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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**FEAR AND VIOLENCE IN RICHARD  
WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English in Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree**

Candidates:

**Ms. Ms. Nadia ALLAL**

**Ms. Wiam DERGUINI**

Supervisor:

**Mr. Bachir SAHED**

**2020**

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## **DEDICATION**

*To*

*My everlasting support my father AMMAR*

*To*

*My charming queen my mother HAYAT*

*To*

*My Brothers and sisters*

*Abdelghani, Abdelrahim, Chahra, Sara, and Tounes*

*To*

*My nieces and nephew*

*Rihem, Selena, Ilene, and Saif-Eddin*

*To*

*My fiance and love of my life Zine-Edine and his family*

*To*

*My friends*

*Yousra, Yasmine, Sarrah, Sihem, Nadia*

*Thank you for your support and endless love*

**WIAM**

## **DEDICATION**

*To my family and friends, I could not have done this without you.*

*Thank you for all of your support along the way.*

**NADIA**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present study examines fear and violence in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. It investigates the situation of the black African Americans facing problems of invisibility and white justice in the American society. Hence, the study employs Psychoanalysis and Critical Race theories. It analyses the characters' behaviour and gives a better understanding of the psychological issues, with reference to race, law, and power. Hence, this dissertation is divided into two main chapters. Chapter one introduces the socio-historical context and the theoretical framework. The second chapter explores the themes of fear and violence, and the concept of invisibility in Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

**Keywords:** fear, violence, race, invisibility, white justice

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## INTRODUCTION

Behind every great man or author there must be a very miserable life, the extraordinarily strong person of today is the deeply depressed man of the past. Richard Nathan Wright is among the few African American writers, who had had a chance to shine in the American literature. He had reached his purpose before he died. By his works he demonstrates the reality of racial society at that time. Moreover, his life, childhood, and adulthood affected his writings entirely. He proved that poverty, misery, weakness, inequality, injustice, fear, and violence are just experiences and life testes that only the strongest person can pass. Wright considers every struggle and issue in his early life as a motive to build a place in the American society. He admitted that sometimes even family cannot be the shield that protects us from danger. Instead, everyone must learn to protect himself.

The Harlem Renaissance plays a significant role in the United States and African American history. Some historians like Cary Wintz, Langston Hughes consider the Harlem Renaissance era as an awakening of art, and literature (Carreiro, 1). Thus, Harlem Renaissance writers such as Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston are the best-known authors; they had a motivation to write about and express the black culture in their country. Moreover, Richard Wright as a person of colour; his writings are almost about his experiences; his famous novel is *Native Son* 1940, he recreates real-life experiences.

Fear in *Native Son* plays an important role; it is considered as a motivator for Bigger Thomas' crimes and different decisions. In addition, the novel shows also the

fear of white's community towards the blacks that causes them harm, hate, and violence.

Violence is not always the sign of brutality or misbehaviour, often it must be considered as a natural response towards any abnormal attitude. It is known that African Americans were suffering from slavery for decades. Nowadays, they still suffer from racial discrimination. Such environment which is full of negative energy creates violence. African Americans attempt to use violence as a tool or method of self-defense.

Fear and violence are among the issues which face blacks daily. In addition, invisibility is where identity, personality, and talent are not recognized, not valued, and not worthy. Blacks suffer from white's blindness which causes endless problems, such as, to get a better position in the American society. This is because American people reject them, which creates the sense of inferiority and self-worthlessness.

American history started with the slaughter of entire race and control of the whole area, this brutality is considered as unforgivable and unforgettable massacre throughout history. Later, the American people brought the Africans as slaves. Such events reveal that white used to use violence against blacks. The difference in skin colour is used as an excuse to discriminate and segregate these minorities. Racism, apartheid, and favouritism have negative effects on the blacks. Which help in creating the monstrous version of the African Americans, where they become brutal and dangerous. Moreover, blacks start acting violently to get attention and to get their rights as human beings, forgetting that these misbehaviours of the black people get them in troubles more than offering the solutions of their cause.

Violence against women is a serious problem; the term used to describe some actions including rape, physical assault, murder, and different forms of violence used against women. Some examples of violence in Richard Wright' *Native Son* are two girls Bessie and Mary, who have suffered and experienced different types of violence, including rape.

This work aims to examine the themes of fear and its creation of violence in *Native Son* through focusing and using Psychoanalytical and Critical Race theories. It is going to investigate the situation of blacks which they have faced fear and violence in American society.

This research seeks to answer the following questions: The crime was an accident, why Bigger did not surrender instead of doing much more of crimes?, referring to the violent crime that Bigger Thomas was responsible for, Who is guilty Bigger or society? In addition, what was the reason behind Bigger's fear?

Many critics have criticized Richard Wright's work. Among them is Ellison, who asserts that *Native Son* presents us a deep and sensible realistic perception of the life of those who lived in the invisibility (Silva, 127). He claimed that Wright's power to convert

The American Negro impulse toward self-annihilation and 'going-under-ground' into a will comfort the world to evaluate his experience honestly and knows his findings unashamedly in the guilty conscience America was his most important achievement (Ellison, 94).

Moreover, In 1971 New York Times review an impressive novel, yet Addison Gayle refers to the new work as 'The most important work of fiction by an afro-

American since *Native Son*'' and other references could be produced to show us that Richard Wright's book is now generally held to be the foremost work of Afro-American fiction and one of the critical African novels of the century (Addison, 35).

# CHAPTER ONE

## SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The American history marked unforgettable events, especially the massacres and the genocides. The start of the American establishment was full of violence and oppression. The American society had faced the Great Depression, heightened racism, and segregation during the 1930s. Racial tensions created violence and fear between blacks and whites, such intentions led to several conflicts between the two. While intense racial prejudice led to public amenities, such as schools and public transportation, to be segregated by colour.

*Native Son* (1940) is an essential figure in the development of African American literature, with characters and settings that provide a vivid portrayal of economic and psychological effects of racism. Wright attempt to portray racism, segregation, fear, and violence in his novel as his main aspects. These aspects are vividly introduced to show the struggles of Bigger Thomas with poverty and racism throughout the book.

Racism has been a matter of question in the United States for decades, whenever blacks and whites wanted to live together race differences and prejudice attitudes always caused problem. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has called America a “fundamentally racist society” (Cheney, 04-10) accusing the white society for its oppression. Richard Wright emphasizes the psychological impact of race logic on African Americans, receiving praise, as Irving Howe wrote, for bringing “out into open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture” (Moore, 665-669).

The novel presents the negative impact of violence on the psyche of African Americans; it shows the results of racial oppression on the behaviors of blacks. And the hypocrisy of the white justice.

### **1. An Insight into the Negro's Psyche**

*Native Son* 1940 is the perfect presentation that portrays a horrific struggle between black Americans and other races, founded on racial ties in the United States of America. It shows the experiences of Bigger Thomas and the possible mistakes that men like him can do, to bring attention to themselves. Oppression, discrimination, segregation drive African Americans such as bigger Thomas to escape reality. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories connect to the sufferings of the protagonist Bigger, on the light of such theories the psychology of the character would be better understood.

Connolly asserts that literature is a therapy that heals the wounded souls of the readers, helps them to find a way out of their problems and find their souls through reading, "Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice" (19). On the other hand, psychoanalysis is a form of treatment that seeks to cure mental disorders, by exploring the relationship of conscious and unconscious components in the mind (Endraswara, 96- 97).

Literature and psychoanalysis are strongly linked, because literature is the development of a psychological process as well as the perception and creativity of the author. Thus, psychoanalysis is used as a means to understand literature. Besides, psychoanalysis also reflects the significance of the interaction between conscious and unconscious elements in the mind in understanding human nature.

From 1890 to 1939 Sigmund Freud developed the psychoanalytic theory and has its roots in his writings. He is seen as the first person to draw the unconscious mind of a human being. He assumes that unconsciousness is a mechanism that defines essential and complex actions (Senium, 55).

In addition, the concept of human beings is motivated, even guided, by impulses, fears, needs, and struggles of which they do not realize-That is, unconsciousness- was among the most progressive ideas of Sigmund Freud, and still defines classical psychoanalysis currently (Tayson 12). Tayson also states that people need to find a way to learn and understand their selves, the real causes of their suppressed wounds, doubts, guilty desires and unresolved tensions, clinging on them in veiled, deformed, and self-defeating methods (Tayson, 13).

Psychoanalysis is regarded as a high-level theory which comprises numerous sub-theories, such as 'psycho-sexual development', 'defense mechanism', and 'theory of instincts'. To certain point, it seeks to unify all of them (Farrell, 21).

Freud in his career analyzes the human mind in terms of the three components that he names, the Id, Ego, and Superego. He argued that our impulses and unconscious conflicts lead to three areas of the mind that fight for dominance as we grow from infancy, childhood, and adulthood. It is essential to analyze all three to gain an insight about why people act the way they do. This helps to understand the reasons behind such behaviors. The id is almost the only aspect of the psyche determined within birth, and it is the origin of our physical urges, instincts, impulses, sexual and violent drive. The id is totally the unconscious side of the psyche. Sigmund Freud defines it as, it is "the source of all psychic energy" (Freud, 38-45). He also suggested that it is the primitive component of personality existed wholly within the unconscious.

The Id, meeting the basic needs, is devoted solely to the gratification of prohibited desires of all kinds: desire for power, for sex, for amusement, for food without consideration of the consequences (Tayson, 25). In other words, the idea is that needs should be met immediately. The individual does not think of what is coming after submission of his desires, and the most important thing is this process is that the person thinks only of the target instead of consequences. It operates on the pleasure principle which is the idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences. The Id is the only part of the psyche that is present at birth and it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives.

The Id is ruled by the pleasure principle, basing on a primary goal that aims to enhance pleasure simultaneously reducing conflicts and problems that are related to achieving pleasures. Freud points to the characteristic manner in which knowledge or thought is interpreted by id as the primary process. In addition, the primary process is considered as sentimental, unreasonable, and illogical “and filled with fantasies and preoccupations of sex, aggression, selfishness and envy” (Barlow and Durand, 25). The unconscious mind attempts to include the mysterious and unreachable aspect of the personality. It generally equals the dark side of personality.

...the logical laws of thought do not apply in the id, and this is true above all of the law of contradiction. Contrary impulses exist side by side, without cancelling each other out or diminishing each other...no alterations in its mental process is produced by the passage of time (Freud, 106).

According to Sigmund Freud, Bigger Thomas the protagonist of *Native Son* 1940 would likely fit into his idea Id, which is a part of Freud’s structure of personality. The Id “is used by Freud in his structural theory to designate that part of the psyche

which contains repressed wishful and aggressive impulses” (Lear, 254). In addition, Bigger was left in a world full of racism, segregation, violence, class separation, and oppression by the whites. He was obliged to live in such environment and faces all kinds of abuse, due to the lack of humanity and respect that was received from white people. Bigger chooses to run away from reality, which pushed him not to think of the consequences of his behaviours. The one and only thing that matters is to feed his Id, Bigger’s fear led him to kill Merry Dalton, at that moment he was thing only of the way out of her room without being caught. It was his way as a survival instinct, but at the same time was his destructive instinct that got him in the electric chair.

The human urges are naturally governed or dominated by what is called the concept of enjoyment. In other words, these urges or instincts cannot be controlled by the person himself, they represent the chief attribute of psychic energy. Such instincts are hereditary, moreover, is the component of personality with simple instincts seek their first loophole.

Id... contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is fixed in the constitution- above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate in the somatic organization and which finds their first mental expression in id in forms unknown to us (Freud, 02).

The id is considered as the brutal version of the individual’s personality; it seeks only for direct response of activities by making the person incapable to think of further results. The same is seen in *Native Son* (1940), according to Bigger Thomas the id is the survival instinct. The only thing that matters is to get himself out of any possible trouble no matter what it takes. Whenever, a person thinks this way without looking forward. It is possible to make unforgivable mistakes again and again such as crimes.

The desires of the id give rise to the ego, which is the second component of the personality that deals generally with reality. Trying to fulfill such impulses and express them in a manner that is socially appropriate in the world.

It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pept- Cs [Perception-Conscious] ... Moreover, the ego seeks to bring influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and to endeavor to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id (Freud, 25).

The ego is ruled by the reality principle, rather than the pleasure principle that rules the id. It is remarkably the difference between the id and the ego. Which means, the data analysis of the ego is distinguished by logic and reason, also is represented as a secondary part. The ego realizes that other people do have needs and desires, so greedy is not good for anyone in the long run.

According to Freud's structure of the psyche, the Ego is identified as being a coherent organization of mental processes. Freud's conception of the Ego is strongly associated with perception, and it governs approaches to the discharge of excitation into the real world. Moreover, The Ego has a set of psychic functions which distinguish fantasy from reality. It organizes the thoughts of the world and makes sense. Indeed, it represents common sense and reason. The ego is said to serve three masters: the world outside, the Id, and the Super-Ego ("Lagache" and "Laplanche").

