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SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS ET LES CIVILISATIONS



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sur les Sociétés et civilisations
(**LARSOC**)

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Les cahiers du LARSOC est une revue pluridisciplinaire qui publie des contributions originales (en français, en anglais, en espagnol et en allemand) à la recherche sur l'histoire et filières voisines des sciences humaines et des sciences sociales. Sont particulièrement bienvenues les contributions transcendant les limites entre les époques, espaces géographiques et domaines de recherches établis. La voie de distribution principale est la publication en ligne par article.

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Les contributions, en texte justifié, doivent être envoyées sous la forme d'un document Word, police Times New Roman, caractère 12, interligne 1,5 et en portrait, pour le corps du texte. Caractère 10 pour les notes de bas de page.

La rédaction refusera, les contributions de moins de 10 pages et celles de plus de 25 pages. Les marges des manuscrits doivent respecter les paramètres suivants : 2,5 cm haut, bas, et 2,5 cm droite, gauche.

La structure des articles se fait selon :

- Article théorique et fondamentale : Titre (15 mots maximum, taille 14, gras et centré), Prénom et NOM de l'auteur (taille 12, gras et centré), Institution d'attache et Adresse électronique (taille 11, centré), Résumé en Français (200 mots maximum, taille 10), Mots-clés (maximum 5, taille 10), Abstract, Key words, Introduction (Justification du thème, Problématique, Hypothèses/Objectifs scientifiques, Approche méthodologique), Développement articulé, Conclusion, Références Bibliographiques.

- Article résultant d'une recherche de terrain : Titre (15 mots maximum, taille 14, gras et centré), Prénom et NOM de l'auteur (taille 12, gras et centré), Institution d'attache et Adresse électronique (taille 11, centré), Résumé en Français (200 mots maximum, taille 10), Mots-clés (maximum 5, taille 10), Abstract, Key words. Introduction (Justification du thème, Revue, Problématique, Hypothèses/Objectifs scientifiques, Question de recherche), Méthodologie, Résultats et Discussion, Conclusion, Références bibliographiques.

Les articulations de l'article, à l'exception de l'introduction, de la conclusion, de la bibliographie, doivent être titrées et numérotées par des chiffres (exemples : 1. ; 1.1. ; 1.2 ; 2. ; 2.2. ; 2.2.1 ; 2.2.2. ; 3. ; etc.). Pas plus de 3 niveaux. Les tableaux, figures, graphiques, photographies en noir et blanc ou en couleur, seront présentés dans le texte à leur emplacement exact.

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Exemples :

- En effet, le but poursuivi par M. Ascher (1998 : 223) est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupée du groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

- Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile qui, dans son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991 : 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles-là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont sait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

- Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

« le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation sociohistorique et une inadaptation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères » (S. Diakité, 1985 : 105).

Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page en indiquant :

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Pour les sources d'archives : il faut mentionner en toutes lettres, à la première occurrence, le lieu de conservation des documents suivi de l'abréviation entre parenthèses, la série et l'année. C'est l'abréviation qui est utilisée dans les occurrences suivantes. Ex. : Abidjan, Archives nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (A.N.C.I.), 1EE28, 1899.

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Pour les sources orales : NOM Prénoms des informateurs + qualité et profession des informateurs + âges des informateurs ou leurs dates de naissance + date, heure et lieu de l'entretien + principaux thèmes abordés au cours des entretiens.

Par exemple : COULIBALY Gberna, *Dozoba* ou Vieux dozo, garant de L'initiation au *Dozoya* de Dagbakpli, 70 ans, 27 janvier 2016, de 16h20 à 17h, Korhogo, Rôle des Dozo dans la crise en Côte d'Ivoire de 2002 et 2011.

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Une monographie : NOM Prénoms de l'auteur, année de publication, titre du volume (italique), lieu de publication, nom de la société d'édition.

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Ouvrage collectif : NOM Prénoms du ou des auteurs, année de publication (dir), titre du volume (italique), lieu de publication, nom de la société d'édition.

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Ex. : WARNER Kathryn, 2010, « The Trial and Execution of Thomas of Lancaster », Edward II, Welcome to the site which examines the events, issues and personalities of Edward II's reign, 1307-1327, <http://edwardthesecond.blogspot.de/2010/10/trial-and-execution-of-thomas-of.html> (17/6/2023).

