneducated blacks like Bigger as chauffeur but fails to develop a genuine

understanding of their economic and social conditions. Mrs. Dalton, his wife, is physically as well as morally blind. She also seems to be sympathizing with the blacks but doesn't really realize the necessity of change in their way of life. Their immature daughter, Mary, lacks fixed identity. Through she advocates for social equality, i.e. equality of white and blacks, she can't rise from her own class and, therefore, becomes the subject of Bigger's hatred:

Everything was all right, except that girl. She worried him. She might cause him to lose his job if she kept talking about unions. She was a funny girl, all right. Never in his life had he met anyone like her. She puzzled him. She acted like . . . Well he didn't know exactly what she did act like. In all of the white woman he had met, mostly on jobs and at relief stations, there was white woman he had met, mostly on jobs and at relief stations, there was always a certain coldness and reserves; they stood their distance and spoke to him from afar. (60)

Though Bigger finds Mary different from other white women he has met; she also cannot be an exception for him. She symbolizes the white oppressions and intensifies his hate and fear.

On his first night on the job, Bigger is to drive Mary to meet her boyfriend, Jan Elrond secretly. When they meet Jan, he extends his palm; Jan grips it and does not let it go. Thus time Jan and Mary both are impervious to how confused and uncomfortable, they are making Bigger in the effort to partake the black experience. Bigger thinks they are playing pranks on him and are mocking his dark skin. Jan shaking his hand and Mary smiling at him:

He felt he had no physical existence at all right then: he was something be hated, he hated the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin. It was a shadow region, a No Man's Land, the ground that separated the

white world from the black that he stood upon. He felt naked, transparent. (67-68)

The idiosyncratic and incredible attitude and manner of Jan and Mary bewilder Bigger. He is scared and resentful as well. He feels completely paralyzed in their presence. Jan's utmost respect to Bigger is worthless. His yearning for true friendship does not count.

Jan Elrond, one of the most important characters to support Bigger's protest, is a young Communist who shows an enthusiastic personality. He believes in the equality for all men, regardless of social class or race. Throughout Jan's first meeting with Bigger, he regards Bigger with utmost respect. He comfortably sits in the front of the car with Bigger, eats with him, drinks with him and speaks to him as an equal. "You're a man just like I am: I am no better than you may be other white man like it. But I don't" (70). His character possesses a strong sense of morality and honesty. Though Mary trusts him so much, her parents and their servant Peggy distrust his motives. She thinks the red'll do something for 'em. The lord only knows where she got her wild ways, but she's got them" (58). And initially it is natural for Bigger to express distaste for reds because he cannot think of a white or red that would be courteous to a Negro like him.

The imagination that we find here in the novel is extremist and melodramatic feeding on the horrific themes of protest, violence and abysmal fear: its single occupation is with racial tragedy. From the very beginning, Bigger, an outsider in his native country, has a premonition that something is going to happen which will be completely out of his control. Being conscious of his black skin, he starts to live violently with his gang. His seething heart inspires him to disbelieve everything. He does not accept his position granted by white persons. He feels constrained and his identity confined. He stands against the whites in a challenging manner. He is predetermined that he, with his friends, would stir the whole

emotions of American inhabitants. Their rebellious nature is exposed before robbing Blum's store. Wright writes about Bigger's action with his gang in these words:

They had the feeling that the robbing of Blum's store would be a violation of ultimate taboo: would be a trespassing into territory where the full wrath of an alien white world be turned loose upon them: in short, it would be a symbolic challenge of the white world's rule over them: a challenge which they yearned to make: but were afraid too. (17-18)

After a wild night out on the town, Bigger is forced to forsake his role of chauffeur for the position of companion on equal grounds with Mary and Jan. It becomes necessary for Bigger help the girl to reach her room because of her drunkenness. In the process, he encounters the blind Mrs. Dalton, the mother of Mary. Afraid of being discovered with the white girl, Bigger accidentally smothers Mary to death in an effort to keep her quiet: "Frantically, he caught a corner of the pillow and brought it to her lips. He had to stop her from mumbling, or he would be caught" (84).

Fate and situation thus drive Bigger to step ahead from his confined life. His actions are based on his knowledge of the rules against sexual intimacy with white females. Expecting to be punished for being in the girl's room, Bigger is paralyzed with fear and he presses down too hard and too long on the pillow, with which he happens to stifle Mary Dalton. Yet the death of the white girl and the subsequent need to dispose the body produces in the black youth a certain sense of accomplishment. Once the horror of what has happened wears off, Bigger is filled with a feeling of importance.

