

Tribhuvan University

Racial Reconciliation in Langston Hughes' Poetry

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled Racial Reconciliation in Langston Hughes' Poetry, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Chandra Mani Bimoli has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Objective and General Outline of the Research Work

The goal of this research work is to establish that though a staunch supporter of African-American causes in the predominantly racist American society, Langston Hughes also advocated, in equal measure, reconciliation between the races for building an egalitarian society firmly grounded on the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as advocated by the founding forefathers of the nation.

This research work begins with a brief reference to the history of racism in America. It also highlights the pathetic plight of the African Americans who have had to bear the brunt of the evils of racism. There is a brief reference to Langston Hughes' poetic career along with the relevant biographical information of the poet connected with the research work under the heading "Biographical and Poetry Ties."

In the second chapter is included the theoretical discourse on racism and racial reconciliation. Various forms of racism are discussed in brief. Also included are three sociological approaches for bringing about racial reconciliation namely-color blind model, political correctness and Christian theology.

The third chapter examines some of the important poems by Langston Hughes, which help us to understand race relations. Seven poems have been selected for the purpose. The poems analyzed are "Theme of English B," "I, too" "Harlem," "Cross," "History," "Open Letter to the South," and "Let America Be America Again."

The analysis of the poem is strictly textual in nature. Evidences from the poem are pondered, probed and analyzed and conclusion drawn accordingly. Owing to many a limitations very little effort has been made to study the structural coherence of

the poems with regard to sound. Hughes employs African American blues and jazz in his poems but no effort has been made to study this aspect owing to may a cultural constrains and the inaccessible nature of these elements to the researcher.

General Historical Background

Racism has been a bitter fact of American history. In his book, *Beyond Black and White: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation*, Dr. George Yancey writes:

This brings out a very important point about racism. We live in a racist society. Racism is not found only way down South or in certain neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of racism is part of what makes America what it is. It is in our history and our culture. I am not trying to sound like some sort of unpatriotic radical; I am merely telling the truth. We cannot change reality until we are willing to acknowledge the presence of that reality. I have to admit that racism is as much a part of my subculture as it is part of David Duke's.

Racism is in David Duke. It is in the skinheads. It is in black nationalists. But more important, at least from my viewpoint, racism is in me. The society has taught me to be racist and I have learned those lessons well. I cannot ignore the realities of racism in our society, so sometimes, in reaction; I act or think in racist ways. I want to think that racism is something that is only found in those groups or individuals that we tend to think of as bigots. But now I am forced to be honest. It is in m as well. (102)

These candid words show how deeply racism is embedded in the fabric of the American society. Racism is woven deeply in the very warp and woof of America.

People may claim to abhor racism but even those people who oppose it as an affront to human society tend to act racist either consciously or unconsciously.

In racist America, the whites treated the blacks harshly. Innumerable inhuman atrocities were meted out against them. They were treated no better than animals. For generations, the blacks lived forcibly under the domination of the whites in the racist American society. They were too weak and disorganized to protest against the many inhuman atrocities meted out against them. However, as time passed on resistance against such a treatment began to grow by leaps and bounds and as a result there was widespread acrimony, violence and bloodshed.

The culmination of black resistance and the backlash that followed led to the American Civil War in 1861. It was fought between the northern and the southern states in the name of race. The northern states wanted slavery to end but the southern states wanted the tradition to continue. In the American south the old argument from necessity continued to be voiced, with little opposition there. This argument was combined with the belief that blacks were naturally inferior and thus intended by nature for slavery. A fierce battle between the northern and the southern states claimed the lives of thousands of fellow Americans. Americans killing fellow Americans in the name of race was one of the darkest moments in the history of the great American nation. During the ghastly days of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was the president of America. He was very much in favor of giving equal rights to the blacks as the whites. It was only his visionary leadership that prevented the union from breaking apart. After the American Civil War had ended, after many men had died in the battlefield, the president of the United States inked the historic emancipation proclamation in 1863.

The emancipation proclamation, lofty as it was, was a victory for the blacks who for generations had to bear the brunt of the evils of racism. The proclamation was inspired by lofty ideals but it only remained on a piece of paper because in spite of the proclamation widespread discrimination against the blacks continued unabated in all walks of life for generations. The Congress abolished slavery in the United States when it adopted the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution in 1863 but discrimination against the citizens of colour did not end there. Discrimination against the blacks in the name of race still continues in the American society though the intensity is much lesser than it used to be in the past.

Langston Hughes was born on February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. During the time Hughes lived slavery was legally abolished in America, however, wanton discrimination against the blacks in all walks of life continued. The inhuman practice of slavery was abhorrent to Hughes. Hughes himself witnessed the dehumanizing condition in which the blacks were compelled to live. He wrote forcefully against the many facet discrimination i.e., social, political and economic ills meted out against the people of the African American race. Many of Hughes contemporary poets wrote against the wanton ills inflicted against the blacks but Langston Hughes went miles further than his contemporaries. Hughes biographer Rampersad Arnold says that had Hughes written only against discrimination then he wouldn't have been a great poet, visionary and an elderly statesman that he is, revered by both the blacks and the whites alike.

Hughes wrote vigorously against the many facet discrimination. He certainly has been a champion in this regard. However, much more than this, he wrote forcefully in favor of peace, unity, harmony and reconciliation between the blacks and the whites. Since he was at school Langston Hughes was profoundly impressed by

these words of Booker. T. Washington which stress on the need for better understanding and harmonious relation between the blacks and the whites so that the dream of just and egalitarian America steeped on the principles of Justice, Liberty and Equality as envisioned by the founding forefathers of the nation would come true.

To those of my race who underestimate the importance of cultivation friendly relations with the southern white man, who is their next-door neighbour, I would say, “cast down your bucket where you are. Cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service and in profession. No race can prosper till it learns there is much dignity in tilling a field as writing a poem”.

To those of white race, I would repeat what I say to my own race, “Cast down your bucket where you are. Cast it down among the eight million Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity you have tested. Cast down your bucket among the people who have tilled the fields, cleared your forests, and brought forth treasures from the bowl of the earth. Cast down your bucket among my people, help and encourage them to the education of head, hand and heart. There is no defense of security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. This will bring to our beloved south a new heaven and new earth.” (qtd. in Pears 23-24)

Hughes unwaveringly supported reconciliation between the races for building an egalitarian society. He saw racism as a disease that stood as a stumbling block in the quest of the American people’s dream for building a prosperous America as envisioned by the founding forefathers of the nation.

An Analysis of his Poetry

Langston Hughes is best known as the “Poet Laureate” of the Harlem Renaissance, an African American literary movement that flourished in the 1920s. Influenced by the Bible, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Walt Whitman, Hughes depicted realistically the ordinary lives of black people. He had a prolific career as a poet, publishing seven books of poetry, and other numerous miscellaneous poems. His reputation has been largely based on the poetry he published in the 1920s, although the poems he published after the Harlem Renaissance have increasingly received critical acclaim and demonstrates his range as a poet.

Hughes' poetry appeals to audiences of all generations, races and nations and interest in his work cuts across socio-economic lines. Hughes' poems are accessible to even ordinary readers because of their simplicity. Hughes challenges the dominant view of poetry as elitist, incomprehensible or unappealing to ordinary people.