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Blacks' Image and the Self-sabotaging Behaviors in Alicia Williams and Delores Phillip's Novels

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Résumé

L'image des Noirs et les comportements d'auto-sabotage ont toujours été cruciales dans les relations interraciales entre les Blancs et les Noirs et aussi, dans la perception des afro-Américains en général. Cette question constitue une thématique inspirante pour de nombreux écrivains Noirs, à l'instar de Delores Phillips et Alicia Williams. À travers leurs ouvrages respectifs, *The Darkest Child* (2004) et *Into White* (2016), ces auteurs afro-Américains dépeignent la négative sous-culture noire-Américaine. Cette analyse est fondée sur la socio-critique. L'objectif de cette analyse est de montrer qu'au-delà des relations interraciales et du racisme dans la société Américaine, l'auto-examen profonde des inconduites, violence et crimes, présentant les noirs rien d'autre que des personnes à craindre, s'impose.

Mots clés : Comportements d'auto-sabotage, interraciale, sous-culture, socio-critique, inconduite

Abstract

Blacks' image and the self-sabotaging behaviors have always been crucial in interracial relationship between Blacks and Whites and the perception of black-Americans in general. This issue constitutes an inspiring theme for many Black writers such as Delores Phillips and Alicia Williams. Through *The Darkest Child* (2004) and *Into White* (2016), these African-American writers depict black Americans' negative subculture. This analysis is theoretically indebted to the socio-criticism. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that beyond interracial relationship and racism in the US society, the examination of Blacks innermost being is crucial to detect their misbehaviors, violence and crimes that label them nothing but people to fear.

Key words: Self-sabotaging behaviors, interracial, subculture, socio-criticism, misbehaviors

Introduction

The self-sabotaging behaviors have always been an unstated issue permeating the black American community. It can be seen as a set of behaviors or lack of behavior that actively contribute to negative outcomes. This term also refers to a “wide range of self-harming acts that are seen at high rates among youth in the juvenile justice” (Patricia Kerig, 2017, p1). In the light of African American literature, it constitutes a topical issue that shapes many black American fictions such as *Into White* (2016) by Alicia Williams and *The Darkest Child* (2004) by Delores Phillip.

Sometimes, despite the issue of racial discrimination in the US society, black Americans’ behavior can be seen as the biggest obstacle to their own social and personal achievement. This statement may sound counterintuitive. But in the view of black characters’ interactions in the selected novels, this statement takes on its full meaning. The issue of self-sabotaging behaviors in this analysis touches the negative attitudes of millions of African-Americans which reinforce the stereotypes about the whole Black community.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that self-sabotaging issue described in Randi Pink and Delores Phillips’ novels covers the black identity with pejorative image. This analysis resorts to the socio-criticism. According to Djiman Kasimi (2010), a literary text has a social and historical content that the interpret cannot depart from. Indeed, the socio-criticism aims to bring out the relations existing between the structure of these two selected literary works and the structure of the black American society in which these works are deeply rooted. Then, this theory is helpful in that it permits to examine the textual and ideological traces as inspired by Blacks’ social realities.

The examination of the question of self-sabotaging behaviors involves representations of black people as violent, the lack of education, the acceptance of social plights and the intra-racial disparities that characterize African-Americans’ relationship to one another from childhood to adulthood.

1. Black Americans and Violence

Blacks in America have the infamous representation as violent and troublemakers. Many Blacks have developed different approach of life that characterizes them, and which is full of negativity. Indeed, violence in the black community is shaped by the hostile American society where Blacks undergo racist assaults. For some black Americans, violence can be a

means to respond to racist attacks. This attitude disgraces the whole black community and confirms the others' perception of Blacks as primitive, dangerous, criminal and violent people.

1.1. The Image of Blacks as Troublemakers

It is seen from the observation of black characters in *Into White* and the *Darkest Child* that the African-American community suffers from self-inflicted wounds and racial-based conflicts. As validated by these novels, black Americans contribute to the destruction of their own image.

Throughout *Into White*, many illustrated representations bolster the argument about black Americans as violent people. This social representation seems to be accepted by many African-Americans who use violence as means of expression. It means that, being violent and strong can appear as a sense of pride for an American born with African gene. In support of this argument, Randi Pink writes:

“she is the weakest black girl I’ve ever seen, brush,” another voice announced. “Get backbone, gal! (...) “Get up, girl,” said the black-and-gold pair. “I know, right?” scoffed purple and white. “Black girls don’t act like that. We need to snatch her black card.” Deanté took a small step toward me and placed his hand on my left collarbone. In my mind, I broke all five of his fingers. In actuality, I did nothing. “Toya will be just fine when she realizes she ain’t white,” he said before giving my shoulder a slight squeeze. “Edgewood ain’t no place for the weak.” (*IW*:2-P3)

