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**Richard Wright: STRUGGLES TO ACTUALIZE PHYSICALLY  
AND EMOTIONALLY THE SELF IN BLACK BOY.**

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**Abstract:**

The object of the research is a fictional autobiographical novel BLACK BOY (1945) by Richard Wright. The study focuses on self-actualization and self-reconstruction of the major character from the perspective of the theory of double consciousness by W.E.B Du Bois. The aim of the study is to show the effort of Richard Wright to achieve his self-actualization. The primary source is the novel itself, and the secondary sources are the theory of double consciousness, Marxism theory, and some articles that are relevant to this research. The writer uses the theory of double consciousness as a technique of analysis. The result of the study shows that a person will be motivated to attain his self-actualization after satisfying the principal needs (basic needs). A person will develop himself, to be what he wants to be and to achieve the goal in life. He will try to grow greater and uses his potential into the fullest.

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### **Dedication**

To my family, especially my mother thank you for her endless love and support along the way.

Fatima.

### Dedication

I want to thank my family ,and best friends (mebarka, sarah) for their support .

Aicha.

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**Introduction :**

Behind every successful writer a story of challenges and misery. Richard Wright is one of the African American writers who could achieve fame , fortune, and had the opportunity to undersign his name with the pillars of African Americans Writers before he died. Wright demonstrates in his works the real side of racial society at that time.

In addition, the majority of his writings were affected by his life. Wright experienced different hardships at the level of his family and society, poverty ,hunger, duality. Besides, the difficulties that he faced in the White society, segregation, Racism, inequality, Jim crow Laws . Furthermore, Despite of the fact that all the circumstances and struggles Wright could reach a position in the American society.

Wright considers Literature as a path to protest and give a voice to voiceless people that are suffering as a second class in a white dominant society.

Throughout the History of African American Literature,The writers tackled different issues; Socially and Politically, and themes in their writings. Racism was one of these fundamental problems. In America, Racism disseminated around the country particularly in the Southern States. People of color were treated harshly. They did not have the same legal rights as **The Whites.**

Richard Wright's Autobiography "**Black Boy**" is a memoir of his journey in several states in the south from his childhood to youth. In his work Wright illustrates the issues that he encountered as a Black boy in the Southern States. In each chapter Wright narrates an experience and perplexing memories. Furthermore, his experience of duality "**Double Consciousness**" Twoness of souls that emerges with his "**Emotional hunger**" and words; the issue of Language. Besides, Racism the cause of poverty, inferiority and segregation in the black community.

Hunger is one of the biggest issues that is tackled in the autobiography **Black Boy**. Wright's hunger is divided into two types; "**physical hunger**" and "**Emotional hunger**". Wright strived from the first one because of poverty that **The Blacks** suffered from in the southern states due to the severe laws and acts that were executed against **The Blacks** in different sections, politically, socially and economically.

In her article **Insatiable Hunger : A Literary analysis of Richard Wright's Autobiography of "Black Boy"** Sarah deeply depicts Wright's Hunger. Wright suffered from hunger his entire life, not just for food but also for acceptance, Love and needs to understand the world around him, however most significantly Wright possesses an insatiable hunger for knowledge (Sarah J. Turner).

The Article clearly depicts Wright's struggles with his family especially hunger that started within the family. His family never provided love, security, and acceptance as other families supposed to do. Wright lived in a tension with the members of the family and this makes an emotional distance. Although the distance and despite the antagonistic and frustrating experience Wright experiences on his family, he was able to preserve hunger for a better life, one that he could better understand (Sarah J. Turner). In addition, Wright's striving from acceptance in his society he saw himself far away from them, also he could not see himself as a real part of this

world. This desire for acceptance disturbs his hunger for understanding because it highlights his lack of ability to comprehend the reason why he could not fit in anywhere. Furthermore, Wright's interactions with other blacks in the south usually makes him depressed with both himself and others. Therefore, he becomes more introverted and not comfortable sharing his ideas and opinions with other(Sarah). Wright suffered from Alienation with both his family and society, his feelings and opinions were totally refused. For that reason, he became afraid to act or to act in order not to face rejection. Besides, he began questioning and to understand the racial gap between **The Blacks** and **The whites**. He illustrates they he wants to understand these two sets of people who lived in one society, but never dealt with each other except in violence.

On the other hand, Wright's experience of Emotional hunger that leads to an important Psychological state in Wright's life Which is **Double** Consciousness. This experience emerges when Wright became eager for Knowledge. His desire for Reading books creates a distance between himself; the thoughts that he acquired and the norms of his society that he never accepted. This duality makes him live a distinct experience.

Ralph Ellison in his Article **Richard Wright Blues** asserts that Richard Wright shaped for himself a dual role to explore and depict the meaning of Negro experience, to show to Negroes and the Whites those issues of psychological and emotional nature that arise between them when they struggle for mutual understanding (Ellison, 2).

Wright shed the light on other issues in his novel; **Color line, The Veil, Inferiority complex,** and **Code Switching**. These concepts are explained by W. E. B Du Bois in his book **The Souls Of Black Folk** Wright explicitly depicted these problems in his autobiography.

