

الطفولة والعنصرية: دراسة تحليلية لنصوص مختارة من منظور نظرية العنصرية النقدية

Childhood and Racism: An Analytical Study of Selected Texts from the Perspective of Critical Racism Theory

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Abstract

This study uses the concept of racial criticism to analyze some chosen literary poems in order to investigate how racism affects children. It focuses on showing how racism affects children psychologically and socially, especially through discrimination and social exclusion. In order to illustrate the profound effects that racism has on a child's development and his relationship with the world around him, the study looks at how poetic writings depict childhood events like losing one's innocence and struggling with one's identity. By examining the texts, the study demonstrates how racism shapes reality and developmental trajectories and emphasizes the function of literature in offering firsthand accounts of this enduring influence. The poets "Countee Cullen" and "Nikki Giovanni" examine racism's effects on childhood and how these experiences impact children's growth and identity building in their selected poems.

Key Words: Children, Discrimination, suffering, justice, society

المستخلص

تستخدم هذه الدراسة مفهوم النقد العنصري لتحليل بعض القصائد الأدبية المختارة من أجل التحقيق في كيفية تأثير العنصرية على الأطفال. وتركز على إظهار كيفية تأثير العنصرية على الأطفال نفسياً واجتماعياً، وخاصة من خلال التمييز والاستبعاد الاجتماعي. ولتوضيح التأثيرات العميقة التي تخلفها العنصرية على نمو الطفل وعلاقته بالعالم من حوله، تنظر الدراسة في كيفية تصوير الكتابات الشعرية لأحداث الطفولة مثل فقدان البراءة والصراع مع الهوية. ومن خلال فحص النصوص، توضح الدراسة كيف تشكل العنصرية الواقع ومسارات النمو وتؤكد على وظيفة الأدب في تقديم روايات مباشرة عن هذا التأثير الدائم. ويفحص الشاعران "كونتي كولين" و"نيكي جيوفاني" تأثيرات العنصرية على الطفولة وكيف تؤثر هذه التجارب على نمو الأطفال وبناء الهوية في قصائدهما المختارة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأطفال، التمييز، المعاناة، العدالة، المجتمع.

1. Introduction

Racism is a complicated issue that shows up in many facets of cultural and social life, but it especially affects identity development and childhood. Children's experiences are impacted by racial discrimination, which affects their social and psychological development. A poet of African American descent was Countee Cullen. He is regarded as one of the most well-known poets of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance, an artistic and cultural movement for African Americans. Racism Poetry by Countee Cullen captures his own battles with prejudice and how it affected his early years. After his parents passed away, he was raised by his grandmother in a difficult home setting (Williams, 2012). His early years were significantly impacted by this feeling of exclusion and prejudice, which also influenced his perspective on the world. Racism was a recurring issue in Cullen's literature, despite his frequent declarations that he wanted to be recognized as a writer regardless of his race. By emphasizing the anguish of Black Americans in early 20th-century American society, he conveyed the effect of racial prejudice on individuals, illustrating the tension between their harsh circumstances and their lost innocence. Cullen's poetry demonstrates how racism shapes personal identity and impacts childhood, making it a crucial aspect of his literary experiences. The African-American poet Nikki Giovanni, regarded as one of the most notable literary voices of the twentieth century, stands out among the authors who have written extensively about this topic. The experiences of the Black community, particularly children, who endure prejudice and injustice, are reflected in her poetry. One of the leading writers of the Black Arts Movement and a well-known poet is Giovanni. "Black Judgment" and "Those Who Ride the Night Winds" are two

of her well-known poetry collections; both were influenced by the Black Arts Movement and the Black Power movement of the 1960s (Smethurst, 2005). At a time when racism and misogyny were pervasive, the poet's artistic motivation sprang from his desire to convey and recover African American integrity. Giovanni used poetry as a vehicle to combat white-dominant cultural norms and racist throughout the sociopolitical upheaval that defined the Civil Rights Movement. Through her writing, the poet sought to establish a culture that celebrates the Black Arts Movement and is more inclusive, equitable, and just. She also recognized the significant contribution Black women made to society and paid particular attention to their issues of concern. This paper aims to analyze the poetic texts of both Count Colin and Nikki Giovanni, focusing on the themes of racism and its impact on childhood in their texts.