From the above extract, black girls and boys are supposed to be strong and violent, by nature. When a black-American acts or appears physically weak, he is pointed as not acting Black. Then, as a “Negro” any black child must have a smidgen of violence running in his blood. Accordingly, for Dante’s friends, Toya’s reaction is “acting White” or faking White. This reaction means that Blacks have to live differently in a white dominated society where social living styles are tailored according to Whites’ living standards. Also, Deanté’s reaction is a way to teach Toya how to resist. Hence, to overcome racial prejudices, she must be strong and violent or “act black” (*IW*:144). However,

Act black as in sag your hundred-dollar jeans down around your knees. Act black as in blast hard-core rap in the Edgewood High parking lot. Act black as in hang behind the school talking Ebonic bullcrap with idiots who likely won’t graduate when you’re in the top tenth percentile of your (*IW*:134)

From Toya’s definition of “acting Black”, it can be noticed that blackness implies negativity, looking different with different lifestyle. As a matter of fact, “acting Black” can be seen as a downside of the African-American identity. Black Americans alter their lifestyle, to

be seen as different, unwanted, violent and negative. Deanté's misbehavior is the result of his attempt to play his role as a Black. From this point, "being black" and "acting black" are two different notions. "Being Black" means to originate from black ancestry, or being born American with African blood running in one's genes. The fact to "act black" is rather a state of mind and a behavior associated with African-Americans. Therefore, the fact to be violent or troublemaker can be interpreted as a deliberate choice of some colored people. It means that, consciously and without any constraint from vicissitudes of economic or social life, some colored men decide to be seen as dangerous and Deanté embodies this social class of Blacks.

From *Into White*, there is a confirming sense of African-American status as unsociable peoples. That is why Toya wonders: "How could such a small group make such an uproar? That's how I felt about the black race as a whole, really. Hovering at around twentyish percent of the population, they made such a large presence of themselves. It was so embarrassing. (*IW*:18). Presumably, Randi Pink's novel demonstrates that Blacks' image is associated with violence and crimes in America. Their actions can be seen as self-sabotaging behaviors and actions which confirm of stereotypes against African-American cultural identity. for Pennie Murray (2015:21):

Statistics show that, compared to their European male counterparts, African American males are plagued with a negative social image, such as higher imprisonment and criminality rate (45% to 30% white males), more drug (cocaine use only: 17.1 to 9.9 white males) and alcohol abuse (75% to 87.1% white males), higher homicide (33.4% to 3.3% white males) and suicide rates (5.5% to 3.4% white males), higher unemployment (12.2% to 5.4% white males), and more mental disorders (16% to 10.9 white males), the total opposite of the prototypical characteristics of leadership.

However, Delores Phillips' novel is analyzed on the basis of textual arguments that motivate black characters to engage in misbehaviors. First, many black Americans' violent lifestyle is justified by their quest for revenge. Indeed, some Black people turn to violence, as response to humiliations and injustices. This revenge can be seen as a defending honor, a demonstration of power, a punishment, or a simple aggression. In *The Darkest Child*, Junior Fess symbolizes Blacks' quest for revenge. His actions and projects are motivated by his will to restore the honor and dignity of his family. Junior's revolution originates from the social injustices he has been victim of. The belief that his uncle was murdered by Chad Lowe, the spokesman of the White cab company, has psychologically sharpened Juniors' quest for revenge. Junior's reaction shows that Blacks' involvement in violence can be motivated by

the deep resentment from social injustices. Therefore, violence in Blacks' lifestyle can be described as a response to impunity in the US society. The culture of impunity in the US reinforces Blacks' perception of an American government which condones Whites' crimes and brutality. From the desire of revenge to the actions of reinforcement of supremacy, each group fan the flame of violence. Accordingly, clashes among white and black Americans continues to sharpen Blacks' violent nature.

The representation of African-Americans as troublemakers constitutes the main factors influencing Blacks and Whites' relationship. As a matter of fact, race matters in the question of social distancing between Whites and Blacks, but African-Americans' behavior is one of the key factors that pollute their relationship to the others. They are considered as a threat. In Delores' novel, Whites' fear of Blacks' attacks creates social distancing. This point is illustrated in Tangy's conversation with Veatrice:

I arrived at the White mans' house to find Miss Veatrice blocking my entrance. "Hey, honey," (...) I'm glad you came, but I can't let you in. Bakker says you can't work here anymore. He says he won't stand for having niggers in his house, not with the way they're acting around here. He says they burned down half the town." "I had nothing to do with that, Miss Veatrice," I said. "That's what I told Bakker, but he said it didn't matter. You're one of them, honey, and I can't let you in here. Bakker says if I see you coming, I'm to lock the door, but I didn't think you'd want to do anything to me." (TDC : 281)

This passage highlights Whites' fear that originates from violence which creates social distances and an atmosphere of distrust emerging between white and black people. Therefore, the representation of African-Americans as alienated, stranger, dangerous people or criminals is ongoing. Many examples of portrayals of African Americans in the media have been villains, criminals, uneducated, poor people, welfare abusers. For Marden, Meyer and Engel (1991:221), "African Americans were depicted, but often in subordinate, comical, or stereotypical roles". The portrayal of African Americans lives in media is sometimes consisted of degrading or racists imagery. These stereotypes reinforced in the media and in society in general have cast them as groups that should be feared.

