



Multicultural Approach: A Strategy towards Transforming African Americans' Social Status and Countering Racial Agenda in The Sellout by Paul Beatty

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ABSTRACT

Racial essentialists created race as a propaganda of racism and after realizing this, the oppressed community has taken its rise towards the zenith of social transformation and respect. Growing injustice and oppressive biasness of whiteness created zeal in black people to stand against marginalizing forces and counter prejudice around them. The paper aims at analyzing new journey of African Americans' transformation towards multiculturalism by getting away with cultural particularism that is restricting their communal circle. This paper investigates their efforts to omit racial, social, and ethnic differences and create plural and multicultural society as source of withstanding their rejection and exclusion in the Sellout by Paul Beatty. The study is quantitative in nature and develops a framework through multicultural stance of postmodernism. The finding reveals that the novel presents the efforts of the protagonist of the novel and African Americans in countering biasness around them by striving for multicultural society by operating beyond any social, cultural, and racial differences.

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1. Introduction

Many colonial forces lost control over the suppressed nation after the civil war and World War II. In this context, white supremacy comes at first when African American slowly and gradually started countering its oppressive policies. In this environment, America also loses its momentum of supremacy and control over black people. The time of superiority has been replaced by guilt over its ugly history of racism and imperialism. The new world has witnessed the beginning of stigmatization of Western oppression and ideology of superiority with white guilt replacing white supremacy. Whiteness has lost its moral footing for controlling others. It has been chastised for its identity and power rhetoric and repression connected to the worldwide terrorism and suffering leading to a drop in the global rankings (Ladson-Billings, 2021). He further blames the victim for not interrogating "whiteness if it was unable to speak. As difficult as it may be to bear, allowing hegemonic white masculinities to speak creates a space to engage" (Demirtürk, 2016)(p. 183). On a similar issue, Walter Mosley in *The Man in My Basement* criticizes white suppression and helps create a channel for the articulation of oppressed community and unravels the exercise of white power discourse in everyday life. The book shows white supremacy being exposed in everyday life and the colonial force is turning into guilt.

The book portrays the white man "as if the colonial Man has made a "discursive return" (p. 185). The status of the oppressed community is in a state of transformation and progress because now a "black man's house provides a powerful cautionary narrative of whiteness" (p. 185). He further shows the growing maturity and striving force for a multicultural transformation in black community by countering the biasness that is the most celebrated theme of this study. This reflects their struggle to transform their broken images and challenge marginalizing agenda behind them. This kind of attempt in the community helps judge their errors and supports it in

a rapidly changing world to reclaim their denied rights and transform their status from victim to privileged community. They achieved this by mobilizing their diversity and teaching the community what it meant to be black in America. As a result, they began offering positive signals to navigate their surroundings and instilling positive feelings in the community to transform its social status and travel towards a multicultural society regardless of their color, ethnicity, and group membership. All these themes are aptly discussed in the sellout by Paul Beatty.

The novel depicts a court case in which an unnamed black narrator is charged of re-segregating a school, a bus, and a community. He recalls his past, which brings him to the present. He narrates his father's teachings, who is known as *Whisper* and instructs the black population in America how to deal with racial situations. He is a psychologist and a mentor who educates individuals of his community to resist racism and discrimination in the society. The narrator is born in California town of Dickens. His father, a sociology professor, regards him more a social experiment than a son. He educates him on how to deal with racism and decides to teach him at home. He never sends him to a public school controlled by white people. He does not believe in the existence of racism in the society. He believes that the failure to seize opportunities for success is the sole reason of the failure of black people. To familiarize him to racism, his father takes him to a petrol station. He is given a 'black' coke price and escorted out of the bathroom. His father is killed by a police officer after a year of this visit. the narrator gets two acres of land, and he is eager to develop it. He also adopts the moniker "Nxxxx Whisper" and educates the rest of the community to deal with racism. He arrived to confront Dum Dum Donut's CEO, Mr. Foy.