1. 1. Racism's Meaning

"Reading the history of racism correctly means also pondering

the history of Europe with which it is so closely intertwined.

Too often racism has been brushed aside as

unworthy of serious study, as a simple and naïve world view

that can be laid to rest, a mistaken faith, while historians

turn to more sophisticated and fascinating subject matter.

Yet to exorcise this evil, no occult powers are required, but

merely to integrate the study of racism within our study of

the modern history of Europe. We must never neglect to seek

the whereabouts of the scavenger until we have stripped his

disguise and found him – even where there seemed to be

only virtue, goodness and truth (Mosse, 1978) "

The basis for racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance is race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Victims may also experience multiple or worsened forms of discrimination based on other related grounds, which can include religion, language, political or other opinions, birth, property, or additional status. Those who reject the existence of these inherited traits—"non-personal social and cultural traits"—consider any disparity in treatment between individuals based on the presence of these traits to constitute racial discrimination. In addition to claiming that some races or groups are inferior to others, some people contend that there are inherited distinctions. Systematic racism, also known as institutional racism, is when some groups are treated unfairly or are denied rights and/or privileges. Even while physical disparities between groups are frequently the basis for racial discrimination, an individual may face racial prejudice on the basis of ethnicity or culture without any physical traits. Covert racism, which is unintentionally demonstrated by those who claim to be dedicated to the ideals of equality and tolerance, is another more nuanced kind of racism. The United Nations Declaration states that "racial discrimination is the same as ethnic or racial discrimination". Some evidence suggests that the concept of racism has evolved over time, with early definitions incorporating the basic idea that people are classified into distinct races. The majority of anthropologists, sociologists, and biologists disagree with this separation in favor of more focused ones that are based on empirical standards, including geographic ethnic division or a history of numerous consanguineous marriages (Frideres, 2011).

1.2. Racism: Origin/ Definition/ Usage

In the 19th century, many scholars believed that humans could be divided into races. The term "racism" is a noun describing the state of being racist, that is, the belief that humans can or should be classified into races with different abilities and inclinations, which in turn motivates political ideologies that aim to distribute rights and privileges based on racial categories in which one race is given more rights and privileges than another. The phrase "racist" can be either a "noun or an adjective", and the adjective here is used to describe someone who subscribes to these ideas. The word's origin "race" is unclear. Most linguists concur that the term originated from Middle French to English, spoken by the French from the 14th to the 17th centuries, but there is no similar agreement about how it arrived in the languages descended from Latin. A recent suggestion is that it derives from the Arabic "ra's," meaning "head, beginning, or origin," or from the Hebrew " rosh," which has a similar meaning. The early founders of race theories believed that some races were inferior to others, and thus believed that differential treatment of races was entirely justified (Garner, 2010). These early theories were based on false presumptions of scientific research; the group endeavor to properly characterize and develop theories regarding racial disparities is known as

"scientific racism", yet the "term" has been considered misleading, due to the lack of actual scientific evidence to support these claims (Smedley, A., & Smedley, B. D, 2005).

"[R]ace is not simply a peculiarity of certain nations; it is a phenomenon of expansive nations and the emotional borderlines set by the laws that define and constitute nations. People were turned into races when nations extended and defined their political hegemony through conquest and expropriation. Race and nation were born and raised together; they are the Siamese twins of modernity (Nicholson 7)"