Despite the representations of Blacks as violent people in Delores' novel, there is in part, an erroneous perception about the African-Americans in general. It means that, the generalized perception of Blacks as violent people discredits the whole African-American image and identity. This perception does not reflect the cost realities in the Black communities. All the colored people in the United States of America are not violent, even though white people collectively perceive them as dangerous or violent. Then, a

misperception of Blacks in the US exists, mainly about the question of “Nigger” and “Negro”.

In support of this argument, Delores writes :

“I was angry. “Miss Veatrice, do you know there’s a difference between calling a person a nigger and a Negro?” I asked. “Sure, I do,” she answered, and explained with such simplicity that my anger dissolved and was replaced by pity. “Bakker says all the Negroes moved north. He says the niggers stayed in the south ’cause they don’t have no sense of direction. From Veatrice description of “Negro” and “Nigger”. (TDC : 233)

It can be observed through these lines that some Whites still do not know the difference between both terms referring to African-Americans. Both “Niggers” “Negroes” are seen as dangerous. However, many Blacks in the US are “Niggers”, the negative side of Blackness¹. For Starks Starks (2013:8), the gap between “Niggers” and the other Blacks (Negroes) is huge: “you have blacks and you have niggers. Black people don’t want to cause trouble... A nigger wants to come here and cause trouble all the time. that’s the difference.” Starks explores the Niggers’ attitude that he defines as not a “simply racial slur, it’s a physical entity that personifies the African-American communities’ dark side, whose attitudes are sometimes inexplicable

For Marlyn Frye (1983), a great number of young African-Americans choose the life of crime. She indicates that the American incarceration system is a birdcage with a structural arrangement laid on “war on Drugs”, felony, which has given birth to mass incarceration, that locks the minorities in a subordinate political, social and economic position. black people, who are part of these minorities are targeted by this system. It is then up to them to avoid to be trapped into this system or escape from it, by avoiding to be associated with crimes. Unfortunately, crimes and violence continue to hold them in their position of subculture and dangerous people. Crimes committed by some Blacks directly or indirectly target and affect the whole African-American community.

Therefore, the image of Blacks as dangerous people is mostly revealed by the Black underclass. The fact is that all races have an underclass, but contrary to the other races, black underclass minorities are negatively re-defining and re-shaping the image of the African-American community in America. They actions reinforce the argument that African-Americans are their worst enemies and detriments to their own race.

¹ Blackness can be seen as the shared experience of millions of people over many generations, all of whom are endowed by the creator with the same essential spiritual and physical nature. It is shared in common with all human beings, and yet finds unique expression in people of African descent, by virtue of historical circumstance and physical necessity. (Deborah Gabriel, 2007: 85)

1.2. The Skin-based Clashes in the Black Communities

The issue skin-based clashes among Blacks shows that there is an “unstated problem” within the black-American community. As revealed by William Edward Burghardt DuBois this “unstated problem” is about color-line and colorism which tear apart the African-American community. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, he wrote: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (W.E.B-DuBois, 1903: 15). This quote bespeaks the dimension of the issue of color-line in the American society and the growing gap between light-skinned and dark-skinned African-Americans. Actually, color-clashes among Blacks are globally seen as a color caste system in which the different groups try to dominate.

Randi Pink’s novel touches upon the issue of violence among Blacks and the ideology of superiority. Conflicts in this novel, start with the main protagonist’s altercation with Deanté, a dark-skinned student. Deanté’s reaction has psychologically affected Toya to the extent that she feels ashamed to be a member of the Black community. Then, she wonders:

Of all the races in the world, why did God put me in the only one that didn’t stick up for one another? No, worse, the one that fights members of its own army: dark-skinned against light-skinned, uppity against inner city, good hair against bad hair;. (IW:2)

These lines describe the split between the light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks showing a degrading picture of groups of black communities fighting one another. Then, African-Americans lack solidarity and unity. Hating one another and developing discrimination in their own community ensure the impending failure in the struggle for social and cultural recognition in the Eurocentric American society.

Toya’s reaction demonstrates that Randi’s representation of some Blacks fighting other Blacks is one of the major causes of self-rejection. Here the main protagonist’s confession of her regret for being born black is justified by multiple racist assaults from her peers. Apparently, being born with a dark complexion in the American society can be seen as a crime. Then, skin differences lead the members of the same community to have negative reactions against one another. In this configuration, dark skin color can be a factor of racial assaults among African-Americans. It means that the Black community reflects the racialized American community.