In the alien heart of Bigger, he makes plan to impose the responsibility of the disappearance Mary Dalton on Jan. After burning Mary to ashes, she returns to his tenement house. He assures himself in the following words: "I will tell 'em I left her with Jan in the car

after I took the trunk down in the basement. In the morning I'll take the trunk to the station, like she told meThey can't say I did it. If they do, they can't prove it (92).

Native Son inverts the pitiable and familiar story of the black victim by making Bigger a violent attacker. Thereby it seems to confirm the white man's fantasies of Negro assault and rape. The victims of Bigger Thomas' violence are a white girl with liberal feeling on the Negro question and Bigger's own lover. Ironically Bigger has assumed exactly the role of the white thrust upon the Negro in order to justify his oppression. In the mind of the white bigots, he is only a beast who could be eradicated oppression. In the mind of the white bigots, he is only beast who could be eradicated anyway. "She made me feel like a dog. I was so mad I wanted to cry" (324)

Bigger is a grim proof that racial differences in America are far more than skin deep. Not only color but also the division of class is also a factor that creates the ground of protest. The socio-economic relationship between the whites and blacks is just the relationship of master and slave, rich and poor, exploiter and exploited. There is no social harmony between them rather a protest. Bigger Thomas represents this protest in many forms. He is not given the dignity of independent citizen and a complete man but he is behaved as semi-human. The society he is born in is such that there is not any opportunity for him to develop his personality, to develop his career and to earn an equal status like of the whites. The white racist society bars him from that equality and compels him to protest against such status-quo. Bigger being born in an inferior race has other options than to work as a servant in the house of a white man, His mother asks him to accept this fact and says, "You know Bigger, if you don't take that job, and the relief'll cut us off. We don't have any food." (16)

Not to have food to eat means that the family of Bigger is extremely poor. It is contextual to remember that poverty is the worst of all crimes. This single crime of poverty in the story gives way to other more dangerous crimes. In the case of Bigger Thomas, poverty

not only means to suffer but also to be as escape-goat. It is not his will but compulsion that Bigger has to search for a job in a white family. This very compulsion drives him to the second compulsion of crime. He “accidentally” kills Mary under the fear to be caught in the white man’s house at night. In the society Bigger is born, there is clear division in the name of color. Wright asserts it as below:

In Dixie there are two worlds, the white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white business and black business, white graveyards and black graveyards, and for all I know, a white God and a black God(7)

With the hope that he and his family would get economic freedom, Bigger takes risk of working as a chauffeur for whites who make him scared and angry in the world. When Bigger is around whites he hangs his head down as if ashamed and he talks only by mumbling in a soft, low tone. No one has ever directly told Bigger to do so but he does it. During an interview with Mr. Dalton for chauffeur’s job, Bigger must sit in Mr. Dalton’s office while being asked the questions. When Bigger first enters the room, he stands quietly with his head down and does not move until Mr. Dalton instructs him to sit, Bigger glances up only once or twice to look at Mr. Dalton, but he quickly fixes his eyes back on the ground when he notices Mr. Dalton looking back hi m. He begins to think that he has done something wrong and becomes angry, worried and confused. He wonders if he was doing the right thing. He thinks this is the right way whites wanted blacks to act:

There was an organic conviction in him that was the way white folks wanted him to be when in their presence, none had ever told him that in so many words, but their manner had made him feel that they did. He laid the cap

down, noticing that Mr. Dalton was watching him closely. May be he was not acting right? (50)

In an episode, Bigger Thomas and his gang “play white”. They assume the roles of generals, financial magnate, and governmental officials. Gus and Bigger alternatively play as general J.P. Morgan and president. Gus and Bigger act out a skit in which he Present wasn’t to keep the niggers under control. They associate whiteness with the power, wealth and authority with control over their own lives. Barred in real life in military, industrial, or political hierarchies, their fantasy dwells in these forbidden roles. “And it is through the ritual of white role playing that he seeks to reconcile the truth of military y, economic and political impotence of blacks with the power of whites” (Bernard Bell 158) . The limits and restriction that push them towards a social marginality and deeply resented by Bigger:

I wanted to be an aviator once. But they wouldn’t let me go to the school where I was supposed to learn it. They built a big school and then drew a line around it and said that nobody could go to it but those who lived within the line. That kept all the colored boys out. (323)

Thus, it is clear that the oppressive white society makes him live the miserable life he lives, B y not letting him become anything but a servant, they lead him to a life of crime and hate. By the heart, Bigger does not feel sorry for Mary whom he smothers to death in her own bed room. He feels that his murder of her is more justified by the fear and shame she makes him feel. It seems that her actions evoke only fear and shame in him. He remembers her uncontrollable state of drunkenness and confirms to himself that Mary herself made him kill her. “Hell, she made me do it! I couldn’t help it! “(108) he says, she was not real to him, not a human being: he had not know her long or well enough for that. He had only known that “He was the hired, and she was the hirer. And there was a certain distance to be kept between them” (121). Similarly, Mary’s mother, a blind white woman, appears to be more responsible

in the death of her daughter. She comes to the room of her daughter at night exactly when Bigger was there just to leave Mary due to her uncomfortable intoxication. Here Wright compares Bigger with Mrs. Dalton and says “She was the white, and he was black. She was rich and he was poor, she was old and he was young: she was the boss and he was the worker” (122). This very gap between them creates a ground of protest in the story. The socio-economic inequality and the master-slave relationship between the whites and the blacks are promoted not only by the color but also by the court or the law in other words.

