

The Impact of Systematic Racism on Characters

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Abstract

For generations, African Americans have been ignored. Systematic Racism first appeared during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and it was refined in the 1980s. It is also referred to as institutional Racism. It is a term that refers to a type of Racism that is incorporated in the regulations of society. When it comes to issues like criminal justice, housing and health care, education and political representation, it emerges as discrimination in those areas (Harmon). The first part of this paper will recapture the historical event in 1967 in Detroit, with the impact of music on African Americans in general. The postcolonial approach illuminates a new way of interpreting and seeing the stereotypical pictures. The second part of the paper traces the origins and the emergence of racial terminology in an international context. It depicts the sequences of systematic Racism through the prism of postcolonial study. The paper discusses how the playwright relates racial classification through the characters with the ongoing Racism and stereotyping, which vividly reflects the system.

Keywords

African Americans, Detroit Riot, Postcolonialism, Mimicry, Hybridity, Music, Race, Systematic Racism, Dominique Morisseau. Detroit'67

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Introduction

Detroit Riot of 1967

On July 23rd, 1967, there was an uprising between Detroit's African American neighborhood and the town's Police Force (Theater Mania), 33 African Americans and ten whites were killed. Seventy thousand were arrested, and over one million buildings were burnt. Demonstrations spread to other capital regions with the police's loss of control.

African Americans were angry due to dissatisfaction, discontent, under-employment, poverty, prejudice, ethnic discrimination, police brutality, and lack of educational and economic opportunities, such uprising, low-paying service workers replaced the city due to de-industrialization. The riot was regarded as one of the Black Power Activist Movement catalysts (Encyclopedia Britannica). The Whites fled to the suburb, where the government supported new buildings. After the uprising, Detroit became a national icon of racial inequality.

In April 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. firmly proclaimed that to "conquer giant triples of bigotry, gross materialism, and militarism, "the country must endure a profound transformation of values." (Human Rights | Al Jazeera). Jr acknowledged that "a riot is the language of the unheard of (Alakrash et.al 2021).

Escape Mechanism in Motown Music

Music has the power to release people from the burdens of their lives. African American songs explore the diverse culture and history in their own words, including oppression and the fight against racism (James B. 197).

In his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, the author, and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois believes that African Americans are strongly influenced by "sorrow songs" significant in African American history regarding the struggle against oppression. Music symbolizes the collective memory of the population (Souls of Black Folk).

In 1963 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of Detroit rewarded Berry Gordy Jr. for his actions, "in recognition of his spectacular rise in a very competitive field and for his efforts in the opening field of Negroes... Detroit has become recognized as the rhythm and blues recording industry" (Smith 24). Gordy wanted to prove that African Americans could act, dress speak respectably. According to Mary Wilson, "None of us were raised in families where manners were not taught. We were all attempting to advance, and it has always upset me that by accepting what some regard as 'white' values, we sold out; this is not true." (Smith 121).

Motown music embodied the spirit of the young African American generation. It fostered and empowered their thoughts and perspectives. It advocates the civil rights movement. Gordy, the inventor of Motown music, to expanded the space to provide them with an opportunity to show their skills and to express themselves freely. "Music is a powerful tool in communication [that] can be used to assist in organizing communities" (Gil Scott-Heron). For that reason, young African Americans competed in this field with white Americans. Motown musicians wanted to shatter misconceptions based on enslavement. Still, Motown failed; Motown's music was created to help African- Americans to break through the colour barrier. They wore wigs that obscured their hair's natural "wildness" because it was believed to scare the white audience. There was severe disagreement among African Americans, who believed in black freedom and independence (Boyce8). Motown music embodied aspirations for the intimidating power of the white (Gaye 13). Financial success was necessary for the African Americans because they were systematically robbed of economic independence by the whites who harmed African American community, denying them freedom and power (Robert J. 102). (That is What the World Is Today) It is a Motown music that portrays the growing frustration of African Americans:

People moving out, people moving in.
 Why? Because of the colour of their skin.
 Run, run, run but you sure can't hide.
 An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
 Rap on, brother, rap on.
 Well, the only person talking about love thy brother is the preacher
 And it seems nobody's interested in learning but the teacher.