Beatty (2015) also teaches his characters to fight against any kind of reality that support their obliteration. His figures instruct members of the community to work for their own socially determined meanings to maintain their social respectability. In the novel, the narrator's father is referred to as 'Nxxxx Whisperer.' He educates his son, as well as the rest of the community, about the true situation of black people and what it means to be black. He instills in them the belief that white people, and their policies are untrustworthy. People in the community also trust his words and accept his advice because they know he is working for the community's benefit. His lectures give them more self-assurance to create a multicultural society and live with other community as a global citizen. These themes are analyzed in the light of multicultural stance of postmodernism. The theory challenges binary opposition, which labels minorities as 'others' and marginalizes them. This As a result, postmodernism criticizes authority, trustworthiness, narrative, and the link between arts and truth. Postmodern thinkers preserve oppositional notions to discover differences and diverse sorts of identities that are split off from core discourse or ideology and help people guide them to live as part of one single society. They understand that acknowledgment of this step necessitates immediate political action, which is under the authority of power institutions. Many African American novelists and writer celebrate these themes, but this study is delimited to analyze the text of *the Sellout* by Paul Beatty. He is a modern African American novelist who understands modern American and commends the struggle of African American community and its role in the mainstream nationalism of the American society.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Racism and discrimination have long been undeniable historical issues of the world. Reform, restoration, and solace via social processes are needed to defeat it. This research examines the community's attempts to combat prejudice by moving beyond cultural particularism and analysing how Black Americans are changing their social standing by participating in mainstream nationalism as portrayed in *the Sellout* by Paul Beatty.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1. To trace out various modes of resistance that African American community adopts in combating prejudice and biasness in the society as portrayed in *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty.
2. To investigate the way African American community redefines its future and transform its social status in the selected novel?

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are various modes of resistance that African American community adopt in combating prejudice and biasness in the society as portrayed in *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty?
2. How does the African American community redefine its future and transform its social status in the selected novel?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This paper draws attention to the high rates of poverty and discrimination suffered by the African American community and aims at reinventing their identity and future by combating bigotry and prejudice in society. The analysis of the African American community's involvement in redefining and enhancing American culture and society through their participation in mainstream nationalism is another significant aspect of this work. By discovering new avenues for revolution, self-esteem, and success, African American authors may help us forecast the future of the community. Studying them also gives us a full grasp of contemporary American culture and its effects on them.

2. Literature Review

Postmodern thinkers are always committed to cross the discerning lines and bring minorities into a mainstream circle by applying "transgressive-deconstructive loosening of the conceptual boundaries of our thoughts about gender, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, and make an essentially liberal demand for the recognition of difference, and acceptance of the 'other' within the community" (Butler, 2002)(p. 58). They also strive for separate identities getting away with power groups. Postmodernists very convincingly give us the account of power discourses in various societies that marginalize the less powerful people. These power discourses are executed against marginalized people who are struggling against power structure and busy in constructing "the social privilege and power from which whites primarily benefit" (Jardina, 2019)(p. 47).

Under the umbrella of "postmodern conditions the ordered class politics preferred by socialists has given way to a far more diffuse and pluralistic identity politics, which often involves the self-conscious assertion of a marginalized identity against the dominant discourse" (p. 56). The theory supports resistance as part of a pluralistic society in which a poor speaks for his rights and stresses cultural change in Marxist ways. It also supports and gives "the idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the pluralistic stance of postmodernism" (Harvey, 2020)(p. 49). Foucault and Rabinow (1982) introduces the idea of 'heterotopia' to support this argument. He prefers pluralistic society in an impossible limited space with juxtaposed and superimposed identities upon others. They want to expand the boundaries and remove the constraints imposed on society's voiceless groups. Postmodernists project the rights of marginalized groups who have been unable to cope with problems caused by powerful "group who has the power to control access to excellence by deciding who is included" (McNair, Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020)(p, 5). The theorists criticize the concept of superiority and inferiority is still prevalent today, marginalizing certain communities through various forms of racism. If we have such a world's heritage and history, the ultimate truth is not more than a dream. In this kind of situation, only a relative reality determines our fate and subjectivity can ensure our survival. As a result, the theory is a human liberation from all these enslavements and punishments.