The point is that Bigger’s protest takes place necessarily due to injustice of the white laws. The black people intentionally violate them so as to obtain a degree of equality treatment as well as to challenge the unjust forces of whites. When some power is cruel, corrupt, unjust and dictatorial, it is right of the people, it is duty of the people as well, to overthrow such power and re-establish new system where there is possibility of equality, freedom, justice and pursuit of happiness. Regardless of the price to be paid, people have to become ready to sacrifice, they have to violate and protest the existing laws for the new ones. The old and unjust laws become no more applicable upon them. In an introduction to “How Bigger was Born” Wright asserts:

The Bigger Thomas were the only Negroes I know of who consistently violated the Jim Crow laws of the south and got away with it, at least for a sweet brief spell. Eventually, the whites who restricted their lives made them pay a terrible price.” (xi)

In *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas has presented as the other of the rigid racist society. He is an outsider, a social misfit, and a cipher in the eyes of the whites. He, therefore, accepts his lot as being free of routines and conventions of the white world but the white society forces upon him completely unlawful authority. The opportunities and possibilities of splendid life style of Negroes are snatched by the white personals but the blacks do not even have the equal

right to knock the door of court. They are made the victims of unspeakable horrors of police brutality, if they dare to do so. “They were shot hanged maimed lynched and generally hounded until they were either dead or their spirit broken.”(xi)

Racism is thus institutionalized by the court in America. Bigger grows in a society where two worlds, white and black, are apparent. These two worlds are physically separated. The separation as such was accomplished after Civil war by an extreme white society which swept the newly freed Negroes like Bigger Thomas through arson, pillage and death out of the public, social and economic life of the South. The motive for this assault was as Wright says, simple and urgent. For he says:

The imperialistic tug of history had torn the Negro from his African home . . . and when the Negro was freed, he outnumbered the whites in many of these fertile areas. Hence, a fierce and bitter struggle took place to keep the ballot from the Negro, for had a chance to vote, he would have automatically controlled the richest lands of the South and with them the social, political, and economic destiny of a third of the republic. (xi)

Form of Bigger’s Protest

Needless to say *Native Son* is a violent protest novel. There are different forms of protest in the novel and all of them are based on the matter of fact as well as on a motive. The first and foremost form of protest that takes place in the novel is the violation of Jim Crow laws at the cost of life. Likewise, the personal plan of Bigger in his ‘ransom case’ is also an underground form of protest to challenge the white society overwhelmingly. More than that, the case of robbery and rape is also there. To some extent, they are also the forms of protest undertaken due to extreme antagonisms of the hero, Bigger. Above all, violence is the most striking form of protest in the context of this novel. All these forms and facts can be brought into light with the help of the text itself:

Every movement of his blood is an unconscious protest, every desire, and every dream, no matter how intimate or personal, is a plot or conspiracy. Every hope is a plan for insurrection. Every glance of the eye is a threat; this very existence is a crime against the state! (367)

Boris A. Max, the lawyer of Bigger, speaks these lines while defending Bigger in the court. The point of Max is that the black are born opponents, the strong antagonists for the nation because the state looks upon them from such perspective and behaves them as if they are the degenerates, robbers, rapists and criminals capable only of violation and violence. They are treated inhumanly as if they have no heart to feel and no head to think:

Feeling the capacity to be live, to act to pour out the spirit of their souls into concrete and objective from with a high fervor born of their racial characteristics, they glide through our complex civilization like wailing ghosts; they spin like fiery planets lost from their orbits; they wither and die like tree ripped from native soil. (366)

The 'native soil' becomes only a graveyard for the blacks who have life but not to live independently and freely. The society they are born in takes their birth as the birth of some evil and soon make them captive within their native soil. In areas far removed from Mississippi, a Negro would say "I wish I didn't have to live this way. I feel like I want to burst" (xiii). Wright writes that he'd heard a Negro say "God I wish I had flag and country of my own" (xiii-xiv). This is not just a fiction but a matter of fact as well. The blacks really dream of what it would be likes to live in a country where they could forget their color and play a responsible role in the vital processes of the nation's life. There is in the black of their minds a wild and intense longing (wild and intense because it is suppresses to belong, to be identified, to feel that they are alive as other people are. They aspire to be caught up forgetfully and exultingly in the swing of events to feel the clean, deep, organic satisfaction

of doing a job in common with others. But the reality is just opposite: “In art, science, industry, politics and social action it may take other forms. But these twelve million Negroes have access to none of these highly crystallized modes of expression” (365).