Segregation, determination, demonstration, integration, aggravation,
Humiliation, an obligation to our nation.
Ball of Confusion. Oh yeah, that's the world is today (Discogs)

Motown encapsulated an era, a generation, and a culture. The 1960s were a period of political and social turmoil. Motown music survived and surpassed all expectations. It was an icon of a self-sufficient black business. Motown's message music inspired the blacks and whites to unite and protest against injustice, racial segregation, and discrimination (Boyce 82). The music is now related to Chelle's depth of love and selflessness for her younger brother (Ade-Salu 10).

Mimicry in Bunny

Bunny is a "black woman, mid of the late thirties. Fun, spunky, sexy, and joyful. A friend and sometimes a lover. Never let nothin' get her down" (Morisseau 105). She tries to escape from her reality; as an African American woman in a white society that systematize people's mentalities. She loses her identity of being an African American woman (Burgess100). Bunny tries to survive in a white materialistic system. She between that:

BUNNY: Well, the folks been askin' me where to go. I been sendin' 'em over to the dukes__ hate to say.

Chelle: You ain't!

BUNNY: I had to Chelle! Now you know I love you like potato salad, but folks pay me to send 'em to the happenin' places. They want an after-hours joint, I gotta send 'em somewhere. With ya'll off the scene, Dukes done tightened it up. Even got that new hi-five record player.

Bunny wants to have a better life. "I wanna be just like them white gals we be seein' at the picture show. Sitting' back on one of them satin sofas, fannin' myself and reading' magazines" (Morisseau 111). This statement reflects the desire that the character develops. Being an African American woman means the white viewed her as ugly, lazy, and ignorant. This phenomenon spread over centuries, and people deal with it as something solid and cannot be changed. The white woman is considered a perfect human being worthy of being worshipped (Burgess 100). The French philosopher Nietzsche claimed that: "No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations". "Nietzsche sometimes calls 'perspectivism' the doctrine that there are no facts, only interpretations (Yovel 6).

Bunny imitates the white criteria of a classy lady, thinking that mimicry eliminates her otherness. Bunny is a result of systematic racism. "It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history__ subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement__ that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking" (Bhabha 204). Racism is not dead, as it is there, and systematic oppression is everywhere.

Being a leading voice in postcolonial studies, Homi Bhabha perceived those issues that made African Americans imitate the whites. Mimicry is an exaggeration or even coping without originality. It strips away their individuality, culture, language, and identity (Bhabha 86). His essay on *Mimicry and Man* is based on French philosopher Lacan. Bhabha regards the Colonizer as a "snake in the grass who speaks in a tongue that is forked " (122). The result of the mimetic representation is that "... Emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 122). For him, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable "other," as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Ibid).

Bhabha tried to expose the inconsistency ingrained in colonial discourse to highlight the Colonizer's ambivalence and how the Colonizer became "other." The binary opposition of black/white, superior/ inferior, is apparent through Bunny's character. Mimicry is considered a response to the deliberation of stereotypes (Setyowat 605). In mimicry, identity is lost because of identification. Identity operates in terms of metaphor, but mimicry is different because it works through metonymy (606).

Bunny wishes to be a "fine woman", she loses her identity and ends her otherness. She attempts to fit the criterion of the white elite is only an exhibition of her need for acceptance and search for a privileged sense of identity (607).

Chelle as a Victim

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, oppression is the: "Unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power especially by the imposition of burdens; the condition of being weighed down; an act of pressing down; a sense of heaviness or obstruction in the body or mind" (Merriam-Webster 654). This definition exposes society's mental need of binary opposition. According to Jacques Derrida, one of the significant figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy, defines binary opposition as "one of the two terms governs the other" (Derrida 41). In comparison, Michel Foucault defines binary opposition as "the binary separation between one set of people and another" (Foucault 198).

The idea of the victim and victimizer is systemic to develop thoughts, beliefs, actions, and behaviour that reinforce racism. Systemic oppression in reaction to racism: "just as there is a system in place that reinforces the power and expands the privilege of white people, there is a system in place that actively discourages and undermines the power of people and communities of colour and mires us in our oppression..." (44). Systematic racism is the result of internalized racism when there is a privileged white (Johnson 23). In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*: "White privilege is about the concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society which whites receive, unconsciously or consciously, under their skin colour in a racist society." (Adams 97) The disadvantage of African Americans make they feel low self-esteem or self-hatred (report 5).

Morrisseau describes Chelle as a "black woman, late thirties. Strong, steadfast, firm, and not easily impressed. A widow, mother and sister. A loving heart beneath her pride" (Morrisseau 105). Chelle is the opposite of Bunny. There is a stereotypical image of an African American woman who financially depends on the government. As an independent woman, she does not believe in Bunny's ideas. The latter looks for somebody who would care for her:

CHELLE: (Laughing): You always lookin' for somebody to lay you right!