The conception that race is a marker of superiority has also created distance among black Americans too. That is why Toya says:

“Yeah, that’s what I thought!” I said, voice rising. Alex looked on in astonishment, since I’d never raised my voice in public. Even now I felt perilously uncomfortable, but I needed to prove my race to my brother, which sounded ridiculous even to me. (*IW*:40-41).

This extract demonstrates that to be White means to be superior, and the protagonist perfectly plays this role. Her White looking feature also has transformed her self-perception. She could feel superior to the other Blacks. This statement of Toya sounds like a universal representation that human races have agreed on, and have accepted. This conception is one of the important factors which lead millions of Blacks, mainly dark-skinned African-Americans to mold their physical appearance through skin bleaching.

Further, representations in the novel cover the issue of skin-based clashes within African-American families. This aspect of the novel is symbolized by Toya and her brother Alex. It results from these characters that skin differences can be factors of conflict among members of the same family. The symbiotic relation between Toya and her brother turns into a conflicting relationship. Alex her protector’s presence in her life becomes embarrassing. The popularity associated with Toya’s new physical transformation leads her to depart from her relatives, “fighting the members of” her “own army” (*IW*:84-85). This change is the result of privileges and the fame she experiences. And, this psychological impact is seen through the breaking of family ties and the selection of new friends. From Alex to her father and mother, the protagonist creates a psychological and social distance. Her actions testify her will to detach from her biological family. As “Katarina”, a White little girl, she disowns her relatives, and tries hard to construct a new personality. This is illustrated by her shameful presentation of her Black family as “losers”, when she says:

“What’s his deal, anyway?” I realized Amelia’s question was directed to me. “Hello?” “Oh,” I replied. “I don’t really know him.” Pointing them as her family might tarnish her image and reputation. That is why she argues that: “No matter how sad it made me, I couldn’t be Alex’s shield. I was Katarina the powerful. Katarina the beautiful. Most important, Katarina, the girl who fit perfectly in the backseat of their Bug.” (*IW*:122)

Therefore, Toya’s obsession to fame blindly leads her to develop a complete disregard for the people around. Obviously, *Into White* shows evidence about color-conflicts and their impacts on African-Americans. Indeed, the novel pictures the negative influence of some Blacks over their counterparts which discredits the African-American identity.

This issue of color clashes among black Americans has also been depicted by African-American writers like Alica Williams (2019) and Toni Morrison (2015) as the result of the grouping system in the American society, which favors color-clashes within the black community. Through the mother and daughter relationship, both Alicia Williams and Toni Morrison depict how fair-skinned black persons deploy shaming on the basis of color to ridicule darker people. Naturally, this way of behaving sets the basis of color caste system among black-Americans. In Morrison's *God Help the Child*, the story of Bride demonstrates that racial apartheid has shaped and continues to shape the lives of Americans, and secretly molds black Americans too. Many black people connect themselves to other black people of the same skin tone. This way of behaving has been widely exposed in Toni Morrison's fiction, through Sweetness distance to her own baby. Today, the legacy of racism and discrimination is an internal matter sweeping the African-American community. It results from the establishment of social hierarchies based on skin tone. This divisive strategy fosters the ideology that Blacks who are close to European by virtue of having some white ancestry can easily access skin privileges and deploy shaming on their peers.

Therefore, even though social realities are changing in America for the African Americans, there is still as strong sense of position held within their community. Herbert Blumer's (1958) conceptualization of the sense of position is utilized as a framework of race and minority relations. Blumer analyzes the negative feelings or relationships that a member of a group has for another. Typically, the group that has these negative feelings or prejudices towards another is the dominant group. The dominant group rationalizes their position of privileged in society and rationalizes the powerless position of the subordinate group.

In Delores Phillips's novel, the color-clashes are also pictured. Indeed, the different perception to one another affects African-Americans' mutual consideration. Both dark-skinned and light-skinned Blacks raise clashes among themselves, despite their Africanness. Sometimes, Blacks with dark skin color receive racist assault and insult from those of lighter skin color: "Tarabelle's voice startled me. "That big ape do you?" she asked. "Do what? That big ape is my daddy," I said, then I stretched out and tumbled into sleep, spending my riches as I went. (TDC:166) These words draw attention on how Blacks perceive their peers from different skin shade. It seems paradoxical to hear this kind of caricature from a black American. But actually, the racist insults that exclusively come from Whites, are part of Blacks' habits.