The Color Line; the racial segregation and political discrimination such as Jim Crow laws, inequality and injustice these acts that legislated by the government against **The Blacks**. These laws makes a separation between the two races in jobs, public places and education this indicates

that **The whites** are superior while **The Blacks** are second marginalized class in the society. Because of such laws people of color in the American society did not enjoy any rights even the rights of life was threatened to be taken from them because of such organizations that encourage hostility towards **The Blacks** in order to eliminate them from the society. Additionally, The veil is implicitly discussed by Wright he illustrates to this concept by showing that There is a virtual barrier between the blacks and the whites ;the sense of the White Supremacy is highly dominated in the Society which makes **The Blacks** feel inferior .Besides, the mistreatment of the whites towards **The Blacks** . Wright also criticized his own community for accepting this cruel circumstances . Moreover, he asserts that the blacks have also dignity and principles must be seen by **The Whites** .

On the other hand ,the problem of Language is affected by racism. Since racism is the main reason of all mentioned above . Language of **The Blacks** is highly influenced by these events there is a switching in the language ;Duality of words of the blacks because they were obliged to change it when they communicate with the whites .Their Language is divided into two dimensions ;one with their own community ,and the other one with the whites . **TheBlacks** considered this as away of surviving in the American society.

With the regard to the background of the study, this research will prove into the following questions: What are the struggles that Richard Wright confronted to actualize himself? How Wright depicts the experience of double consciousness through the types of hunger? How Twoness leads to duality of words and affects the Language of The Blacks? To what extent did the novelist Richard Wright describes the situation of The Blacks in the Southern States during Jim Crow Laws and discrimination in the American society?

Related to Research Questions above, the Research Objectives are: To identify the struggles in Wright's life ? To examine the cause behind Double Consciousness and to shed the light on

Richard Wright's contribution in describing the reality of the American society and situation of The Black Race in the South during Jim Crow Laws in the novel.

In fact, the nature of this work requires a resort eclectic Theoretical Approach. Double Consciousness will be dominated. Indeed, this theory is practical to the study ; it analyses the way in which emotional hunger leads to Dual identity "**Twoness**" and how Wright encounters this Psychological problem in American society. This can be done through depicting the cruel racism and mistreatment of the whites against the Blacks. Besides, this research will utilizes The Marxist Theory which is necessary to approach the social life in the south during Jim Crow Laws . This approach also attempts to reveal the And the conflict between the two races .

Indeed, this dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter is entitled " Socio-Historical Context and Theoretical Framework". It starts with the history of African American race and it's striving in the American society. This chapter introduces a Background of Double Consciousness Theory and sheds the light on the different issues ; Socially and Politically Which are The veil , Color Line and Code Switching that clearly depicted by Wright in the autobiography. The second chapter is entitled " Practical Part : Double Consciousness Experience and The Struggles in Richard wright's Environment and Society. This chapter concerns with putting "**Black Boy** " into practice through applying Double Consciousness Theory that is important to analyze The Emotional Hunger that led Wright to experience duality. Besides, the physical hunger that is illustrated by Wright that makes him relaying on himself in his community. Then , applying Marxist Theory that equally significant to the study in order to approach social life in The Black community and the marginalization at all the level; Socially Politically and Economically that they faced in the American society which is clearly asserted by Wright throughout the veil , Color Line and Inferiority complex. Additionally, this chapter explains how all these problems influenced The Language of

## **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

Ethnic discrimination and segregation have been a serious issue between the Whites and the Blacks which its excruciating impacts still reside in the memory and the psyche of the Black Americans. Social discrimination was based on race and started in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with slavery. Those slaves captured in Africa and shipped through the *Middle Passage* in cruel conditions, and were forcibly put into labour in plantations (cotton, crops, etc...) and in households without any cost. The American economy in that period was based on slavery especially in the South. The Whites had complete control over the slaves; they mistreated and abused them in both ways mentally and physically. When it comes to law the African slaves had neither freedom nor even natural human rights such as; the right for life, mobility not the right for creed.

The '*chattel slavery*' is an act which considered slaves as a part of property and legalised the ownership of slaves with total control of the master over their lives and destiny. This act emphasizes on the possession of slaves as objects, it allowed complete control as well as it protected the behaviours of the owner. These cruel circumstances stripped the Black subjects from their humanity and strongly affected their psyche and mind by accepting the concept of inferiority. They were persecuted and considered inferior due to their skin colour. Later on, the North started to call for abolishment in order to expand and impose industrial zones and rail roads in the South. This act was completely rejected by the South since slavery is considered as the backbone of their economy which was based on manual labor. Therefore some of the slaves rebelled against their owners and escaped to the North.