Despite the good will of the blacks they are deprived from the mainstream of America. Their lives become continuous challenges to the whites. The white folks won't let us do nothing” (x). Bigger Thomas therefore starts a protest against the Jim Crow Laws at the cost of his life:

And then there was Bigger No.4, whole only law was death. The Jim Crow laws of the South were not for him. But as he laughed and cursed and broke them, he knew that someday he'd have to pay for his freedom. His rebellious spirit made him violate all the taboos. And consequently he always oscillated between moods of intense elation and depression. He was never happier than when he had outwitted some foolish custom. (x)

Hence all legitimate ways are closed to Bigger; he embraces the extralegal means to assert his protest. He seeks a challenge worthy of his manhood. He insists on something “bigger” than the cramped horizon of ghetto life. Bigger kills Mary in order to become real, to make the white world acknowledge his existence. “If the white world blots out his reality, he will blot the reality of the white world (Unger 482). This murder by all means, has a liberating influence on Bigger. Though temporary, it ends his sense of fear and shame. He takes it as a successful form protest.

The thought of what he had done, the awful horror of it, the daring associated with such actions, formed for him for the first time in his fear ridden life a barrier of protection between him a world he feared. He had murdered and had created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it

was the first in his life he has had anything that others could not take from him. (101)

In fiery crucible of crime, he discovers a new sense of purpose and a new freedom of action. As a murderer, he acquires a new conviction of his own worth, even his superiority. Unlike people around him, Bigger has crushed the conventional notions of reality and he has moved beyond law, conventions, and good and evil.

Bigger Thomas does not only object the rules, disciplines and manners of white society but on the contrary, he crosses out all the feelings and pathos of black community. He can't share his feelings with the feelings of other blacks because they are not equal at any way to him. His haunted heart and ordeal lead him to jump from his circle:

As he rode, looking at the black people on the sidewalks, he felt that one way to end fear and shame was to make all those black people act together, rule them tell them what to do, and make them do it. Dimly, he felt that there should be one direction in which he and all other black people could go wholeheartedly; . . . that there should be a way in which gnawing hunger and restless aspiration could be fused; that there should be a manner of acting that caught the mind and body in certainty and faith. But he felt that such would never happen to him and his black people, and he hated them and wanted to wave his hand and blot them out. (109)

Their lives show Bigger's sense of community and at the same time a sense of alienation from that community. He lets these unjust values to be obeyed by other blacks but he dissociates himself and his ethics from others. He feels alone and his loneliness is his identity. On the way of his existence, he violates order, system and ideal of the society.

In the racist society of the white, blacks like Bigger suffer from extreme poverty, hunger and diseases. In order to fulfill their basic needs, they have to work as servants in the

house of the whites under unbearable conditions. They are raped, seduced and killed. Court gives them no justice. They are the second - rate citizens, the run - down degenerates in the eyes of law. Contrary to the fact, they get the badges of rape, murder, robbery. They are embarrassed in public, and put to death:

If a Negro rebels against rule and taboo, he is lynched and the reason for the lynching is usually called "rape", that catchword which has garnered South pretty quickly, even today. (ix)

It is thus their identity to rape, rob and murder. Richard Wright ironically presents this fact in the form of protest. He gives Bigger a necessary role to violate the white laws protest and to challenge them. Bigger's murder case is defended in the court on these very grounds.

Defending Bigger in the court, his lawyer, Max says:

Your Honor, remember that men can starve from a lack of self-realization as much as they can from a lack of bread! And they can murder for it, too! Did we not build a nation, did we not wage war and conquer in the name of a dream to realize our personalities and to make those realized personalities secure! (366)

Ironically, Bigger finds a more meaningful existence and freedom through violence and crime. Freedom for him then becomes the license to exploit others, both black and white. He visits Bessie Nears, his girl friend, a passive woman. 'She has all accepted that her life will never have the possibility for improvement. She feels doomed in th4 pits of the slums. She works long hours in a white woman's kitchen and seeks an escape with the use of alcohol which bigger provides her. And she is the most tragic victim of his newly discovered freedom. After Bigger arrives at Bessie's room, she mentions that the Daltons live in the same section of town as the murderers Loeb and Leopold did. She reminds him that Loeb and Leopold killed a boy and then tried to get ransom money by pretending that the boy had been

kidnapped. He is given the idea that he can do what Loeb and Leopold did. He then asks her that he had killed Mary but says that Mary has eloped with Jan. But when Bessie affirms that he killed Mary, Bigger says, "All right. They white folks. They done killed plenty of us." (168) frightened by Bigger's ransom scheme, Bessie says, "But I don't want to do it, Bigger. They'll catch us. God knows they will" (170). Bigger, however, pressurizes Bessie to join his plan.