Published in *The Crisis*, in 1921, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” was written when Langston Hughes was only nineteen years old and still is one of Hughes’ most recognizable poems. According to Michelle. L. Taylor, “It expresses the inner thoughts of a young African-American on a journey to meet the unknown, using the motif of rivers to reflect upon the history of African-Americans and Hughes own poetry. Its publication launched his career (315).”

The Weary Blues was Langston Hughes’ first collection of poetry and it established his reputation as one of the most notable poets of the period now known as Harlem Renaissance. The volume includes a number of previously published poems, chief among them, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” which originally appeared in a 1921 issue of the *Crisis*, and the title poem, which won the first prize in a 1925 opportunity magazine literary contest. According to Michelle L. Taylor, *The Weary*

Blues is notable for its meditation on African-American music, race and spirituality, all of which capture the complexities of African-American life during 1920s (315)”

During the 1930s, Hughes wrote scores of poems that express his revolutionary hopes for an egalitarian society free from exploitation and discrimination of all kinds. In fact, his race pride is replaced by workers’ pride. In his address he gave before the second International Writers’ Congress he even urged the end of racial categorization, which he viewed as a means for ruling classes to divide and conquer the working class, and claimed that he represented the end of race.

An important facet of Hughes’ aesthetic is its link to modernism. Hughes poetry had always been experimental and he clearly modeled some of his poems on Modernist Montage.

A leading critic on Hughes’ poetry Anthony Daware writes:

Like other modernist, he used montage to represent the modern experience of social fragmentation while simultaneously recomposing the image of fragmentation in a meaningful way. Not until the 1950s however, did Hughes compose an entire volume of verse in a montage form. “Montage of a Dream Deferred,” uses the bebop form of jazz, popular at the time and itself modernist, to represent the problems and aspirations of the Black community in Harlem. (313)

Hughes last phase of writing converged with the civil rights movement and anti-colonial movements worldwide. He poetically argues the major events and issues of the day, such as increasing heroin use among urban black youth, political strategy for black liberation, the Vietnam war, mass demonstrations and ultimately reconciliation between the races for the establishment of a just and egalitarian society. According to Anthony Daware:

As a multi-talented and complex poet whose work speaks to many different interests both within and outside academia, from modernism to civil rights, Hughes is a major voice in twentieth century American poetry. To date, no other black American poet has garnered as much critical acclaim as Hughes, whose lifelong concern for social justice will continue to attract ever more readers of his poetry. (314-15)

Biographical and Poetry Ties

Langston Hughes was deemed the "Poet Laureate of the Negro Race," a fitting title which the man who fueled the Harlem Renaissance deserved. But looking at Hughes within the narrow confines of the perspective that he was a "black poet" does not fully give him credit or fully explain his works. What if one actually stereotypes Hughes and his works by these over-general definitions that causes readers to look at his poetry expecting to see "blackness?" Any person's unique experiences in life and the sense of personal identity this forms most definitely affects the way he or she views the world. This molded view of the world can, in turn, be communicated by the person through artistic expression. Taking this logic into account, to more fully comprehend the message and force of Hughes' poetry one must look, not just to his work, but also at the experiences in his life that constructed his ideas about society and his own identity. In looking at Hughes' biography, one studies his struggle to form a self-identity that reflected both his African American and mainstream white cultural influence; consequently, this mixing of black and white identity that occurred throughout Hughes' life is reflected in several of his poems.

Hughes' racial identity was formed from both a myriad of influences that accumulated over his life and also by the shadows of events that happened before his birth. Hughes' young life was segmented into distinctly different times with distinctly

different influence. Which relative he lived with and which city, state, or country he was residing in all seemed to be constantly changing and constantly dividing up his life from childhood through young adulthood. Consequently, events in each segment of Hughes' life contributed to his ever-evolving self-identity.

From a very young age Langston Hughes was aware that he had a multicultural background and this realization undoubtedly played a major role in forming his self-identity. Hughes inherited his mother's Indian, French and African ancestry and in his young years, Hughes was greatly influenced by this side of the family. Similarly, Hughes' father's lineage was multicultural African and European. Two of Hughes' paternal great-grandfathers were white; one was a Jewish slave trader and the other was a Georgian distiller. Due in part to his ancestry, in Hughes' adult years a friend observed that the author repeatedly used the theme of the 'tragic mulatto, and Hughes eventually admitted that he identified with such a doomed young man. Throughout Hughes' childhood and young adulthood, he dealt with a variety of specific white and black ancestral and cultural influences.

Hughes multicultural ancestry must have had some influence on him as a young man. Primarily, Hughes, like every other human being, was seeking/forming his identity as he grew up. In truth, he found comfort and thrived in the African American community, both in his boyhood in the Midwest and when he was older in Harlem. It is important point to make, though, that during this time of maturing, while Hughes felt at home in the African American culture, he also was strongly influenced by white culture. The foremost influence might have been that throughout Hughes' life he realized he was not fully black. He came from a multi-racial family in which he had English, French and Native American ancestors. Although he was predominantly black, he was not wholly black, at some point; Hughes may have

realized the significance of this and even the ramifications. Due to the one-drop rule, even if Hughes had been mostly white, that one-drop rule, that one-drop of black blood would have banned him from the white world and stigmatized him as black. Today, Hughes would have the choice of recognizing himself as a multiracial individual but back then that was not possible. Not only was Hughes aware of his white heritage, he also had strong mainstream white influences in his life such as his schooling in Kansas and Columbia and Charlotte Osgood Mason's support. Hughes was no stranger to mainstream white culture and it can be reasoned that, due to this, it did have some effect on him and his identity of himself. He could view the white world, or even view with a white perspective, without being part of the mainstream.

Being neither wholly black nor white, Hughes' poem "The Weary Blues" is neither black nor white in meaning or racial point of view. Therefore, it is essential for the readers to understand who Langston Hughes was before they can understand what his poetry is saying. He was not just a black poet. He could not find his identity just in the tradition of black writing and history that has come before him. He realized that he is a mixture of black and white and that no one racial identity is complete in describing who he is. Granted, he leaned towards close connection with African American heritage, but he was also extremely versed in white culture and education. Being a dark-skinned man, Hughes was just as outcast by white society as a purely black man would be. What was different for Hughes, though, is that he could not turn his back on mainstream white society and speak in his poetry with a solely black voice. White society was still a part of who he was; therefore, his identity lay in the interweaving of what is black and what is white. The struggle that Hughes encountered in finding his own cultural identity as a multicultural man with multiracial influences is reflected in his works. Furthermore, the ambiguities of

Hughes' cultural allegiance make him struggle to reconcile the differences between the black voice and perspective and the white voice and experiences that his poetry can reflect.

Langston Hughes writing: novels, drama, essays and specially poetry have a profound social and political implication. Today, Hughes is revered by both the whites and the blacks as one of the greatest American poets. Hughes has been duly honored for the breath of his contribution in the field of American letters. He received several honors for racial reconciliation Witter Bynner prize and Guggenheim Fellowship among the prominent. Hughes even received one of the nation's greatest honors when the United States postal service printed one hundred and twenty million stamps bearing his portrait.

Langston Hughes was a towering figure in American letters. Besides, he was a humane gentleman, who was adored and respected by both the blacks and the whites. All through his life Langston Hughes strongly advocated social justice, equality, fraternity and ultimately reconciliation between the races for the creation of a just, humane, egalitarian, bright and prosperous America. The rich legacy that Hughes has left behind shall always endure.

II. DISCUSSION OF TOOL

Racism

The term racism is usually applied to the dominant group in a society, because it is that group that has the means to oppress others. The term can also apply to any individual or group, regardless of social status or dominance.