The 1850's slavery was the most divisive issue in the American politics, which was one of the main reasons that led to the collusion between the North and the South. After the Civil war, the North enacted '*Emancipation Proclamation*' later on known as the XIII Amendment, which guaranteed 'equal protection' under the law for all people and declared the abolition of slavery in the USA. *Such an amendment brought no change for Blacks' miserable life and* things went worse for, the South adopted the system of '*Racial segregation*' to keep African Americans in a subordinate status by prohibiting them from equal access to public facilities and institutions, ensuring that the Blacks lived apart from the Whites. The legalisation of '*Equal but Separate*' doctrine, *Black Codes* and *Jim Crow* laws were enacted to enforce segregation and curtail the power of Black voters. These laws demonstrated the hypocrisy of the government and enforced the use of violence against the Blacks as a way to intimidate them, to ensure that they remained second class, for example; the Ku Klux Klan a Southern white terrorist group that sought for the restoration of the White supremacy through intimidation and violence aimed at the newly emancipated Blacks.

The concept of slavery was favoured by the White Americans, because slaves were viewed as a way for the Whites to gain wealth and power within the social classes and to have hierarchy. Karl Marx argues that a class is formed when its members achieve class consciousness and solidarity. This happens when the members of class (The Bourgeoisie) become aware of their exploitation and conflict with another class (The Proletariat). The class struggle in USA is based on ethnicity. White supremacy, discrimination, and racism were the central sources of conflict of the social, political, and economical development of the USA.

The exploitation of the Blacks and the mistreatment by the Whites led to racial tensions between the two groups. Marx argued that the only way to end class struggle is by the rebellion of the proletariat (the Blacks) and the overthrow of the Bourgeoisie (the Whites). This clearly happened in 'The Civil Rights Movement' during the 1960's, and this is in a way making to what

should have happened long before during the age of slavery and later during Reconstruction Period.

The 1962 March is a nonviolent movement in which the African Americans protested for equal rights by maintaining civil disobedience as a strategy. It successfully outlawed social discrimination and segregation in public and institutions. It called for equal job opportunity, and enacted the XIV Amendment (citizenship right) and the XV( the right to vote) Amendment.

Slavery and racial segregation effected the lives and outlook of the African Americans significantly as they were not granted equality. The mistreatment and violence led the Blacks to act overly aggressive and have hostility towards their own people because of racial frustration, which allows the Whites the reason for stereotyping and stigmatizing them. This led to the feelings of inferiority and self-hatred within the Black individual. W.E.B Du Bois, an Afro-American scholar established the theory of Double Consciousness in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*

The Blacks in America suffered for hundreds of years from alienation, racism, exploitation, oppression, in addition to social, political and economic discriminations. For these reasons some psychological problems had appeared among the black community. One of these issues was Double consciousness that presented by W.E.B. Du Bois in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*.

### **1.Double Consciousness Theory.**

The theory of Double Consciousness is one of the fundamental theories of the twentieth century. It sets for understanding the psycho-social division existing in the American society. This theory was developed by W.E.B. Du Bois in his famous work *The Souls Of Black Folk*. Which refers to the psychological challenge of being both African ‘Negro’ and American .One presents as "actual- self" and the second as the "other “or the "object" as viewed by the whites .It describes the feeling of owning the more than one social identity, which makes it difficult to

develop a sense of self . Because they do not want to be one or the other, they want to be able to maintain both identities in harmony instead conflict.

“ It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feel this Twoness, an America, a Negro; Two souls , two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder”.(Du Bois,13).

This definition portrays the division of the Black’s identity into several parts; being a black “Negro and American”. Therefore, the Blacks cannot possess self-consciousness and the measurement of their character is seeing themselves through the eyes of others.

### **1.1 Historical Background on Double Consciousness.**

In the twentieth century the African Americans lived in a society ruled by the Whites and suffered from problems of a cruel race discrimination that led to a psychological issue; double consciousness. Du Bois in *The Soul of the Black Folk* depicts the African Americans experience of double consciousness

The principle dilemma of African Americans was in the first instance; all black American must have double life, as a Black and as an American, which means a double life with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes that must give rise to double words and double ideals...” This situation arises a painful self-consciousness; an almost morbid sense of personality and moral hesitancy, which is fatal to self-confidence. Moreover, some undefined features of African American “Twoness” were certain and ought to be secured; “in the merging of his double self into a better and truer self”. The Negro wishes neither of earlier formed self to be lost, nor .....and lastly. Education would give way to determination of negative

African Americans “Twoness” by concurrently raising the race and introducing sanity to bigots .( Allen,5).

The “Twoness “that pervades from certain parts of Afro-American life derived from paramount dualities and significant contradictions within American culture in general. However, each Black/White duality in American culture essentially was necessary to make clarification of itself into relating “Twoness” within the African American society. For instance, in *The Souls Of Black Folk* Du Bois points out contradictory standards, although in prior works he had additionally talked about common features between the two lives of Black and White Americans (‘like those double stars that bound for all time, whirl around each other separate yet one’).

The presence of class distinction in Black communities was also inside their White counterparts. They still undermine Du Bois dispute for the development of combined beliefs inside either black or white camps, a crystallization globally apposing ethics that split these camps, and their subsequent representation as dualities within African life itself (Allen,6).

“From the double life every American Negro must live as a Negro and as an American, as swept on the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the Eddies of the fifteenth century, from this must arise a painful self-consciousness ,an almost morbid sense of personality and moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the veil of color are changing and changing rapidly, but not at the rate .not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life , within double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes ,must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt to hypocrisy or radicalism”(Du Bois,141-142).

