

Culture Shock

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Abstract

The migration of blacks in North America through slavery became united. The population of blacks past downs a tradition of artist through art to native born citizens. The art tradition involved telling stories to each generation in black families. The black culture elevated by tradition created hope to determine their personal freedom to escape from poverty of enslavement and to establish a way of life through tradition. A way of personal freedoms was through getting a good education that lead to a better foundation and a better way of life. With regard to all historic migrations (forced and voluntary), the African Union defined the African diaspora as "[consisting] of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union." Its constitutive act declares that it shall "invite and encourage the full participation of the African diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union."

Keywords: literature concepts, African American abstracts

The origin of African American language originated in the Dominican islands. Slaves were brought to the islands before being slaves in America. In the islands, American slaves were able to communicate because of the tribes from Africa spoke the same language. The dialect was easy to conduct everyday communication through common phrases. The language spoken was broken English. Phrases like, where are you going, I already been there were used in daily conversation. Some of the language from Africa is used in American dialect. Words like banana and voodoo are a part of the English language. It is wonderful that some of the spirituality in language was shared amongst African traditions implementing culture passed down upon generation of slaves. Communication is a valued source of maintaining universal relationships.

African folk tales is a form of storytelling used by slaves as a form of entertainment. African folk tales were heroic tales used by slaves. The folk tales had a hero like the road runner and the coyote reflected in the Loony Toons cartoons. The stories used animals as characters. The hero of the tales, were weak animals who fought over stronger animals like the lion or the bear. The format of the stories was to tell a story of how slaves were to overcome slavery or to tell how the weak could triumph over evil. African slaves believed that someday they would be free. The folk tales were an inspiration that there was hope of obtaining their freedom from slavery.

Paul Dunbar's poems are about his experiences to slavery. Dunbar contrast in his writing about the feelings of being a slave. Dunbar expresses the pain of being a slave. His experience entails the hardship of the instability to do as willed. He explains in his poems that the slave felt inferior to the slave owner. Dunbar expresses the slaves were put in a position where they were treated less than nature and that the slaves had to keep in their true feelings of pain as a mask they carried. The slaves were very unhappy because they did not want to be slaves and they preferred their lives as free tribes in Africa. What it meant to be captive is like a caged bird. That is the way things were and you were forced to live in that condition. A good slave would do what he was told to do in order to survive of face the consequences. There were restrictions on being a slave. As Dunbar put it, the painful relationship of being contained is the discipline of change. Dunbar spoke of racial justice of the American slave. Dunbar wants his voice heard.

The songs that slaves sung were about the sorrow and pain of slavery. Gospel music is songs written about a spiritual journey to reach salvation. Gospel songs speak of hope and disparity of the black race. Fredrick Douglas found this in the songs about slavery. Douglas went north to find freedom and found disparity and sadness of his people. Gospel music can be sad to listen to because of the mourning rituals it expresses in its music. Music has transformed from work songs, field hollers, and spirituals, to that would leave a powerful imprint on later forms of American music: on gospel, ragtime, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, and rap. How the genre changed the message remains the same of hope and content. In order to understand the songs you must identify with the content and anguish of black's suffering.

The important theme of Louis Armstrong's songs "Go down Moses" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is asking God to grant their freedom from slavery. The words: Let my people go and Carry me home sweet chariot speak of the words of slaves of Jews. The timeline in which the poems were written were taken from the Bible. The poem, "Go down Moses," refers to Moses asking the heroes to release the slaves from bondage. The final miracle from God, Moses was to kill the youngest boy of the pharos. The song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," refers to releasing the slaves from Israel as well.

Each poem speaks of justice that black slaves can relate to wanting their freedom from slavery as well. At the end of the poem the song is spiritual in that it states that after they get their freedom they will help others get theirs as well. Armstrong expresses in his poems that he may not know what freedom is like; but the feeling of what it may be like is worth the risk. Armstrong's poems state that heaven may be the answer from bondage.

The Trickster Tales are a remarkable abstract story about stability of the black race from oppression. The tales are often clever display of hope and wit. The tales speak of the black race as strong and heroic. The tales give insight to overcome oppression from slavery. The tales uses strong characters that build hope for the black slave. The tales are funny. The characters in the tales are reflective throughout history of the stereotypes of black people as being inferior to the white race and uneducated. Humor was used in the tales to enlighten circumstance to be overcome with spirituality and love. The experimentation of stereotypes in the tale allows an understanding of how race is perceived. The tales talk about the struggle of slaves in how racism becomes an understatement in how society dictates inequality.

African American Toast to Tradition is a collection of poem of rural Louisiana which is poems about traditional African experience. The poems are reflective of heroic wit of the black man in how he overcomes racism. "Shine and the Titanic," is a toast poem using the wit of the African American. The poem reflects on the black porter is clever in how he escapes the ship from sinking. The Titanic was a ship during 1912 that did not allow blacks on board cruisers. Despite the antics of the time that blacks should just sit and do what they are told, the porter uses his instinct and swims to the port as the ship sinks. Toast poems are similar to folk tales because the weak can overcome obstacles of oppression.

The slave trade had been predicated to the institution of labor to southern plantation for sugar, rice and later cotton. Ely Whitley, a Yale graduate, invented the cotton gin to reduce slavery. Instead, slavery increased because of the demand for cotton in the market. At one time there were more slaves than slave owners. Due to the cotton gin, more Indian land was purchased to grow cotton. Cotton was later noted for destroying the soil with later effect the production and sale of it. After the Industrial Revolution, there were over 250,000 freed slaves. It was a time where there was a demand for education. During this time, slaves competed for remedial work with the white men. Slavery decreased in number to 100 per southern plantation. The emancipation proclamation was radiated to free slaves. Because of the use of technology, the southern plantation had no longer a need for slaves.