As a result of revisions to the theory instinct, the concept of ego was further clarified. The instinct emerges from internal origins and exerts a relentless strength of power that demands gratification. The source of instinct is derived from the somatic process experienced as a kind of "hanger" and "need". Indeed, Freud calls it the psychic representatives of somatic processes. The ego plays a particularly important

role in personality that is it mediates the tension between the id and the superego. In addition, Ego must find some outlet for the Id's impulses and at the same time limit them within superego's demands.

We are warned by a proverb against serving two masters at the same time. The poor ego has things even worse: it serves three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These claims are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails in its task. Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the super-ego and the id (Freud, 110).

The third part of personality is called the superego (adding morals) the superego develops last and is based on morals and judgments about right and wrong. Even though the superego and the ego may reach the same decision about something, the superego's reason for that decision is more based on moral values, while the ego's decision is based more on what others will think or what the consequences of an action could be. The superego's function is to control the Id's impulses, especially those which society forbids. It also has the function of persuading the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection. Moreover, the individual in psychoanalysis is a primitive being, driven by pleasure dominating principles, being exposed to external world. About the formation of superego,

The long period of childhood, during which the growing human being lives is dependence upon his parents, leaves behind it a precipitate, which forms within his ego a special agency in which this parental influence is prolonged. It receives the name of super-ego (Freud, 03).

## 2. Critical Race Theory

In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. Harry A. Blackman

The Critical Race Theory movement is described as “a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among races, racism, and power.” (Delgado and Stefancic, 02). It is also a school of thought which emphasizes the social impacts and effects of race.

Critical Race Theory focuses on the experiential knowledge of ethnic minorities and their communities of origin with respect to race and race relations (Graham et al. 82). The Critical Race Theory relies on the different communities and minorities’ lived experiences with different cultural, national traditions with respect to its race relations.

Moreover, the history of The Critical Race Theory is coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in late 1980. It emerged first as a response and challenge to the idea that The United States had become a racist and color-blind society, where White supremacy, violence, discrimination were effective (Bodenheimer).

Derrick Bell is considered the forefather of the Critical Race Theory. It is also originated among scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, who claimed that the White supremacy and racism were defying and breaking the legal system of America. The Critical Race Theory’s most crucial goal was to fight against the oppression and racism of people of Color in different countries, especially in the United States of America (Bodenheimer).

According to Delgado, Bell, and Stefancic, there are many tenets of Critical Race Theory (Bodenheimer). For instance: Everyday Racism, in which people considered it as a fundamental part of the American community and society, and it is against people of color because they are accused of being fastidious and particular. Thus, it is all about racial discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice (Tyson, 369).

Interest Convergence; Interest Convergence is grounded on the premise that people of color's interest in achieving racial equality advances only when those interests "converge" with the interests of those in power (McCoy and Rodricks, 09). Interest Convergence is also defined as the idea that a majority will only support a minority's interests if their interests align ("Interest Convergence"). It sometimes refers to as material determinism (Tyson, 369).

Race as social construct; Race is an extremely simple concept. Focused on superficial traits such as hair texture, skin colour, and facial characteristics (Jensen, 135), individuals are designated by themselves and society. Racial categorization provided no genetic racial indicators and markers; it is neither voluntarily selected nor biologically determined (Jensen, 135). Race was used to classify human beings in different ways and categories because of the different geographical areas, skin colour (for example, black, white, red, yellow), and ethnicities.

The U.S. Census Bureau designed and classified the written responses to the race question; White, Black or African American, American Indian, Asian, free coloured, mulattos, mulatto slaves, black slaves, Chinese, and Japanese ("About Race").

Intersectionality refers to hierarchical and categorical classifications' concurrent experience, including class, sexuality, gender, sex, and nationality, but it is not limited to them. It also refers to what is often seen in various types of oppression,

such as racism, homophobia, sexism, classism (Cole). Thus, Intersectionality is not based on race only. As Delgado and Stefancic explain “Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances” (Delgado & Stefancic, 09).

Many Critical Race Theory scholars believe that minorities of writers and thinkers write about race, prejudice, and racism since they have experiences with racism directly. This position or attitude is called the voice of colour (Tyson, 377).

Finally, As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic explain in their introduction to the Third Edition of Critical Race Theory: *The Cutting Edge*:

Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct with its words, stories, and silence. But we need to acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world (Delgado & Stefancic, 03).

### **3. Richard Wright’s Formative Years**

Richard Nathan Wright was born in September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1908 in Roxie Mississippi, he was descendant of slaves. The son of Nathan Wright, an illiterate sharecropper and well-educated schoolteacher Ella Wilson Wright. His family was very poor, so that when his father decided to leave the family his mother was obliged to work as a cook to offer all the needs to her kids, they moved to Memphis, Tennessee to his grandmother’s house. Wright was forced to live in an orphanage for a while until his mother could have him again. The harsh living conditions influenced his writing and his childhood experiences led him to write about racial discrimination concerning the plight of African Americans during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like every great author

of great works Richard Wright faced struggles in his life in order to survive, His family and relatives had to remind him of his situation of living in the white's men world by putting him in fear so that he can survive in this world: "Richard's parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts created a black and authoritarian environment. And when he refused to fall into the miserable mould, they cut him off, isolated him" (Wright, 286). Likewise, his family was tough in treating him though he cannot be the person he wants to be, since he was a kid, he was different and willing to be rebel sooner or later. Family usually has a great stand in everyone's life and it greatly has an impact on each individual whether positively or negatively. In the case of Richard Wright his family had never been supportive; on the contrary, they had never been on his side.

Wright as a miserable black boy succeeded to survive in environment full of violent repression that could create monsters, thieves, serial killers .After going through the terrible circumstances, he emerges as a revolutionary ready to go beyond the boundaries set by his society, however, many of his actions shows his imitation to such violence, for example: he set the house on fire when he was four years, this accident almost killed his grandmother and because of this violent action his mother nearly beaten him to death. There is also another proof that shows his violent actions were when his father asked him to kill a cat and he did it even though he knew that his father was not serious about it, because deep down he wanted it. Then it was his chance to do it without being punished for it and that was like a victory for him: "I had had my first triumph over my father. I had made him believe that I had taken his words literally. He could not punish me now without risking his authority" (Wright, 19). Besides, Wright was not afraid from his father because doing it was more like obeying his father's orders and would not be punished for taking his words for

serious. Likewise, his mother makes him feel the horror of these actions by punishing him for his violence. For instance, in the case of killing the cat, she made him bury the cat in the midnight which terrified him and made him think twice before doing anything.

Ella Wilson Wright taught her child how to survive without depending on others for protection, even if this act needs violence in order to protect himself when he was forced to fight the street gang who stole his money and brought his stuffs back, Wright learned how to count only on his hands to live, especially when his father left the family for another woman. It destroys his family apart and he was put in orphanage, day by day his mother's visits become less which made Wright feel that his family was trying to abandon him that reflected negatively on his attitude towards community. Moreover, his mother took him again and started living in his grandmother's house. While they were living there, the orthodox religious practices which formed the daily routine in the house. His grandmother's disciplinary role, her vague, obscure, religious ideas paved the way for a strong dislike of religion itself. He says, "Whenever I found religion in my life, I found strife, the attempt of an individual or group to rule another in the name of God (Wright, 150).

Wright was unable to believe in God or religion even though he spent hours in the church, which made him a subject to religious pressures. Thus, his grandmother's house was set as a place for violent quarrels and irrational decisions in which there was much fuss about religion. What made things worse for him is that his aunt and grandmother were very religious at the point that they set him apart as a sinner, because his grandmother's religion had blinded her visions towards him that she was not able to accept that life could be lived differently. In addition, Wright did not want

anyone to push him against his will. Therefore, they punish him by making him wash his clothes and refused to buy him worldly schoolbooks. This was not enough they did worse even though they were starving to death; it did not change their opinion about working in any job that requires his presence on Saturday. Since he was a kid, he experiences all the kinds of violence for instance once his aunt as a school teacher beat him in front of the class for something he did not do, even though she did not stop until he threatens her with a knife. All this negative feedback was a reason for Wright to be exposed to violence and always uses it as a shield to protect himself from anyone that tries to harm him.

Wright had to pass through a series of tough ordeals to achieve self- confidence and maturity. Whenever Wright grows up his anger and hatred emerge with him, when he gets older and starts different jobs in different places, he realizes that whites are stereotyped Negroes. He notices that whites are racists. These tough experiences taught Wright that whites will never accept or consider blacks as humans. There was none to understand his feelings, emotions, and actions. At contrary everyone tries to encroach upon his personality. And every situation that faces him always proves that he is always right about it, even if blacks are innocents nothing is going to change, and the law serves only whites. Especially, when he saw the owner of the store with his son bringing a black women to the back room and beat her because she did no pay her bills, and after beating her a white policeman arrested her for being “drunk” (Wright, 198). At the same time, he did nothing to the store owner and his son just because they are whites and law is made for them.

Even though Wright had experienced hard moments, He became overly sensitive to racial oppression, and developed a strong dislike and hatred for all white people in

general. All the encounters that he had were not all bad for example: Ella the first black intellectual Negro schoolteacher that Wright has ever met (Wright, 46). She awakened literary interest in Richard Wright; he became bold and dare to write about things he never thought that it is possible to act out in the real world.

Wright had read for Sinclair Lewis and Theodor Dreiser and began to see “an effective way to alter one’s relationship to one’s environment” (Bone, 08). Wright also studied the social sciences, which he becomes more interested in studying the relationship between individuals and society, through using fear and violence in his works to reveal the strong bond that kept all together. Wright always has the will to learn new things and take advantage.

With the passage of time he becomes more concerned with the techniques of writing, so he studied Dostoevsky who is really regarded as one of the finest novelist who ever lived. Literary modernism, existentialism, and various schools of psychology, theology and literary critics have been profoundly shaped by his ideas. Richard Wright studied Conrad and James Henry too. Referring to Dostoevsky’s novella *Notes From under Ground* is reflected in Wright’s *Man Who Lived under Ground*.

It is obviously seen that Wright was able to educate himself by finding ways and means to heal the frustrations of his childhood, it is also known that he is descendant from a past full of disappointment, fear, failure, abandonment, and no courage to change destiny. Yet this was not everything surprising in Wright’s formative years, however still shocking especially his bad experiences with whites in the south, so that his family moved to Chicago. There was not much change in their terrible circumstances.

When Wright was living in Chicago, he joined the Communist Party at the age of nineteen years old, searching for opportunities that would allow him to define himself, he was surprised the absence of Jim Crow restrictions and hatred. The possibility to live in peace without fear and anxiety, Wright was able to find all the needs he never found in the south side. During his John Reed membership Wright feelings of anger, defeat, and hope for promising future based on reason and justice were turned into social activism, artistic production, and socialist militancy. He had been granted a common identity by socialism; it created a global scene from his suffering together with that of millions of others. They become connected each one is a part of the others life.

Wright wrote about his presence in the communist party: “I was a communist because I was a Negro. Indeed, the Communist Party had been the only road out of the black belt for me. Hence communism had not been for me simply a fad, a hobby; it had a deep functional meaning for my life” (Fabre, 23). It was created and ruled by whites, for some reason, allowed him to be a part of it. The reason behind is the Communist Party appeared to respect individuality and they believe in equality among all species. It was a chance for Richard to get rid of the chains that were set by; first his family and whites in the south, it was more like a door to paradise.

Likewise, he describes his feelings towards the Communist Party, “for the first time I could speak to listening ears. I felt that in a clumsy way it linked with white life with black, emerged two streams of common experiences” (Crossman, 106). He found his lost part and got a chance to find purpose that directed him in his writings. So, he had opportunity to publish in the party organization. During this time Wright published works poems like “*A Red Love Note*”, and “*I Have Seen Black Hands*” and

*“Between the World and Me”* in order to remind the reader of the barbaric violence that was done by whites toward blacks. On the other hand, Wright learn that the Communist Party accepts people only in one case if those people do what they are asked to do, it is more like returning favour. Thus, he got some arguments with the communist membership because Wright was known for his individualistic, which was a reason why nobody understood him. Wright’s individuality caused him issues. He left the Communist Party in 1940 dissatisfied with the Party’s abandonment of a militant platform against segregation during the World War II, in addition Wright explains the main motive for joining the communist party,

It was not the economics of communism, nor the great power of trade unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of experiences of works in the other hand, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred people into a whole. It seemed to me that here at last, the realm of revolutionary expression, Negro experience could find a home, a functioning value and role. Out of the magazines I read came a passionate call for the experiences of the disinherited, and there was none of the lame lisp of the missionary in it. It did not say: “Be like us and we will like you, maybe”. It said, if you possess enough courage to speak out what you are, you will find that you are not alone. “It urged life to believe in life” (Crossman, 123).