Through these lines, Du Bois points out that the African Americans must experience "Double Consciousness", it was obliged, double life of African Americans which undoubtedly gave rise to double words and double ideals: A Negro, American. Two warring souls dwelling in one.

Further aggravation came from the influence of rapid social change, changes that released by the dynamics of the U.S economy which infringed upon both Black and White societies. Conversely, the specific anguish of Afro-Americana whose decision Du Bois considered key to the opening of all. Therefore, an existential one. What confused him was less that black Americans experienced duality in their lives. However, rather that this duality was lived as self-estrangement (Allen,4). Du Bois depicts the changes that accrued in America during the nineteenth century although these changes were just for a dominant current, despite the fact that the Blacks still have no rights and did not live the same life as the Whites did. Therefore the Afro-Americana individual suffered psychologically from this difficult double life experience

“The history of American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain self-consciousness manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older self to be lost He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he known that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American , without being cursed and spit upon his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face”(Du Bois ,13).

The evident explanation which Du Bois brought to problem of “ Two un-reconciled souls dwelling in one dark body”. Was that of education a presentation of his belief in the powers of sanity? Different streams of thoughts anticipated accordance with “the multiplying of human desires in culture-land “had derived the need” for the world-wide cooperation of men in satisfying them”. Therefore the notions of “a new human unity, pulling the ends of earth nearer and all men

,black ,yellow ,and white”; second on the part of whites , an ardent and real belief in the inferiority of blacks who were strait for ordained to walk within the veil; to conclude, “the confused , half-conscious mutter of men are black and whitened , crying, Liberty, Freedom, Opportunity, vouchsafe to us ,a boastful world ,the chance of living men”(Allen,4,5). In fact, the blacks in their striving with the mainstream society their demands were clear; Freedom, equality without marginalization.

## **1.2.The Color Line:**

The twentieth century brought an amalgamation of issues mainly to the relations of humans with diverse belongings and statues. According to Du Bois "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,\_ the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa ,in America the island of the sea...’(Du Bois,19).

Du Bois uses the color line as a reference to the racial segregation and social injustice that existed in the United States following the abolishing of slavery. Du Bois used the story Alexander Crummell as an example to shed the light on the historic injustice and coercion that extended for centuries in the American society.

"This is the history of a human heart,\_ the tale of a black boy for many long years ago began to struggle with life that he might know the world and know himself .Three temptations he met on those dark dunes that lay Gray dismal before the wonder -eyes of the child: temptations of hate ,that stood out against the red dawn; the temptation despair, that darkened noonday; and temptation of doubt, that ever steal along with twilight .Above all, you must hear of the vales he crossed, \_the valley of humiliation and the valley of the shadow of Death"(Du Bois, 150).

Through these lines Du Bois relates that many African American experienced the temptations of hate, despair, and doubt. Alexander Crummell is one of these Africans; a Black American seeking to become a priest however, he was rejected by the Whites of becoming a priest due to his skin color . Du Bois emphasizes that despite of glorious and holy position of the religion, it cannot be excluded from this race conflicts. Moreover, Du Bois revived the concept of the color line , a notion determined by Fredrick Douglas in his article "*The Color Line*".

"Few evils are less accessible to the force of reason, or more tenacious of life and power, than a long - standing prejudice. It is a moral disorder, which creates the conditions necessary to its own existence, and fortifies itself by refusing all contradictions. It paints hateful picture according to its own diseased imagination, and distorts the featured of fancied original to suit the portray. As those who believe in the visibility of ghost can easily see them, so it is always easy to see repulsive qualities in those we despise and hate"(Douglass, 1).

According Douglass the "Color Line" is the main cause that separated the races and legislated inequality. Du Bois utilises the color line as a symbol in *The Souls of Black Folk* to refer to the invisible and physical division between the races. He further emphasizes that the color line is inherently hierarchical, in order to remain the Blacks inferior. These are the main reasons that led to "the self-hatred".

### **1.3. The Veil:**

The veil is a factor which contributed to double consciousness. Du Bois uses the veil as a metaphor to symbolise the White refusal of the Blacks, it defines racism and separation from the two races. According to Du Bois the veil is a mirror (The Whites) in which the Blacks see themselves through it. The veil led to the acceptance of the idea of inferiority by the Black subject, which suggest the Whites to reject the clarity of the existence of Blacks in the society , "the Negro is the sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with a second-sight in this American world ,\_ a world which yields him true self-consciousness, but only lets see himself through the revelation of the other world"(Du Bois,13)

Furthermore, David Owen in his article "*Whiteness in Du Bois' the Souls of The Black Folk*" "The veil illustrates the marginalization of the blacks the mainstream society and culture, that is, how there is a barrier and gap between black and white experience (Owen, 14).