BUNNY: That's right, honey. 'Cept these nigger 'round here ain't bringing back no kinda thousands. Hell, they ain't even bringing back no hundreds (Morrisseau 111).

Chelle is immersed in her inferior social position. Her dream is to have a home to ensure her son's future, who studies at college. She disagrees with her brother Lank who establishes his own business by investing their parents' inheritance in a bar. She does not want to invest in anything due to the unstable situation in Detroit:

CHELLE: That ain't the somethin' I want, Lank. Put Mama and Daddy's hard-earned money on the line just to keep hustling? Cuz that's all-a bar. Hustle on the books.

LANK: That's all any kinds business is.

CHELLE: I just wanna have somewhere for Julius to return and call home. These parties are temporary. Survivin'. This house and this life is all I need. I don't wanna take on nothin' that could make us lose it.

LANK: Don't you see I'm tryin' to make things better? Invest this money so it grows into somethin' more. For you and Julius. Be the man for him that this Daddy would a bean was he live.

CHELLE: I know, Lank. You been a good fill-in for my Willie and I love you for it..... I don't wanna lose my son's future to no bar. Too shaky. I want him to have something solid (123).

Chelle's insecurities are revealed throughout the dialogue with her brother. Her concerns are expressed by pointing out the financial risks of such a project to her and her son. Unlike Lank, Chelle is a single mother who wants to break out of her cocoon to be an idol representation of her race. An African-American family's history is told from the perspective of three generations in this play. The first two generations are represented during slavery, experiencing painful and disgraceful experiences, and the final generation emerges from the shadow of their predecessors' negative experiences to a point in which they can take pride and be proud of their heritage (Cross 33-37).

CHELLE: That ain't the somethin' I want, Lank Put Mama and Daddy's hard-earned money on the line just to keep hustling? Cuz that's all-a bar is. Hustle on the books.

LANK: That's all my kinda business is.

CHELLE: I don't wanna be huslin' forever.

LANK: What you wanna do? Chelle? Sit on the money till we rot?

CHELLE: I just wanna have somewhere for Julius to return and call home. These parties are temporary. Survivin'. This house and this life is all I need. I don't wanna take on nothin' that could make us lose it.

LANK: Don't you see I'm tryin' to make things better? Invest this money so it grows into somethin' more. For you and Julius. Be the man for him that his Daddy woulda been --- was he alive.

CHELLE: I know, Lank. You been a good fill-in for my Willie and I love you for it. But I don't love no bar. I don't wanna lose my son's future to no bar. Too shaky. I want him to have something solid.

LANK: Me too.

CHELLE: Promise me we gonna hold this house and this family together. Promise me that, Lank (123).

Chelle refers to Lank as a "fool" He responds, "I ain't a fool dammit! I listen to you all we ever gon' do is be quiet and safe and never have nohin' better than what we got" (Morisseau 66- 67). According to American playwright August Wilson, it does not matter what colour one's skin is, "it is more a state of mind and a way of viewing the world" (Abbotson 90). He emphasizes the need for African Americans to identify their own culture and refuse to acknowledge that culture's unfavourable white evaluations, which he believes too many of them are willing to accept. Dr.K. Sue Jewell is a socialist who supports the idea of reshaping the image of an African American woman:

The goal for African American women, and others who seek equality for all people and an equitable allocation of resources, is societal transformation rather than reformation. The former requires eradicating stereotypes, dispelling myths and supplanting ideologies that serve as the basis for patriarchy and other systems of domination. (Jewell 3)

Morisseau pinpoints the stereotyped image of a person who is affected by racism through Chelle's character.

CHELLE: (Laughing): You always lookin' for somebody to lay you right!

BUNNY: That's right, honey. 'Cept these nigger 'round here ain't bringing back no kinda thousands. Hell, they ain't even bringing back no hundreds (Morrisseau 111).

The term "black shame" is a concept that describes oppressed or marginalized African-Americans who perceive themselves in situations when they feel—it illustrates their racial discrimination in the past. "Black shame" refers to unfavourable attitudes and traumatic experiences such as slavery, oppression, and hegemony. On the other side, African American pride refers to black people's positive attitudes concerning their African and Ancient roots and cultures. This pride is manifested through cultural traditions and behaviour associated with their race (Dahn 100).