Racism can be both overt and covert. Individual racism sometimes consists of overt acts by individuals, which can result in violence or the destruction of property. Institutional racism is often more covert and subtle. It often appears within the operation of establishment and respected forces in the society, and frequently receives less public condemnation than the overt type.

Social scientists argue that racism is the belief that differences between the races exist, be they biological, social, psychological, or in the realm of soul. It is often argued that racism is using this belief to promote the belief that one's particular race is superior to the other. Historically, people of African descent in the United States have experienced a stigmatization based on the presumption that blacks are naturally of the inferior race. All negative attributes have been associated with the African – Americas. The interplay of race, stigma and disease has been reflected in professional writings and in popular images throughout the twentieth century.

It is generally believed that race is essentially a social and historical construction. It has no real basis in science.

There are differences in treatment of people on the basis of characteristics, which may be classified as racial, including skin color and place of birth. This is a concept not universally agreed upon. While this usually refers to discrimination against minority racial groups in western societies, it can also refer to the opposite situation, and in that case is often called reverse discrimination when it is due to

affirmative action or other attempts to remedy past or current discrimination against minority racial groups. Many do not consider this racism, but simply a form of discrimination. However, reverse discrimination is relatively rare.

Researchers in the University of Chicago (Marianne Bertrand) and Harvard University (Sendhil Mullainathan) found in 2003 study that there was widespread discrimination in workplace against job applicants whose names were perceived as “sounding black”. These applicants were fifty percent less likely than candidates perceived as having “white sounding names” to receive call backs for interviews, no matter their level of previous experience. The researchers view these results as strong evidence of unconscious biases rooted in the United States’ long history of discrimination. This is an example of structural racism, because it shows a widespread established belief system. Another example is apartheid in South Africa, and the system of Jim Crow laws in the United States of America.

A number of international treaties have sought to end racial discrimination. The United Nations uses the definition of racial discrimination laid out in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted in 1966:

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human right and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (qtd. in Mullar 67)

The sociological fact is that larger numbers of members of certain groups have advantages that members of other groups don’t have. Those who have smoother

access to these resources find it easier to succeed in variety of adult endeavors. These resources include things like personal connections, property ownership, economic resources, and educational opportunities.

Racism can manifest in various places. Racism can be of various kinds. Some of the kinds of racism discussed are: academic racism, scientific racism and racism as an official government policy.

Academic racism refers to the tradition of prejudicial study of human societies and cultures, languages and peoples in circles of academia. With regard to African people its basis was formed during slavery and colonialism to remove any form of noble claim from the victims of these systems, thus reducing them and justifying their position as “natural” and a continuation of their historical “worthlessness.” Legendary quotes come from some of Europe’s most respected scholars such as Darwin, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. David Hume said, “I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in art or speculation. No ingenious manufacture among them, no arts, no sciences” (qtd in Mullar 74).

Kant discussed the rank of races in this quote, “The Yellow Indians do have a meager talent. The Negroes are far below them, and at the lowest point are a part of the American people” (qtd in Mullar 75). In the nineteenth century the German philosopher Hegel simply declared, “Africa is not historical part of the world” (qtd in Mullar 77). This openly racist view, that Africa has no history, was repeated by Hugh Trevor professor of History at Oxford University, as late as 1963.

Scientific racism refers to the use of science or the veneer of science to justify and support racist beliefs. The use of science to justify racist beliefs goes back at least to the early 18th century, though it gained most of its influence in the mid 19th

century. Works like Arthur Gobineau's "An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" (1853-1855) attempted to frame racism within the terms of biological difference among human beings, and with the rise of theories of evolution after the work of Charles Darwin became well known. L.B.S. Leakey in "The Progress and Evolution of Man in Africa, 1961 stated : "Indeed, I would be inclined to suggest that however great may be the physical differences between such races as the Europeans and the Negro, the mental and psychological differences are greater still" (qtd. in Mullar 80).

It became common to consider some races more evolved than others. These points of view were very common within the scientific community at the time even Darwin, who was an active abolitionist and considered all humans to be of the same species against the trend of polygenism at the time believed that there were biological differences in the mental capacities of different races. Ideologies such as social Darwinism and eugenics used and reinforced many of these views.

There were also scientists who argued against biological reinforcement of racism, even if they believed that biological races did exist. In the sciences of anthropology and biology, though, these were minority positions until the mid 20th century. During the rise of Nazism in Germany, many scientists in western nations worked to debunk the racial theory on which the regime rested its claims of superiority. Since then, many of the scientific studies which some claim support racist claims have since been debunked by scientists with specifically anti-racist agendas, such as Stephen J. Gould. However, Gould himself has been accused by a number of scientists of misrepresenting the positions of those he engages, being politically motivated in his attacks, and being selective in his use of materials to those ends.

The status of the concept of biological race remains very controversial within science, though politically no mainstream scientists admit to using scientific data to justify racist beliefs. Some scientists, such as Arthur Jensen and Richard Lynn, have argued that the threat of being labeled as a "scientific racist" has made the scientific study of race and a racial difference politically taboo and has stifled true scientific discourse. These charges have surfaced most often during the study of intelligence, IQ, and the concept in psychometrics termed general intelligence factor. Many scientists, though, believe that there is no evidence for typological notions of biological race, nor scientific justifications for racist beliefs.

Institutional racism or structural racial discrimination is racial discrimination by governments, corporations, or other large organizations with the power to influence the lives of many individuals. Social institutions, like governmental social service agencies, are created to serve all the people. But they can often become the areas in which racial prejudice is embedded both in formal behaviour patterns and also in formal institutional policies. This means that these institutions do not serve certain people well. In many cases and in many ways, these institutionalized systems oppress the very people they were created to help.

In apartheid (the system of unlawful discrimination formerly practiced in South Africa), the legal system enforced racial inequality. The laws of the nation not only permitted, but actually required, differential treatment of persons based on their racial identity. This racism was purposefully and explicitly woven into the fabric of the nation's institutions. The full force of government authority supported racism.

Institutional racism can also be implicit, informal, unintentional and relatively unnoticed by the people perpetuating it. Institutional and systematic forms of racism are exponentially more damaging than individual racism.

Examples of racism in American domestic policy include slavery and discrimination against Native Americans

Racial Reconciliation

In the last few years, reconciliation has become one of the hottest topics in the increasingly hot field of conflict management. Reconciliation refers to a large number of activities that help turn the temporary peace of an agreement which ends the fighting into a lasting end to the conflict itself. Through reconciliation and related processes parties to the dispute explore and overcome the pain brought on during the conflict and find ways to build trust and live cooperatively with each other.

The terminology "racial reconciliation" represents contrasting ideas. There is no standard definition that all scholars and practitioners rely on. Plurality of opinion notwithstanding, almost everyone concurs that it includes at least four critical components identified by John Paul Lederach-truth, justice, mercy, and peace.

It is also important to explore how ideas about racial reconciliation differ from one another as to how to solve the social problems of racism and social alienation in our society.

Views on racial reconciliation and the various ways and means of building fallen race relationship are divergent. Some of the striking views on the subject are given below.

An eminent sociologist Andres T. Tapia defines racial reconciliation and how it can be achieved in the following words:

I believe the road to racial reconciliation will involve whites coming on our turf, eating our food, listening to our music, and being uncomfortable as they experience faith, history and culture through our eyes. Minorities have long been learning from white Christians. We

have learned their hymns, read their books, practiced their theories.