It was the time when the great depression had exploded. The worst period that the United States had gone through, this period marks a stock market crash. In other words, it was named the black Tuesday and these tough, tiresome, and hard times were marked as a turning point in the US economy and the American’s lifestyle. The depression which “hangover the world, poisoning every aspect of social and material life and crippling the future of a whole generation” (Ahmed, 06). As Margo puts in it, “The great depression is to economics what the Big Bang is to physics” (Margo, 41). It made the American people live in poverty, misery, sufferance, and bad living

conditions for a while, at this time unemployment and inflation were raising and almost impossible to recover the economy. So, it was extremely hard for Richard Wright to find job, the Great Depression had imposed on him 'job-hunting' and 'joblessness'. In the first place what made it difficult for him is that he is African-American. Thus, men like him could find some jobs but the jobs were usually very hard and exhausting. Wright was obliged to work in a very young age to support his family and take the responsibility when he was only a teenage. Though, he faced physical and mental abuse by employers and he survived through a combination of sporadic employment and public assistance. Wright turned his interest to writing and puts all negative energy in it. It was his way to escape reality. In addition, those conditions never made him weak at contrary awaken his talent and expose it to reality. Wright with his works changed the African-American literature, paving way to blacks like him to draw a path in American society, his works changed the world's view about Negroes and they would not be seen as slaves anymore, blacks can do better as whites do. Moreover, Wright's journey searching for identity is among the earliest experience of horror and fear. Erik Erikson a psychologist has coined the term identity crisis so that the issue of identity crisis is fundamentally related to social status:

Identity refers to one sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. Our identities are simply our own creation: identities grow in response to both internal and external factors. To some extent, each of us chooses an identity, but identities are also formed by environmental forces out of our control. (Erikson, 16-19).

Richard Wright exemplifies identity crisis in his works, as many African American writers used it. The incapability to adjust the self to the Jim Crow environment that compels the individual to set out in search of identity, he was also one of the most

discussed writers in the third world. The importance of his works is not seen according to the technique and style used in his writing, instead it is seen in the great impact of his ideas and words in describing the attitudes have had in American life. In addition, the importance is his success in picturing the sufferance of blacks in the world of whites. Mostly his works represent the social conditions of black people, chiefly their racial situation, misery, poverty and their obstacles to gain freedom and identity. His works show the obstacles in defining identity, the portrayal of his protagonist reveals identity is defined by the color of skin. This leads racist whites to regard blacks as intellectually and socially inferior.

Wright's journey shows that identity crisis sometimes is questionable for the extent when blacks start imitating the white oppressor to hide their native identity in order to be safe, because identity without power is worthless, only power can protect it and fighting for identity without power is a lost cause more than courage. The author meant to use the theme of identity crisis in his works to show the struggle of black people in white dominant society, those issues are not just about race, poverty, rights, injustice however it goes beyond this to the extent of identity and self-awareness. Yet the way that whites treats black and the crisis also shows white's power and control over blacks that white society does not allow Negroes to think their individual identity, it shows the worthlessness of identity as Negro. "I am invisible man ... I am invisible; understood, simply because people refuse to see me" (Ellison, 03). It is hard to be not seen in society and the hardest is to be treated like a trash and the worst is having no place in society. Negroes suffers to find their belonging, so they use violence to be noticed. Like they are forced to act the way they do.

Richard Wright as a Negro faced many problems in his career. He was known as one of the finest artists in America. Pointing directly to black people's suffering and the struggles to build a place where all values are respected, and the problems faced by his race. Much of his writings were focused on black life and he strongly connected black life with his own story of life. It was exceedingly difficult to establish a place among other writers and he worked awfully hard to prove to the world that Negroes can be writers. His works were tool to talk about himself and his fearful experiences which were full of horror, violence, mental and physical abuse by racist employers. Sometimes bad, harsh and tough living conditions create killers, thieves and monsters however in the case of Wright it creates a great and influential writer and poet. Who started writing at the age of fifteen years and even though he passed away his works will never fade, leaving marks in both blacks and whites and will be forever a way to change one's point of view toward the universe, paving away to writers who followed his path like: Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, James Baldwin, Gwendylon Brooks, Lorraine Hamsbery, John Williams to finish his cause.

In addition, Wright's early fictional works for instance his first book, *Uncle Tom's Children* a collection of short stories, was published in 1938. The short stories in *Uncle Tom's Children* demonstrate the brutality being waged against black people in the form of racism. It occurs as the individual breaks from the ambivalent mentality towards the traditional culture, challenges its inequality and wants to share the benefits of the white world and to abide by its standards. In these short stories Wright shows according to whites, black men were considered as a sexual threat to white women. However, black people are always insecure rather from the side of white men or women. Then his most influential novel *Native Son* was published in 1940, after two years he published his-two-part article "*I Tried to Be a Communist*" in the

*Atlantic Monthly*. Later, his next book titled *Black Boy* was published in 1945 and was on the bestseller list for the larger part of that year also was a selection for the Book-of-the-Month club. Wright went to the United States also travelling in Mexico and Canada then settling permanently in Paris in 1947. He wrote an article titled “*I Choose Exile*” describing the reason of leaving the United States in a search for freedom, and that he had found it in France, the place where Wright had his literary successes and he found a home. He took a break for seven years, while discovering the modern expatriate environment framed by existentialism and worldwide rebellion against colonialism, so he wrote three novels about exile which are: *The Outsider* (1953), *Savage Holiday* (1954), and *The Long Dream* (1958). Wright discussed existentialist concepts have been more popular in France than in the United States, which were criticized as out of contact with social conditions.

Wright’s major works among them: *Native Son* (1940), *The Man Who Lives Underground* (1942), *Black Boy* (1945), and *The Outsider* (1953). Deal with the concept of estrangement or the outsider, where a person feels more like a stranger and have no sense of belonging in his family or his own community. This figure is seen mostly in Wright’s works where the characters are treated like strangers not only in a white oppressive society but also in their own community. Most blacks experienced such phenomenon which brings a sense of loss where the person starts to feel as an outsider from his own self. The attitude of the outsider is unusual and violent towards society: he does not accept a system that sentences him to confusion and shame. Blacks become rebellion.

Wright’s writings in Negro literature in America marked an important phase, he is certainly a protest writer. The development of Richard Wright as a protest writer of

oppressed Negro community is considered as natural social situation because his works represents a society and its complicated relationships with other parts of the society, chiefly the dominant oppressive class. Thus, white society tries very hard using all means, tools, and methods of oppression for the sake of humiliation to all blacks with no exception, and all of this happens in the name of colour, in the name of racial superiority. Wright explains its effect on the black self, and he said:

I was learning rapidly how to watch white people, to observe their every move, every fleeting expression, how to interpret what was said and what was left unsaid (Wright, 174).

Wright with his works defining blackness as a revolution to liberate black men and their lands; it is about taking back what was theirs once. It is extremely seen that the heroes in his writings sound rebellion against their fate, so they reject their fate and always look for change and look for enjoying the self-request. However, society does not allow them to do and believe that to stay alive the only way is to stay in line. So, violence is an inevitable theme in Wright's fiction and to his characters.

*Native Son* is the finest Proletarian novel ever written in America, it is the first black novel and a keynote of the African American literature and Wright was a communist when he wrote it, the novel is mostly about violence and fear. It is, in a way, shocking this amount of violence. He uses it as a method to serve certain purposes. The purpose behind using violence is shocking people to gain their attention. Also, he succeeded in violent themes and situations perfectly. Margert Wallace who calls *Native Son* as "The most blatant stuff I have ever read", also says, "It is difficult to think of an American novel that provides a more brilliant analysis of the interplay of social and psychological factors in experience". The novel presents the struggles of human beings to live a life of dignity.

*The Outsider* is a result of Wright's effort to find philosophical replacement of communism, because after leaving the Communist Party. He realizes that communism is just a lust for naked power that makes him believe in nothing. He feels like an outsider in America because of the colour of his skin more like he does not belong there. It is also search for freedom that lies in his will to power. Wright's presence in seeking freedom poses a challenge to the Communists' will to overpower him. Wright's works are closely to black literature protest irrationality of colour line that presents blacks from full and free participation in American Society. So, he uses his works to reduce the unjust acts toward black community. As a black novelist gives voice not only to his conscience but also to his race, thus novels written by blacks are considered as a way to create identity from residence. A way to develop their racial traits and look into themselves to their heritage which helps in understanding their elves. Wright s tries to prove that black skin is not and will never be a curse at contrary is a gift to appear unique.

Since decades there was an endless conflict between blacks and whites. This conflict leads whites to own the universe and have the full rights to control the others.

James Baldwin argued:

The world had prepared no place for you, and if the world has its ways, no place would ever exist. Now, this is true for everyone, but in the case of a Negro this truth is absolutely naked: if he deludes himself about it, he will die (Baldwin, 104).

This truth presents itself differently to white men, who believe certainly that the world is theirs. Besides, they certainly expect the world to help them in the achievement of their identity, but the world does not do this for everyone.

Wright's art is a part of his actual life experiences and impression. This truth is seen in his works *Black Boy* and *Native Son*. Most of the heroes of his short-stories and novels are blood thirsty. In *Native Son* Bigger Thomas killed Marry Dalton and Bessie, and the cross demon in *The Outsider* kills the person whom he loved; Fishbelly could not love his parents in *The Long Dream*. Heroes in his works seem to have no time to stand and stare at their relatives because they are haunted by the idea of escaping from the racial south. Moreover, many experiences of the literary characters are the experiences of the writer himself. His works are a result of a strong revolt, to some extent, against the established unjust white supremacy.

In 1940 Wright's novel *Native Son* appeared on the "The Book of the Month Club", and its success has continued unabated ever since. *Native Son* is the first bestseller by black writer, which brought the African American literature in the limelight. It portrays the new violence measures adopted by whites; however, they also represent an attempt to understand the destructive physical and psychological impact they had on African Americans. The novel tells the story of black young boy named Bigger Thomas who struggles to prove his existence as equal citizen in white society. He is obliged to go through harsh periods of time in order to recover his identity, in a society views blacks as slaves and pets property of whites. Where they do not have any right to do what they want. He lives in determinant environment Chicago's South Side ghetto leads to double homicide. Wright shows the social class struggle in the novel, and whites are separate from blacks. When Bigger Thomas was living in Black Belt where there is no chance to live in white people's area and he says:

He knew that black people could not go outside the Black Belt to rent a flat; they had to live on their side of

the “line.” No white real estate man would rent a flat to a black man other than in the sections where it had been decided that black people might live (Wright, 288).

The novel was full of fear and violence. It shows the danger fear can cause to people that surrender to such emotion. This feeling creates serial killers; the same happens to the protagonist Bigger Thomas. Wright succeeded to illustrate and summarize the suffering of African Americans in the United States. In this graphic writing acknowledges the racial barriers that prevent the advancement of blacks, he indicates the frustration and chaos that might occur due to the isolation and defamation of people of colour.

The protagonist fights everything to survive and it is more like living in an infinite battle, where there is no result and no winner in the fight. Sometimes he needs to fight his conscience. Similar to be stuck in a corner and there is no chance to escape, indeed the powerlessness of African Americans white society shown in the novel plays an important role in Bigger’s monstrous transformation. Wright explains that: Bigger hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them. He knew that the moment he allowed what his life meant to enter fully into his consciousness, he would either kill himself or someone else. Powerlessness created by whites who took control over everything, money, prestige, jobs, wealth, and even people. Thus, the feeling of hate was always taking over his thoughts. He hated himself because he cannot help his family to get out of the misery, then he hated his family because of his race which caused him social injustice.

*Native Son* (1940) created praise, disgust, fascination, anger, and caution in the United States. Content focuses more on violence and accusing society of racial actions against people of colour. In addition, the novel is considered one of the

violent and revolutionary works in the American Canon. Used for blaming the American country for such results or murders, because society is guilty in its involvement in what is happening to minorities. Although the commercial success of the novel suggested to genuine for a more social conscious art, many critics deplored that Wright's Urban realism had done away with aesthetic altogether. James Baldwin argued that "are forgiven on the strength of their [good] intentions, whatever violence they do to language, whatever excessive demands they make of credibility" (Baldwin, 15). He also denounced *Native Son's* sordid depiction of black community, contending that it reinforced the stereotypes it meant to challenge in the first place. Ralph Ellison went step further as he captured what can be viewed as artistic lapse in *Native Son*.

In order to translate Bigger's complicated feelings into universal ideas Wright had to force into Bigger's consciousness concepts and ideas which his intellect could not formulate. Between Wright's skill to knowledge and the potentials of Bigger's mute feelings lay a thousand years of conscious culture (Ellison, 89).

Critics assert that the novel *Native Son* is more like an autobiography of Richard Wright that it is a mirror to his life, experiences, and all the painful moment that he was obliged to go through. Charles I. Glicksberg asserts that "Richard Wright is Bigger Thomas-one part of him anyway. Bigger Thomas is what Richard Wright, has circumstances marked out differently, might have become" ("The Furies" 110). Referring to the formulation of James Baldwin, that "No American Negro exist who does not have his private Bigger Thomas living in the skill". On the other hand, Ellison assessed *Native Son* as a crucial flaw that "Wright had to force into Bigger's consciousness concepts and ideas which the intellect could not formulate". He

believed that Wright compromised his own personality to achieve the fundamental theme of Bigger Thomas's frustrated existence.