Today, most biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists reject the classification of races according to base on particular, "empirical factors like location, ethnicity, or inbreeding history". Research on the human genome has shown scant data thus far to suggest that the proper definition of race can be used to determine the genetic classification of humans. As history shows, the expression "racism" has just recently become widely used. The concept became popular, and it was utilized to characterize Nazi "social and political ties" in the 1930s in the West, where "race" was viewed as a naturally formed political unit. Although most people agree that racism happened before the word was coined, there isn't a universally accepted definition of what racism is and isn't. In order to highlight the numerous variations that are difficult to categorize, some racism experts today prefer to use the term racism in racial plurality. Additionally, they contend that various historical eras and geographical areas have been typified by distinct manifestations of racism. Garner lists the various "definitions of racism" that are out there and highlights three characteristics that all of them have in common. First, is a strong historical hierarchical relationship among groups of people; the second is a collection of ideological thoughts regarding racial distinctions; and discriminatory acts and practices come in third. (Garner, 2010)

2. Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory is one of the most important literary and critical concepts and trends that literary theory is concerned with in theory and application in the post-modern period. Despite the existence of racial theories "in previous Western Orientalist writings", According to "post-colonial theory", the discourse of Orientalism generally has used all of its mental instruments and infernal mechanisms to marginalize and despise other races through exclusion, alienation and rejection. This is because inferior races are linked to backwardness, laziness, primitiveness, and violence. One example of this is the "German Orientalist Renan", who greatly exalted the Aryan race at the

expense of the degenerate Semitic race. Post-colonial theory - especially with Edward Said - has confronted these hateful racist nonsense, and criticized these intellectual nonsense by deconstructing, undermining, and dispersing them at times, during other times by employing objective scientific critique. Hence, racial theory is a well-known academic discipline in Western universities, especially in Britain and the United States of America, which studies the concept of race in its close relationship with the concepts of law and authority. Hence, racial theory is an ideological orientation that focuses on studying human races within specific ethnic, cultural and critical perspectives. Racial theory suggests, at its core, the centrality of the white man, his class, social and cultural distinction, and his superiority over other races. Moreover, we can talk about an old racial theory and a post-modern racial theory linked to customs, difference, diversity, plurality, and openness to the other (Hamdawi, 2012).

A theoretical framework in the social sciences, critical race theory applies critical theory to the study of society and culture in relation to power, law, and racial categories. Two recurring elements in the theory, which started as a theoretical movement in American law schools in the middle to late 1980s as a reconceptualization of critical legal scholarship on racial concerns, are First, according to critical race theory, racial dominance and white supremacy are sustained throughout time, and the law in particular may contribute to this process. Second, critical race theory has looked at how the law and racial authority might be changed, and it has broadened the theory into an anti-subordination and racial liberation goal. Derek Bell, Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Camara Felice Jones, and Mary Matsuda are notable academics in the field of critical race theory. By 2002, the theory was the main topic of courses and classes provided by over 20 American law schools and at least three law schools abroad. Education, political science, law, ethnic studies, women's studies, communication, and American studies are among the disciplines that study and develop the notion. According to many, critical race theory is a crucial viewpoint on racism and race in the United States (Delgado, 2012).

2.1. Racial Theory's Concept

The understanding of genetic and inherited races is the primary focus of racial theory in literary works and criticism. As such, this theory supports racially and marginalized minorities by color in our society, such as the Negro movement, which stands up for black people against white supremacy and haughtiness. Therefore, racial theory is based on a racial basis within "a genetic, cultural, and ethnic framework". To put it another way, racial theory opposes racial discrimination and colorism as well as estrangement, exclusion, rejection, hatred, and aggressiveness. Hence, racial theory in

literature and criticism is interested in the differences in color as well as ethnic and racial occurrences that are pregnant for the purpose to examine, evaluate, and discuss them throughout the context of multiple disciplines that integrate a collection of established cognitive methods to comprehend form, meaning, as function in both creative and cultural texts and discourses. Racial theory has historically been linked to post-colonial discourse; Because it reveals the color, racial, civilizational, ethnic and cultural disparity between the Western world and the Third World. Hence, racial theory is the one that focuses on texts and discourses with a racial orientation and color and ethnic distinction, with the aim of deconstruction, undermining and dispersion; in order to expose the Western liberal ideology based on the illusory white mythology (Hamdawi, 2012).