America is a multi-cultural society that welcomes diverse groups of life. It is expected that some biases and prejudices may exist. Among other groups, African Americans may have special challenges, and they are expected to respond to them differently. They have to deal with racial and cultural challenges. Because postmodern theorists believe that mono-cultural representation cannot provide authentic identity or assist in the resolution of racial, social, and economic conflicts, therefore, they emphasize the importance of intercultural flexibility. They further believe in political fixability to uplift economic status of minority because, they know that there is the direct relationship between democracy and economic development(Sebók & Boda, 2021). This study also adopts the concept of the cultural variation model as a solution for the problem of minorities in America in general, and African Americans in particular, and examines their families adapting and sharing culture with the rest of their community. This notion becomes

inevitable for African American families because "Mono-cultural nationalism can no longer provide us with the national identities we need.

The formation of multi-cultural civic identities requires a new way of drawing our political maps" (Mennens, 2011)(p. 2). Communities often demand recognition that is not possible without multicultural adaptability. The cultural and civic identities can only be recognized when ethnic minorities share ideas, adapt values, and "minority cultures should have specific rights to express and maintain their culture" (Mennens, 2011)(p. 2). Postmodernism challenges fix border identities and deviates from traditionally accepted realities. It focuses on the need of a network that operates beyond borders at states level plurality. It believes that "Enlightenment concepts of rationalism, centralism, and monoculture have to be replaced by notions of diffusion, negotiation, and diversity to make multiculturalism work successfully" (p. 5). The movement focuses on the need of totality and collective ideology. Postmodernists think that distances can only be curtailed after the creation of a multicultural diversity and the "notion of ideology both as a system of representation and as a necessary and unavoidable part of every social totality" (Hutcheon, 2003)(p. 13). Postmodernists want to recollect all values and recognition of cultural diversity at a public and private level. They believe that the distorted truth has no value because society needs "reevaluation of all values" (Sim, 2013)(p. 20). Postmodernism focuses on "rejection of the idea that there are foundations to our systems of thought, or belief, that lie beyond question" (p. 9). Similarly, Sim also focuses on the inclusion of all the social groups in politics for collective progress and prosperity because there is a "particular interest in the marginalized groups whose difference keeps them excluded from political power" (p. 22). African American families start an upward mobility to raise in the mainstream nationalism to create a place in national politics therefore, the study pertains to multicultural diversity to achieve the set goals. This is the main objective of the study.

3. Research Methodology

This study focuses on the idea, manner, and movement of African American transformation towards mainstream nationalism. The essential principles of multiculturalism that best fit to analyze the selected texts serve as the theoretical framework of the study. Research procedures and methods are various techniques involved in conducting the research. The process includes all the sources, ways, and designs used during analysis and critical evaluation of research problems. Relevant data is accumulated through desk or library research and electronic sources are also used to analyze the texts in the light of postmodernism and racial socialization model. During library research, the researcher employed abstracts, research papers, research articles, theses, books, reviews, dictionaries, catalogs, computers, databases, open shelves, and encyclopedias to gather relevant data and required information. Both secondary and primary data are used in the study. Periodicals, journals, research papers, observations, personal talks, and interviews are used as secondary and miscellaneous sources to gather the proper information and pertinent data for this dissertation, while selected African American novels are used as primary sources. The textual analysis method has been used to analyze and interpret the relevant texts. The selected writer's contribution is also crucial because it helps guide a scattered society and portray a communal system that motivates the members to transform their social status. They also deconstruct the concept of narrow nationalism and promote pluralism as a source of pride and progress among African American community. The data has been categorized by making lists of the characters and selecting parents' dialogues, ideas, stories and messages to collect information to answer the questions. The analysis focuses on the respect they show for all the communities living in America and realizes that cultural assimilation, racial pride, pluralistic approach are fascinating sources of the bright future of African American community. They are fascinated with the concept of transnational blackness, which they express in their works. The validity and reliability of the analysis is determined based on the opinion and observation of the supervisor, teachers and senior research fellows.

4. Data Analysis

In his novel, Paul Beatty stresses on the recognition of the power and existence of black people as part of American global variety. He does not appear to be interested in causing a ruckus among white people. Instead, he concentrates on black people's heritage and culture to promote their identity and advancement. He strives to instill in them a spirit of resistance to the various biases they encounter and prepares the community to tackle all social issues. This is a distinct trait shared by all black parents who train their children to anticipate all types of biases and prejudice in society. He tells people to concentrate on their culture and overlook the

distinctions among other social groupings. African Americans have a distinct set of problems in the United States, and they respond to them in diverse ways. Mennens (2011) also underlines the relevance of multicultural identity in allowing minorities to progress in new ways. He also emphasizes the need of recognizing a community's culture and beliefs. Paul Beatty's depiction in *The Sellout* is remarkable in which he develops characters with multicultural identities.

