

A Thematic Study of Racism and Identity Crisis in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper entitled A Thematic Study of Racism and Identity Crisis in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* is to bring out the racial problems faced by the black people living in the United States portrayed in this 2016 Man Booker Prize Winning novel. Beatty is the first American to have won the Man Booker Prize. The novel takes place around Los Angeles, California and concerns a protagonist who grows artisanal marijuana and Watermelon. The novel *The Sellout* has been noted for its postmodern treatment of African –American gender and sexuality in addition to racism. The forefathers of Africans who eventually become slaves in the United States lived in a society that is filled with inequalities, social, economic psychological and culture. Beatty has stated his motivation for writing this novel.

KEY WORDS:

Racism, Slavery, Social equality, Sense of home, segregation, Migration.

The novel is set in Dickens, the city where the author lives which is secretly wiped off from the map triggering identity crisis in its residents. The novel begins with the narrator at the Supreme Court. His opening lines: “this may be hard to believe, coming from a

black man, but I've never stolen anything" (TS 3). The narrator sees a black comedian berating a white couple for laughing at his jokes aimed at his community. "Get out . . . this is our thing" (288). In this novel, one of the characters who talks about racism is the narrator who experienced the racism directly.

This novel deals with racism and the cause for freedom crisis in the developed nations like America where there is a difference between the blacks and whites and the blacks being restricted from even their basic rights. Racism is a discrimination and prejudice towards people based on their race or ethnicity. The ideology that subordinates racist practices often include the idea that human can be different in social behaviour and natural capacities. The holocausts a classic example of institutional racism which leads to the death of millions of people based on their race.

Racism and racial discrimination are often used to describe ethnic or cultural basis and are independent of their differences described as racial. Racism can be present in social actions, practices or political systems that the expression of prejudice or a version in discriminatory practices. Associated Social actions may include Nativism, Xenophobia, Otherness, Segregation, Hierarchical ranking, Supremacism and related Social Phenomena. Racism came into wide spread usage in the Western world in 1930s, when it is used to describe the social and political ideas of Nazism. In further states, everyone are entitled to their rights without distinction of any kind such as Race, Colour, Sex, Language, Religion, Political, or the Opinion, National, or Social, Origin, Property, Birth or other Status.

Critics of this attitude argue that by refusing racial disparities, racial colour blindness causes to continue patterns for a long time that produce racial inequality. Anti –racism includes, believes, actions, movements, and policies which are adopted or developed in order to oppose racism. Legally or socially, rights were given to White Americans that were granted to

Native Americans, African Americans, Asian American, Hispanic and Latino Americans. So people belonging to these groups do not identify as whites.

Since the European colonization of North America began in 17th century, Europeans believed the original inhabitants of America were heathens and savages who need to civilize their Christianity and European culture. The Jim Crow laws are stated and local laws enacted in the southern and Border States of the United States enforced between 1876 and 1965. *The Sellout* successfully points not only the problem, but all the complexities and nuances of the problem, proving that it are not as simple as black and white.

Once when the narrator's father is sought by the members of the surroundings, community of Dickens as 'The Nigger of Whisper' for their freedom and treated them as equal because of the living of black people, the city of Dickens is eliminated from the map. The narrator's neighbour, Homing Jenkins is also heart-broken by the loss of city of Dickens. After five years of going through the legal system, the narrator's case ended up at the Supreme Court. At last the narrator is happy to see the city of Dickens being included again.

The Sellout is one of the most hilarious American novels in years; the author points out a difference between the black people and white people and also the bad conditions of blacks in America. *The Sellout* is a comic master piece, but it is much more than that. Racism is the major issue faced by the black Americans in United States. Through these characters, the author conveys a great message to the universe which treats people in so many ways based on their colour, creed, and financial status. It is obvious that racism is a destructive force that only leads us away from our goal as a human being.

Work Cited

Beatty, Paul. *The Sellout*. One World Book, 2016.