3. Racism Effect on Children's Health and Well Being

In actuality, racism and its consequences are a disease. Children who experience racism and its impacts may develop chronic stress. Furthermore, long-term stress causes real hormonal changes that result in inflammation, a sign of chronic illness. Pregnancy-related stress can have an impact on children before they are even born. Racial differences in low birthweight and infant death persist despite advancements in healthcare. Since infants are able to recognize the racial phenotypic distinctions (SangrigoliS, 2004), it is critical in a diverse community to manage disparities well as normal. The three main layers of racism—"institutional, personally mediated, and internalized"—must be understood by physicians in order to recognize, address, and manage its effects on children's health. Other identities that people must navigate alongside race, such as those related to identity, familial circumstances, immigrant status, religion, and ethnicity, disability, and others, can influence the experience of race. The majority of the discourse surrounding the historical foundations of race to date has focused on institutionalized (or structural) racism, which is manifested in the ways that social institutions (such as government agencies, educational institutions, financial institutions, and legal systems) discriminate against members of historically marginalized groups, either overtly or covertly (JonesCP, 2000). Place "where they live", education "where they learn", economic resources (what they own), and legal resources (how their rights are implemented) are all ways that children encounter the effects of systemic racism. The delivery of healthcare and overall health outcomes have been found to be impacted by both explicit and implicit personally mediated racism, which is defined as racism that is based on presumptions about the skills, intentions, or motives of others based on their race. Internalized racism, or internalizing racial stereotypes about one's own race, can be a result of the effects of both structural and personally mediated racism. A good racial identity produces the best results for the development of young people and mediates experiences of

prejudice. In adolescence, when young people must deal with the effects of social status and awareness of personally mediated racial prejudice, a prosocial identity is crucial (SteeleCM, 2011). Bystanders are also negatively impacted by racism, even though the victims of racism—children and adolescents—are the ones who suffer the most. For instance, when asked to recall a past anchoring event as a victim or bystander, young adults who were bystanders to racism and other forms of victimization as youth suffer significant physiological and psychological effects that are similar to those experienced by first responders following a major disaster . The following were the three main characteristics that defined the abusive event or events: "(1) an individual suffers physical or psychological harm; (2) there is a power disparity (e.g., age, size, stature, or status) with respect to the target, which results in dominance and the decline of the target's self-esteem; and (3) the abuse is repeated, which raises the level of stress because of the expectation of future events" (JansonGR, 2004). Stereotype danger, or the fear of confirming a negative stereotype of one's race, might subsequently manifest as a result of internalized unfavorable racial preconceptions that unintentionally undermine one's capacity and self-perception. Threats from stereotypes can impede a victim's ability to achieve important developmental milestones, such as academic and professional success (SteeleCM, 2011). The stereotype that both the victim and the offender hold is then strengthened by underachievement, making both the victim and the bystander even more susceptible to recurring instances of overt or covert victimization. Based on these discoveries, it may be possible to maximize the well-being of all children and the adults who care for them by implementing universal interventions to actively participate in societal antiracism bystander behavioral interventions and to erase racist (whether encountered as a victim or bystander) from children's lives. However, in order bystanders must be able to identify critical circumstances and treat them as crises in order for personal intervention to occur, feel personally accountable, believe that they can successfully complete the intervention, believe that the consequences of not helping are severe, and make the conscious decision to assist. All youth can benefit from racially varied environments, such as schools, which foster cognitive skills like critical thinking and solving problems, yet research has shown that racism affects health across racial groups in regions with high levels of racism (Wells, 2016).

. Impact of Racism on Children ¶

Given the topic's social significance, research on racism and children has a long and significant history and has received consistent attention across time. Early studies had a lasting impact on American public policy and some of the earliest theories regarding racism. On the other hand, psychological research has refuted a number of popular

beliefs regarding the origins and development of racial attitudes. Recent studies have shown that newborns' responses to race vary within the first year of life, and other studies have found that early parental socialization shapes later racial attitudes. Both overt and covert racial prejudices are formed in children. Most programs seem to have trouble changing the racial attitudes of children. Racial stigmatization has a negative impact on children; there is evidence that it causes them to internalize racial prejudices and is linked to behavioral health and functional indices. Racial pride is encouraged when stigmatized adolescents raise awareness of racism, but there aren't many advantages for the negative impacts of racism (Quintana, 2014).