Bigger puts enough pressure on Bessie to partake in his plan and heads back to the Dalton's residence. He is there with a purpose. He makes the Daltons suspect that Jan has played role in Mary's disappearance. Bigger seems to be able to make Britain, an overt racist, and Dalton family both agree that he is an abandoned building to use a drop off point for the ransom money. He finds one and he returns to Bessie.

There he writes a ransom notes displaying his heightened power. He emerges as a kind of artist, creating fictive worlds, inventing scenarios; manipulating others as he himself was manipulated. Using the situation to his advantage, he makes an alibi and writes the fake ransom note to export Mary's parents for money:

We got your daughter She is safe She wants to come home. . . .

Don't go to the police if you want your daughter back safeGet ten thousand in 5 and 10 bills and put it in a shoe box . . . and tomorrow night ride your car up and down Michigan Avenue from 35th street to 40th street. . . .

Blink your headlights some. When you see a light in a window blink three times throw the box in the snow and drive off. Do what this letter says. (Red

166-67)

To make the note even more convincing and to dissuade blame from him, Bigger signs the note the communist symbol of a hammer and a sickle. Bessie is extremely upset. She blames bigger of killing Mary and he admits to it. Now that Bessie knows about death,

Bigger thinks of killing her to keep her quiet. He could not leave her and he could not take her with him. If he took her along she would be crying all the time; she would be blaming him for all that had happened; she would be wanting whisky to help her to forget and there would be times when he would not get it for her (221) .

For Bigger, Bessie has really become a burden. So he drags her to a vacant tenement on the south side where he rapes her, and then beats her head with a brick before tossing her body down an airshaft. "All he knew was that the room was quiet and cold and that the job was done." (212) He is then confident that there is no danger from Bessie's side.

Bigger kills the second girl too, because he has deep longing for his personal identity. He avoids all the so supposed obstacles from his way so that he can gallop for his ultimate goal. He does not have least glance towards norms and values, humanity, meaningless for him. He wants to show the society who he is. He tries fleeing by his hook and crooking because of fear and punishment after being captured by the police force.

Bigger's ransom episode provides some broader social back ground. We learn that Mr. Dalton's real estate company rents apartments to blacks in the most run down area of the city. Even in such area when blacks first moved into that neighborhood, the white tried to chase them away by bombing their houses. Now the whites have fled the neighborhood and many of the buildings are abandoned. Regarding this Charles Johnson in "Being and Race" writes:

We see the "facts" of black Chicago life for the poor in the 1930s. Wright is Meticulous with sociological details; he absorbs the information provided by other authors about political and economic disenfranchisement. The book "teaches" but more important than all this reportage is the fact that Wright reminds us through his method here eidetic description or presenting things in their tweed essence for a historical subject, the world we live in is, first and foremost, one shaped by the minds (14) .

It is the ransom note which transfers Bigger's fear to the Daltons. When Mr. Dalton receives the note, the family panics. Britten returns and questions Peggy, the housemaid. She says Bigger is "just like all the other colored boys"(9). It exposes racism. Peggy's unconscious prejudice is similar to Britten's blatant racism. No one seems to believe that a black could have either intelligence or the boldness to carry out such a crime.

The kidnapping case terminates as soon as the newspaper reporters discover several bones of Mary in the furnace. The breaking news about Mary's murder spreads all of a sudden. Bigger steals a newspaper and hides in an abandoned building. The news story about him assumes he was a rapist. It describes the reaction of the white community to his crime. Whites are attacking blacks on the street smashing the windows of their homes and firing them from their jobs. The police assume that Jan had something to do with the crime because they cannot a black could have done it by himself.

From his hiding place, Bigger sees an apartment where a couple live in a single room with their children and he recalls his childhood memories of his own room apartment. He is aware of the contrast between the large, empty abandoned buildings thinks about the scarcity of apartments in the Black Belt, a scarcity created by the confinement of blacks to one small neighborhood and by the frequent condemnation of buildings within the area. "He knew that empty flats were scarce in the Black Belt; whenever his mother wanted to move she had to put in requests long months in advance" (233). He also thinks about rents for blacks being higher than rents for whites, and about the business in black neighborhood being owned by whites and about the prices being higher than those of business in white sections of the city. Bigger is lost in thinking about the two worlds- white world and black world.