Lucy Terry's "Bars Fight", poem is a eulogy of the American Indian in discretion. Americans took the native Indian for granted when they took over their land. A lot of people died over the possession of land. The native Indians felt the land is free to man and should not be taken for granted. In Terry's poem, she speaks out for the cost of war is too great to lose human life.

This poem gives a feeling of redemption towards slavery. Wheatley speaks of the pain to be taken from Africa to an unknown land bitter and cold in which blacks do not understand. Slaves, who were Christians, did not understand why they were pitied with scornful eyes of deception. Slaves prayed a guardian would protect them for such travesty.

Claude McKay was born in 1890 – 1948. He was college educated. He studied agriculture. He worked several jobs including dining cart waiter and editor. He was born in Jamaica and migrated to America to continue writing poetry. He held an interest in arts and politics and was involved with the Jamaica socialist party and he served as a founder of the Negrotude movement. (*A Long Way from Home* (1937).

Claude McKay lived in a time where poor black people were not treated fairly and segregation was tolerated. Blacks were looked as second class citizens. Blacks were considered separate but equal and if blacks retaliated against the opposition, as a result they were lynched.

There was an inflammation of riots in the United States in 1919 called the Red Scare. Claude defies the traditional role of the black man at this time by creating a sentiment of pride in his poems. Claude explains in his poem that the black man must not die in vain. Claude explains in his poem there are historic reasons why the black man must defend himself for a good cause so he can die in peace. (Marcellus Blount. Columbia University Press. 1999)

"If we must die," is a poem about the reformation of the black man. In this poem Claude speaks of the disparity of hope that the black man be remembered for his bravery. Claude McKay is a historic figure known for his poems which challenged the white intellectual on racism in 1920's during the Harlem Renaissance. Claude McKay wrote about how he coped with a racist society. (Poetry Foundation)

McKay's pride in African culture and racial self-consciousness helps stimulate African American literary expression. The sonnet, "If we must die," was read by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the British people during World War II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

There is a relationship between modernism and modernity. Modernism characteristic of present culture, while modernity is the formality of change in a society. Modernism and modernity is influenced by a behavior. The behavior is relative to an emotion felt during a specific time. Modern literature is reflective of time period spanning from the 19th century to the present.

During this time spanned the conscience of cultural movement in art and literature. The moral culture of the Renaissance was to be in touch with the love of religion. The imagist felt they needed to express what they envisioned in the art. Cubism and Dadaism was an art movement often protesting fear and denial.

Modernism is a reflective of productivity. Since the Renaissance period, there was the Industrial Revolution and two World Wars. The Renaissance was the end of slavery and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. People wanted to understand life and so they wrote what mattered to them most. They wrote their feelings about love. The Industrial Revolution came at a time where technology was replacing man labor. It was a time of invention. People wrote about

how their relativity would replace their purpose to technology. During World War I and World War II, was a time of reason. Not being able to relate to war, writers wrote about what they could not come to reason. Literature became distorted and disconnected. The way people saw the world was changing. The conscious began to experiment with reason.

Moral structure became the meaning of expression during Modernism. "The Heart of Darkness" symbolized racism of the Congo slave trade. "The Station of the Metro" illustrated how illusion became an abstract symbol. "The Wasteland" is a poem depicting the sorrow embedded in pain which is the primary reason for human need. "The Second Coming" is the passion in fear of the resurrection or the end of the world. The British consider this period of time as the, "Lost Generation." It is a time where people want to understand what is going on in their present lives. It is a time to find comfort in what they have become, not knowing who they really are, hoping that change will come.

There is an artistic journey through time with each movement. Through each art movement you are seeing the artist reaching the audience by conveying messages through imagery. The imagery can be about an emotion reflective of the living condition. The image can be happy or sad, anger or glee, confused or mortified. The relationship between the artist and his art is determined by attitude. The artist interaction with his audience is a connection to real life events. "Farewell to Arms," is a story about real life experience with war. The Great Depression was a time in America where people felt alienated and desperate. People were unemployed at a time where technology previously increased. It was a time during the World War I. People wanted to find a sense of solidarity through Hemmingway. Stein wrote about having a gay relationship, which was found shocking during the time of Dadaism.

Modernism is the center of content. It is a time where everything is centered on the evolution of human thought. People were searching for empathic reason. There was a lot of conflict and out of conflict there were protest for liberalization. Freedom of the speech led to civil disobedience when the literature art movement became popular. It was a time of woman's suffrage and the Harlem Renaissance influenced by the Civil Rights Movement.

Modernism is the foundation of an art movement. Art is the expression of how it is conceived or interpreted. Art is an emotion embedded in pain, anger and deserted thoughts used to entertain or arouse those of interest. Modernism is a political assessment influenced by society issues. Modernism is the exploration of human evolution. Modernism is how we perceive the culture which surrounds us in time. Modernism is written history.

Conclusion

Why must man live in captivity? Why is there so much poverty and violence in society? Why must we isolate ourselves with hatred predicated to violence? Why do we live in isolation of so much distrust? This is a test to prepare us for our future. If we could see our own faults of the condition we are in, we can see man is not free. We must tolerate our condition to allow change. I believe that all men should be created equal. All people should sustain life in a healthy environment. I believe that in this era, change has come our way and as we strive as a people we will overcome obstacles to learning to a utopia of freedom.

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