### **1.4. Code Switching:**

Code switching is when one changes their language or way of speech depending on the environment. In Black culture, relates directly to Double Consciousness. African American language is not seen as acceptable by society, so switching to 'proper' talk is the only way to be accepted. Blacks feel like they need to talk with slang or Ebonics to fit in with the culture. Long ago during the slavery era, the blacks required a way to communicate, because they spoke different African languages since they come from different African countries. They were also not familiar with English language, therefore, they used 'pidgin'; which is a mixture of several local African languages and English. Through time, pidgin vanished because of the dominance of the English language. This case is a clear reflection of double consciousness. According to Du Bois, code switching must be appeared in the society and occurred with Blacks, because they were

suffering from double consciousness and residing in a society full of white people. Therefore, they were forced to change their language when they were talking to the Whites. The Blacks considered code switching as a way to survive in the mainstream. Franz Fanon refers to the 'Negro language' in his book '*Black Skin, White Masks*' which he places a tremendous importance on language . "The Black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the White man. A Negro behaves, differently with a White man and another Negro"(Fanon, 17).

Fanon argues that the Blacks exist in two modes; one when the Black is around his race, and the other when he is along with the Whites. Fanon expresses in this chapter that the Black subjects feels uses the language of the oppressor in order to feel whiter. According to Fanon language is not a basic tool for communication, but is a fundamental part of the identity that gives a sense of belonging to the individual. Furthermore, he argues that language becomes an index of both cultural difference and power.

### **1.5.Hunger:**

"Hunger" is a unique and significant theme in Richard Wright autobiography. It considered as an important part in Wright's life and one of the biggest struggles that he had faced . "Hunger " in the novel has two fundamental types. In the first instance, "**Physical hunger**" ;the lack of food due to poverty that the "**The blacks**" were suffering from in the southern states. This kind taught Wright how to relay on him self, therefore he worked manual jobs in an early age in order to feed himself and support his family. Second, "**The emotional hunger**" , Wright pursuits for love ,acceptance ,however his greatest hunger is seeking for "**knowledge**". This type makes Wright to experience another Psychological issue which **Double Consciousness**.

### **1.6.An overview of Du Bois:**

W.E.B Du Bois (William Edward Burkhardt ; was born on February 23,1868\_August 27,1963). He was an African American writer , pivotal sociologist, historian ,teacher, and sociopolitical activist who debated for racial equality for African Americans. His emergence as a Black leader coincided with the rise of **The Jim crow laws** of the South and the Progressive Era. He participated in the creation of **The National Association for The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** in 1909, and he has been called the father of Social Science and the father of **Pan-Africanism** . Du Bois awarded a scholarship to attend Fisk University .While he is studying at Fisk his experience of racism and poverty was noticeably different from his life in Great Barrington. Therefore, he determine to dedicate his life to ending racism and improving Black Americans. Then, he graduated from Fisk University in 1888 and he was accepted into Harvard University, where he obtain a master's degree, a doctorate, and a fellowship to continue his studying for two years at The University of Berlin in Germany. Du Bois was the first Black American to earn a doctorate from Harvard.

Du Bois wrote his collection of Essays **The Souls of The Black Folk** in 1903 which is considered as a landmark of African American Literature(Lewis.Femi).



## **Chapter 2:**

## **II.1. Richard wright: The African American writer.**

Richard Nathaniel wright was born on September 4,1908 on a plantation near Natchez, Mississippi, U.S, and died in November 28,1960. Paris, France.

One of the America's greatest black writers . Wright was also among the first African American writers to achieve Literally fame and fortune. His father Nathaniel wright was an illiterate sharecropper and his mother, Ella Wilson was a well-educated school teacher .His father abandoned the family and left Richard and his brother to be raised their mother .The family's extreme poverty forced them to move to Memphis when Richard was six years old .Ella Was obliged to work as a cook in order to support her family . Richard temporarily stayed in an orphanage during this period as well. His mother became ill while living in Memphis ,so the family moved to Jackson, Mississippi, and lived with Ella's mother Margret Wilson .

Richard's grandmother, a devout Seventh Day Adventist ,enrolled him in a Seventh Day Adventist school near Jackson at the age of twelve. He also attended a local public school for a few years. In the spring of 1924 he wrote his first story "the Voodoo of Hell's Half Acre" was published by The Southern Register, a local black newspaper.

After that , Richard worked several menial jobs in a young age in Jackson and Memphis in order to support his family. During this time he continued writing and discovered the works of H.L Mencken Theodore Dreiser, and Sinclair Lewis. Moreover, he moved to Chicago, where he became a post office clerk until the Great Depression forced him to take one various temporary positions. During this period he became involved with the communist party , writing articles and stories for both The Daily worker and New Masses .In April 1931 he published his first major story "Superstition" ,in Abbot's Monthly.

His ties to The communist party continued after moving to New York in 1937. After that, he became the Harlem editor of the Daily worker and helped edit a short-lived literary magazine, New challenge .In 1938 four of his stories were collected as Uncle Tom's Children. Then, he received a Guggenheim fellow ship, which allowed him to complete his first novel Native Son (1940) .He married Dhimah Rose Meadman in 1939,but the two separated shortly . In 1941 ,he married Ellen poplar, and they had two daughters. Richard wright wrote many works before he died of heat attack.