How easy it would be for him to hide if he had the whole city in which to move about! They keep us bottled up here like wild animals, he thought. He knew that black people go outside of the Black Belt to rent a flat; they had to

live on their side of the "line". No white real state man would rent a flat to a black man other than in the sections where it had been decided that black people might live. (233)

Here Bigger is once again reminded of the restrictions to the blacks whose lives are conditioned by the white society. Thus, it is the racist society that produced Bigger and made his protest inevitable. Bigger comes out of his hiding places and white walking Bigger overhears to black men arguing. One blames the Bigger Thomas of the black community for the fact that whites mistreat blacks. The other says that whites will hate blacks whatever the matter is. He says, "But Jack, ever nigger looks guilty to white folks when somebody's done a crime" (235). He says the blacks should fight back and support Bigger Thomas.

Bigger's protest takes a different form when attempt to flee from the cordon of eight thousand policemen goes in vain and is eventually captured. "Two men stretched his arms out, as though about to crucify him" (253). The police drag Bigger by the feet with his head banging along the grounds. He loses his consciousness. With the capture, his hopes, power, hatred all to come an end. Yet, Bigger has more to struggle. The point of all is that *Native Son* as a whole is the manifestation of the protest of a black hero in a white dominated society. Throughout the novel there is rape, robbery, and violence of a black boy who has rights to nothing except these. It, therefore, becomes his plight endowed by God like whites. Having been deprived of all the opportunities by the laws itself, Bigger hideously involves in the activities as such by the matter of fact. Initiating from an 'accidental' death of a white girl, Bigger further develops the cases of ransom, rape and a second murder of his own lover, Bessie. He is finally caught by the police and is sentences to death. However, Bigger and his lawyer proclaim the fact that if there is no chance to live a complete life lawfully, there is then a more chance of violence than surrender. Wright assumes this fact as a protest and develops it in his fiction to the full-fledged forms as depicted below.

Protest as a Means of Freedom

Why does Bigger revolt? is a great question to be taken into account in the course of this research. No explanation based upon a hard and fast rule of conduct can be given. But there are always two factors dominant in his personality "Endowed with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" (365), it becomes a first duty, a necessity for Bigger to revolt so as to overthrow the existing system which forbids him and his whole black race from the above mentioned fundamental and natural rights. Through some quirk of circumstances, he becomes estranged from the religion and folk culture of his race. Secondly, he is trying to react to and answer the call of the dominant civilization whose glitters come to him through the news papers, magazines, radio, movies and the mere imposing sight and sound of daily American life. That is to say he revolts because he has heard that "After the revolution it'll be ours. But we'll have to fight for it. What a world to win, Bigger! And when that day comes, things be different. There'll be no white and no black; there'll be no rich and no poor" (69).

Bigger wants to feel that he is alive as other people are. He makes the protest a means in his unfinished quest of equality, identity and existence. He involves in robbery, rape, murder and says "he knew what he was doing but felt he had to do it. And he says he feels no sorrow for having done it" (364).

Out of his own bitter experiences of hunger, poverty, cruelty, and racial segregation, Bigger evolves a personal vision of the world as a hostile society where in the oppressors rule by force and victims are blinded and intimidated. It is this vision which takes the form of strong protest in the novel resulting in the tragedy of death. However, Bigger says to his lawyer that:

What I killed for must've been good! Bigger's voice was full of frenzied anguish. It must have been good! When a man kills, it's for something . . . I

didn't know I was really alive in this world until I felt things hard enough to kill for 'em . . . It's the truth. (392)

Thus, the description of Mary's murder makes it clear that white world is the cause of the violent reactions and protest of Bigger Thomas. The good intentional but blind Mrs. Dalton appears as a blur of whiteness when she comes upon Bigger in Mary's room. By her presence she summons to Bigger's mind his conditions fear of the worst possible violation of racial code, miscegenation. The same fear drives Bigger to the grisly disposal of Mary's body, while the whole operation is overseen by a white cat. Exhausted after the crime, Bigger sleeps to weaken the next morning in a city covered with white. In this episode is imagined the horrible truth that Richard Wright forces his readers to face violence is a personal necessity for the oppressed.

He was living, only as he knew how, and as we have forced him to live. The actions that resulted in the death of those two women were as instinctive and inevitable as breathing or blinking one's eyes. It was an act of creation! (366)

When life in society consists of humiliations, one's only rescue is through rebellion. It is not a strategy consciously derived, it is the deep, instinctive expression of human being denied individuality and dignity. And that it can brutally consume even the undeserving as its means. Yet expressing of the rebellion can be liberating:

His crime seemed natural; he felt that all of his life had been leading to something like this. It was no longer a matter of dumb wonder as to what would happen to him and his black skin, he knew now. The hidden meaning of his life- a meaning which others did not see . . . (101).