Contemporary American poet and author Countee Cullen is well-known for his writings that tackle issues of social justice, racism, and identity. His works mostly examine the realities of Black communities in the US, with a focus on how racism affects children's psychological and social growth. In his poems, Cullen reflects on how racial discrimination can create a sense of isolation and injustice in children, affecting their aspirations and self-confidence. Through his work, he advocates for greater awareness of issues of equality and children's rights, and the importance of supporting them to reach their full potential, free from the constraints imposed by racism (Williams, 2012). In his poetry, Countee Cullen illustrates how racism affects children by describing their everyday lives and the ways in which racist behaviors hinder their social and psychological growth. "Incident" is one of his most well-known poems that tackles these topics. Poetry by Countee Cullen frequently examines racism and infancy, providing moving insights into how early life events mold a person's character in a segregated society. His 1925 poem "Incident," which depicts a young African American child's first experience with racial discrimination, is a potent illustration of this. The poem describes the speaker's joyful encounter with a white boy who uses the racist epithet "nigger" to taunt him while he is eight years old in Baltimore. This incident serves as the focal point of his time in the city, illustrating how a single act of racism can tarnish a child's innocence and cause lifelong misery. Cullen's works highlight the painful realization that race plays a central role in how individuals are perceived and treated from a young age. In "Incident," the encounter is simple yet devastating, showing how a child's joyful world can be disrupted by racism. The poem's stark, emotional imagery and its focus on childhood innocence lost to racial hatred convey the broader struggle that African Americans face in a society that systematically devalues them. Countee Cullen's poem "Incident" is one of the most prominent poems that deals with the subject of racism and its effects on childhood. This poem belongs to the Harlem Renaissance era, and highlights how a single racist incident can overshadow childhood memories

"Once riding in old Baltimore

Heart-filled, head-filled with glee

I saw a Baltimorean

Keep looking straight at me" (l. 3-4) (Nielsen, 1988)

The narrator describes a happy and joyous event she had in Baltimore in this section of the poem. However, he starts to feel worried when he spots someone from Baltimore. This instance might be seen as an illustration of how racism affects childhood, as the youngster is exposed to racist beliefs or attitudes in an indirect manner that shapes his experience. This incident can be interpreted as proof of how racism influences children's thoughts and behavior according to critical racial theory. Even if the child is initially content, the circumstances he encounters may cause him to feel different or subjected to racial discrimination. Racism is not only a personal issue; it is a component of the societal structure that has a significant impact on children, making them aware of racial disparities at a young age.

"Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,

And so I smiled, but he poked out

His tongue, and called me, "Nigger." (l. 5-8) (Nielsen, 1988)

In this part of the poem, the speaker, at the age of eight, describes an interaction where a boy, who is only slightly bigger than the speaker, insults him by calling him a racial slur. The speaker's initial smile contrasts sharply with the boy's hurtful words and actions. This moment reflects how children can be exposed to racism at an early age, even when they are young and innocent. The use of the racial slur "Nigger" highlights the cruelty and dehumanizing effect of racism, even in childhood interactions. The speaker's smile, possibly out of innocence or a desire for connection, is met with hostility, showing how racial prejudice can disrupt the natural joy and innocence of a child's world. The boy's actions are a clear example of how racial biases can be learned and expressed early in life, reinforcing the idea that racism is not only an individual attitude but a learned behavior, often influenced by societal and cultural forces.

Giovanni has been a prominent surviving member of the Black Arts Movement and one of the most prolific African American poets for more than half a century. Her poetry and activism have been heavily influenced by her views on Black nationalism.