In short, the development of disparities between light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks has created a polarized African-American community, in which relationships are characterized by widespread tensions. Accordingly, what black people in America fear from the other social groups, they have already done to themselves and it is going on. This is the racial clash that exists between members of the same African-American community. Then relationships among Black students, parents, children, light-skinned and dark-skinned are determined by the skin tone.

2. Failure in Blacks' Educational and Social Communities

The self-sabotaging behaviors in the African-American community involve Blacks' failure in social achievement and realization. In fact, education plays a meaningful role in African-Americans' social achievement. It appears as an important challenge for many black families to make up. Regarding the attitude of teenage characters in the novels, education is revealed as a failure for many African-American families who give less importance to it. This sequence of the analysis displays the way millions of colored people develop self-destructing image, as the result of educational failure. Also, it shed light on African-Americans' acceptance of their social plights.

2.1. Education: The Basis of Blacks' Failure

Within the framework of education and personal development, the selected novels hover over the issue of parents' resignation to children's education. Each writer describes this issue in a particular way. In *Into White*, parents' negative effect on their children's education is described by the lack of stability in the African-American families. This instability is often caused by troubles and violence in many Black families. Violence and trouble among parents can negatively impact children's education, and the story of the main protagonist pictures this reality. For Toya, "The only things my mother and father ever had in common were their mutual regard for Unsolved Mysteries and Jesus Christ. Outside of those two interests, they fought about everything." (*IW*:6) From Toya's remark, her parents are constantly opposed about everything. This opposition is the bedrock of constant conflict. Knowing that the child's education is based on family stability, troubles between parents can alter the child's mindset. In fact, children are likely to be violent when they are raised in an unstable environment which exposes them to parents' fights. Then, violence can shape or misshape their psyche. Unfortunately, this representation is a subtle way of picturing some African-American

families as factors of children's social failure and brutality. Families become the places where children learn and experience violence.

In Delores Phillips' novel, the issue of parents who play little or no role in the education of their children is pictured in a more realistic way. *The Darkest Child* focuses on the lack of education of many black Americans as one of the main causes of their failure to social integration. Indeed, the first lines of Dolores Philips novel show the difficult life the main protagonist of the novel will be confronted to. Willingly or unwillingly, she has to comply to what her mother dictates. The scene of various ups and downs in a teenager's life in an African-American family is set. Tangy's story describes how the influence of parents on a child's life can be detriment to the future and mental development of this child.

Also, *The Darkest Child* shows to what extent education is not the priority in many African-American families. More importantly, the novel points out the role of African-American parents in teenagers' deviant behavior. Tangy's experience shows the irresponsibility of some Black parents who deprive their children of school education. Indeed, the protagonist is compelled to stay home for domestic chores despite her high IQ. This sad reality is experienced by all her siblings, and she has no power to escape. Like the others, she must endure this treatment and decision of her mother, that ruined their lives. This situation is not the one that the protagonist expected for her life. Unfortunately, she has to cope with it, as she assumed:

Domestic servitude was not what I desired for myself, but she had only to speak and I would do anything she asked. It was my obligation to obey her though I did not want to be like my older brothers, Harvey and Sam, who seemed to breathe at our mother's command. They were men, and their lack of initiative disturbed me, although I knew they could not just leave our mother's house. Departure required consideration of consequences and a carefully planned escape. (*TDC*:1)

In this extract, Tangy shares her frustrating. The negative impact of her mother consequently impedes the lives of her children. Like Rozelle Quinn, many black American parents do not favor their children's education for an actual integration in social life. The lack of education is a social disadvantage for many Blacks in America and can be pointed as one of the major causes of Blacks' failure in the American society. Knowing that education is the bedrock of personal development, it requires a real investment to ensure the child's success.

For the protagonist's mother, there is no guarantee that school can lead her children to success. This misconception shows the way parents willingly deprive their children of their legal right to education. The impact of the failure of Tangy's mother to educate her children is

visible in their behavior. None of them has a secured and well-paying job. To ensure a better life. Tangy's brothers turn to robbery. Tangy's brothers, Sam and Harvey are illustrative figures of troublemakers and robbers. This is the result of their mothers' carelessness for their education. They have no respect for social rules. They are rather violent and criminals.

Furthermore, through the character of Rozelle, it appears that many African-Americans fail to achieve their role as protectors of their children. At their early age, children have to face realities of life. Tangy's mother is the embodiment of these types of parents who force their children to leave school and manage to bring money home. In the novel, Rozelle reiterates Mattie's sentiment by saying: "My girls ain't nothing. If it wadn't for my boys bringing us money, we'd be in bad shape. Not one of my girls ever bring one dime to this house." (*TDC:330*). This extract draws the attention on the responsibility given by some black parents to their adolescent children, and to what extent these parents abandon their parental accountability. These black parents commit their children to family charges and break the social norms that position parents and adults as the main providers and protectors. The fact to expect children to supply money and food whereas parents are valid is a way to expose them to the hazards of life. Like Tangy, countless of black children have their future jeopardized, because of their parents' decision to give less priority to school education.