But what about Bigger's murder of Bessie, his own lover, a black girl? Court doesn't speak about and this case. It does not even make an inquiry how she is killed and why? It is

here the court is largely questionable. The question is that does it really try to control crimes or just the blacks? Boris Max, the lawyer employed by the International Labor Defense, is of the opinion that this is just an attempt to subdue the blacks but not to control the crimes. This is not for the maintenance of law, order, justice, equality and human rights. This very court forbids justice for the blacks and creates the grounds for crime. It is careless about the murder of blacks by the blacks.

And under it all he knew that the white people did not really care about Bessie's being killed. White people never searched for Negroes who killed other Negroes. He had even heard it said that white people felt it was good when one Negro killed another, it mean that they had one Negro less to contend with. Crime for a Negro was only when he harmed whites, took white lives, or injured white property. (307)

Therefore, Max argues that in the case of Bigger no individual is punishable but the law itself which discriminates the blacks and whites. He doesn't see an ultimate solution of the case by the decision of the court. He sees the case in relation to race and argues.

This boy represents not a tiny aspect of a problem whose reality sprawls over a third of this nation. Kill him! Burn the life out of him! And still when the delicate and unconscious machinery of race relations slips, there will be murder again. How can law contradict the lives of millions of the people and hope to be administered successfully? (361)

Here, Max shows the narrowness of the court not to be able to see the case with relation to dominant social and racial factors. His appeal to the court is "to recognize the laws and . . . change them" (359). He even warns that if it is not improved and corrected, there will be another civil war.

Your Honor, another civil war in these states is not impossible, and if the misunderstanding of what this boy's life means is an indication of how men of wealth and property are misreading the consciousness of the submerged millions today,, one may truly come. (369)

The point of Max is that when oppression is there, there is also the revolt. Bigger's protest is just an example of a personal necessity for the oppressed. He says that this revolt is begotten by the fact of society. Max sees society as an integrated part in the crime of Bigger. He doesn't want to isolate it and argues that ". . . the defense has raised the viperous issue of race and class hate in this trial" (373). Defending Bigger in the courtroom he continues further. "Every time he comes in contact with us, he kills! It is physiological and psychological reactions, embedded in his being. Every thought he thinks is potential murder" (367).

The logics of Max are thus based on the ground of social reality which, he says, we cannot isolate in the judgment of a case as such. After killing Mary, Bigger convinces himself that the circumstances of the fear and hatred must militate against accommodation to social conventions and structure if he is to achieve a meaningful sense of self. "By willfully confronting and accepting the hidden meaning of his life of anxiety and violence, and his repressed fear and hatred of whites for controlling his life, Bigger is reborn" (Barnard Bell 160). He accepts the ascribed white definition of Bad Nigger as a rebellion against social conventions and status-quo.

The timid Bigger turns out to be an assertive young boy after the murder he commits. "He felt that he has his destiny in his grip. He was more alive than he could ever remember having been his mind and attention were pointed, focused toward a goal" (141). New found vitality affirms his challenge to his confinement; Bigger, therefore, seems to have achieved something new for the first time in his life though he kills Mary accidentally. He is convinced

that he has discovered his capacity to rebel through act of murder against the white society. He takes it as a means of his protest.

The sense of protest as such begets confidence to Bigger. It seems, to quote Hugh M. Gloster, "The individual's delinquency is produced by a distorting environment rather than by innate criminality" (233). Max, taking Bigger's protest as a means for the Blacks and any marginalized groups advocates Bigger's reaction to white oppressive society and runs the risk of challenging Buckley's racist attitudes and Mr. Dalton's ignorant notions. Being defended by Max, Bigger as well is proud of his murder which he feels has washed away his shame. When his friends and family arrive in the court, he is rather aware of his family's shame under the eyes of the white people. However, he himself is no more ashamed of the whites. So he says, "They ought to be glad" (257).

From the beginning, Bigger looks angry towards the whites because of his bitter experiences with them, he develops within him an unspoken antagonism which gets an outlet only in his interview to Max. Unlike the other submissive black boys in the story, Bigger seems to protest an undercurrent protest in the heart of his heart. When he 'accidentally' killed the white girl,

He felt a certain sense of power born of a latent capacity to live . . . The knowledge that he had killed a white girl they loved and regarded as their symbol of beauty made him feel the equal of them, like a man who had been somehow cheated, but now evened the score. (155)

Bigger's protest grows more powerful through the violence. He kills in order to prove that he is also alive in the white world no matter how. Unknown to the whites, he takes his accidental murder of Mary as a courage, and makes it a means of his protest. Though he has committed for both murders, he knows that it is only for Mary's murder he would be sentenced. But Max makes the court aware by insisting that there are numerous major crimes

such as robbery, rape, murder being eclipsed. He points out the history of slavery for Negroes for more than two hundred years. Max presents Bigger's action as if they were inevitable, compulsive or beyond control. He also issues a warning: Bigger is the product of black and killing him will only produce new Biggers and more black violence.