Many critics assert that there are lots of similarities between the protagonist and the author, maybe because he is telling the facts that each Negro had gone through and maybe he is telling the facts that he had gone through. The author used his own experiences in the novel, considering the origins of Wright. A Negro man like Bigger Thomas, both are Mississippi born Negroes move to Chicago to look for change and make their conditions better. Wright's father left the family leaving his wife and kids to live in poverty, and misery. Bigger also lives with his mother, his brother, and his sister in the worst slum of the Black Belt of that city. It is mentioned by Wright in *How Bigger Was Born*, saying that everyone has their own Bigger Thomas living inside, each one has his private Bigger Thomas, sooner or later he will show off. Because as Negroes living the worst part of the city full of criminals, illiterates, it creates monsters. So, both Bigger and Wright are motivated by fear and hatred. Moreover, from the beginning of the novel the protagonist was all the time afraid and scared from what is coming, this fear leads to hatred. Yet hating himself in the first place because there is nothing to be done to stop this strong emotion, also both they are turning this negative emotion to a weapon for self-defense, in order to protect themselves from white oppressors and this weapon is shown in the phase of violence.

Likewise, both are rebellion and they do not believe in the idea that blacks are slave to whites; they rebel against faith and do what it takes to change it no matter what. Even though most blacks accept their destiny and live in whites' mercy forgetting about their dignity which is the most important thing in anyone's life and without its life becomes worthless. Unlike Wright and Bigger who chose to fight

rather than stay chained like a pet; Wright fought using his writings and works and he proved that destiny can be change only by the free will to achieve the impossible, and slaves one day will be the masters. On the other hand, Bigger chooses to dare and do what even whites afraid to do, he went so far and killed the millionaire's daughter in order to break the rules and prove that blacks can do anything even if it is impossible. According to those facts, both Wright and Bigger could expose to violence, because all this pressure and experiences that are full of injustice can lead to the only thing which is violence and crimes.

#### **4. The Harlem Renaissance and Black Identity: The Color Line**

The Harlem Renaissance was between World War I and the Great Depression when black artists and writers prospered in the United States. Critics and historians have assigned different dates for the start and end of the movement. Still, by 1917, most tend to agree that there were signs of increased artistic activity amongst black artists in New York City's Harlem area and that much of the original vigor had been lost in the mid-1930s. Harlem was home to more blacks than any other place in the country. It was the predominant epicenter of black culture in the post-war years, but other cities included Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia encouraged and fostered smaller groups of black artists (Milne, 335).

For several reasons, the movement came about the failure of the southern agriculture economy and the shortage of labour in the north, which led about two million black people to migrate to northern cities in search of jobs in between 1910 and 1920. Furthermore, World War I had left the whole generation of African Americans questioning why they were still offered second class status. However, they had been soldiers, and many had died for their country. By the end of the war, a large

number of Northern American Cities like Harlem had new experts and better payment energized by chance for change (Milne, 335).

For this purpose, magazines such as the *Crisis*<sup>1</sup>, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Opportunity featured prose and poetry by the Harlem Renaissance stars Langston Hughes, Claude Mackay, Nella Larson, and Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen (Milne, 336).

Major New York publishing houses started looking for new black voices in order to publish their poems, short stories and novels. White intellectual society welcomed these writers and sponsored their attempts to educate Americans about their race, culture and heritage through art. They supported them financially and through social contacts (Milne, 336).

For African Americans, including writers and artists, New York City became a popular destination. It was home to a non-profit foundation which supported African Americans in the South and helped them. However, in the early 1930s, the financial support began to dry with New York's stock market crash, and the subsequent economic worldwide Depression. The Renaissance had gone its way (Ibid, 336).

Besides, some historians like Cary Wintz and Langston Hughes consider the Harlem Renaissance period as an awakening of art, music, and literature. It also created a black and white cultural bridge (Carreiro, 01).

The term "Negrotarian" was common in The Harlem Renaissance period. Zora Neale Hurston first used it. Some African Americans using it sarcastically to describe

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<sup>1</sup> *The Crisis*, An American quarterly magazine published by the National Association For the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It was founded in 1910 and, for its 24 years, was edited by W.E.B Du Bois. It is considered the world's oldest black publication.

the white patrons, Negrotarian also include white social reformers and social activist such as the Communist Party of The United States of America (CPUSA)<sup>2</sup>. The word “Negrotarian” is derived from the words “Negro” and “Humanitarian” (Carreiro 247).

Moreover, The New Negro is a term which refers to a newly enslaved African by white Americans. In the first decades of the twentieth century, this phrase has always denoted an African American who was politically intelligent, well-educated and proud of the cultural heritage that he has. In his 1900 book, *A New Negro for a New Century* and encompassed education, self-improvement, and self-respect. Booker T. Washington’s view of a New Negro was outlined in it (Milne, 345).

In Locke’s work on African-American poetry and prose, *The New Negro: An interpretation*, Locke used the term during the Harlem Renaissance. He argued that African American writers and artists should engage in their people’s Leadership and should participate in showing white America a new and clear vision of black people as they are productive and creative forces. According to him, the New Negro should be an African American who has socially, politically and culturally developed by himself /herself. Locke has arranged a series of African American art exhibits and helped to establish a national black theatre (Milne, 345-346).

Thus, from 1920 to 1940, The Harlem Renaissance brought a new attention to African American literature. Many black artists, musicians, and others create classic works from jazz to the theatre; it was a great influence on social thought and culture. It gave many opportunities for blacks to publish their works and writings.

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<sup>2</sup> CPUSA, when the Harlem Renaissance ended, black intellectuals became involved in the CPUSA because it offered the best solution for economic and social reforms.

Langston Hughes is one of the most prominent Renaissance poets. His first two collections of poetry, *The Weary Blues* in 1926, and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). Additionally, Claude Mackay has also published novels such as *Home to Harlem* (1928), short stories and memoirs (Milne, 337-338).

Moreover, Zora Neale Hurston, an African American writer, her famous novel is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Hurston wrote 14 books. She produced and created plenty of literary works in her life, including short stories, essays, plays, novels, and articles (Milne, 337).

Richard Wright became the most famous African American writer during the Harlem Renaissance era. He wrote a trendy novel which is *Native Son* (1940). Wright speaks and writes about plenty of topics and themes, which they had a direct influence on him as a person of color.

Richard Wright grew up during two common periods: The Harlem Renaissance and The Great Depression. Thus, this influenced him to write *Native Son*. He was involved in the Harlem Renaissance. From the nineteenth to the twentieth century's, much of his writings were about racial topics and themes. These subjects show that the Renaissance has a significant influence on writing.

What led African Americans to move to Harlem is to achieve the dream of a new start, not being slaves, and being under the control of the whites. They want to live their dreams, to express their culture, social and artistic views, without being criticized by the whites. *Native Son* was created to show the hardships that people faced during that time by recreating real-life experiences to illustrate how hard life was (Heine).

Moreover, white and black are used as an imaginary in *Native Son*; the novel reveals that they are just a skin colour, but how society views that, here is the difference. Through it, Wright shows more themes such as fear, violence, racism, segregation. Bigger's violence is a direct action against whites' images, which puts it in the black's mind, and that is not good to act and behave. Thus, whites viewed blacks as dangerous, leading two cultures to segregate. This segregation contributed to Bigger's anger and dissatisfaction towards the white community. He assumes that he is just a product of what he was shaped to be by his society. The whites have a stereotypical black view. Bigger sees no way to do to the white supremacy because of their colour they are superior and the blacks are powerless due to their skin colour. Richard Wright uses white and black colours as well as lightness and darkness to display the difference between white Americans and African Americans (Heine).

The criticism of the Harlem Renaissance movement leads to focus on its influence on black literature and the African-American community (Milne, 347). Many critics have seen the Harlem Renaissance as a period of great hope and optimism, while others disagree.

For instance, George E. Kent believes that the movement still provided American literature with some important and fundamental achievements. He argues in *Black World* that "the short story in the hands of [Jean] Toomer, Eric Waldron, and Langston Hughes became a much more flexible form" and that, while no Harlem Renaissance author created a truly new form of the novel, these writers did provide stories that "occasionally stopped just short of greatness" (Milne, 347). The playwriting of the time was praised by Kent, although it gained a little Broadway attention.

Amritjit Singh states in his book *The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance: Twelve Black Writers* that the artists involved in the Harlem Renaissance failed to develop a “black American school of literature” for several reasons. He argues that the artists themselves “reflect the spirit of the times in their refusal to join causes or movements” and were interested less in the societal problems of blacks than in their problems (Ibid, 347).

Margaret Perry, in her famous book, *The Harlem Renaissance: An Annotated Bibliography and Commentary* notes that the writers of this era “failed to use their blackness to fullness and with total honesty, in order to create that unique genre of American literature one called black or Afro-American.” (Ibid, 347).

Besides, Nathan Huggins in his 1971 book *Harlem Renaissance*, hypothesizes that black and white Americans “have been so long and so intimately a part of one another’s experience that, will it or not, they cannot be understood independently. “He claims that the creation of Harlem “as a place of exotic culture” was as essential to whites as it was to blacks. He describes it as an unusual and interesting place for both whites and black communities (Milne, 348).

It was important to portray African Americans in a better light, in a way that most of whites could accept or embrace, and blacks themselves could internalize. Nathan Huggins says, “Even the best of the Harlem Renaissance poems carried the burden of self-consciousness of oppression and black limitation” (Ibid, 349).

Cary Wintz argues that The Harlem Renaissance was a “psychology,” a state of mind or an attitude, shared by several black writers and intellectuals, who centered their activities around Harlem in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Wintz, 02).

Harold Cruse charges that the Harlem Renaissance failed because “a cultural renaissance that engenders barriers to the emergence of the creative writer is a contradiction in terms, an emasculated movement” (Cruse, 37). However, he correctly guesses that “Negroes had to see whites without the awe of love or the awe of hate and themselves truly, without myth or fantasy, in order that they could be themselves in life and art” (Cruse, 307). Thus, through art and literature, Negroes should express themselves and their culture to the whites.

When The Harlem Renaissance ended, many black writers wished to end racial injustices, segregation, and discrimination in The United States of America. The impacts of white patronage on black writers and intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance are not easy to describe or define. Besides, there are negative responses as well as positive ones; Black writers and artists were motivated by the whites’ positive responses. In The Harlem Renaissance, many African American intellectuals gained confidence and self-expression to voice freedom of speech. In the early decades of the twentieth century, most African Americans developed a desire to make their culture accessible (Carreiro, 11-12).

## CHAPTER TWO

### CREATING THE MONSTER THROUGH FEAR, INVISIBILITY, AND WHITE JUSTICE

African American literature is the body of literature created in the United States by African American writers. It focuses on themes and particular interest for black people such as violence, racism, slavery, and fear.

Fear is the unpleasant feeling people have when they think they are in danger (“Fear”). As Alex Niles stated in Psychology today’s blog: “Fear is an emotional response induced by a perceived threat that causes a change in brain and organ function, as well as in behaviour”. According to this definition, there are several types of fear: Fear of the unknown, fear of people’s opinions, Negrophobia (fear of the blacks), fear of the whites, and fear of power.

#### **1. Fear and Violence in African American Literature**

Fear plays an essential role in the works of African American writers. For instance, in *Native Son*, emotions are important. Thus, Blacks are afraid of whites, and the whites are afraid of the blacks, and everyone afraid of his community. However, without the fear of Bigger Thomas, nothing would happen and change in the novel because fear is the driving force behind his actions; it is also a motivator that pushes the protagonist Bigger Thomas to murder two girls Bessie and Mary Dalton.

Among these fears are the fear of white people and the fear of authority. The most dominant fear is whites' fear, for example, when Bigger is unready to meet with Mr. Dalton and get a job. It is due to the fear of being close to white people (Write Work).

Another example, Bigger fears that a convenience store owned by a white man will be robbed. He is not afraid of stealing the store; he is just scared because the store owner is white, and he has never robbed a white store before (Writework). Whites are the source of Bigger's fear "...You are calling me scared, so nobody'll see how scared you is!" (Wright, 29). Almost every action or decision that Bigger makes is influenced by the fear of white punishment and the white community (WriteWork). It also seems that the symbol of white authority is telling the blacks that they cannot move ahead or win in their lives; this view helps to instill fear in blacks like Bigger Thomas.

Bigger's fear of the whites plays a significant role in the novel because it has a relation with the plot, and it helps to understand the reasons that lead Bigger to murder two girls Mary and Bessie. Moreover, Bigger Thomas is afraid of having both the same destiny and a way of facing life like his family (Silva and Marques, 120-121). Bigger's personality is ruled by fear, hatred, shame, and guilt.

He hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them. He knew that the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness how they lived, the shame and misery of their lives, he would be swept out of himself with fear and despair (Wright, 10).

For twenty-year-old Bigger Thomas, life in Chicago at the beginning of 1939 is among one of terror and anger. On this day, for no particular cause, he has just beaten up his friend Gus, except that he and two of his mates would have to drop off their

plans to rob a white merchant. It is often early in *Native Son* (Reardon). Thus, Wright notes:

His confused emotions had made him feel instinctively that it would be better to fight Gus and spoil the plan of the robbery than to confront a white man with a gun. But he kept this knowledge of his fear thrust firmly down in him; his courage to live depended upon how successfully his fear was hidden from his consciousness... This was the way he lived; he passed his days trying to defeat or gratify impulses in a world he feared (Wright, 72).

