

A Journey of Racism to Reformation with Special Reference to Just Above My Head of James Baldwin

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Abstract -

Racism spread around the nation particularly within the South America. Black people were treated upsettingly. They did not have full rights as the white citizens enjoys. Because to these realities, numerous black writers reacted with a set of scholarly works and utilized their abilities in composing to reflect on their life. Hence, they have come to an aesthetic level and delivered imaginative works. African American writing includes verse and slave narratives. The Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements played awesome parts within the improvement of African American writing. Nowadays, African American writing constitutes a premise within the writing of African American writing. The present paper is an endeavor to deliver a clear see to the point on how African American writing created and changed throughout time. It centers on the issues of prejudice and separation with the assistance of Just Above My Head of James Baldwin.

Keywords - Gender Issues, Discrimination, Inequality, Awareness etc.

Introduction -

African American writing has turned into an unavoidable piece of American writing and culture. It is just with the huge portrayal of African American writing that American culture stands to be washed down from the issue of racial separation. African American writing has analyzed the issue of racial segregation in the entirety of its philosophical, existential and epistemological angles. It has gone from mid seventeenth century with slave stories to the present occasions with all its socio-artistic extravagance starting a scholarly and social change in the texture of American culture. Subsequently, this exploration work is an endeavor to manage the development with the extraordinary reference to *Just Above My Head* of James Baldwin of African American Literature which has showed up because of some chronicled occasions. It furnishes the pursuers with a review of this sort of writing beginning from the seventieth century with the importation of African slaves by Europeans till the Ninetieth century which was depicted by the improvement of African American works in the region of writing.

Prejudice and disparity are probably going to be one reason of the improvement of African-American Literature. In this manner, the ebb and flow explore work will attempt to demonstrate the

interrelated relations between African-American writing and James Baldwin's work as its magnum opus of test. The recorded foundation of African American writing, it manages the primary African American developments from the frontier to the contemporary field.

Just Above My Head is described by Hall Montana and manages his recollections of his adored sibling Arthur just as of companions and different relatives. There is a purposeful complexity between the ways of life and mentalities of the more seasoned age of African Americans, comprising of the guardians of Hall and Arthur Montana and Julia and Jimmy Miller, and those of the more youthful age. In spite of the fact that still criticized by racial partiality, the youngsters have better chances to make budgetary progress and self-acknowledgment. Lobby's diaries principally concern the battles of Arthur, Julia, and himself to endure and develop in a white-overwhelmed society.

The story starts with two years after Arthur's demise however quickly flashes back to the times of his and Hall's youth, toward the start of the Korean War. All the young fellows in the story live under the shadow of the draft. Lobby is in the long run drafted and puts some distance between alternate characters while he is serving in Korea.

One of the most important people in the lives of Arthur and Hall is Julia Miller, who at the age of eleven is inspired by the Holy Ghost and is in

constant demand as a preacher at black fundamentalist churches. The book is flavored with many excerpts from Julia's sermons as well as abundant quotations from traditional gospel hymns. Baldwin attempts to give his work the feeling of a musical composition, thereby suggesting that music has played a large part in the survival of African. In *Just Above My Head*, James Baldwin echoes themes of the importance of the church in the black community, homosexuality, and deep social concerns.

Just Above My Head, Baldwin's novel tells the story of a black gospel singer, Arthur Montana, and his brother and manager, Hall Montana, who narrates the account of Arthur's rise to international stardom and his death of a heart attack in the basement men's room of a London pub. The cast of characters, which is rich and various, includes Jimmy Miller, Arthur's accompanist and lover, and his sister Julia, a child evangelist and Jimmy's sister, as well as the "Trumpets of Zion" gospel quartet, whose members started singing gospel music together when they were teenagers. The quartet includes Arthur Montana and three friends who meet violent ends; one goes insane, one is murdered, and the other turns to drugs. The novel covers a span of thirty years in the lives of these friends and associates with settings ranging from Harlem to Africa, Korea, Paris, and the Deep South.

The plot is complex. Hall Montana is drafted and sent to Korea. Julia abandons the ministry, is raped by her father, then becomes a prostitute and takes a succession of lovers, including Hall and an African tribal chief. All of this unfolds against the story of Arthur Montana's rise to stardom and his search for love, primarily homosexual. Told as it is against the social ethics. The story of Julia brings forth issue of gender bias. Despite of biological relations as daughter and father, Julia's father molested her which catch the global attention of human discrimination on the cost of color, caste and creed. Baldwin has woven this tapestry for the social concern and compels us to think over by the blacks and the whites on equal level.

Hall Montana describes his reaction to the news of his brother Arthur's death in the opening of James Baldwin's novel *Just Above My Head* as he sits in an empty home that he shares with his family

on a Thursday morning. Here, the Reader gets a glimpse of a prevailing theme in this novel i.e. the consequences of love in all of its forms, be it returned or refused, praised, accepted, or condemned. Hall's reaction to news of his brother's death leads him through a memory laden soliloquy in which he recounts telling memories of upcoming themes of the story to come while he digests the news that he has received. As a prelude of things to come, Hall asks the reader, "Do you know, friend, how a brother loves his brother, how mighty, how unanswerable it is to be confronted with the truth beneath that simple word? Simple. Word. Yes. No. Everything becomes unanswerable, unreadable, in the face of an event yet more unimaginable than one's own death.