Thus, Bigger has proved that he could lift him up and makes him live so intensely that the dread of being black and unequal would be forgotten; that even death would not matter, it would be a victory. He involves himself in killing and violence for the sake of his identity. It is true that the world he lives is living-dead for him. One ultimate death is better than thousand deaths. He painfully protests against the whites' culture and world and make a ground for blacks identity and self-realization through the murder.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Sacrifice as a Result of Racial Protest for the quest of identity

Native Son advocates protest for the quest of identity in many forms and levels. Most dominantly, it is the racial protest that deserves the attention of this research. Having been segregated, marginalized and oppressed by the white racist society, there develops in the mind of Bigger Thomas a great sense of hostility and unspoken antagonism. The environment and social conditions just mark upon him the impressions of hatred, fear and shame. He remembers how the Whites charge the Blacks for will deeds such as raping and killing. By the matter of chance it happens to be so he accidentally smothers Mary Dalton, a white girl, to death in his fear of being caught by her blind mother. His undercurrent protest thereby takes a real form. He revolts more through his ransom case, murder of his own lover, Bessie. His protest thus takes violent forms as depicted in chapter three. He makes his protest as such a means for the oppressed. He creates his identity by killing the white. His protest, however, remains unfinished when he is caught and decided by the court to be killed. He readily accepts his sacrifice and thereby he appears to be like a Christ figure in the crucifixion prepared by the white racist society.

Bigger Thomas is a black man from a poor family. His father is already dead. He lives in a room with his mother, sister and brother. They suffer from hunger and there is no food. Bigger gets a job of chauffeur in the white Dalton family. Walking in the white area, working in the white man's house he develops shame, fear and hatred upon him. He does not like to work for the whites. It is a matter of shames as well as a compulsion for him. When he comes across Mary Dalton, and her boy friend, Jan, Bigger Thomas feels more hatred towards the Whites. Though they treat him friendly and try to win his political favor, Bigger remembers the white assault, their oppression and discrimination. Feeling of color and class haunt his

mind. Hunger, poverty, frustration, white men's oppression in the society and Bigger's quest for identity, all those things create broad grounds of protest in the novel.

Bigger Thomas represents the millions of blacks in America and their grievances. The greatest stories of tragedy are the stories of the blacks. Bigger Thomas' tragic story is one of the examples. Unlike the other fellow blacks Bigger is much conscious about his skin and the badges of fear, hatred and shame provided on its basis. His rebellious spirit wants to blot out all these racial attitudes and their unbearable consequences. Protest becomes a means and a necessity for him. He advocates his protest when he accidentally happens to kill Mary Dalton. He takes it as a self-creation rather than killing. He understands a hidden meaning of life when he comes face to face with death. It is Mary herself who makes him kill. More than that, it is the society that creates gaps in the name of color. In this case of crime no individual like Bigger seems punishable but the court itself that forbids the blacks from the fundamental rights of life. The point of institutionalized racism thus comes into account.

Boris A. Max, the lawyer appointed by the International Labor Organization to defend Bigger in the court, argues the penalty of death provided to Bigger. Asking for life imprisonment, he reminds the court that the case of Bigger is interwoven black girl and Max points out how the court shows its biasness to the blacks. He says that it does not even investigate the case if it is of theirs. For example, the court does not speak about Bessie's murder, it speaks about Mary only. In such situation, Max appeals the court to recognize and change the laws. He even indicates the court about the possibility of another civil war. He affirms the protest of Bigger as a means in this context. Bigger's racial protest for identity remains unfinished when his dreams of life, liberty, equality and pursuit of happiness are destroyed by the decision of the court. However, he is not defeated, he justifies how a man can be destroyed but not defeated. In the complex situation of "do or die", he preferably chooses to die rather than to be defeated. In his death cell, Bigger comes to realize the fact of

life. He understands how life is over without achieving goal, without meaning, without anything being settled, without conflicting impulse being resolved. However, he affirms his sacrifice and his protest until the last as he says that he is right.

Coming to the end, Bigger's protest is fully against the racial attitudes of the white dominated society. His protest is surely a racial protest. Bigger sacrifices his own life by accepting death penalty. He proves that when a man kills, it is for something good change. He sacrifices his life for the sake of entire black community. He changes the laws that favor whites and construct the laws for the welfare of blacks. Representing the entire black community, his protest not only ends his life; it ends the frustration, alienation and suppressions of black people on America.

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