But it is time for whites to recognize they can benefit from minority perspectives on life and faith. The shift from whites saying, “What can I do for you?” to “I need you” would signal that perhaps words and deeds are starting to come together. (107-8)

The whites have always treated the blacks as inferior. They have meted out animal like inhuman treatment to them. The blacks were considered to be immoral, irrational and inferior just because of the colour of their skin. The whites lived with the presumption that they were by birth morally, socially, economically and politically superior and so had the divine right and the moral obligation to rule over the people of the inferior race.

Andres T. Tapia argues that the whites must forgo the mindset of superiority that they are so entrenched in to patch up fallen race relationship. They must take the initiative to repair the past ills they have inflicted in the name of the superiority of race. The whites must acknowledge that the blacks are equal to them and by no means inferior. Only such an acknowledgement will open up the road to racial reconciliation. The whites must accept the blacks as partners and give the blacks the stamp of respectability they deserve.

In Maxie D. Dunham's view:

Reconciliation is a lot more than black and white. It is about politicians and how they serve their constituency. It is about bringing our behaviour into harmony with our beliefs. It is about what we think of welfare. It is about breaking the cycle of poverty and building a system where welfare will be an emergency measure, not a way of life. (125)

Maxie D. Dunham suggests that to open up the path to reconciliation people must bring their behaviour in consistent with their beliefs. In simple words, he suggests that people must practice what they believe in. "Practice what you preach," is his simple formula. Dunham argues that reconciliation is also about breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, want and humiliation. It is about building a welfare society where nobody is left behind.

Author Clarence Shuler suggests replacing the term "racial reconciliation" with "racial partnership". He explains:

The strength of the term racial partnership is that, first of all, it implies that equal parties are involved. This is something racial reconciliation doesn't necessarily do. Second, partnership implies a working together for a desired goal or result. This is hard work because you are forming something out of nothing! Partners starting a business very often have to work through their differences if they are going to be successful. Most partnerships are formed because the goal can't be achieved by one person or company. If it could, then there wouldn't be a need for the partnership. The same is true of us in the areas of culture, race, and even spiritual gifts in some of our own churches. We all need each other-we just pretend we don't because we are often afraid of what we may lose personally (control, for example) and what the finished product may look like. (142)

Clarence Shuler views the term "racial reconciliation" as flawed and derogatory citing it is discriminatory which suggests that unequal partners are involved. He suggests that the term "racial reconciliation" be replaced by a more honourable term "racial partnership". Shuler's is an explicit suggestion that blacks

and whites must work in a high-minded spirit of partnership because the goal of harmonious existence in a peaceful and prosperous society cannot be achieved in the absence of the other. He stresses that both the blacks and the whites need each other though they may pretend that they can do without the other. He suggests that such a pretension must be done away with.

Michael F. Thurman expresses the following view about racial reconciliation:

To love others is easier said than done; however, we must manage to incorporate it into our daily lives. We must wrestle with, and ultimately overcome, our prejudices that we bring to bear on the relationships we form with others. Our love of others must be based on our recognition of them as having desires and needs just as we do, as having the basic sameness as we, as having a truly transcendent reality about themselves as we do. (68)

Both the blacks and the whites have committed atrocities against each other. They have killed, maimed and lynched each other. This is an undeniable fact of history. Consciously or unconsciously they may harbour hatred and recrimination. Michael F. Thurman argues that to overcome the hatred and discrimination of the past is easier said than done. In the first and the foremost place, people of both the races must make deliberate efforts to wrestle with the prejudices that have so far kept them divided. Both the blacks and the whites must realize that their destiny is intertwined and that their relationship is based on humanity.

According to an eminent sociologist George Yancey, professor of sociology, The University of North Texas, there are three basic approaches to handle racial problems. They are- color blindness or color-blind model, political correctness and racial reconciliation: Christian ethics and race. The first two models namely color-

blind and politically correct model are models built on secular principals whereas Christian theology is a religious model. Discussed below are the three approaches to racial reconciliation

Color Blindness

Some sections of people feel why they have to study racism at all. Their thinking is that if race can be ignored then racism will disappear automatically. The focus of the color blind model is that despite the past historical abuses that minorities have suffered neither whites nor racial minorities today should enjoy any economic or social advantages because of their skin color. Thus we should treat skin color as if it were hair color. The goals of this model are admirable since if people become color blind than many of the problems connected to racism will disappear. A real question is whether a color blind society can materialize or whether color conscious steps to alleviate the racial inequalities and tensions must be taken.

It is naïve o believe that race does not continue to affect the life chances of racial minorities. Most racial minorities are aware that white Americans have historically benefited from racial privilege and his privilege continues to be passed down from one generation to the next. For example, the land where most white Americans live was once the home of Native Americans. Whites, as well as other non-Indian races, currently benefit from historical sins and it is a mistake to ignore the past deeds. Corporate sins, as well as personal sins must be addressed if fallen Native American relationship is to be built. Advocates of a color-blind society too easily dismiss the seriousness of historical and structural sins and are unaware of the ways these sins affect current racial relationships.

Political Correctness

The second way to deal with racism is through a politically correct model. The main argument of this model is that by empowering racial minorities centuries of racial oppression can be overturned. In this way the limitations of the color blind model, which ignores the historical and institutional racism that have been inflicted on the people of minority faith is corrected with deliberate efforts to institutionally reverse the effects of that racism. Because of historical discrimination, it is contended that there should be overt attempts to increase economic opportunities for racial minorities. This has resulted in calls for affirmative action by many supporters of this model.

It has also been contended that the culture and lives of racial minorities have been devalued. Thus, some of the more revolutionary supporters of this model promote the cultural values of racial minorities so intensely that they denigrate almost all European American values, while ignoring the possible dysfunctions within minority group culture, one might argue that they seem to believe that to be European-American is to be evil. According to Shelby Steele,

Even those who advocate multiculturalism, but do not condemn European-Americans and European American values , tend to cling to a notion that universal norms do not exist, allowing them to accept norms and values from a variety of minority group cultures. (75)

Nevertheless, because of sinful nature and society created by humans will contain fallen institutions. "All races are represented by groups that have historically engaged in brutal practices: the cruelty of human sacrifices practiced by the Azects, the enslavement practiced by Africans in Egypt, Oman, and Sudan, and the massacres of Native Americans" (qtd. in Mullar 86).

In recent years, reconciliation has become an important matter for people who approach conflict resolution from a secular perspective. For them, the need for reconciliation grows out of the pragmatic, political realities of any conflict resolution process. An effort is made to begin building bridges of trust between two communities.

Much is emphasized on apology and forgiveness. Apology and forgiveness are two sides of the same emotional coin. They reflect the constructive ways the oppressors and the oppressed in an intractable conflict can come to grips with the pain and suffering the conflict produced.

The oppressors who committed human rights violations and other atrocities have to take responsibility for their actions and apologize. An apology has to be heartfelt and reflect true remorse for past actions. An apology can still matter if it is made by someone who is several generations removed from the abuses, something the former president of the United States Bill Clinton did when he apologized for slavery, even though it had been brought to an end almost a century before he was born.

By the same token, the victims of these atrocities according to Desmond Tutu, who chaired the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in South Africa must find the space in their hearts to forgive those who victimized them, even though the pain and suffering they underwent will never disappear. But forgiving is just as important as apologizing in any society which wishes to put its struggles behind it and create a more peaceful and cooperative future.