Parents' incapacity to educate their children is also due to the number of children and the size of families. In the Black communities, the large number of children cannot facilitate the monitoring of children. Being a "Baby mama"² (*TDC:72*) of nine Children, with different fathers is not easy to deal with. According to Taleeb Starkes, one of the real backgrounds of Blacks' undereducated communities is also caused by the generating of babies, when parents have no sound financial budgets. He supports that:

Baby Mamas are short-sighted, low educated, self-entitled incubators who are complicit in perpetuating this HoG epidemic. Despite burdening the conceived children with a dim future and taxpayers with another mouth to feed, their multi-partners birthing marathon thrives. I use the word "partners" loosely because as previously stated, the partnership doesn't extend pass the procreation phase. Consequently, these babies who are product of people that shouldn't have had children in first place are likely to become JUVINIGGERS. (Starkes, 2013:118)

He claims that many black parents are more concerned with procreation but remain careless for their children's education. Children's education and social integration is done at their

² "Baby mama" refers to black American with many children from different fathers. "Baby mamas" are considered as procreating entity that subsidizes the Black subculture.

expense. These children shape their education in street and are pointed as useless for the society, if not, wrongdoers. Mostly the “Baby Mamas” like Rozelle have no income and rely on the government’s financial assistance. As more kid equals more money, these black women contribute nothing to the American society, and are always expecting everything from the government.

Moreover, young girls with no real education quickly become pregnant, thus perpetuating the cycle of “Baby Mamas”. Indeed, the issue of sexuality and unplanned pregnancies is blatant in the black communities. It has been depicted in Randi Pink’s *Girls like Us* (2019). This fiction work portrays the life of four teenage girls who deal with unplanned early pregnancies. Without sexual education, these innocent girls are forced to grow into motherhood. From this novel, Randi Pink offers a sobering account of the reality young uneducated girls faced before abortion was made legal in the US. Definitely, careless sexuality is a standard in Blacks’ relationship. Indeed, babies from prostitution and mindless mating are victims of their parents’ distances and are let to their own account. As pictured by Delores Phillips through the relationship between Judy, Tangy and their mother, it appears that the time spent during the child’s conception is probably the only significant time that some parents are really connected to their children. Also, regarding the absence of Tangy’s father, it appears that some black parents play no significant role in the education of their children. Clearly, Tangy, story shows that in the African-American community, some fathers are not really expected to play significant role in a child’s life, or even abandon the mother.

In short, black children’s failure in the American society can be put down parents’ resignation to their children’s education. Some parents sometimes are lousy for letting their children grow with a great passion for violence. Also, some children even can’t see their fathers for months and years. These children grow in violent environment with a careless mother as portrayed by Randi Pink and Delores Phillips. Then children who are exposed to such parents end up poor or pregnant or even wrongdoers, as the byproduct of their social environment. Then education in African-American community is still a challenging issue to sort out. Many black children’s lives collapse because of the lack of investment in education, and this issue appears as a deliberate choice of some Black parents.

2.2. The Afro-Pessimism: The Acceptance of Socio-Cultural Position

From the different representations in the selected novels, Afro-pessimism can be seen as the “social death”. Let us say, the death of any massive revival that could permit black

Americans to break the pillars of racism, social plights and cultural downgrading. This social death is materialized by Blacks' acceptance of their social position and the lack of effort to change their realities.

In *The Darkest Child*, Afro-pessimism is presented in a way of black Americans' carelessness for their social realities. Actually, millions of black Americans live in poor position and living conditions. These living conditions emerge from their laziness, self-destruction and acceptance of their plights. Indeed, the novel focuses on the main causes of Blacks' plights in the US society. It is revealed from this novel that the lack of education and the issue of victimization are factors of Blacks' social backwardness. Indeed, education facilitates integration in professional domains. Unfortunately, the high rate of uneducated Blacks is also an indicator of low rate in professional realm. Most of the uneducated African-Americans retire from school training, at their early age to look for modest jobs. Tangy testifies that:

I was in ninth grade, which in itself was miraculous, considering I had never set foot in an eighth-grade classroom. Academically, I surpassed my peers, but at home I was a complete failure. At the age of twelve, my mother's children were expected to drop out of school, get a job, and help support the family. (TDC:13)

In fact, the lack of education can result in the failure to access better paying jobs. Many among them who do not choose violence are confined to labor. It means that, since there are less alternatives for an uneducated Black, he is compelled to accept or look for some odd jobs. Delores Phillips writes that:

On Wednesdays the stores did not open, and if anyone passed through town, the only people they were likely to see were the Negro men sitting or standing about the platform of the train depot. Every day, except Sunday, the men would come into town and wait around for some form of labor to be offered. My brother, Sam, was one of them. (TDC:16)

The situation of Negro men who wait for labor to be offered is a consequence of the lack of schooling. Thus, the lack of education can keep African-Americans in the need for subsistence living. Unwillingly, Tangy's brother is doomed to share this bleak life with many other Blacks.