The protagonist of the novel does not bear a single identity. He acts as a 'Nxxxx Whisper' for black people, but he also strives to educate everyone in his vicinity. The narrator adheres to his culture and traditions, but he accepts all other groups as equal members of society. He feels that all groups must be accepted for the sake of the country to flourish, but he also educates his son to carry on his own ideas. He respects the whole community but "in his heart, he was more interested in black liberty" (Beatty, 2015)(p. 25). He teaches some principles of life to his son by molding his character. He makes an effort to prepare him for various biases. His son is used as a test subject in all his social experiments. He teaches him how to appreciate his culture. He shows his experience and ideas through him because he performs "famous social science experiments with me as both the control and the experimental group" (p. 25). Considering his experience, he prepares him for biases and prejudices. The father of the narrator believes in the inclusion of social groups for collective politics. Sim (2013) also emphasizes the importance of sharing equal values among all members of the community. In this setting, the African American community must fulfill two roles. The first is to build positive relationships with other communities, while the second is to promote their own culture and civilization. The narrator's father gets his son passed through the same challenge as he himself experienced to test his ability. At an early age, he wants to "test the "bystander effect" as it applies to the "black community" (Beatty, 2015)(p. 26). He understands that they should recognize others but need not to mix with them because they still face hurdles of other people's prejudices. His son mixes with white children and he "lost his scientific objectivity and grabbed me by the shirt. "What? Why?" he yelled" (p. 31). He tries to fulfill the aim of changing the community as he is "known around town as the Nigger Whisperer" (p. 31). He instills in his son the importance of waiting for the right opportunity and time to act. He understands that timing and circumstances are against them. He wants his son to be treated equally like white children are dealt with, so that he might succeed in life. He wishes that his son could gain fame and "be a Renaissance nxxxx. A modern-day Galileo out this motherfucker" (p. 46). During the phase of prejudice and discrimination, African Americans respond positively to everything.

He tells his son to look after the community and his people. Rather than focusing on what occurs to them, he needs think what should not happen to them. After his father's death, he discovers that the police do not arrest the murderers but block his path through the streets with no accountability for this partial treatment. He now believes that his father is correct in his assertion. White people do not believe that black people are deserving of humanitarian assistance. They continually look down on them and regard them as inferior. Postmodernism deviates from any socially imposed image and opposes any activity that ignores minorities (Lane, 2006). Paul Beatty teaches the same thing to the people of his community through his characters: to protect their rights and not to trust any other power structure in this situation. Between both groups of society, a sense of distrust prevails. Whites disregard blacks and blacks also blame them for snatching their rights and making their town disappear from the map of the world. The city of Dickens has vanished from the map, and the narrators attempt to re-create it. He believes that it is the result of a huge "conspiracy by the surrounding, increasingly affluent, two-car-garage communities to keep their property values up and blood pressures down" (p. 49). This is the concept of mutual suspicion between the two communities. Each was attempting to harm the other in whatever way it could. The narrator's father has spent his whole life trying to teach his son that white people are not fair to black people. The narrator explains that his father promises that "from Manhattan Beach down to Cabrillo, they called you nigger and expected you to run" (p. 100). This is an example of whites' suspicion of blacks, which always works in their favor because they are in power. They are always attempting to keep control of the country. They regard black people as an ever-present menace. They set their touts in cities and towns whose job is "to keep the white moth occupied" (p. 110). They do not expect any smart jobs from blacks. Laura Jane talks to Marpessa that she is offended because she has used the "word 'nxxxx'?" "No, because you're a beautiful woman who just happens to be black, and you're far too smart not to know that it isn't racing that's the problem but class" (p. 116). The community is educated that white people will not tolerate anyone who is intelligent and will

murder or arrest them. Later, the narrator takes up his father's role and pushes his people to control their own lives and determine their destiny in the country.