In fact, atrocities are committed by both sides in most intractable conflicts. As a result, there is a need for all parties to make apologies and grant forgiveness. Nonetheless, because most of these disputes are "asymmetric" in the sense that one

side has a lot more power than the other, the burden of apologizing tends to lie primarily with one side and that of forgiving with the other, something that was seen in South Africa.

Apologies and forgiveness are important because intractable conflicts generate such deep and searing emotions. Even after the fighting stops, people still feel the pain, hurt, anger, fear and hatred that produced the conflict and its horrors in the first place. Desmond Tutu says, "without apology and forgiveness, people remain locked in the value systems that produced the conflict. Little progress beyond the lease fire can be made" (77).

Individuals and states can do a lot in building fallen race relationship. At the most basic level we can say that reconciliation is all about individuals. It cannot be forced on people. They have to decide on their own whether to forgive and reconcile with their one-time adversaries. Reconciliation is something that cannot be forced by the state. It has to come from the heart of the citizens.

Even though reconciliation mostly involves people talking to each other, it is not easy to achieve. Rather it is the most difficult thing people are called to do emotionally. Victims have to forgive oppressors. The perpetrators of crimes against humanity have to admit their guilt and, with it, their arrogance. It is thus abundantly clear it is not easy to forgive; it is equally clear how far doing so relieves them of the pain they have carried inside them for years.

The next model for bringing racial reconciliation is grounded in Christian theology. It can be referred to as Christian model. Christians conclude that secular models for healing fallen race relationship are inadequate. Chris Rice concurs that secular models alone will not reconcile fallen race relationship. He says, "It should not come as a surprise to Christians that models built upon an overly optimistic

perspective of humanity are unable to compensate for the powerful effects of sin (80)".

Christian Model

Certain Christian organizations, Reconcilers Fellowship and Urban Ministry have concentrated on building fallen race relationships growing out of a firm and unwavering conviction that only the gospel can bring about lasting reconciliation. Out of these ministries attempts have been made to find a Christian definition of reconciliation. The model is also known as "Reconciliation Theology." Its origin comes from the work of black Christian activists such as Martin Luther King, jr., Tom Skinner and John Perkins who have called upon their fellow countrymen to confront the ugly racial past and to challenge the social structures that exploit racial minorities. This is an ideology that is still in its infancy nevertheless there are several principles that have developed from this approach that are worth exploring.

Social scientist Glen Loury, a distinguished black professor at Harvard and Boston University, is one who does not accept the liberal interpretation of America's race crisis. He believes that government's attempts to prevent both blacks and whites from taking responsibility for their own behaviour has only made the situation worse. He writes:

Neither the social scientists nor the politicians know what to say, or what to do, about racial disintegration. The analysts cannot account for it; the public spokespersons dare not speak of it. Euphemisms [...] abound. Instead, we hear familiar intonations of platitudes and empty phrases: "racism" "inadequate funding" "no job" "no hope". Even as the collapse of social life among the inner-city poor worsens, we have these pat, ritualistic public conversations full of platitudes about

“caring” and “compassion” but devoid of hard-edged judgments about decency and personal morality. (107)

Lourey recognizes that restitution and healing cannot come until first, blacks and whites admit that the real problem is the condition of the heart.

The first principle of reconciliation theology is that since Christ calls upon all human beings to love each other, members of different races must make deliberate attempts to interact with each other. The adherents of the Christian model believe that intentional efforts to create interracial interactions are necessary to deal with historical hatred and mistrust.

Advocates of reconciliation theology understand that the mistrust generated from the historically oppressive racial relationships requires that efforts must be made to develop interpersonal relations between the different races. It is only in spending time together that people of different races can learn how to relate to each other, to build trust, and to establish new relationships of equality. This can lead to honest and open dialogue that helps us overcome historical forces of alienation.

A second important principle in reconciliation theology is that Christians of all racial and political backgrounds must oppose social structures of racial inequality. While overt racist laws have been taken off books, the devastating effects of centuries of racism still continue to haunt the society. Only government effort cannot bridge fallen race relations. Echoing this sentiment Richard Land writes: “Government has a role to play: God ordained civil society to punish those who do evil and reward those who do right, but government cannot save us. Only the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ can do that” (97). The color-blind model breeds a limited understanding of racism because it focuses only upon overt and individualistic discrimination. This rings hollow for racial minorities because they understand that racism still has a

significant effect on their educational and economic outcomes. Dealing with the societal structures that have created these conditions may be costly to white Christians. However, unwillingness of Christians to deal with ways that racism has structurally manifested itself and to concentrate only on instances of individual racism cheapens the message of gospel.

Related to the second principle is a third principle: namely, that whites have historically benefited from racism and thus are called to an attitude of repentance for these historical and structural sins. Repentance for these corporate sins is a difficult but necessary step in the process of American racial healing. Yet, rather than attempting to manifest corporate repentance, some white Christians have developed a cognitive denial of the historical evils of racism. Many Americans tend to resist the notion of corporate sin because of the individualistic society in which they live. Many Christians say that they must not forget that repentance is a biblical call for Christians to hear and heed.

The last principle of reconciliation theology is that just as Christ has forgiven the sinners, so must racial minorities engage in an attitude of forgiveness. This many Christians believe is not a request, but a command from the savior. In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus links the forgiveness Christians receive from god to a command that Christians also forgive others. Ephesians 4:32 also makes this argument. Forgiveness is not based upon whether Christians feel like forgiving, but instead it is a basic obligation for faithful Christians. Thus, minorities must volitionally choose to forgive the historical abuses suffered by themselves and other members of their race, as well as forgive the contemporary consequences of those abuses.

The adherents of Christian model believe that centuries of discrimination meted out against the blacks in the racist American society must come to an end.

Christians unwaveringly believe that the gospel is the only panacea to build fallen race relationship but are also mindful of the role the government should play.

Echoing this sentiment Richard Land writes: "The fact that racism at its foundation is a spiritual problem and will be vanquished only by spiritual means does not mean that legislative and judicial relief should not be applied to racial discrimination and bigotry (98)". They believe that political adjustments must be made to give the blacks the rights they deserve but much more than that in the first and the foremost place has to be an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between both the races for a sustainable reconciliation to take place. The proponents of the Christian model believe in the reconciliation of hearts and minds above every other consideration.

Both politically correct model and Christian theology acknowledge that racial reconciliation involves – truth, justice, mercy and peace. They concur that apology and forgiveness are the keys to repairing fallen race relationship. The only difference between the two models is that whereas the former is a secular model the latter has its roots in Christian theology.

III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Struggle for Identity

Hughes was a mixed blood who struggled throughout his life to find his identity. The struggle for unity and reconciliation as well the battle to find his own identity is illustrated in Hughes' poem "Cross."