Giovanni has edited anthologies, authored studies on Black revolutionary politics, and composed poetry for children and adults. Her poetry, like that of "Gwendolyn Brooks and Lucille Clifton", treats Black women as subjects and displays an unwavering love for Black people. The beloved American poet Giovanni, also referred to as "the Princess of Black Poetry", is a poet who transcends generations. Her poetry are read by people of all ages, including young people and senior citizens. Her poetry for young readers, however, is distinct. Her young children adore these books because of their vivid colors and huge drawings. Giovanni honors her people in her children's poetry, which covers African American history and culture. She celebrates the strength of the community and instills the love that her people share. Little children can relate to her depictions of contented households and the straightforward pleasures of childhood. She upholds the ideas of her poems and feels that black love is black wealth. Her poetry employs rhythm and repetition, and the vivid pictures support the concept. Giovanni expresses her conviction that art is vital to existence and ought to be preserved through her children's poems. She uses poems written especially for her young audience to spread her message. This paper outlines the poet's thoughts by analyzing her poetry, with a focus on children's literature. With over fifteen poetry volumes and 10 children's books to her name, Giovanni is regarded as one of the most well-known and beloved African American poets of her era (Barstow, 2007, p. 213). With supportive parents, grandparents, and a joyful family, she was raised with a love of life and people. She is praised as "a poet of the people" and has won multiple awards, including "the Langston Hughes Prize". Giovanni's children's poetry is written with remarkable vision and in straightforward, honest language. Children may easily read and comprehend her writing because of its straightforward language and style. With their two daughters, Gary and Nikki, her mother Yolande and father Jones Giovanni, who was frequently referred to as "Gus," shared a contented life. Yolande Cornelia Giovanni, Jr. was Nikki's name. Gary gave her sister the nickname "Nikki Rosa," which, as she got older, some people again abbreviated to "Nikki," and that became her well-known moniker. She began writing at a young age and enjoyed her school. In her book Giovanni: "Poet of the People, biographer Judith Pinkerton Josephson makes observations" (Josephson, 2000, p. 2).

One of the most well-known poets in the United States, Giovanni, has written deeply and poignantly on racism and childhood. Giovanni emphasizes her opposition to racial injustice and her worries for children's rights in several of her writings. She highlights the difficulties that children, particularly those from diverse racial backgrounds, have in discriminatory societies while writing about childhood as an innocent stage that should be protected in safety and security. Giovanni discusses racism as a phenomenon that influences how children develop their identities and shares her aspirations for a just and equal world where kids can grow up in a hate-free atmosphere. Giovanni

conveys uplifting messages in her children's poems, stressing the value of self-confidence and pride in one's identity despite racial difficulties. She advocates for a society in which children's rights are upheld and where racial or ethnic differences do not stand in the way of fulfilling aspirations. Through her art, Giovanni represents the voice of children impacted by racism and gives hope for future generations to carry on the struggle against injustice and discrimination (Bader, 2014).

The autobiographical poetry "Nikki-Rosa" by Giovanni recounts the poet's joyful childhood. "Childhood remembrances" do, in fact, transport us back to the times we cherish. The speaker asserts that if a person is "Black," particularly in their situation, the world understands how difficult their early years were. They did really had to endure difficult living conditions. In any event, no one takes into account the poet's childhood happiness. She shared a home with her parents and sister. They had Christmases, birthday celebrations, and BBQ tub baths. Her true happiness would be incomprehensible to a white person who would be writing her life story.

"childhood remembrances are always a drag

if you're Black

you always remember things like living in Woodlawn

with no inside toilet

and if you become famous or something

they never talk about how happy you were to have

your mother

all to yourself and" (l. 1-8) (Adoff, 1997)

The text reflects the impact of racism on childhood by embodying the lived experience of the black individual in a difficult social context. In critical racial theory, racism is considered to not only affect the individual directly, but also his psychological and emotional experience since childhood. The sentence "remembrances are always a drag if you're Black" indicates that childhood becomes burdened with worries and difficulties due to social marginalization and racial discrimination. The experience of living in "Woodlawn with no inside toilet" is an example of poverty

resulting from structural racism that leads to a lack of basic amenities. This poverty overshadows childhood memories, depriving the black child of enjoying simple moments of joy, such as "being happy with your mother," which are overlooked by a society that focuses more on suffering than appreciating positive human connections. The text highlights how society devalues the experiences of black people and focuses on their suffering instead of appreciating the simple moments of happiness that an individual may feel in childhood.