She gets mad at what he did and risked with their money "You gave your word. You looked me in my face and gave your word! Did not belong to you! Belonged to us. And you throw it all away" (159). Lank accuses Chelle of holding him from achieving his dream. He tells her that the system's boundaries influence her. Chelle calls her path "quiet and safe," an indication that her character is different from her brother, who tries to make a Noise:

LANK: Aww, Chelle.... (Beat) Okay, looka here... Me and Sly ... we been thinkin' 'bout how it'd feel to be legit. Thinkin'... we could get us a piece of Shep's bar and start to build somethin' for ourselves. Found this stuff for a good dreal--- thought it'd be great for a bar!

CHELLE: So that's why done changed all the decorations? For some bar?!

LANK: Not just some bar. A bar of our own.

CHELLE: No, Lank.

LANK: Whoa there—think about it for a sec, Chelle.

CHELLE: Nothin' to think about. I just say no (120).

Lank wants to get rid of the shame of being coloured, economically productive, and fulfil his dream to open a bar. Lank's dream is restricted by his sister's fear of the future and his newfound interest in white women. So that, he is in between; that is why he is a consciously hybrid due to his ambivalence. The French philosopher Louis Althusser coins the definition of two-state mechanisms. Althusser analyzed how the control of the dominant system is enforced through "invisible ways in which the cultural forms seek to ensure the perennial dominance of the ruling class" (Mambrol 2016a).

Repressive State Apparatus, known as the complex or direct power, resembles domination. The term "repressive" indicates repressing people and forcing them to follow the imposed rules as Althusser states that the state itself "Functions by violence" (Althusser 244). He explains that this is made possible by the government due to the help of the army, police, or any other order reinforcement agencies liberated to use violence and deadly force if necessary. During the 1967 riot in Detroit, the police officers were against the Blacks. Lank expresses his anger with his friend Sly; saying, "I'm tired a bein' treated like trash" (120). This is clarified in the following quote:

CHELLE: You wanna talk about scared? I stepped out on the porch this morning to a cloud of smoke. Look like we in some kinda war picture. Mean lookin' guards come down this street, hunting us like we're the enemy.

(Sly holds out the newspaper to Chelle)

(Reading) "Governor Romney today asked for five thousand regular army troops to reinforce seven thousand National Guardsmen and two thousand policemen in quelling Detroit's race riot." See there? These pigs can't control us good enough. Gotta bring in the army for some order?

CHELLE: Race riot? That's what they sayin' this is?

SLY: That's what they say so. Makin' like we just hate honkies and burnin'shit up. But I wish they'd come askin' me some questions. I tell 'em-- if this about niggers hatin' honkies, then tell me why white folks down there gettin' they lootin' in too (178).

Morisseau describes the character of Sly as a "black man, late thirties. Hip, slick and sweet-talking. An honest hustler and numbers man. Fiercely loyal. Lank's best buddy" (11). Sly is a victim as he will be killed at the end of the play. Morisseau depicts the harassment of police officers. Chelle represents the second type of ideology. This type of power is an indirect method through culture, religion, education. She an example of her race's mentality. One as "the internalized master and slave" (Baudrillard 33)

Both types utilize violence to maintain the rule of the dominant power, and the ideological state apparatus exploits domains to do so, despite their parallels in the methods they use to keep the order. A person who goes to the church might not have the desire or belief to do so, but he goes to church to be accepted by his community. Through Chelle's character, Morisseau tries to show that passing the past to future generations is significant.

Hybridity in Detroit 67'

Hybridity phrase used to describe the scientific outcomes of 17th-century "interbreeding" studies, but it became a symbol of white supremacy. The indigenous person's Mimicry state is what Bhabha refers to as 'hybridity' (Nayar 28).

In literature, hybridity describes people who live in a country with two cultures and have a divided biological and cultural identity. Most people who belong to the inferior group try to obtain some prominent habits to imitate the superior. One's racial heritage is biologically tied to him via the skin. Such personal conflict would ultimately result in hybridity.

Weiner and Richards, who underline in their paper "Bridging the Theoretical Gap," the idea that hybridity occurs as a direct result of racial nature or bias of the host society in which the immigrants attempt to establish a new home for them after they immigrate from their own country (Weiner and Richards 102). Thus, the hybrid person is specified by his double identity or what is called duality. Some critics call it the two-ness, which means the person with double consciousness

The inferior always try to assimilate and adopt the style of the superior's life and culture to be like them so as not to be not 'marginalized'. Robert J.C. Young observes that "you may assimilate white values; you never quite can become white enough" (Young 23). Consequently, they continue to be characterized as "marginal men...on the margin of two cultures and societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused" (Park 892).