My old man's a white old man
 And my old mother's black.
 If ever I cursed my white old man
 I take my curses back.
 If ever I cursed my black old mother
 And wished she were in hell, I'm sorry for that evil wish
 And now I wish her well.
 My old man died in a fine house.
 My ma died in a shack.
 I wonder where I'm gonna die
 Being neither white nor black? (1-11)

The narrator in the poem wonders where his place is as a man "being neither white nor black." (11). Hughes came from a multi-racial family. On his father's side he was descended from African slaves, a Jewish slave trader, and a Scottish distiller. On his mother's side there was French, English and Cherekoo blood. Although he was predominantly black, he was not wholly black; at some point Hughes may have realized the significance of this and even the ramifications. Due to the one drop-rule, even if Hughes had been mostly white, that one-drop rule, that one-drop of black blood would have banned him from the white world and stigmatized him as black. Like Hughes the narrator of the poem is searching for his identity. He is in a state of

dilemma about his ultimate destiny. It can be reasonably inferred that this confusion was mirrored by Hughes' uncertainty about what voice his poetry should take. Author Richard K. Barksdale states, "There is no doubt that Hughes had intended to probe the psychological impact of miscegenation in his play (*Mulatto*) just as he had done in his poetry "*Cross*," (193). Hughes discusses what it is like to be a biracial man in America and it is his character's anger that resonates. It is very clear how much he resents being both black and white with the language he chooses. There is the respect he feels for his father but lack of respect for his mother that comes across clearly. He mirrors that there is shame is not only being product of the union between two different colored people but also two people from different stations in society. This leaves him not only as a cross between the two people but also with a cross to bear in life as he struggles with his own identity.

One way to reconcile this conflict was for Hughes to write poetry that spoke both for his black side and for his white side, consequently creating poetry that delivered a powerful impact for both black and white audiences.

Hughes is in a uniquely good position to write from these dual perspectives. He is versed in both black and white culture and tradition. He sees things from these dual perspectives and, consequently, can write about one situation from the two perspectives that he has developed and analyzes life with.

In his poetry, Hughes is searching for a balance between the white in his life and the black. Hughes' poetry and his life are usually viewed as being exemplarily African American, but Hughes is much more than this. He is very proud of his African American heritage, but he does not deny that he has white ancestors and white cultural influence. He uses his poetry as a way to further explore his personality and his identity. In his article entitled "*The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*"

published in the magazine Nation in 1926, Hughes argued that no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. Even though Hughes is creating identifiably African American style poetry, to follow this creed, Hughes expresses himself openly; he is not trying to make himself black or white. Although, the creed, Hughes expresses himself openly; he is not trying to make himself black or white. Although, the poetry itself reflects African American dialect and form, the message of this poetry is not limited to merely blacks. He writes from the point of view of a white narrator, and he conveys the universal message that between black and whites there are often unrecognized bonds of humanity and society.

Langston Hughes shares a similar plight like the poet Derek Walcott who also shared a divided root. The sentiments Hughes expresses in the poem "Cross" bears resemblance to the thoughts Walcott expresses in the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" which proclaim Walcott's divided roots.

Blacks and the Whites are One and must Reconcile

In his much quoted and complied poem, "The Theme for English B" Langston Hughes makes a passionate plea to both the blacks and the whites to bury, for once and ever, the acrimony, hatred and mistrust of the past for he urges with a deep and passionate conviction that in spite of all the grievances, the blacks and the whites harbour, they are inextricably united by the thread of nationality, brotherhood and humanity.

The white instructor has asked his black student to write something which would come from the depth of his heart and which would thereby reflect reality:

The instructor said,
Go home and write
a page tonight.

And let that page come out of you

Then, it will be true. (1-5)

Such an assignment keeps the black student wondering. He thinks that the answer to the assignment is not as simple as it may seem:

I wonder if it's that simple ?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in winston-salem.

I went to school there, then Durhan, then here

to this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored student in my class. (6-10)

The above lines reflect the dilemma of Hamletian proportion in the narrator's mind and this dilemma stems from the fact that the narrator has been conditioned by the society which is historically racist in nature, he is born in a society which has passed a legacy of hate and resentment to its off springs, he has been taught that there is a deep wedge or fissure that separates the blacks and the whites. Moreover, he is twenty two and for all these years he has been a living witness to how the whites have been unkind to the blacks, he knows how the blacks and the whites have fought a bloody battle against each other, he known how the blacks and the whites have killed, lynched and maimed each other. He is a living witness to the dehumanizing condition in which the citizens of color of his kind have been living. All this being so, it should come as no surprise that consciously or unconsciously racism has been a fact of his life. Albit unconsciously he tends to feel and act racist which has colored his imagination. This becoming the ground reality, it becomes difficult for him to write with a free mind and heart which would reflect the reality.

In the second stanza, the narrator's confusion is further increased. The following lines mirror the confusion hovering in his mind, "It's not easy to know what is true for you or me,./ at twenty-two" (16-17).

As the speaker broods further, he feels as if he hears the white narrator and himself talk on the page he is writing. "I feel and seen and Hear, Harlem, I hear you/hear you, hear me – we two – you, me, talk on this page" (18-19).

The narrator then reflects on his own life. He reflects on his activities, his likes and dislikes. He likes to eat, sleep, drink, work, read, learn as the white narrator does. For Christmas he likes present like a pipe or records. He wonders that being black does not make him not like what folks from the other race likes for he is no different from the whites just because he is black. Here is an implicit suggestion that the color of the skin does not influence the way people think, believe, like and dislike. To cling to the misguided notion that the skin color does so is wrong and derogatory:

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink and be in love.

I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.

I like pipe for Christmas present,

Or records-Bessie, bop, or bach.

I guess being colored does not make me like

the same things other folks like who are other races. (21-26)

The black narrator then wonders if the page he writes will also be black. He knows that because the words have come from a black man's soul it will not be white meaning to say that it will manifest black sentiments but he is confident that it will be a part of the instructor:

So will my page be colored that I write ?

Being me, it will not be white.

But it will be

a part of you, instructor. (27-30)

The narrator reflects on the fact that blacks and the whites have their unique cultural customs and traditions. They have their own identities. They may have many differences which make them feel that there is a deep void between the two but all the differences notwithstanding they are a part of each other, they are inseparable.

On further introspection the black narrator becomes emotional and even philosophical. He directly addresses the white narrator with the pronoun "you" and urges that the only truth is that they are a part of each other and that together they combine to form America. Their destinies in spite of the ghastly past and a pall of gloom hovering in the present is inextricably intertwined:

You are white –

Yet a part of me, as I am part of you.

That's American.

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be part of me.

Nor I often want to be part of you.

But we are, that's true ! (31-36)

The black narrator then expresses an unwavering conviction that the blacks and the whites can learn from one another all the differences notwithstanding. As the black narrator learns from the white instructor so too can the white instructor learn from the black though he may be more older and more free:

As I learn from you,

I guess you learn from me -

although you're older – and white –

and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B. (37-41)

The message in the poem is not limited to the black narrator and the white instructor. The message transcends time and space as all good poetry does. As the white instructor and his black student are a part of each other so too are all Americans, i.e. both blacks and whites are a part of each other. As the black narrator and his white instructor learn from each other so too can all Americans both the blacks and the whites learn from each other's experience. In the "Theme for English B" is an explicit suggestion that the blacks and the whites must live together in a spirit of peace, harmony and reconciliation.

Langston Hughes is a dynamic individual who searches for his identity by writing from all the perspectives he has experienced; to see him as less than this or to categorize him simply as an African American poet is reductionary and stereotypical. Just like the black narrator in the poem, Hughes can step outside African American culture and analyze black actions from the mainstream white perspective in which he has been educated, but as a persecuted African American Hughes still has every right to speak against oppression and racial discrimination.

Hughes eloquently advocates that such a feeling of oneness is a perquisite and that it supersedes all the other considerations.