## **II.2.Hunger:**

Richard wright depicts and relates his struggles , obstacles, and experiences that he had faced as a young African- American boy in white dominated society ."hunger" is a motif that is intensively and intentionally repeated by Richard wright throughout the memoire. Hunger is Richard's long-life struggle, that led him to explore literature and engagement into social and political issues, and made a stronger version of him. "Hunger" does not only represent the desire for food, but it also portraits the willingness for acceptance, love, and knowledge. Richard Wright personifies hunger as a sneaky person he says, "hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant". He also uses "hunger" as a metaphor to express the lack and the emptiness that he felt due to racism and the Jim Crow law ,which later on was the main cause that led him to escape the South.

Wright's struggle with hunger started within his family . At first Wright's hunger formed itself in the physical sense. His family could not provide proper food and other necessities because of poverty. Richard's hunger grew when his father left them for another woman. He and his brother had to live on their mother's inadequate salary because their

father refused to pay alimony. His mother could not financially support the family and therefore Wright suffered intense hunger and severe negative side effects like stomach pain, dizziness, etc. He even started to hallucinate about his hunger. “Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played,” he says, “but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly”(22). His feeling of hunger became worse than before ,the feeling of pain increased in his guts and stomach, and here Richard seemed to understand hunger through his experience. He constantly begged his mother for food, and complained about his hunger. His mother tries to joke about it because she could not provide him food ,and she felt terrible and frustrated about the situation. However Richard did not like the joke, he felt as if his mother was teasing him, he says,

“... Mama, I’m hungry,” I complained one afternoon.

“Jump up and catch a kungry,” she said, trying to make me laugh and forget.

“What’s a kungry?”

“It’s what little boys eat when they get hungry,” she said.

“What does it taste like?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then why do you tell me to catch one?”

“Because you said that you were hungry,” she said, smiling.

I sensed that she was teasing me and it made me angry .

“You’ll have to wait.”

“But I want to eat now.”

“But there’s nothing to eat,” she told me.

“Why?”

“Just because there’s none,” she explained.

“But I want to eat,” I said, beginning to cry.

“You’ll just have to wait,” she said again.

“But why?”

“For God to send some food.”

“When is He going to send it?”

“I don’t know.”

“But I’m hungry!”(22-23)

Wright knew that his father did not come home for many days ,but he was not aware that his father left the family until his mother asked him , he did not know that the absence of his father would mean there would be no food , he says,“She was ironing and she paused and looked at me with tears in her eyes.

“Where’s your father?” she asked me, stared in bewilderment. Yes, it was true that my father had not come home to sleep for many days now and I could make as much noise as I wanted. Though I had not known why he was absent, I had been glad that he was not there to shout his restrictions

at me. But it had never occurred to me that his absence would mean that there would be no food.”(Wright 23)

Young Richard blames his father whenever the hunger pains flare-up, he says, “as the days the image of my father became associated with my pangs of hunger, and whenever I felt hunger, I thought of him with a deep biological bitterness”(Wright 23). Richard links his hate toward his father and all his negative emotions to hunger. Later, when his mother becomes ill and can not support the children, Wright moves in with his grandmother in Jackson. There, his diet improves slightly, but he still does not eat enough to feel satisfied. Hunger becomes one of the dominant emotional state of his life at that time, and it is something he constantly has to think and deal with. When Richard moved to his grandmother’s house, he started relying on himself. Young Richard is a proud, stubborn, and determined character. He doesn’t accept the food that strangers offer him.

Wright reflects that, “When the neighbours offered me food, I refused, already ashamed that so often in my life I had to be fed by strangers” (Wright). He doesn’t want other people to know that he is hungry, therefore he started to work hard to satisfy his hunger. Wright got addicted to knowledge because of his boarding teacher Ella. Young Richard secretly sneaked to her room, because he was hooked to her book collection. Ella narrates the story of ‘Bluebeard and His Seven Wives’ which contains religious fervour ideas therefore, his strictly religious grandmother aggressively rejected, and she felt that disobedience and fool language is linked to his reading of the books.

‘Ella,’ I begged, ‘please tell me what you are reading.’

‘It’s just a book,’ she said evasively, looking about with apprehension.

‘But what’s it about?’ I asked.

‘Your grandmother would not like it if I talk to you about novels,’ she told me.

‘ I detected a note of sympathy in her voice.

‘ I don’t care,’ I said loudly and bravely.

‘ shhh \_You mustn’t say things like that,’ she said

‘But I want to know .’

‘When you grow up ,you’ll read books and know what ’s in them ,’she explained.

‘But I want know now.’

She thought a while ,then closed the book.

‘Come here .’she said .

I sat at her feet and lifted my face to hers.

‘Once upon time there was an old man named Bluebeard,’ she began in a low voice (Wright 51,52).

Wright’s grandmother considered this story contains devilish ideas.