Yet, Blacks' social position justify Whites' perception of them. Indeed, the situation of the main character's family favors their humiliation, by white characters. They are underclass people who begged for subsistence jobs in Whites' houses:

We hear the Griggs is looking to hire a girl, and Tangy Mae is right good at cleaning." Almost immediately there was a change in the young man's

demeanor. “You’re a nigger?” he asked, then yelled back into the house, “Kirk! Dave!” He turned once more to face my mother, and said, “Every five minutes another bunch of you niggers come knocking on this door. What do you think we are? (TDC:200)

The fact to apply for odd jobs, assigns poor reputation to black people. The young man’s reaction gives an inside about Whites’ perception of Blacks’ social position. Indeed, these jobs clearly define the position of a great number of Blacks in the American workforce. Centuries after slavery, many African-Americans still work as Whites’ servants. Even though some colored people in America compete with the other social groups in all professional realms, many black People are underclass people and are predominantly living in poor conditions. It sounds sometimes like an accepted social backwardness, when countless of black Americans do nothing to change their position in order to improve their living situation.

To condone their social failure, many African-Americans point out racism as the main cause. They develop victimization, based on racism. Indeed, victimization is used as justification to Blacks’ failure. For many colored men, racial discriminations are rigged by white people for African-Americans to fail. Knowing that racism is a lurid matter pervading the American society, it cannot be denied that racism and White privileged society influence negatively African-Americans’ education, and their integration to the labor force. But African-Americans use mainly this alibi that failure is an option. In fact, it appears as a common belief that racism is a so pervasive matter controlling the US society that individual effort cannot overthrow or overcome.

Another element operating within the framework of family socialization is learned helplessness. Learned helplessness, as defined by Murray L. Pennie (2015:127), is a

mindset that leads individuals to believe that they have no control over the events occurring in their life. Or, that the negative events occurring in their life are because of their own failure, which they have no control over. In essence, helplessness is a state of mind resolving that the negative occurrences in life are inescapable or at least seemingly inescapable, which undermines an individual’s ability to apply the appropriate adaptive responses.

Then, according to him, when African-Americans accept a mindset of learned helplessness, they become self-deprecating, they value helpless as an effective coping mechanism; and they become proficient at creating an entirely new reality scripted by the deception of helplessness. Regarding African-Americans’ social realities, the issue of afro-pessimism is deeply impacted by the mindset of learned helplessness, favored by sociopolitical realities in the US.

In one word, the effortless acceptance of social realities underlies the pervasive issue of African-Americans' self-destructing image. Under the influence of racism many Blacks adopt pessimistic attitude and develop the argument that racism is an inherent issue in American society. The lingering belief is taught to children from birth to fixate their position as other and unwanted people. This mentality destroys their power of reaction against social plights and lead many of them to develop a sense of victimhood. It can be seen that the truer hindrance to the consistent progress of African Americans is in their acceptance of social plights, servility and inferiority. This is a form of self-doubt and a rejection of their own competence. Therefore, colored men dismiss their abilities and are convinced that they are incapable of any accomplishments.

Conclusion

From the analysis of Delores Phillips' *The Darkest Child* and Randi Pink's *Into White*, it follows that the issue of self-sabotaging attitude is a factual issue that permeates the African-American community. These black American fictions explore the self-sabotaging question as a set of behaviors characterized by violence, failure and victimization that negatively impact the image of Blacks in America.

Delores Phillips and Randi Pink's novels express that literature which describe African Americans' social realities and promote the black identity. In their quest for social depiction, their novels make the satire of black Americans' self-sabotaging behaviors. Blacks' daily misdemeanors, crimes and violence, reinforce the representation of the white people and stereotypes that label them all, nothing but uneducated troublemakers. The fact to confirm the negative representation of them can create social distancing from the other social groups, which can be mistakenly perceived as racist facts.

It comes out that Black Americans are planting the seeds of their self-destruction. It is evident that things cannot be perfect in blacks' lifestyles. But through their actions and bad habits, they are making things worse on themselves, and the whole African-American community. Unfortunately, African-Americans do not take responsibility, individually and collectively, to stop this self-sabotage by members of their own community. It must be acknowledged that it is urgent to take actions for the restoring of the black image.

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