This phenomenon results in a struggle when a person belongs to an inferior group. Morisseau wants to reconstruct the African American identity and family life through Lank's character. In her play, she depicts the process of evolution from Bunny's mimic to Chelle's shame state and finally to Lank. She describes the character of Lank: "black man, early thirties. Cool, loving and charismatic. A dreamer. Has a special effect on women—but not a womanizer. Chelle's younger brother." (Morisseau 11).

Lank and Carolina break the boundaries of being black or white. The formation of an original identity in a systematized racial society is hard to achieve. Lank's hybridity is further explored when he was in conversation with his sister about her son and how she should keep her money for her son's education:

CHELLE: That's all. Not tryin' to mess these vets up more than been already.

LANK: Ain't nobody messin' nobody up. We here to make people feel good. Make some extra money to keep my nephew in that Tuskegee Institute. I told Julius—he goona be like one of them airmen. That's what he promised me (Morisseau 117).

Lank does not want to hide in the basement. He believes that obtaining the bar would make him equal to white men. He is a symbol of a young man who dreams of freeing his city of racial inequality.

LANK: Pickin' out niggers ain't gonna do nothin' but lock away a whole lotta potential. Put us to good use, this city be full of all kinds of production. I'm tired of bein' laid off at that plant and runnin' joints outta my basement like I got somethin' to hide. Like the only way, I can be somethin' is underground. I'm ready to be aboveground just like them white folks. Aint's no tellin' what Detroit could be if we were all put to good use. We could make some kinda... what's that word when things is all copacetic and beautiful? Like perfect, damn near?

SLY: Utopia.

LANK: Utopia. Detroit could be some kinda ... what's place Malcolm went? Side by side with them other... y' know... Muhammad folks?

SLY: Mecca.

LANK: Detroit could be some kinda mecca ... that's what it could be. Colored folks moving this city forward. Get us some business of our own—make them stop treatin' us like trash to be swept away. I'm tellin you, we get a chance to get above ground, Detroit'll be a mecca. (121).

The basement represents African American reality. Their real identity is buried. The siblings are hegemonized by the system. They have different views concerning their family history. As then heritage symbolizes the family's identity and culture. Lank and sly meet Caroline, a white woman, on their way home. She is injured and thrown on the floor. Lank does not think of escalating racial violence and rushes to help her. Morisseau describes Caroline as a "white woman, late twenties to early thirties. Beautiful, quietly strong, troubled, soft and mysterious. A world of danger behind her eyes" (11). The writer does not mention anything regarding her background or roots. Despite her unknown background, Lank and Chelle agree to let her live and work with them.

An individual can create a new space to declare a certain level of equity between his locally and globally elements (Ashcroft et al. 109-110). Caroline is introduced as a white woman seeking a place to stay at. She has suffered a sense of fragmentation and dislocation. She is a transcultural, rootless woman. Her unidentified identity is touched when Bunny asks her where she is from. She replies, "Outside of here aways" (143). Particularly, Caroline's assertion that she cannot situate herself within a particular geographic area alludes to the reality that she is incapable of maintaining a single stable sense of self. She has a sensation of "double consciousness and cultural intermixture" (Smith 4)

In Transformation of the Liminal Self, Alaa Alghamdi argues that a person's fragmented identity is due to their inability to experience a single sense of self. Still, the ability to combine two contradictory cultural attitudes into a single coherent self-distinguishes a person among others. This blended and coherent self serves as a fertile ground for constructing the hybrid identity's physical manifestation (191-192). Chelle warns Lank about Caroline due to the racial differences. "These cops coulda killed you. They been known to shoot us for less" (168). She blames her brother for wasting their money:

CHELLE: Without tellin' me the plan . . . You just blow it all on some ol' white man's word like some kinda fool!

LANK: I'm not a fool, damnit! I listen to you, all we ever gon' do is be quiet and safe and never have nothin' better than what we got!

CHELLE: You always tryin' to have somethin' better! But what Mama and Daddy gave us is already fine without you tryin' to change it or replace it. Ain't nothin' wrong with what we got!

LANK: Ain't said it was nothin' wrong with it! But life ain't just about Keepin' what you got. It's about buildin' somethin' new. You gon' see that Chelle (169).