**"how good the water felt when you got your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes"(l. 9-19) (Adoff, 1997)**

Anyone may observe how white folks portray black Americans as destitute and unhappy. As a result, the speaker disapproves of this superficial prototype portrait. Instead, she demonstrates the strong social and love bonds found in a black family and the way of life of a black community. The speaker mentions a pleasant childhood recollection in these lines. She used to bathe in the large barbecue tubs that people in Chicago use for barbecuing. The "water" felt lovely when she bathed in the grill tub, even if they lacked a genuine bathtub. The presence of her family, particularly her mother, made the memory special, not the "water," which brought her joy. The speaker looks back on her early years objectively in the following lines. As an adult, she talks to her younger self, who was unable to comprehend the grownups' emotions at meetings over Hollydale. As an adult, she can now relate to her parents' emotions

whenever she thinks of her childhood home. Hollydale was an all-black housing development project in the 1950s. It was where Giovanni's parents wanted to live. Due to discriminatory lending standards, they were unable to obtain a loan for a home because all of their savings were invested in a real estate project on Jackson Street in Lincoln Heights. They were forced to abandon the strategy as a result. Her father then secured the house at Jackson Street by selling his investment. The lines "your father's pain as he sells his stock/ and another dream goes"(l. 18-19) make reference to this tragedy. The speaker claims that Nikki's biographers are unable to comprehend the agony of ending a dream before its time. Racism, inequality, and poverty forced Black families to give up their goals. The speaker is unaffected by poverty, and she believes that living a joyful existence is what defines Black identity.

Her well-known poem "Nikki Rosa" captures the joy of her early years despite their lack of resources. She is a firm believer in the value of sharing and the unity of families. Her activist grandmother Louvenia Watson, who inspired her to participate in campaigns calling for African Americans' rights, is the source of her revolutionary aspirations. She also learned from her grandma the value of standing up for her rights, always telling the truth, and appreciating and respecting others. Despite their poverty, painful experiences of segregation, and personal problems, she emphasizes the love and joy of growing up in a typical African American home—a family. She feels that people cannot understand her or her people's happiness despite their hardships and poverty. It is evident from the poem's subsequent lines:

**" And though you are poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
Christmasses
and I really hope no white person ever has cause
to write about my hard childhood**

and never understand that

all the while I was quite happy."(l. 20-33) (Adoff, 1997)

The text reflects the impact of racism on childhood by emphasizing that the challenges a person faces are not the result of poverty or family problems as much as they are the result of societal racism that many cannot understand. The text illustrates how someone who was raised in difficult circumstances does not want others—especially white people—to write about his pain because they will not be able to comprehend the profound and intricate truth of his life, according to critical racism theory. Here, racism has an indirect impact on childhood experiences because significant social and economic problems, like poverty or family conflicts, are hidden away while the child has to deal with the racist system that governs shapes daily life.

Giovanni whips out "Spin a Soft Black Song" (1971), a children's poetry book with kid-friendly themes. She talks about how, despite poverty and segregation, she had a joyful upbringing. She claims that despite the struggles and artificial limitations that her people face on a daily basis, white people would never comprehend the joy that they experience. She maintains that white people misinterpreted Black people and would never understand how happy and united Black families are. She is fiercely proud of and devoted to her African American community. Giovanni employs language that kids can relate to and comprehend in all of her children's poetry. Children's delight and play are artistically constructed and colorfully depicted, with phrases that go along with the beat and rhythm that African Americans are accustomed to. The poet has also published two children's books, "The Sun Is So Quiet (1996)" and "The Girls in the Circle (2004)". The depiction of the vivid yellow sun, the dark-skinned kids having fun on the shore, and the rhythmic performances of songs and dancing all contribute to the well-known scenes of joyful childhood recollections. Sound and rhythmic repetitions enhance the poems' attractiveness (Abraham, 2016).