Postmodern theorists recognize the power of minorities in contributing to the advancement of a community at state level. Parents often try to teach their children how to act like a black kid. They aim at fixing everything that is broken and bring their originality to people from all walks of life. Blacks introduce local versions of all required objects everywhere, from hotels to schools and from homes to parks. They understand that to gain a position, they must put themselves forward. They know that they are "historically most documented workers in history, give us for attending racist rallies protesting the undocumented workers seeking better living conditions" (p. 128). This is how they prepare themselves to meet societal difficulties. They attempt to make positive gestures out of unfavorable situations. They support other members of the community during a difficult time and help them "grouse at first, but the racism takes them back. Makes them humble. Makes them realize how far we've come and, more important, how far we have to go" (p. 133). They create objectives for themselves and show that they are serious about achieving them. They do not waste time messing around with Whites. They understand that if they simply exercise their cultural value and carry out their goal, they can succeed. They act on their desires while ignoring the views of the rest of the society.

The narrator believes that by practicing re-segregation, they will be able to develop and overcome all other people's preconceptions. He says that he wants to segregate everything which includes "the school." As soon as I said it, I realized that segregation would be the key to bringing Dickens back" (p. 139). Even though it appears strange to blacks and other members of society, he continues to do so as his father tells him not to impose integration. This demonstrates that African American children listen to their parents' advice and walk on their path of advancement as per their suggestions. He segregates everything because his father advises him "You can't force integration, boy. The people who want to integrate will integrate ... Made me realize that for many people integration is a finite concept. Here, in America, "integration" can be a cover-up" (p. 140). He tells his son that integration is nothing more than a form of social refuge and a consoling treatment for them.

The only way to deal with the societal issues that the black community faces is to establish its worth and promote its own culture. He tells his son that valuing one's own culture and history will elevate the worth of being black in America. He uses Barak Obama as an example of someone who promotes himself as a unique individual, while ignoring the prejudice that surrounds him and makes him a valuable human being. He inculcates faith in blackness and asks him to "Remember those photos of the black president and his family walking across the White House lawn arm-in-arm. Within those frames at that instant, and in only that instant, there's no fucking racism" (p. 205). He also assures him that if you cherish your own culture, no one will care about race or color; instead, people will value talent. The narrator reassures that he does not even value race and that "nothing's attributable to color anymore. It's all "mitigating circumstances" (p. 230). This exemplifies the originality of Africans. Parents in the United States teach their children how to act and deal with racial situations. They teach them to promote their culture while also respecting others because mono-culturalism is harmful to their community. They are clear that multicultural recognition and collectivism are essential for progress. For political, social, and economic advancement, all postmodern thinkers value the inclusion of various social groups in a single orbit.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty proves that African American community needs a cosmopolitan society to counter the prejudice around it. The protagonist of the novel focuses on his personal and social growth, instead of indulging into the political propaganda of Whites. He transforms his community and creates a multicultural society that is governed beyond mono-culturalism. He strives for mainstream as global citizen of the world and shows his consent to live all the members of different communities around him. The protagonist's father instills in him the importance of his culture and heritage. Sim states that for collective advancement, all the groups must have a shared set of values. The narrator believes in the community's shared ideals for social progress. The protagonist's father teaches him to share the values of his own culture and civilization with others. He teaches him that he belongs to a hardworking community that strives for excellence and success in life. He sets a goal of establishing good relationships with the rest of the people of the community and asks his son to help him achieve it. He instills in

him the values of a pluralistic society. He utilizes his teaching as a means of informing his son about his surroundings and preparing him to deal with biases and prejudices of the society and create harmony among all the groups living in the society. He uses the example of black leaders who fought for their community but never breakdown their relationships with others. He uses Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and other leaders who fought for freedom as examples, and he wants his son to follow their footsteps. He warns him not to disregard racism but advises him to maintain a pluralistic and cheerful outlook on life. Until his death, he instills in him cosmopolitan principles and a lesson in joint success. He uses the example of those black people who just protected Whites and their interests and warns him against following in their footsteps. He uses the example of Bemoan, a black cop who works for whites. After his father's death, the narrator attends college and resumes his father's profession to teach the community. He also instills in him a sense of morals and the importance of virtue in life. All this reflects individuality and freedom of choice. The narrator accepts his principles and creates a new identity to live in a pluralistic American society in which his culture and traditions are treated respectfully. He stands up and fights for his rights but pledges to live in peace and harmony in the diversified society of America.

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