We can closely relate/link Hughes' thought with both the secular model and reconciliation theology. He implores members of different races to make deliberate efforts to interact with each other. Hughes believes that intentional efforts to create interracial interaction are necessary to deal with historical hatred and mistrust.

End Discrimination for Reconciliation

In many of his poems Langston Hughes strongly protests against many an inhuman atrocities meted out against the citizens of color. He strongly demands that the blacks be given the stamp of respectability they deserve. He saw racism as an evil which held back the American people's quest for a bright and a prosperous future. He knew that if racism could be dismantled then the blacks and the whites could collectively build America of their dreams.

In his poem entitled "I , too" Hughes emphasizes on the immutable truth that he too is an American and that as a citizen of the country, he has equal right as a white citizen has. The black narrator in the poem comes down heavily against the whites who have denied the blacks the right that is their due nevertheless he does not pour venom, he does not preach hatred and acrimony. He is angry with the whites but he acknowledges that as a black he is only a half of what makes America and the other half are the whites, his brothers, meaning to say that blacks and the whites together combine to make America. The sentiment that Hughes has expressed here is akin to the one he has expressed in "The Theme of English B".

The poem begins with the line, "I, too, sing America" (1). It implies that the narrator "I" is also an American. He too sings the glory of America, he too loves America passionately as a white does. Then the narrator says that he is the "darker brother" (2) meaning to stress that the whites are his brothers. There is no any other difference between the brothers except that one is black and the other white. Then the narrator laments how he has been mistreated by the whites, his own brothers, how he has been treated like a second class citizen. However, he is not disheartened, he laughs, eats well and grows ever stronger:

I am the darker brother

They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh
 And eat well,
 And grow strong. (2-7)

In the second stanza of the poem, the narrator envisions that tomorrow meaning in the future things would change. In spite of the dark clouds hovering on the horizon, the narrator believes firmly that things would turn for the better when the whites acknowledge the black as his half brother and give him all the rights that he of right deserves:

Tomorrow,
 I'll be at the table
 When company comes.
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to me,
 "Eat in the kitchen". (8-14)

One day the whites would regret for their actions, they would see how beautiful the blacks are because blacks too are Americans, they too have feelings for their motherland, they too sing the glory of America:

Besides,
 They'll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed –
 I, too, am America. (15-18)

Langston Hughes is unhappy at the way the blacks have been treated. He demands his fair share of rights as whites but at the same time he also acknowledges

the white as his half brother meaning that the destinies of the blacks and the whites is inextricably lined with each other. Hughes always wanted the blacks and the whites to live in peace and harmony with each other nonetheless he also demands equality between them. The poem mirrors that Hughes believed in togetherness, peace, harmony, brotherhood and reconciliation between the races as envisioned by the founding forefathers of the nation for building an egalitarian America but he knows that reconciliation he is calling for must be based on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. He is not willing to concede with anything less than this, well aware that reconciliation cannot take as long as the black is treated as a second class citizen.

Hughes could see the destructive ramifications of denying the blacks their fair share of rights. He discusses the various negative consequences of racism in his often quoted poem "Harlem".

A poem that students often encounter in their classes is "Harlem: A Dream Deferred." This is one of the most famous and often discussed poems that Hughes has written. This great poem is often subjected to misinterpretation by critics and students alike. Many have labeled the derogatory charge that Harlem is a propagandist poem but to read the poem as such is to misunderstand the soul of the poem.

The poem carries the theme that having to postpone one's deepest desire can lead to destruction.

The questions are all rhetorical questions, because they intend to answer themselves. The first question in the first stanza uses simile: "like a raisin in the sun," (3) "like a sore," (4) like rotten meat," (6) "like a syrup sweet." (8) The second stanza which is not a question but a suggestion also uses simile "like a heavy load." (10) The last stanza uses metaphor, "or does it explode?" (11)

The poem employs rhyme: sun-run, meat-sweet, load-explode.

The poem also uses imagery: "raisin in the sun," (3) "fester like a sore-/ And then run," (4,5) etc.

The question, " What happens to a dream deferred?" (1) appears to be answered with questions. But if we analyze each question we get an idea of what the speaker really believes about dreams being postponed.

The "dream" (1) is a goal in life, not just dreams experienced during sleep. But what dream is it exactly? The poem does not choose the dream and leaves it up to the reader. Perhaps it connotes to the African American people's passionate dream to an end to the dehumanizing condition in which he has been forced to live. Perhaps it refers to the Negro's dream to an end to poverty, want and humiliation. It may refer to the Negro's yearning for the stamp of respectability he of right deserves and so forth. We can guess that the dream the poet so stresses upon most probably relates to the dream of the African American people for liberty, equality and fraternity. Perhaps it refers to the Negro's dream of a just and egalitarian society, perhaps it refers to the Negro's dream of emancipation from the social, economic and political ills that have been inflicted upon himself and his kind. Nevertheless, the speaker's position is clear that any important dream or goal that must be delayed can have serious negative affects. As we look at each question we find out what those affects are. With each question the speaker offers a possibility of each negative affect. The first one "Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" (3): a raisin is a good thing, useful and nutritious, but if a raisin is left in the sun to dry it becomes hard and impossible to eat; its values sucked out, it no longer serves its useful nutritious purpose. The dream or life goal of a human being is central to what makes one a valuable member of society, but suppose that person with the dream is told he cannot see his dream fulfilled just yet;

he must wait until society changes, until institutions and laws change so that he can become a doctor, lawyer, professor, or poet.

The speaker gives the various possible consequences of dreams being deferred.

Or fester like a shore—

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust or sugar over—

Like a syrup sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load. (4-10)

Finally using the rhetoric : “Does it explode!” (11)” he warns that if the blacks have to go on continuously postponing their dreams than it could have disastrous ramifications for the entire American society. A vicious cycle of blood and sorrow would follow and both the blacks and the whites would have to bear the evil brunt.

Many critics charge that Hughes is here propagating violence and bloodshed but such a view is merely a misreading of Hughes intention. Throughout his life Hughes preached reconciliation between the races for a better America for the generations to come. The point he is trying to make is that blacks should be given the place they deserve in the society. If it does not happen then there would be violence and bloodshed in the society and such an explosion would not only affect one particular community but it would be disastrous to the entire society, for both the blacks and the whites. The message the poet wants to convey is that for social harmony to prevail, for the progress and prosperity of all Americans the wanton discrimination against the blacks should end for once and for ever. In fact, the poem is

an appeal to all that discrimination must be ended growing out of the speakers firm and passionate conviction that such a situation would pave the way for the creation of a truly just society founded on the principles laid down by the founding fathers of the nation.

Desmund Tutu stress on social, economic and political justice as the first and foremost precondition for bringing a lasting reconciliation for without justice reconciliation is unthinkable. So long as people are denied the rights that is their due reconciliation becomes impossible. In "Harlem" "I, Too" and many other protest poems Langston Hughes demands justice for the blacks. At some point in his poetry he may sound harsh and this is understandable looking at the gravity of discrimination practiced against the blacks but it is important to understand that acrimony, hate and resentment were not Hughes' doctrine. It would be false, misleading and derogatory to label the charges of hate and recrimination on Hughes. His biographer Rampersad Arnold says that it is important for the reader to understand who Langston Hughes was before we begin to understand his poetry.

Hughes is an iconic figure in the field of American letters revered by both the blacks and the whites alike. Had hate been his doctrine he wouldn't be such a great personality. He wouldn't be awarded several prizes for racial reconciliation Witter Bynner prize and Guggenheim Fellowship among the prominent. The American nation wouldn't have honoured him by printing one hundred and twenty five million stamps bearing his portrait. Senator John Kerry wouldn't have kicked off his election campaign by reciting Hughes' Poem "Let America Be America Again".