The Rosa Parks story helps the kids understand African American history. Rosa Parks, an African American seamstress, is honored in Rosa (2005) for her bravery on a bus on December 1, 1955. History was made by the act. Rosa Parks broke the law because she believed it was her responsibility to challenge the unfair laws that were in place. Despite being mistreated and viciously attacked, she had the guts to follow her conscience. Her bravery and tenacity cleared the way for her people, the African Americans, to be free. Giovanni emphasizes that sometimes one person's willpower is all that is needed to alter prevailing societal conditions by using Rosa Parks as an example. She references this incident in a few of her poems, and in a later edition, she turned it into the subject of a poem of the same name in which she uses the name as a

verb synonymous with standing up for one's rights: "do the rosa parks/ say no no" is repeated, reinforcing the fact that one must stand up for one's rights (Simpson, 2022). Rosa Parks' brave deed, which ultimately resulted in the independence of African Americans, is masterfully explained to kids in a language they can comprehend. The poem Lincoln & Douglass: "An American Friendship (2008)" depicts the historic friendship between two significant figures in African American history. Frederick Douglass, a former slave who became an American abolitionist leader, and Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation, developed a close relationship based on their similar beliefs and worked toward a common objective. Once more, the children's favorite poet's lyrics provide them with a sight of their past (Giovanni N. , 2008).

Giovanni's children's poetry adopt a child's point of view, highlighting small details that adults frequently overlook. Children's favorite subjects are covered in the poems: sleeping, dancing, playing, napping, stars, parents, friends, and fears. Her message of African American pride and love, which she wishes to inculcate in the young readers, is a subject that she keeps in mind throughout these children's poetry. For example, she follows the pulse and rhythm of Black music when writing the "dance poem:"

"all you children gather round

we will dance and we will whorl

we will dance to our own song

we must spin to our own world

we must spin a soft Black song

all you children gather round

we will dance together." (19-25) (Wilkin, 2014)

This passage from Giovanni's poetry "The Dance" makes it clear that kids are welcome to assemble around one another and participate in a joyful, unrestricted dance. The opening line of the passage is, "all you children gather round." This invitation unites children as a coherent group enjoying a special experience and promotes a sense of belonging. Here, dance is more than just a physical activity; it's a way to break free from social and personal limitations. Giovanni urges kids to have a song that represents their uniqueness and sense of self by using the term "we will dance to our own song." The line "we must spin a soft Black song" alludes to the

significance of cultural identity, giving the poetry a deeper meaning. The rich African-American tradition, which holds a profound emotional past within it, is symbolized by this gentle Black ballad. Giovanni characterizes this song as "soft," highlighting the need to preserve and transmit this legacy to future generations while referencing the beauty and subdued power of black culture. In order to improve their feeling of identity and independence, the concept of "spinning to our own world" emphasizes how crucial it is to create a world of their own that represents their goals and experiences. Since the word pattern in this piece mirrors the continuous and rhythmic character of dance, the rhythm and repetition create a singular sensory experience. The final line of the verse, "we will dance together," highlights that the group is where dance's power resides and that happiness and harmony are conveyed through a common vision. Giovanni emphasizes that genuine beauty is found in sharing life with others while teaching children the virtues of unity, pride in identity, and self-expression through this work. By advocating for the pride and celebration of ethnic identity, the poem addresses the effects of racism on children. Critical racial theory emphasizes how racism affects children's psychological and social development and changes their experiences. Children who experience racial discrimination may find it difficult to have a balanced identity and develop. The poem emphasizes the value of resistance against the detrimental impacts of racism affecting children by urging them to band together and express themselves freely.

Conclusions

To conclusion, racism has a significant effect on childhood, influencing the identity and mental landscape of kids who encounter it. By applying critical racism theory to text analysis, we draw attention to the ways in which social and cultural structures perpetuate these occurrences, excluding and marginalizing certain kids on the basis of their race or color. Racism has an effect on how children view themselves and interact with others, which impedes their social and psychological growth. Raising awareness of these problems is crucial, as is working to establish social and educational settings that support the eradication of discrimination and the advancement of justice and equality for all children.

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