‘You stop that, you evil gal!’ she shouted. ‘I want none of that devil stuff in my house!’(Wright

Wright has seen emotional hunger and seeking knowledge as a path for being intellectual and achieving a respected position in the society . However, education is rejected by his family. According to them, it is impossible to occupy jobs as the Whites. Young Richard is very proud about his newly acquired knowledge, he says “ I went from window to window and printed in huge soap-letters all of my newly acquired four letter word”(Wright 25). However, Wright feels trapped by his surroundings. Wright’s father Nathaniel and his grandmother always tells him to behave like the whites because they are civilized and superior . This led Wright to experience of

the “ double Consciousness”. Richard shows inborn individualism and intelligence. This characteristics causes him conflicts, he also struggles with his stubborn nature.

The experience of double consciousness, the inner “Twoness” and have no self consciousness because of the oppression and the disvaluement of **The Blacks** in a white dominated society . W.E.B Bois illustrates this in his book **the souls of Black folk** claiming that it is difficult for **The blacks** to have one identity while the live and see themselves through the **The whites** .

“The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American World \_a world which yields him no “True self -consciousness “,but only let him see himself through the revelation of other world (Du Bois 12,13).

Wright throughout the novel depicts his experience with double consciousness that starts from his childhood with his father who was eulogizing the behaviors of **the whites** asking Richard to do like they do and his mother was telling his sometimes not to act black. Therefore, no doubt a child has a serious issue with being black because he was never shown self love . **The blacks** believe that being White is better ultimately playing a role in **The blacks** Self-degeneration. This experience of duality emerges in Wright’s life through Emotional hunger as he declares “ I had new hunger”(Wright, 323).

**Reading books** was the way for wright that makes him see the world in different angel.

“But of feeling something new ,of being affected by something that made the look of the world different”(Wright,322)

Indeed, this reading teaches him many things that he could have the opportunity to learn them in his Black community which makes him see himself far away from his world.

“ My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living ,and that sense of distance was increasing each day(Wright,326,27).

Additionally, Wright’s thoughts , feelings and vision completely changed because of this experience . He becomes highly influenced by reading and considering it as sense of life.

“Reading was a drug ,a dope .The novels created moods in which I lived for days ( Wright, 322).

Wright implicitly depicts the concept of “ veil “ by criticizing his own community and the white Supremacy . Young Richard struggles with Blacks and Whites alike for acceptance and humane treatment. Wright wants to shed light on the idea that a black individual has also a dignity and need to be seen by the Whites.

He rejected in his autobiography the fact that his own race is convinced by notion of being inferior to the white. He mentioned that this is shown in their behaviours by not pursuing their rights and not asking for equality . He also criticizes the contradiction of the Blacks by accepting the social norms and standards established by the whites. Wright rejected the imitation of the behaviours of the whites by the blacks and refused to follow any rule. He is a growing character who reaches awareness, and wishes to learn about the world , however his society and circumstances are slowing him down. Young Richard shows through out the memoire signs of inferiority and shame towards the Whites, due to his social status ,being both black and poor.However, his stubborn nature helps him to face all the struggles and imposing his own principles.

He realizes a whole new outlook on white people, after a white man assaulted a black boy , he says “then why did the white man whip the black boy .?”(Wright 24).In Memphis, Wright learns about racism both from what he observes and from his relatives. He observes that there are

people with lighter skin and others with darker skin color. He fully understand that this distinctions are not inherent or biological but are products of society which are politically and socially unequal. When he heard about the murder of Bob Greenley he got more scared from the White racial terrorism. He stated ,

“ Indeed the white brutality had not seen was a more effective control of my behaviour”(Wright17)

The color line refers to racial segregation and political discrimination in the American society towards theBlacks. He depicts these different issue in his novel throughout the circumstances of TheBlacks in the southern states .In the first Instance ,Jim crow laws system was more than a series of tough anti-black laws .It was a way of life .Under this system the African Americans were relegated to the status of the second class citizens and the The whites had applied many strategies to restrain blacks from receiving citizenship in America in order to remain them inferior and dealt with a degrading manner. Jim crow portrays the legitimization of anti-black racism . Furthermore, this system was undergirded by the following belief The whites were superior to blacks in all significant aspects .In addition, marginalization ; the The blacks were prevented from full participation in social economic and political life that was enjoyed by the whites

“At last we were at the railroad station with our bags, waiting for the train that would take us to Arkansas; and for the first time I noticed that there were two lines of people at the ticket window, a “White” line and “black “ line. During my visit at Granny’s sense of the two races had been born in me with a sharp concreteness that would never die until I died. When I boarded the train I was aware that we Negroes were in one part of the train ant that the whites were in another. Naively I wanted to go and see how the whites looked while sitting in their part of the train.

“Can I go and peep at the white folks?” I asked my mother.

“You keep quiet ,” she said.

“But that wouldn’t be wrong , would it “?”

“Will you keep still”?

“But why can’ I “?”

“Quit talking foolishness”!

I had begun to notice that my mother became irritated when I questioned her about whites and blacks, and I could not quite understand it. I wanted to understand these two sets of people who live side by side and never touched, it seemed, except in violence(Wright,62).

Wright since his childhood starts realizing that there are “Racial differences” between The Blacksand The Whitesand wondering simultaneously why these two races can’t be together.

Besides, the murder organization that was created by the whites “The kuKluxklan” that aim to eliminate the Theblacksfrom the American society.