A Visionary and a Dreamer

In one of his poems entitled "History" Langston Hughes writes:

The past has been a mint
Of blood and sorrow.
That must not be
True of tomorrow. (1-4)

Langston Hughes was aware of the vicious cycle of blood and sorrow that had followed because of the brunt of the evils of racism but he always looked at the future with hope. He urges passionately that the cycle of blood and sorrow must come to an end so that the future generations of Americans could live in peace.

One of the greatest aspects of Langston Hughes' personality was that he was an optimist all through his life. He never let pessimism and hatred overtake him. Hughes unwaveringly believed that Americans both the blacks and the whites would overcome hatred and discrimination of the past and that a day would dawn when both the races would be able to live together in peace and harmony. Thus, the dream of reconciliation between the races, which he passionately cherished, would come true.

Langston Hughes was a great dreamer. He implores people to live with a dream. How much importance he attached to dreams can be gleaned from one of his poems entitled "Dreams."

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go

Life is a barren field

Frozen with snow. (1-8)

Hughes was probably writing how he needed a dream to escape the depressions of racism, and life in Harlem, but the poem is not in a negative mood or intended only to be read by one race. It is a positive message for everyone. This is why Hughes rarely received criticism and it is also why he was and still is so popular. When it came down to it, everyone accepted him. Actually, Hughes was accepted by the whole human race and he accepted the whole race. He just wrote about the feelings of life, and because everyone has bad times at some point in their lives, anyone could relate to his writing. During Hughes' time, as well, anyone could relate to his writing. Everyone has, or needs a dream and once it is reached, there is another that pops right up. Hughes let everyone know that it is possible to reach his/her dream and make the most of life. The mind can be a colourful garden, splashed with all tones of colour when life outside is black and white. Not only did Hughes show this to the world, and made life easier for the blacks, he improved race relations, a task that had not yet been fully attempted.

The point Hughes wants to make through his poem "Dreams" is that everyone needs a dream or an image of a better life, to help and push them along to success, along with helping them live a full life. Langston Hughes' poetry makes readers realize that out of all bad there is something good. Without this theory, where would the world be? Without something to love, dream about, or relate to, would there be any soul who could reach the top of any mountain? Would there be any soul like Einstein, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. Hughes made it possible for many people to be successful and his poetry still enlightens us with thoughts, to this day. Hughes lived during the time of depression for black Americans,

but he didn't include negativism aimed at whites or any group, in his text. He had experienced how white Americans had been cruel to black Americans, but he knew that negativity pushed back and forth between the two groups would not improve the situation for either side. His writing is about coming together as a whole and it shows his feelings, experiences and hope-people cannot argue with that. He accomplished the feat of building a bridge between the black and the white community.

Hughes had a passionate dream for America. In no other poem has Hughes expressed his dream of an egalitarian America so explicitly than he does in "Let America be America Again." The poem reflects how profound and infinitely great his vision of America was.

Hughes wanted America to be a land of Justice, Liberty and Equality. He wanted to see an end to discrimination in walks of life. Hughes wanted a regeneration of American values so that American would be a great land of love. Some of the important lines that reflect the breath of Hughes vision read as:

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed –
 Let it be that great strong land of love
 Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
 That any man be crushed by one above.
 (It never was America to me.)
 O, Let my land be a land where liberty
 Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
 But opportunity is real, and life is free,
 Equality is in the air we breathe.
 (There's never been equality for me,
 Nor freedom in this homeland of the free"). (6-16)

Hughes had a lofty dream for America but he equally regretted that America of his dreams was only a figment of his imagination because America of his time was entrenched in the vicious cycle of the quagmire of racism. Hughes laments that America has not been America for the Negroes. He laments that there has not been equality for him and his kind in the “homeland of the free.”

Hughes vision of America was of a land where no man was left behind. His vision of America was of a land that would be inclusive and all encompassing. The given lines reflect on the vastness of his vision for America.

I am a farmer, bondsman to the soil.
 I am the worker sold to the machine.
 I am the Negro, servant to you all.
 I am the people, humble, hungry, mean-
 Beaten yet today- O, pioneers!
 I am the man who never got ahead,
 The poorest worker bartered through the years.
 Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream. (31-38)

Hughes was well aware that America of his time was utterly different from the America of his dreams nevertheless he firmly believed that a day would dawn when his dream of America would come true. The following lines reflect on his unwavering conviction:

O, Yes,
 I say it plain
 America never was America to me,
 And yet I swear this oath—
 America will be! (76-80)

It was, in fact, this dream, which enabled Hughes to carry on his life with an optimistic attitude.

Similar sentiment echoes in the poem "Someday". This poem begins with a depiction of the gloomy and unpredictable situation of the moment. It captures the vicious cycle of killings, lynching and intimidation in which the blacks and the whites were caught in:

Once more
 The guns roar
 Once more
 The call goes forth for men
 Again war begins
 Again
 False slogans become a bore
 Yet no one cries:
 ENOUGH! NO MORE! (1-9)

Hughes laments that humans have been acting like angry dogs who love to kill, however, he believes that men would overcome this destructive appetite someday though the die hard skeptics dismiss that it would never ever happen. Hughes dismisses such a thought as pessimistic. Hughes believes that someday the blacks and the whites would be able to live in peace and harmony in a spirit of mutual respect, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all and like flowers they would give blossoms in the sun:

The pessimist says
 It always will.
 That, I, do not believe.

Someday
The savage in us will wear away.
Someday quite clearly
Men will see
How clean and happy life will be.
And how,
Like flowers in the sun,
We, too, can give forth blossoms,
Shared by everyone. (13-24)

The sentiment expressed above is similar to the one expressed by Richard Rime in the poem, "Where the Rainbow Ends".

Having analyzed the aforementioned poems, it is obvious that the theme of racial reconciliation rings loud and clear in them.

IV. CONCLUSION

In his poems "Theme for English B" and "Someday" Hughes makes a clarion call to both the blacks and the whites that the differences between them notwithstanding they are still a part of each other united as they are by the common thread of nationality, brotherhood and humanity and so must unite for building an America as envisioned by the founding father of the nation. He makes an impassioned plea to both the blacks and the whites that they must brush aside the dreadful memories of the past because they are a part of each other; one cannot ignore the other as their destinies are intertwined.

In "I, Too" he advocates equal rights for the blacks because he knows that without justice there cannot be reconciliation. However, in doing so, Hughes is respectful to the whites for he acknowledges that they are his brothers inspite of unspeakable atrocities, rantings and recriminations of the past.

In "Harlem" he probes the unpleasant ramifications of denying the blacks the rights that is their due and urges though implicitly that such an unpleasant situation/scenario can and must be avoided for the consequences would too much for the society to bear upon.

In his poems Hughes often speaks with a due perspective, i.e. for both the blacks and the whites, uniquely well poised as he is, to do so owing to his hybrid consciousness. The dual voice is evident in "Theme for English B" and "Cross".

Hughes was a towering personality in the field of American letters who is revered by both the blacks and the whites for the range of his vision and statesmanship. The legacy of reconciliation he has left behind shall always endure. In the 21st century, at a time when "equality" is a catchword for individuals, societies and governments even more people will be attracted towards his poetry.

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