The expression “A word he feared” tends to explain that Bigger Thomas lives in the South Side Black Belt of Chicago, the largest of the City’s two African American ghettos. Bigger hates his life because he and other black people like him is not welcomed anywhere. After all, in the behaviour and the acts of American society, they are not good enough. There are strict limits on what he can hope for and for what he can expect to do in his life. Moreover, if he ignores the truth, like when he and his mates are foolhardy enough to rob and steal a white man, they will be hell for them to pay for (Reardon). In conversation with one of his peers, Bigger wants to be an aviator, but he is not welcomed in the flight school. He sees a plane in the sky and yearns for the freedom and the independence that the pilot, a white man, has (Reardon).

The psychology of Bigger Thomas is all about fear. Fear is a part of life in which the black community is dealing with. The white authority or supremacy is among the issues that cause fear in Bigger Thomas. It is important because it drives Bigger to make violent actions and creates different decisions. Richard Wright’s powerful novel reflects the forces of fear, violence, and hopelessness shaping American society.

The World Health Organization defined the term of violence as: “Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation”. (“W.H.O”).The first who had experienced such violent behaviour were the blacks, because of their black colour. They were considered as the ones who entered the white community as slaves, because of the blacks could not get rid of any idea of equality in all social aspects for a longer period.

African American literature had some issues during time, for instance: the issues of race and tension of colour pushed African American writers to use writing to establish and build a place for themselves in that community. The sensitive and creative African American artist uses his artistic expression to create a powerful impact on the minds of the readers about their oppressive conditions. Another issue is that was created by English adventures who visited the African continent was so far the issue of segregation, so they helped to develop the ideas of inferiority and distinction. Which were pictured in a form of blackness and physical differences between the oppressor and the oppressed. Almost it gave a bad reputation to black that they were seen as savages and brutal.

Furthermore the African Americans were given different names each one was worse than the previous, like: ‘Colored’, ‘Negroes’, ‘Black’ and ‘African American’, which they lost their rights to be called with their proper names; because in the eyes of the oppressor they are more like objects and property that belongs to them. Generally African American literature shaped in the form of novels, poems, and plays to show the case of race, so that writer’s works are more like a reflection to their

identities, to show who are they. It was the only successful way to talk about them freely by using their writings (Warren, 05).

African American writers vividly described the pains, difficulties, privations, and the horrors that they were enduring and their degradation. The entire literature presents the principles of racism, culture, slavery, and liberty. So, they attempt to use their fiction and poetry as a weapon to end segregation once forever, and to protect civil rights. Because blacks were separate from whites. Throughout the novel Wright shows the black man's struggle and the social oppression he faces in the country that chain to guarantee its citizens: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

They tend to create new way of looking at tradition to create completely different order of reality by using imagination, through this way their goal is to change the whole view about African American people. That is no longer a gloomy phenomenon, a dark community, as well as inferior to whites. Well African American writers usually tend to use sensitive themes to grab the reader's attention, also because those themes are the corn stone of the African American literature. The way it is presented to the readers and what should be considered that using themes like: identity crisis, fear, and violence are sometimes seemed harsh and brutal. However, they do not reflect to the writers at contrary using such themes help the authors to describe the real situation successfully because it is something real and happens, in a way, it cannot be hidden and must be illustrated to show how black people suffer from racist white society. Mostly writers prefer to use the theme of violence in their works, however some readers saw this as a savage act but others prefer it, because it represents things that are important.

Many works in African American literature deal with the theme of violence as a result of a conflict wherein the stronger tries so hard to oppress the weaker, whereas the latter tries his best to resist and to end all the forms of oppression. The conflict is mainly between two different races, like: whites and blacks.

Violence has been used by groups seeking power, by groups holding power, and by groups in the process of losing power. Violence has been pursued in the defence of order by the privilege, in the name of justice by the oppressed and in fear displacement by the threatened (Ainfowose, 01).

Violence is always used to achieve something and each one that attempts to use it have a reason behind such behaviour, some reasons are worthy, and others are just for fun or to please one's self. However, in the case of black people. It is worthy to use violence to achieve their rights, because without power they cannot reach anything. Thus, whites had used power to oppress them in any ways. The use of violence against blacks is justified. However, when it comes to blacks the same thing. It is called brutal and it is related to their illiteracy. Sometimes violence is needed to establish a place in a community, because what is taken by force can be restored only by force. Whites did enough to erase the African Americans identities, and they failed.

African American writers usually attempt to include the theme of violence in their works. Violence can be used by anyone and each has his own reasons, because sometimes violence is needed either to achieve certain aspiration by any means or to achieve any important goal. However, sometimes it goes beyond that to the extent of achieving justice and equality. Yet the reason behind using violence in African American literature; mostly writers use it to bring justice to oppressed minority. So,

they attempt to create one hero or the other to revolt against the existing structure. Indeed the protagonist of African American literature is always seen rebellion and exposed directly to violence. In addition, writers like Wright, Baldwin, and Ellison etc. Create protagonist who is willing to fight against the existing socio-political situation, attempt to show their reactions against the economic situation by proposing ways which their actions can effect change.

Whereas, African American literature emerges with slave narratives, which are works written by slaves to describe their miserable lives against slavery, which were full of violent behaviour by the oppressors against them. That is way violence is one of the major themes used and examined in Modern African American literature, to show that blacks are oppressed because of racial prejudice and injustice of whites. Injustice effects negatively on blacks which leads them to react negatively and violently toward the others. Always the African American writers have a goal to reach behind using the theme of violence, among them is to examine the situation and struggles of African Americans to live in harmony and equality together with Americans in America, there have been critics about including violence. However, they all agree on the same view that violence is primary effects of racial prejudice and injustice, so it is only the result of what whites have done to blacks.

As a matter of fact, violence was one of the impacts of racism and discrimination to react to the horrible condition of slavery and racism. So African Americans used violence as one of the different ways to describe the awful situation and terrible conditions. Whereas African American literature attempts to examine the issues of black people and their suffering because of segregation through using violence. Many works that violence was included in, the main reason is to show blacks objectives.

However, it is seen that most of them use violence only like a way to achieve self-definition, belonging, and self-esteem in a community where they are treated more like inferior to whites.

Moreover, violent behaviour is a sign of psychological needs, where youth follow this path to fulfil their psychological needs; “Mob violence, like gang participation can serve many psychological needs. These include the need to enhance self-esteem, to correct perceived injustices, to devalue the person or property that is the target of the violence, to create social change, or to benefit materially” (“Commission”). It is exhausting enough to be a black man when living in American society. Furthermore, sometimes blacks pretend to be other people than themselves to please the society or people surrounded with them. To be accepted in society they let go their real identity and personality.

African American literature serves as evidence for the cruelty and injustice of slavery; it also aims to present African Americans as humans and individuals not as property of whites. African American writers used their writings and works to make change, to establish new area that embraces all black people together. However, sometimes these works accuse society for everything like injustice, inequality, and racism and it was their way to judge society for what they are responsible for. So, they used literature as an instrument to address the struggles they faced everyday focusing on stereotypes, injustice, and violence; they deal with these issues through portraying real events in a form of fiction. By writing novels, they support their case of freedom and equality to spread self-awareness among African Americans.

Fabi argues that: “literature was a powerful tool to combat prevalent racial stereotypes, to reinforce the cultural pride and self-awareness of African Americans,

and to foster the process of racial uplift” (Fabi, 34-36). Violence does not mean that blacks are violent because they are uncivilized like whites describe them, in the case of oppression and discrimination violence must be a result of racism. African American literature attempts to show the horrible conditions and violence that blacks endure, it seeks for different goal. Freedom is always the first to achieve. The chaos made by the American society somehow affected the black people’s life and it turned it up and down. It has been the black writer’s duty to determine such mindless oppression in their literary output.

Ralph Ellison one of the best African American writers, who used the black experience to symbolize the American predicament within the human case of the Modern Age. Ellison believed that; the role of the writer is to express the objectives of literature to make the readers aware of the complex unity and diversity. He was very conscious about the role of literature in society. The social function of literature is to look back on our own traditions and culture. These traditions, rituals and folklore have deeply shaped the humans. Ellison is a friend of Richard Wright and the later encouraged him to pursuit a carrier as a writer. Furthermore, Ellison believed in the idea that a good writer is the one that expresses his own vision, his sense of life, his experience and expresses them, in a way that they touch a very deep portion in the heart of the readers. In a way that the writer’s works go directly to the bottom of the reader’s heart and must leave an impact in them. Ellison uses irony to describe and depict the harsh conditions that African Americans endure in a racist community.

In 1952 Ralph Ellison wrote and published a novel titled *Invisible Man* the story is about showing the racial prejudice and black oppression uncover reasons by what is called ‘invisibility’, at the beginning of the novel the author says “I am invisible,

simply because people refuse to see me”(Ellison, 05). He meant to emphasize on the concept of invisibility to focus on the struggles of blacks from racism and violence, but he shows that there are some benefits of invisibility. So, the aim of the novel is underlying on the Negroes issues in American community, Ellison focuses on invisible to show that blacks are not seen as humans on the contrary they are seen more like animals.

Ralph Ellison proves that African American writers always try to justify the violent attitudes that come from blacks. The lives of black people are accordingly to what whites want, even if doing such thing is against their own beliefs and culture. Which it does not matter for the oppressors, so the fear grows up to the extent to block their abilities to challenge the stereotypes of a racist white society and it leads them to behave against their own will. In addition, blacks in general fail to face the power of a white dominant society and they become unable to identify themselves effectively. As a result, African Americans believe that if they want to prove themselves and to fight for self-definition.

The use of violence helps to prove their existence. Whereas, blacks behave violently to change the image that whites had drawn about them. They picture them as sub-humans and underestimating their abilities. In *Invisible Man* Ellison attempts to show two different kinds of the blacks’ reaction toward the whites’ oppression, the first attempt to obey or pretend doing that as a strategy to avoid some of the issues. However, sometimes it is completely wrong because obeying the whites does not mean that they will treat them better. The second is different and truly the opposite, they use violence to prove their existence and they are rebellion as many African American, who believe in the idea that the only way to fight for their beliefs is by

using violence. However, using violence is dangerous for whites and deeply destructive for themselves.

Ralph Ellison's reason behind not giving a specific name to the protagonist in the novel *Invisible Man* (1952), is that he wants to describe the harsh experiences that all blacks without exception. They all share almost the same impact of those struggles. At the end of the novel the protagonist could finally accept his reality by embracing his blackness and he started believing that black skin is not a curse. It is absolutely the opposite that blackness is a gift. He also embraces his own identity and faces the world for it, so he became able to restrain his violence.

Chester Himes is an essayist, short story writer and one of the major novelists and African American writers, who experienced violence as many of other blacks and he included the theme of violence in his works. He believed in the idea that the system in a place does not support all of its citizens, there would be always apartheid and the system itself would take sides for the benefits of the white community. In 1950s and 60s he wrote series of detective novels, his works have obvious power, moves the reader enormously involves him completely, also his novels explore racism in the United States. Himes said in an interview:

No one, no one, writes violence the way that Americans do. As a matter of fact, for the simple reason that no one understands violence or experiences violence like the American civilians do.....American violence is public way of life, it became a form. So, I would think that any number of black writers should go into the detective story form (Himes, 48).

Chester Himes witnessed all the kinds of violence for instance, beating, killing, riots and the fire that took the lives of over three hundred convicts. Depending on these facts he wrote short stories and novels to share these experiences.

The violent past of Chester Himes includes a wild adolescence in the world vice as well as a seven and a half year stuck in prison, in a way, affected his life and his writings. So, he came up with a novel titled *Cast the First Stone* (1937), it is considered as the first novel written by him and was published in (1952) after ten years of being written. It is supposed to be as Himes's own story because he included his experience in prison that began when he was just nineteen. This incident affected his writings that came as reference for his violent fictional world populated with weirdly named characters. Like all African American writers who attempt to use the theme of violence, violent behaviours, and brutal moment. To make the reader feel the pain, hurt, hatred, and the real sense of oppression that all African American have gone through. His early life and works were similar to those of Richard Wright and James Baldwin; also he chose to exile himself to Paris.

Richard Wright as many other great African American writers who tend to use their art to reveal the truth about black's life, and to serve his reason that he has become a writer. It was more a self-conflict to reach the goal that his white employer once told him: "You'll never become a writer. Who on earth put such ideas into your nigger head?" for a psycho of a child that grows in a brutal and violent environment, experiencing the unusual trauma of black existence. It paved a way for him to follow this path. Wright says that literature is a form of protest "against the injustice that destroys his spirit, crushes his dignity". In his major works he attempts to use the theme of violence as a tool or method to describe the real events that experienced by Negroes, and believed that violence should be mentioned in any works in order to make the reader feel and live the moment even if it is harsh and hurts. *Native Son* (1940) one of his greatest works and considered as a masterpiece, the novel based on

violence. Edwin R. Embree begins his biography of Richard Wright with the following statement:

Richard Wright wanted to write not a book but a bomb. He wanted to tell what happened to Negroes the hates and hurts of American life and to tell with such hard, cold realism that people could not get away with it (Embree, 25).