It is one's death, occurring far beyond the confines of one's imagination. Or, surely, far beyond the confines of my imagination. And do you know, do you know, how much my brother loved me? How much he loved me! And do you know I did not know it? Did not dare to know it: do you know? No. No. No." In this passage, we see Hall questioning the reader's understanding, and indeed his own understanding of love. This questioning of love, particularly as it will develop in context to homosexuality and race is significant to the work as a whole because it questions the existence of love and how it manifests in settings of difficulty and/or discrimination. This theme is further alluded to when Hall later shares his mother's feelings about New York after the death of Arthur. "She doesn't like this city because it robbed her of her son, and she feels that the people in the church, when they turned against him, became directly responsible for his death."

The reader does not yet know all the details of this turn, Arthur from the church, nor the church from Arthur, but it would seem that conflicting drives, values, and discrimination were at play. The story can be presumed to be pretty well saturated with locations, people, and events that created strong emotional ties, ties based upon strong sentiments like love and hate, that eventually soured over the course of time, finally completely rotting after the death of Arthur. The ties are strong enough to drive Arthur and Hall's mother away from her surviving family in New York, all the way to New Orleans. Love and

discrimination, race and sexuality, family and society, play a pivotal, strong roles in this story.

As the story goes on, the main characters are formally introduced: Hall Montana, Arthur Montana, Julia Miller, and Jimmy Miller. Baldwin manifests himself in each of these characters in *Just Above My Head*. Hall Montana represents Baldwin the novelist. Hall is a conservative heterosexual who leads the typical American life. He is the quintessential image of middle class, white picket fence suburban life. This was a life style that Baldwin himself once strived to live. He worked diligently to ignore his homosexual urges and live a typical heterosexual lifestyle. He learned over the course of some years that this lifestyle would never suit him and accepted his homosexuality and lived his life as a non-conformist. Hall is the representation of how Baldwin saw his life playing out if he had chosen to live wearing a mask of heterosexuality and conformity. Hall's brother Arthur represents Baldwin's chosen path. Arthur is an open homosexual African-American male, and he experiences many forms of discrimination in the course of his life as an intersectional member of society. His life parallels Baldwin's in many ways, including his exodus to Europe to live a more comfortable life without the omnipresent discrimination of life in America.

Julia Miller represents Baldwin's carnality and spirituality. Both Julia and Baldwin were childhood evangelists who turned from spirituality and devoted themselves to carnal delights for a period of their lives at right around the same age. Julia and Baldwin both also shared an unfortunate upbringing under an abusive father. Julia was repeatedly raped by her father, and Baldwin was beaten regularly and intensely. Corresponding with the theme of love and its hardships and its fickleness, Julia and Hall at one point in the story have a relationship that comes to an end and sets Hall in to melancholy for a while when Julia abandons him and leaves for Africa. Jimmy Miller goes on to become Arthur's life partner. He parallels Baldwin's pursuit of love and acceptance in his own life. Jimmy finds love in Arthur that mirrors the type of love that Baldwin himself sought out, continuing the prevalent theme of manifestations of love and homosexuality that are the basis of the novel.

Just Above My Head tells a story that spans approximately thirty plus years. In this time, the reader follows the lives of the four characters listed above. This story though, through and through, is based upon love. Hall, Arthur, Julia, and Jimmy's lives, their stories, all revolve around love. Hall experiences unrequited love when he pursues Julia, and ultimately finds love in Ruth whom he builds a family with. Arthur struggles with his career and his homosexuality until he accepts who he is and finds love in Jimmy that lasts for the remainder of his life. Julia loses herself in her search for love and is forced to leave America for Africa to trace her roots and find peace. Jimmy finds love in Arthur and loses it upon his death. He then tours the country alone as he did with Arthur to learn to love himself.

A big new novel by James Baldwin is always of major interest, and there are scenes here of Baldwin at his earthy, lyrical best. But this rambling book lacks overall shape, and Baldwin seems self-consciously intent on sour lip-chewing, on talking around and beyond white readers: to see him crumpling into jive-and-slap insularity is dismaying, he whose anger isn't by nature clogged and stingy but churchly, prophetic, and outcast. The chief narrative here belongs to Arthur Montana, the "Soul Emperor," a famous black gospel singer done-in finally by the combined injuries of being good of heart, black, musical, and homosexual; but the book is really a troika of three barely-yoked-together themes, all of which Baldwin has done better by before.

Baldwin is a brilliant writer of ever about how it was and is. The touring the South in the Fifties, going into a bar or a store if you're black. There is the portrait of Sister Julia, a child preacher, her calling ended at the hands of her brutalizing father, then her placeless wandering as a black, childless woman in a white world. And the love scenes, as usual with Baldwin, are maudlin, but Arthur's first love affair with one of his back-up singers, Crunch, is very moving and deftly done. Wonderful, too, are the church concerts, the singing and testifying but the sermonizing that precedes or follows them dispirits. Baldwin seems to have described the way which is already leaded by the leading Afro-American writers about their identity, ethics, and indigenous emergence along with its utmost hoping of better tomorrow.

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