Young Richard was selling Newspaper and he didn’t realize that that they were published by this organization.

“They tell me that you are smart in school ,and when I read those papers you were selling I didn’t know what to make of it. Then I said to my self that that boy doesn’t know what he’s selling. Now ,a lot of folks wanted to speak to you about these papers, but they were scared. They thought you were mixed up with some “whitekluxers” on ‘em .But I said ,shucks, that boy just doesn’t know what he’s doing.”

I handed him his dime ,but he would not take it.

“Keep the dime ,son” he said. “But for God’s sake ,find something else to sell”(Wright,171).

Young Richard blamed himself a lot because he could make such mistake as if he betrayed his own folks.

“I did not try to sell any more of the papers that night ;I walked home with them under my arm, feeling that some Negroes would leap from a bunch or fence and waylay me. How on earth could I have made so grave mistake?(Wright,171).

### **II.3. The force of language:**

Richard noticed the power of language at a very young age when he literary follows the orders of his father by killing a noisy stray cat he has befriended. He mentioned,

“ kill that damn thing!” my father exploded(Wright 17).

Young Richard knows that his father does not literary mean it, but his hate for his father made him to do so. It gave him a kind of power over his father’s wishes because Richard realizes that this act reveals a weakness in his father, which is lack of control in his language. As he stated in the memoire,

“ oh yes,.....He had said to kill the kitten and I would kill it!. I knew he had not really meant it for me to kill the kitten, but my deep hate of him urged me toward a literal acceptance of his word”(Wright 17).

Wright also notices that language has the ability to seperate one class from an other. He realizes the Blacks should use a respectful language when it comes to the Whites, which clearly shows the inferior postition of the Blacks. He decided to deliver his speech rather than the speech of the principal in order to convey his own thoughts and mark his presence as a black subjugated , marginalised person by using a powerful, angry tone. He emphasized on his own speech,because the principal forced l him to deliver the speech written by him rather than his own because it

would be more influential in front of the audience that consisted from both Whites and Blacks.

As he states ,

“well, Richard Wright here’s your speech,” he said with both bluntness and shoved a stack of stapled sheets across his desk.

“What speech?” I asked as I picked up the papers.

“ The speech you're to say the night of graduation,” he said.

“But, professor, I've written my speech already,” I said.

He laughed confidently, indulgently.

“Listen ,boy, you’re going to speak to both *White* and colored people that night . What can you alone think of saying to them? You have no experience....”(Wright 226)

As a strong willed nature young Richard clearly said that his determined to deliver his own speech which made the the principal furious. As he states in the autobiography,

“Professor, I'm going to say my own speech that night,” I said .

He grew angry.

“You're just a young , hot-headed fool,”he said (Wright 227).

Language showed a firm side of Young Richard personality by speaking out his speech without caring about the environment and the applause, he was very proud about himself despite the hate he has towards the society. He says,

“I walked home, saying to myself : The hell with it! With almost seventeen years of baffled living behind me, I faced the world in 1925”(Wright 232).

### **Conclusion:**

Richard Wright’s Black Boy is a autobiography where he illustrates his struggles and status as a child, teen ,and adult marginalised black individual in the segregated South,which he names them as the “ Negro experience" (Wright 247).

**Literature and reading** helped Wright to develop parts of his personality to see the world more positively and from different lenses. It also encourage him to live according to his own principles, and helped him to settle his main purpose in life which is being a writer, after that he realized that language is a compelling tool and very influential. It simply led him to self-enlightenment.

According to Wright reading was a mean to escape the reality of a Jim Crow era society and his unsupportive family.

Young Richard showed signs of inferiority and complexities with how to feel good and confident about himself. At first, he was discouraged by his family and relatives, and he noticed that his uncle always tell his cousins to stay away from him. This is the first time when Wright sees himself throughout the eyes of someone else.

Wright's abusive family and racist society had a deep impact on his life, however his fight instinct, rebellious, and stubborn nature is revealed in the Aunt Addie incident, when he stood up for being punished about a problem he did not do. He strongly expresses his desire to be part of the society rather than to be forced to be one of the categories that the society wishes him to be. Richard battles against a dominant White society in both the South and the North, he even struggles against his own black culture. According to him neither of the two sides can handle a brilliant, strong-willed, and self-respected black man. This is clearly shown when he insisted to deliver his own speech rather than the speech of the principal, which main purpose was to satisfy the white audience. As a result he get ridiculed for his insistence and his family did not want to encourage him. No one can understand what he is trying to defend and they barely listen to him when he tries to explain something to them.

Richard shows that he has pride and dignity and that he will not be bullied into living only in the little box of confinements and restrictions that dictate the life of a Southern black man, constantly cowering in fear of the violent enforcement of subordination in the black population. Moreover, Wright expresses that his fear of the Whites was not through actual contact, but through the experiences of others in his world whose stories were placed within his atmosphere of consciousness, shaping his behaviour and feelings. Through this osmosis of experience Wright could actualize, and reconstruct himself. This experience helped him to a better comprehension

about the reality and the environment his dealing with. It strengthened his determined , rebellious nature ,which helped him to draw his path for being a writer.

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