Scholars and researchers all agree on the same opinion, that violence or violent behaviour is not accepted in any society or culture no matter what reason. It endangers the lives of its citizens and leads to harm the individuals which create a sense of insecurity and chaos; it will sooner or later collapse the high standers of a community and leads to conflicts between the members. However, no one can deny that in some cases violence is needed, such behaviour cannot be avoided because survival demands violence and sacrifice.

Violence develops to the extent to be considered as a normal and natural response, especially for those who experienced it in their early life; those who attempt to use violence for whatever reasons. Such reasons are mostly seen as natural reaction and a reflection to their experiences, because such behaviour cannot appear without a reason or something that leads it. It is an emotional reflection created by fear. This strong and destructive emotion is considered as one of the main reasons for using violence against people and leads them to act violently.

In the case of blacks, white's oppression, neglect, suppression, abuse, and invisibility led the blacks to use violence as a reflection. Furthermore, fear is seen mostly in the African Americans, they were living in fear, afraid of everything and were controlled by fear. So, blacks always seem hopeless, no way out and indeed having no power to

change their own situation. Being stuck in this unbreakable cycle, living in isolation. These all help to grow these feelings of fear, anger, and frustration lead to violence.

In other words, whites should not always blame black for being violent that way because it is better if change would be present in order to spread peace blacks should take their rights and their identity and surely violence will fade away.

Humans are mentally designed to not be directly violent, because violence is a hard task and individuals before committing to such behaviour must go through some levels. Mostly violent people are either exposure to violence whether abused or threatened or have witnessed any forms of violence in their early life and sometimes being a subject to a general ambience of danger or residue of fear created by high levels of conflict and violence in a community. Which affect their psychology badly and turn them to do worse than they have seen. Those people mostly become gangsters, murders, serial killers, robbers in order to get rid for that anger and somehow use violence as a tool to forget their painful experiences, however this task makes thing worse because using violence to revenge or forget the past would destroy himself before harming the community. Which means violence is never been a solution.

Always the case of African Americans violence is present when mentioning aggression because it is highly normal to relate blacks to violence and they are in the first place when using violence. According to their background and the horror historical events that they have experienced over time. Violence is only created by the accumulation of all horror, terror, and fear that they were exposed to. Blacks are psychologically hurt which creates a mental response shaped in the form of revenge that comes out as violence, murders, and crimes. In order to make the white abusive

community pay for the years of slavery and torture, all these facts do not prove that violence is accepted or one of the solutions, it is completely the opposite violence should not be ended with violence. In addition, it is seen mostly that blacks before hurting other people they harm themselves first, because using violence to release the anger against community is more destructive for blacks than whites.

There is a strong relationship between violence and African Americans; it is simply seen as deadly power and leaving destructive impact on the black youth's psychology. Before decades American slavery existed, which leads to several issues that, in a way, influenced the blacks. While the existence of slavery in any society has proven to be a destructive and tragic experience for those who suffered at the hands of their captors, the same that happened to blacks. However, the impact of the American slavery on African Americans was highly destructive than any other society around the world. According to Morris (1996) Africans were "presumed" or "natural slaves" based on their skin colour. They were also referred to as "thinking property" and inherently "people have no rights". Black people were oppressed according to their blackness and mostly seen as property that belongs to whites, it was known for decades that whites are considered to be as the superior society and the rightful for the crown and for controlling the world. Wright succeeded in making blackness as a revolution to prove the black existence.

## **2. Invisibility: Bigger Thomas as Invisible**

We are not literally invisible, that might sometimes be preferable. But on the streets, in stores, on elevators and restaurants we are potential criminals or as servants, not as ourselves (Franklin, 34).

Invisibility is seen as a psychological experience in which the individual feels that, racism undermines his or her personal identity and capacity in a multitude of interpersonal circumstances. It is also defined as “an inner struggle with the feeling that one’s talent, attitudes, personality, and worth are not valued or recognized of prejudice of racism” (Franklin, 32). Franklin. A.J. shows the struggles that African Americans face daily with invisibility contribute to the feelings of anger, frustration, inferiority, and alienation.

The concept of invisibility comes because of racial experiences that influence African American selves; black people are ignored, not seen at all. The ignorance of white oppressive society has been identified as a central theme in many African American novels, thus, it is a way of refusing to recognize people with their traits of character that African Americans have often been confronted with. Moreover, blacks always face this kind of invisibility that is called psychological blindness. This happens when the people they meet are unable to see them as individual beings, and all their stereotypes about blacks are activated as soon as they recognize them.

The concept of invisibility can be explained as “the situation of man whose individual identity is denied” (Lieber, 86). However, blindness is the state of those who refuse to see blacks as individual beings. As Foster said, “If I am invisible to you, you are blind to me”. It shows the strong bond between the two, thus, African Americans are not literally invisible instead whites are acting blind and refuse to see them as a part of society.

Ralph Ellison is one of the African American writers who used invisibility in his works, especially his novel *Invisible Man* (1952). He explained it noticeably clear, the invisible man is invisible and without a name because others do not see him. This

statement points at something that is profoundly important and interesting. African American's names do not matter, it does not make any difference whether blacks have their proper names, or they do not. Because they are extremely not important and black lives do not matter (Ellison, 439).

*Native Son* is considered as the black literature novel to explore both blacks and whites psychology, becoming a source of inspiration for future writers. The protagonist Bigger Thomas as well as many blacks must struggle against white injustice as the Daltons and justice system. The novel is a perfect presentation of the fighting against per-established stereotypes, and the unfairness of the American discriminate society. Bigger experienced as plenty people like him the concept of invisibility and ignorance, however, invisibility affected his life and existence. He was fighting to prove his presence as an individual among white American society. Yet the absence of blindness, invisibility, and ignorance. Bigger's life would not be full of crimes, confusion, and danger. Thus, invisibility helped him to be not the first suspect, when Mary Dalton was murdered.

Jan was blind, Mary had been blind. Mr. Dalton was blind, and Mrs. Dalton was blind, yes, blind in more ways than one [...] Mrs. Dalton had not known that he was in the room with her: it would have been the last thing she would have thought of. He was black and would not have figured in her thoughts on such an occasion. Bigger felt that a lot of people were like Mrs. Dalton, blind... (Wright, 137).

Bigger was not the first suspect because the Daltons were extremely blind, and he is invisible to them. Which made them unable to regard him as dangerous as whites, also the real conditions of Bigger's race are invisible to all whites. Moreover, whites are manifesting their denial to see blacks beyond their stereotypes of savages.

*Native Son* (1940) is the depiction of cultural blindness; Bigger Thomas is repelled and deeply offended by their social blindness, a collective mentality. “They wanted and yearned to see life in a certain way; they needed a certain picture of the world; there was one way of living preferred above all others; and they were blind to what did not fit” (Wright, 106). Bigger soon replaced his anger and shame at his family with joy and relief, since he knows that; “if he could see while others were blind, then he could get what he wanted and never be caught at it” (Wright, 107).

Jan and Mary’s relationship with Bigger is truly relevant in further discussing blindness and invisibility. Even though, they hang out with him once. They failed to understand him as a human, and individual. Bigger’s opinion has not changed about whites as oppressive community, he sees them as abusive force instead of kind people with pure intentions. The only thing that made Bigger think like that is the way they communicated with him. For instance, Mary did not choose the appropriate words when having a discussion with him. Thus, Bigger had that feeling of division between races, the separation between him and them. This kind of conversations made him aware of his inferiority.

You know, Bigger. I’ve long wanted to go into those houses and just see how your people live [...] I just want to see. I want to know these people [...] yet they must live like we live [...] they live in our county... In the same city like us (Wright, 101).

This following statement proves Bigger’s opinion, the way Mary Dalton was talking about blacks. It shows the African Americans’ invisibility. In addition, choosing such words like “your people” as if they do not belong to the American society, black people are not even considered as a part of it. Expressions like “we”, “our”, and “your” increase the sense of separation and shame in Bigger. Those words

show the real intentions of any white person even if this person acts friendly, it does not stop them from being blind toward blacks.

Bigger and the people of his skin must continuously struggle to find way to overcome their invisibility as a disease that kills all men to do this step, mostly blacks should learn how to see themselves as a way that obliges others to consider them as individuals.

Richard Wright depicts Bigger's murder as he is stuck on the time like the Daltons, Bigger has a position from which those covered by their blindness may be examined. They are simply blind and Bigger knows that, having made him invisible. They have forgotten him and insignificantly speak of him and his deeds. Thus, invisibility becomes his shield that protects him. Bigger clearly understands their ignorance and his own invisibility. He let his guards down because others blindness provides a wall of protection for him.

Wright describes Bigger as a person who tries to hide his truthful and real self under covered in his invisibility, Bigger is no longer afraid of people and even his friends that they would discover his truth. Because they will never know about it, it makes him feel free because he believes in this philosophy. "... Act like other people thought you ought to act, yet do what you want" (Wright, 108). Invisibility helped him to get rid of fear because nobody sees him. So, nobody will suspect him. It makes him more comfortable and no one will ever think that he has the courage to do what he did. It is true that his invisibility protects him because only the mask is seen. Yet, in this black mask also lies a danger. If Bigger is detected there will be no place to hide and no hope for mercy.

Mostly invisibility and blindness are the result of psychological conditions, which occur when blacks start to understand that their identity or talent is not seen because of the dominance of preconceived attitudes and stereotypes (Franklin and Pierce, 277).

In *Native Son* (1940) whites attempt to see Bigger Thomas with their outer eyes instead of their inner eyes. For instance, the white oppressive society judges people according to their physical appearance. More like looking at people through their physical eyes depending on how individual looks like from the outside, to the extent that clothes determine what we see, the person beneath them is invisible to us. This is seen throughout the novel in the case of Bigger. The blackness of his skin represents his outer covering that made him always invisible.

Additionally, the novel *Native Son* is about the inability of white society to recognize and see the humanity of black people, instead white people on purpose prefer to ignore them. Bigger Thomas is painfully aware that in this blind white world, he is transparent not even an individual. Along the novel Bigger's one and only desire is to be noticed, to be seen perfectly as a human being. Moreover, ignoring his existence pushed him for murder. Bigger experienced invisibility different times, it is seen when whites communicate with blacks. Purposely white people do not call blacks with their real names, instead with other different names that are not related to them anyway. This shows the worthlessness of African American people as individuals. For instance, the short conversation that was between Bigger and the reporter covering Mary Dalton's disappearance:

One of the men walked over to Bigger. "Say, Mike, you thinks this Erlone fellow did this?" "My name ain't Mike," Bigger said, resentfully" (Wright, 208).

*Native Son* is best known for its search for acceptance and the sense of hopelessness, felt by those who have not achieved the American Dream with its promises of equality, freedom, and prosperity. Wright's *Native Son* best known as a provocative novel because of the cause that deals with, the black cause is the endurance of indignity, fear, defeat, surrounded by white indifference. Which Wright makes clear; it is controversial for the charges against white society, accusing whites of being oppressive.

However, blindness is used as a metaphor to explain the relationship between whites and blacks. Throughout the novel blindness appears in a form of physical and psychological, that both have effects over the characters. In other words, both whites and blacks lack the psychological insight and the capability to understand reality, apart from their own angle. This lack of understanding can be merely attributed to the horrors of the white system. Where blacks are considered as inferior and whites as superior (Taylor, 44-45).

Invisibility is the denial of white people to see the truth, the truth that black community exists no matter what they do. For long time whites were blind or even acting blind and refuse to recognize and accept people just because they are different in skin colour. This ignorance created psychological and mental issues, which pushed African Americans to behave violently toward white society. Such behaviours are done to prove something, which is profoundly serious. Blacks generally lack self-esteem and self-confidence; they resort to violence, as a way, to prove their existence. Thinking that killing people by accident or on purpose will turn all the eyes on them.

In *Native Son* the protagonist Bigger Thomas wanted the whites to recognize the existence of blacks, because they could not see them as human beings. He blinded the

whites, and he knows it better after killing Marry. According to him if they cannot see them as humans and recognize their existence, definitely they would not think of him as a murder. Deeply he took advantage of the white's blindness. The white's certainty that Bigger does not have the courage to commit such crime, even when they received the kidnapping note. They directly suspected the communists rather than Bigger. The ultimate certainty and trust toward the law proves their blindness because the law is created to serve and protect only the whites. Committing such murder against the whites is not accepted and the murderer would be punished deadly.

They had never held up a white man before. They had always robbed Negroes. They felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people. For they knew that white policemen never really searched diligently for Negroes who committed crimes against other Negroes. For months they talked of robbing Blum's but had not been able to bring themselves to do it (Wright, 17).

It does not matter if Negroes kill each other, and if it happens whites would be glad. However, killing white or robbing them would result deadly consequences.

Throughout the novel Bigger Thomas's feelings toward white people were full of anger and hatred, according to him whiteness is always as a sign of evil. He hated the Dalton family because of their blindness toward the sufferings of the black people. Otherwise, bigger considers Mr. and Mrs. Dalton hypocrites because in one hand they give charities of millions of dollars to the Black College and Welfare Organization; simultaneously they support the racial system.

Bigger heard that Mr. Dalton owned the South Side Estate Company, and the South Side Estate Company owns the house in which he lived. He paid eight dollars a week for one rat-infested room. His mother always took the rent to the real estate office. Mr. Dalton was somewhere far away, high up, distant, like a God. He owned property

all over the black Belt, and he owned property where white folks live, too. Even though Mr. Dalton gave millions of dollars for Negro Education, he would rent houses to Negroes in his prescribed era, this corner of the city tumbling down for rote (Wright, 164).

The invisibility of black people and the blindness of white community have always affected the lives of blacks; they have always been the ones that face those struggles. For long time blacks were experiencing discrimination and segregation because of their race, and their skin colour was a curse. They were isolated from the world and live far from the white society, which creates the feelings of hatred and anger. Such invisibility leads to violence, in order to be noticed African Americans turn to violence to prove their presence in the society.

Wright was always in full artistic control of violence in his best fiction. He uses violence extensively but as a necessary and powerful reflector of the deepest recesses of the central character's radically divided nature" (Butler, 10). According to Butler, Richard Wright succeeded in using violence in his works without failing.

Bigger is a "terrifying reflection of his own dark society" (George, 503). Bigger's violent responses are perfect reflection of his experiences in oppressive and violent environment. Fear and hatred are incorporated aspects of his aggressive and violent personality against those who oppress him. Bigger attempts to use violence as the only weapon he has to fight them. He is a "representative black victim of white racism [...] closed off from self-fulfillment and self-expression, isolated from the world around him, he turns to violence" (Bryant, 12). Violence is a necessary part of Bigger's behaviour, and he considers it as a normal way to react toward situations that he might face. Moreover, Bigger always uses violence when he feels angry or

afraid; it is a natural response to protect himself from any danger that threatens his life.

The protagonist Bigger Thomas and men like him lacked love in their lives, they were not loved which is a purpose that it creates hate and leads to violence. The strength of the novel, therefore, lies in the incredible detail of black life recorded by Wright. There is no doubt that the novel is a clear example of black man's pain and the way they are trapped in a world that does not want them, it describes the emergence of violence and aggression. Bigger's father was killed by whites this created a tough persona and made him the way he has become; this incident provokes violence against them.

In addition, Bigger's intention was not to kill Mary Dalton, it was an accident. He was afraid that her blind mother would catch him in her daughter's room, he killed Merry by accident and has nothing to do with hatred of the whites, and the desire of violence arises in Bigger when he loses his self-trust. However, cutting off her head and burning the rest of her body was brutal. It makes him look like a professional killer and surely guilty. Deep down in him, he feels the desire to express his solidarity with blacks. He wants to unite them and make them act in togetherness to get rid of their shame and fear.

The act of violence often allows those who are oppressed in society to gain a sense of power, to feel that they can cross the limits that are drawn by white oppressive society: Bigger finds himself wishing "that he had the power to say what he had done without fear of being arrested, that he could be an idea in their minds, that his black face and the image of his smothering Marry and cutting off her head and burning her

could hover before their eyes as a terrible picture of reality which they could see and feel and yet not destroy” (Wright, 130).

For Bigger, the killing of Merry gives him a sense of power to hurt whites, the way they did to them. It makes him feel that it is more like a revenge for his father’s death. However, this crime was an accident; it shocked the American society entirely. In the other hand, it was committed by fear.

“I didn’t want to kill her!” Bigger shouted. “But what I killed for; I am! It must have been pretty deep in one to make me kill! I must have felt it awful hard to murder.... What I killed for must’ve been good! When man kills, it is for something... I didn’t know I was really alive in this world until I felt things have enough to kill for’em.... It’s the truth, Mr. Max. I can say it now, cause I’m going to die I know what I’m saying really good and I know how it sounds. But I’m all right. I feel all right when I look at it that way. (Wright, 429).

Most of times blacks have the same reason in killing whites either to feel the sense of power, to get revenge, to hurt whites like they did to them, or because they are afraid. Bigger Thomas was violent even with the people of his own race, first he almost killed Gears when they decided to rob a shop running by a white man. When he realizes that his partner is scared and has no courage to do it, it made him afraid too. Fear gives a way to violence. He has murdered one of his own race, after all. Blacks have as much reason as whites do to fear him. The same happened with his girlfriend Bessie Mears he killed her to protect himself, he killed her with a brick and thrown her from the window and left her to freeze to death, their relationship was not healthy because she was willing to exchange sex for liquor and money. He discovers his salvation and rebirth after having committed two murders.

Resorting to violence and criminality offers him his basic freedom and real life. Violence calms down his idealized self. It is not the innate criminality of the hero, but

individual delinquency produced by the defective environment. However, the death of Bessie Mears played an important role because Bigger was not on trial for her murder instead he was arrested and sentenced to death for Marry Dalton's murder. This is to show the prejudice of the American justice system. Which blacks lacked their simple rights, from this point. It shows that every crime that does not involve any whites is not their matter, and the American justice does not take any step forward to bring justice. Instead, it is an extremely useful way to reduce the Black population by letting them kill each other.

Black violence in *Native Son* functions as a positive force, allowing Bigger to triumph over indifference and, for the first time, explore his identity as a human being. The novel reveals that violence is perpetuated by white objectification of blacks. Although a lack of violence keeps obscuring black consciousness, violence helps blacks to identify themselves as intelligent, autonomous beings. In addition, violence is the only way blacks can gain freedom and remove themselves from objectification in order to construct a new identity, that Bigger uses violence to overcome indifference and shame. Bigger turns to violence in order to remove guilt, violent acts create a semblance of control and meaning that gives him power. The development of violence enables Bigger to redefine himself according to his own choices (Thomason, 11)

### **3. The Role of White Justice in the Creation of Violence**

Before decades, the American history started with the creation of a myth to excuse white settlers of the genocide of the Native Americans: the false assumption that non-white people are less human, less civilized, barbarians, and brutal than whites.

Making excuses for an annihilation of a whole race, to make some changes and bring civilization.

Being black in U.S. society means always having to be prepared for anti-black actions by whites- in most places and at many times of the day, week, month, or year. Being black means living in various types of racial discrimination from cradle to grave (Feagin, 187).

It is extremely difficult for blacks to live in a white society, every day they are exposed to face any types of injustice and inequality. The opportunities and routine of everyday life for blacks are deeply affected by racial discrimination (Essed and Feagin, 101-116).

Racism is the absolute belief that one race is the principle determinant of the human characteristics and capabilities, that racial difference create an intrinsic dominance. It is a philosophy and mindset that does not accept the equal dignity and worth of all human beings who hold the same civil rights. Such belief results in racially motivated bigotry, prejudice, and persecution (Cantos and Cond, 186).

Racial discrimination and segregation extremely based on race. It is meant to separate groups from each other by making a certain group superior, favourable, and dominant. It makes other people deeply inferior and unfavourable according to their race or skin colour. The same happened to African Americans, every day they are facing ignorance, they are hardly excluded from the dominant white culture that is regarded as normal people who are African descendants, experiencing all kinds of racism, segregation, and racial discrimination. Thus, race was an excuse for enslavement. This has contributed to the creation of racist perspectives focused on race and beliefs about citizens of African descent who came to the United States.

Race was instrumental in deciding the destiny of many African Americans, notably black Americans. “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black and one white- separate and unequal” (Sigelman, 164). For decades, black people were considered as criminal, ignorant, and irresponsible to excuse their treatment toward them. This treatment pushed blacks to become objects of prejudice, racism, abuse, and violence. The role of white discriminant society always is defining blacks as a separate community, by which they are not equal in rights. This separation and inequality have negative effects on the life circumstances and changes of black people in America. It creates the sense of insecurity and involves the feeling of inferiority. Such separations are preserved by white dominant society through prejudice, racial discrimination, inequality, and segregation.

In addition, Inequality, discrimination, and prejudice as dominant and shaping forces created distorted representations of blacks in the minds of white people. Skin colour has been always a part of the separation between whites and non-whites; the white colour has always been the sign of purity. Which makes people feel the sense of superiority, any racial inter mixture make one non-white. It involves the sense of inferiority. These differences encourage one group to view the other group as less than human. “Every white man, no matter how low, is above every non-white, no matter how high” (Appiah, 06). Such racial categories are created to establish hierarchic granting privileges and control over other different groups of people, thus, oppressing and excluding others at the same time.

Most of time black people are judged unfavourably because of their race however, racial prejudice is a terribly negative attitude that is used by white to show the difference, to prove their power and control over blacks. The most growing

mechanism to uphold discrimination is stereotyping, because stereotyping is among the concepts that lead to racism, ignorance, and the sense of inferiority. The most significant stereotyping in the American society is the notion of black as a monster, the representation of crime and violence. The white community is indeed fearful of the black, and fears that violence instability would spread from black community and destroy the white community. Because for them, blacks are brutes, savages, rapists, and criminals. This fault thought about black people, makes them act that way and the American society's treatment toward black community creates the monster.

Notably black Americans are depicted as murderers, and crimes are tools that the white society uses to oppress black people racially. "For many Americans, law- and-order issue is intertwined which has unspoken fears about young black man" (Hadjor, 90). However, black man committed a crime media develops it in the public mind, turning the black crimes into the focus of public fears. Always, white society has developed the picture of a black urban criminal who threatens the American civilization and the way of life.

Equality is regarded for all men in the United States in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold those truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" (Kerber, 525). History shows that African Americans lived under white domination and control, by the end of slavery, normally, independence makes all men equal. However, African Americans still have not secured the complete range of these fundamental human rights. Black people keep facing struggles for equality, race discrimination, class domination, and segregation (Feagin, 14).

Since the existence of slavery, blacks learned to accept their own inferiority and know the difference between them and their masters. When slavery was canceled,

whites created 'Jim Crow Laws' to keep discriminating and segregating black people in different way than slavery, but with the same results and goals. Even if blacks are free and no longer slaves, they are treated likewise (Eitzen and Zinn, 180-185).

Generally, white's domination goes beyond controlling their lives. They built houses away from theirs, which gives blacks exceedingly small space to live all together in crowded houses, mostly one room apartment. Like in *Native Son* Bigger and his mother, sister, and brother. All live together in one room apartment, unlike the Daltons.

There was no rug on the floor and the plastering on the walls and ceiling hung loose in many places. There were two worn iron beds, four chairs, and old dresser, and a drop-leaf table on which they ate. This was much different from the Dalton's home. Here all slept in one room; here he would have a room for himself alone. He smelt food cooking and remembered that one could not smell food cooking in the Dalton's home (Wright, 100).

Moreover, blacks encountered serious problems in obtaining a job in a white environment. Most of them work like chauffeurs for the whites. Like in *Native Son* 1940 when Bigger's mother asked him to accept the relief's offer and work for the Daltons. "You know, Bigger, "his mother said", if you don't take the job the relief'll cut us off. We don't have any food" (Wright, 16). The blacks rely on the whites.

For long time, white people were known as the ones who would do anything to struggle blacks from enhancing their lives. They were discriminating, segregating, abusing them deadly. Thus, whites attempt to limit the blacks by deciding for them what to do, where to live, and which job they can get. "They don't let us do nothing" (Wright, 22).

When Bigger's crime was revealed to the Media, many of the implicit white stereotypes exploded out. While Bigger committed one of the most horrific crimes, even the smallest feeling of remorse does not burden their prejudice. Because they are completely convinced that they are on the right side. Media pictured the Murder as a SEX CRIME and this title covered all newspapers, which makes Bigger's situation get worse toward the public opinion. Bigger as a black man has already raped a white woman, in the mind of media and millions of white people. It is considered as a great violated taboo. As a response to such murder the public repeatedly uses racist terminology to define Bigger. "Kill that black ape!" (Wright, 270), "burn that black ape" (Wright, 334), "He looks exactly like an ape!" (Wright, 279). Bigger's prosecutor was not better than other whites and he said: "... at this every moment some half-human black ape may be climbing through the windows of our homes to rape, murder, and burn our daughters!" (Wright, 408).

Segregation, discrimination, racism, and unequal helped in creating monstrous images of black people in the mind of white society. Richard Wright's protest novel *Native Son* was the best example that expresses his disgust toward racism. The novel represents his anger against prejudice and social discrimination. Depicting the horrible consequences of racism. Relying on the facts that show the terrible living conditions of Bigger and his family, having a segregated and hopeless life helped in creating the monster that becomes hardly aggressive and violent. Bigger becomes "America's native son, the heritage of white racism" (Feglar, 78). The white community shapes the identity of Bigger and men like him, making him a vicious and passive viewer. Where the heart of his life depends heavily on his physical and social environment. White society has been always oppressive and controlling everything that is related to black people, white justice was the cause in creating the monsters.

However, Bigger's rebellion shows that a person can create his own new identity far from fear and disgust, has the right to control his life even in an oppressive, racist environment.

Bigger Thomas is the monster created by his environment, he is considered as the result and product of white oppressive, racist society:

I say that this boy is the victim of a wrong that has grown, like a cancer, into the very blood and bone of our social structure. Bigger Thomas sits here today as a symbol of that wrong. And the judgment that you will deliver upon him is a judgment delivered upon ourselves, and upon our whole civilization. The Court can pronounce the sentence of death and that will end the defendant's life, but it will not end this wrong! [...] In theory he was stimulated by every token around him to aspire to be a free individual. And in practice by every method of our social system, he was frustrated in that aspiration. Out of this confusion, fear was born. And fear breeds hate, and hate breeds guilt, and guilt in turn breeds the urge to destroy-to kill (Hatch and Shine, 57-58).

Racial Oppression, search for liberation and struggle for survival are crucial facets of the African American History. Since the dawn of the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, African Americans have been subjected to numerous types of racism and injustice that have destroyed their consciousness and driven them to succumb to escape strategies needed to survive in such unmerciful community.

In 1963, Fannie Lou Hamer and other activists were travelling back to their home after their meeting and attending a voter's workshop in South Carolina. They stopped at a restaurant in order to eat. However, they found that the restaurant owners did not allow the black people to enter and get some food; black people were not welcome. Fannie Lou Hamer recognized that the restaurant owners pushed her friends to police

cars when she returned. A police officer pushed Hamer away and began kicking and beating her. She said:

They beat me till my body was hard, till I could not bend my fingers or get up when they told me to. That is how I got this blood clot in my left eye-the sight's nearly gone now. And my kidney was injured from the blows they gave me in the back (Blain).

Hamer showed the black people's ill-treatment by the police and the white people; she also shows police violence and brutality against the blacks (Blain).

#### **4. Violence against Women in Wright's *Native Son***

Violence against women is a global problem. In 1993, The UN Declaration on the elimination of violence against women defined it as "... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." This statement defines violence as acts that cause harm, danger and by including the term gender-based which emphasizes the inequality between the two genders men and women, and their roles in a society or culture (Krantz and Garcia- Moreno, 818).

Historically, women have been seen as lower than men and have less value than them, in different sects in society, politically, economically, socially. In Western culture, male violence against women has coincided with the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the 1970s. Feminist activists described male violence against women as fundamental to the continuation of women's oppression such as sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence and other types of male violence (Greenan). Women of all ages, social classes, religions and nationalities all over the

world suffer and experience all forms of violence such as interpersonal violence, physical and emotional violence, domestic violence, sexual violence. Men overwhelmingly committed it. Thus, women started to arrange and organize consciousness-raising campaigns, open safe houses, write books (Greenan).

Richard Wright is one of the prominent black writers; his famous novel *Native Son* portrays the life of people of colour, which they were under the whites' oppression. The central theme of *Native Son* is violence; it has different ways and forms in the novel. Besides, the violent deaths of Mary Dalton and Bessie Mears, both who are killed by Bigger Thomas through various kinds of violence including, rape and murder.

For instance, Rape is a serious problem and crime; it also means sexual violence against women, particularly against black women (Guttman, 170). Thus, in *Native Son*, both white and black women bear the brunt of the race-class system's brutality (Guttman, 170).

In *Native Son*, Mary Dalton is a rich white girl and daughter of a wealthy white family, her father Mr. Dalton, who hires Bigger Thomas as his family chauffeur. On the first day of his work, Mary asks Bigger why he is not in a union; this question makes him hate and fear her and thinks that she will cost him his job. Then, during the meeting of Mary Dalton and her boyfriend Jan at a black restaurant on the South Side. Mary invites Bigger to join them; she starts asking him about the living of black people and that she is curious about how they live. After their meeting, Mary Dalton and Bigger Thomas return to Dalton's house, Mary was too drunk, and she cannot get out of the car, Bigger carries her to her room. He becomes sexually aroused and

kisses Mary; she is physically attractive and beautiful; Bigger puts her in the bed, he intends to have sex with her (Reads).

[Bigger] lifted her and laid her on the bed. Something urged him to leave at once, but he leaned over her, excited, looking at her face in the dim light, not wanting to take his hands from her breasts. She tossed and mumbled sleepily. He tightened was aware only of her body now; his lips trembled. Then he stiffened. The door behind him had creaked (Wright, 84-85).

Then, suddenly Mary's mother appears, although Bigger knows she is blind, he is afraid that Mary will tell everything to her mother, to protect himself and to silence Mary he puts a pillow on her face. Bigger Thomas recognizes that he has murdered her to death, he takes Mary's body to the furnace to burn it, Bigger cuts off her head and put the body on fire, after that he cleans the basement (Reads). The murder of Mary Dalton changes Bigger's life and his character.

Bigger realizes that he commits rape every time he looks to a white face:

Had he raped her? Yes, he had raped her. Every time he felt as he had felt that night, he raped. But rape was not what one did to women. Rape was what one felt when one's back was against the wall and one had to strike out, whether one wanted to or not, to keep the pack from killing one. He committed rape every time he looked into a white face. He was a long, taut piece of rubber which a thousand white hands had stretched to the snapping point, and when he snapped it was rape. But it was rape when he cried out in hate deep in his heart as he felt the strain of living day by day. That, too, was rape (Wright, 257-258).

In addition, another victim of Bigger's rape and murder is Bessie Mears; she is a stereotypical black woman. She welcomes Bigger after the day when he killed Mary, he tells her about the missing of Mary. Then Bessie gets angry and worried; she asked him if he has done something wrong and unacceptable to the white girl Mary, Bigger explains that he accidentally kills her (Shmoop Editorial Team). He thinks back to his

feeling of shame, hatred and anger that he felt that night, he committed rape, but the word rape for him is just feeling of being forced to strike out to protect himself.

In an abandoned building, Bigger rapes his girlfriend Bessie, when he is on the run from the police. After that, he begins thinking how to kill Bessie because Bigger knows that he cannot take her on the lamb with him “He remembered that he had seen two bricks lying on the floor of the room as he had entered” (Wright, 234). Bigger uses one of those bricks to strike Bessie on her head repeatedly; he killed her. Then, he throws her body down an airshaft. Bigger violently kills Bessie because he fears that she knows about his murder of Mary Dalton. While Mary’s death is accidental, Bessie’s death is murder. Bigger justifies a lot of his behaviour by blaming Bessie and thinks that she is unable to help and support him (Reads). He has to kill her and claiming that,

If he took her along she would be crying all the time;  
she would be blaming him for all the hard happened ;  
she would be wanting whiskey, to help her to forget and  
there would be times when he could not get it for her...  
He could not take her and he could not leave her  
(Wright, 273).

Bigger admits to having committed an act that will lead the white society to murder him. Still, he will not admit that he has done something wrong, a kind of violence which is rape to Mary’s body; Bigger claims that it happens to him when he feels the fear of being a black man.

Besides, while Bigger is being accused of rape, Richard Wright makes it clear that he does not rape Mary Dalton. However, Bigger rapes her; he is emotionally and sexually attracted by the fact that he is defying the white supremacist society. Through this way, *Native Son* reveals that both white and black rapists ensure that

black women are not like the white women, in which the black women are the most likely victims of rape (Guttman, 186).

*Native Son* fully represents the complexity of the situation in the word of rape, in which it has two meanings; the first one used in the battle that happens against men, the second meaning is that it is a word that describes violent actions committed on the women's bodies (Guttman, 187).

*Native Son* tackles the theme of violence against women because Crime and violence give blacks the feeling of personal power, Bigger feels that after the killing and the murder of Mary, he experiences a sense of denial and control over his choices from the society.

Bigger Thomas's violence in *Native Son* has provoked a debate between people who read it and people who interpret the actions of Bigger, in which they interpreted Bigger's murder of Mary as to gain self-recognition, recreates and prove his self and human identities, and between people who criticizes his actions to perpetuate the stereotypes of African American people (Takeuchi, 56).

Many writers have been criticized Richard Wright's novel, *Native Son*. For instance, James Baldwin, a lover of Wright's writings. He wrote an entire book of criticism entitled *Notes of a Native Son*. He criticized the novel representing the main character, Bigger Thomas, as sexual and physical acts towards the white woman Mary through his murder of a white woman. However, later Baldwin softened his critique by saying that the novel focuses just on the role of injustice and the unjust social system in which it leads Bigger to act like the way he does with women ("Literary Criticism of *Native Son*").

Other writers have said that *Native Son* is an example of Naturalism, in which the society restricts its characters traits; they have argued that Bigger cannot take decisions and choices because of the society. But Bigger acts with some autonomy, especially in his crime of murder and rape Bessie (“Literary Criticism of *Native Son*”).

Violence against women is the most central theme in *Native Son*. Richard Wright makes powerful statements about violence and how it plays a vital role in influencing and shaping the lives and the choices of many African Americans. Wright illustrates and shows different themes such as violence, particularly against women to tell the world how the injustice society is full of hatred and fear, and how women are exploited and killed.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows the powerful chemistry and the unbreakable bond between fear and violence, both complete each other and the first creates the second. These sentiments affect the life of the individual, in a way, that fear pushes the person to make errors and sometimes leads him to act violently. Whenever, a person is afraid of something it blinds him towards reality and leads him into darkness, where there is no mercy.

Most of time, whites are blind. Literally they refuse to see other people, for example: in the case of Bigger and men like him are not noticed. This rejection is because of their race which does not allow them to be treated like humans. In the American society blacks people generally are invisible, however, the reason of this study is to prove that blacks are not invisible. The blindness of whites that prevents them to see, refusing to see means that they are blind.

This study proves that the person is not born with inner violence or savage, only life conditions and vicious people can turn him into a monster. The unstable psyche has a greater impact on the behaviour, like the case of Bigger Thomas who grew up in a very bad environment. Negative feedback, anger and suppression help in the creation of evil.

Later, some people will blame the others for their brutality. This search explains the real life conditions of black people, and their suffering because of their race or skin colour. Where blackness is considered as a curse that coloured people have to know that they are less worthy than the whites and unwanted in their society. As a matter of fact white people are monsters in a way because they made blacks suffer for decades; they made them lose faith in themselves. White society is the creator of the monsters.

This study paved the way to discuss very important subjects, which were not allowed to talk about. Such subjects are very sensitive to reveal in society, for example: rape, racism, violence and discrimination. Before women were not allowed to express their opinions or ideas, because women were not equal to men in rights. This inequality makes men underestimate women and sometimes it goes to the extent to rape. Such violation happens to both black and white women because in this case neither race nor skin colour matters.

In addition, this work reveals many facts that were hidden or uncovered yet, among them is blaming the white Americans for their crimes against humanity, and the inappropriate treatment against coloured people. However, this study does not stand in any way for the brutality of some African Americans. Any criminal whether black or white, educated, or illiterate, any crime whether planned or unplanned is against humanity and ending the life of someone is against the law as well. The person that dares to commit such crimes must be punished for his actions.

*Native Son* is a sample of difficulties that face African Americans in certain time. It serves black people's needs and targets. The novel narrates a journey of black man who has experienced persecution in his childhood and becomes a killer in his

adulthood. It presents the results of a painful past that affects the present and the future. There is unbreakable bond between the past and the future, like Bigger had a very painful early life. Such pain cannot be forgotten easily, it keeps him thinking of the past repeatedly. This over thinking of something prevents from living a better future. The most things Bigger wanted are acceptance, if he was accepted as a human being, he would have been changed.

The author highlights on the role and impact of fear and violence on the individual. It is seen in the novel that fear leads the person to act violently, which means the sense of insecurity develops the sense of anger. It is seen in many situations in *Native Son* whenever Bigger is afraid of, something or someone, this fear prevents him from thinking of the results. Fear always pushes him to do unacceptable things like murder and rape. In addition, the fate of Bigger was extremely painful. Shocking because he was executed just for killing Merry Dalton instead of killing both. It is unjust to Bessie because when he was tried, the American Court sentenced him to death for killing the white girl only. Thus, Bessie was black girl and her life does not matter as Merry. Such act shows the inequality between blacks and whites in America also shows the differences between them.

The white injustice is one of the reasons behind the brutality of blacks. It has a greater impact on the psyche of the individuals.

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## الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الخوف وكيفية خلقه للعنف في رواية "ابن البلد" لريتشارد رايت. هذا البحث يهدف الى التحقيق في حالة السود والأقليات الذين واجهوا مشاكل العنف والخوف في المجتمع الأمريكي. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على نظرية التحليل النفسي ونظرية نقد العرق حيث يساعد هذا التراكم المتناسق على تحليل سلوك الشخصيات ويعطي فيها أفضل للقضايا النفسية, مع الإشارة إلى فحص المجتمع والثقافة من حيث صلتها بتصنيف العرق, القانون, والسلطة. تهدف هذه الرواية أيضا الى منح السود مكانة أفضل في المجتمع الأمريكي وفي الغالب, لوقف أي عنف او إساءة محتملة تدمر أرواح السود. علاوة على ذلك, تلقي هذه العملية أيضا الضوء على الفصل والتمييز العنصري الذي واجهه السود خلال الوقت. لذلك, تم تنظيم هذه الرسالة في فصلين رئيسيين: يقدم الفصل الاول إطارا نظريا وسياقا اجتماعيا تاريخيا للعمل أما الفصل الثاني يستكشف موضوع الخوف والعنف, ومفهوم التخفي في رواية "ابن البلد" لريتشارد رايت.