Lank is different from his sister. His opposition is direct in a conscious hybrid, while Chelle's resistance is indirect in stereotypical images of African American women in a white society. To the postcolonial theorist David Jefferess, resistance means "the indigenous people's struggle to subvert the colonizer's power, or a failure of the colonizer's dominance to be absolute" (Jefferess 4)

Thus, in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Frantz Fanon refers to the importance of colonized resistance against the ideology of superiority. He resistance and fought the Colonizer's ideology, "the absolute line... [where] the colonized man finds his freedom in" (85-85). The Blacks assimilate due to the artificial obedience resistant case due to actual disobedience. The state of assimilation resembles Chelle in her Mimicry, and Lank represents the resistance state.

Lank loves Caroline, and he wants to create a successful business. Chelle perception is restricted to the notion of race; she is unable to overlook it.

CHELLE: She's a white woman, Lank. Maybe you ain't noticed, but I have.

LANK: I noticed, Chelle.

CHELLE: That's what I'm afraid of. It's like . . . you get around her and you get further and further away from reality. Forgettin' who you are and what this world can do to you. You come in here with your new 8-track player and your new bar and this white woman, and you think you, somebody, you ain't.

LANK: Why can't I just do what I do without it bein' about somethin' else? Hunh? Just for once?! (171).

Lank insists on keeping Carolina in their house without thinking of the consequence of his resistance to the rules and boundaries ingrained by the white society. Chelle is worried about her family and what may happen to them for bringing white women to their house. Lank attempts to convince his sister to keep Carolina till she recovers.

CHELLE: so, where we gonna take her?

LANK: Ain't nowhere to take her. Just figure we let her stay here tonight. Figure the rest out when she wakes up.

CHELLE: We can't keep her here.

LANK: What else you wanna do, Chelle? Leave her in a alley?

CHELLE: I ain't sayin' that, but she can't stay here!

LANK: What's gonna hurt—one night?

CHELLE: What you think gonna happen when this white girl wakes up in a house full of colored folks in the ghetto? You think she gonna be thankful and happy you saved her when she see all these gashes on her face? You think she gonna be able to distinguished one colored fool from the next?

LANK: How you know it was a colored fool?

CHELLE: I pray it wasn't. But if it was. . . we all in trouble. Even if it wasn't. . . all she got to do is say it was, and we all in trouble.

LANK: I know that, Chelle. Don't you think I know that? (130).

Caroline finds herself at a house full of the picture "Motown artists, Mohammad Ali. Joe Louis. Malcolm X." (132). Lank tells her that he saved her:

LANK: We didn't do nothin'. . . just found you stumblin' 'round and brought you back cuz. . . you were hurtin'. You were needin'some help, remember?

CAROLINE: Yeah . . . Yeah, thanks um . . . shit (133).

Morisseau depicts Lank and even Chelle as people first and foremost motivated to help others without considering race. Caroline asked Lank and Chelle for a place to stay in and work because she got nothing and her purse was stolen:

LANK: You need some room and board?

CAROLINE: Just . . . I don't have anything . . . my purse is gone; you know. . .

LANK: you can stay here, miss---

CAROLINE: I won't be trouble. I'd work for it. Doesn't matter were. As long as it's safe.

LANK: You can stay here, miss---

CAROLINE: I would work---

CHELLE: We don't have no work---

LANK: We got us a bar needin' some upkeep. Doing some renovations around here. Maybe you could help with that ---

Welcome, We good people here. Hard workin', hustlin' people. You gonna be just fine

CAROLINE: Thank you both. Really. You're good folks (136-137).

A White girl serves African American people. It is a controversial issue when being a white person is superior while being of colour is inferior. The white community creates this myth to complicate many things in the country.

CAROLINE: I was with him sometimes when he'd take money from folks. Criminals. On the payroll of some of the worst kind of men. Illegal business. There's plenty of it in Detroit . . .not just on this side of town. I was with him when he'd ride around in certain parts . . . looking for folks to . . . give a hard time. One time I saw him beat this . . . colored man. said he looked up to no good ...beat him so bad his face looked . . . distorted or . . . something . . . like a monster. That's how I'd picture him in my mind sometimes. A hideous monster. (*Beat*) Maybe he even deserved it. I thought that sometimes too . . . (174).

According to the stereotypical of black people, they are monsters and killers. Caroline feels safe and protected in a house full of African Americans while the one who attacked her is white. Lank is a man of colour and a decent person who is not hindered by racial fears. Morisseau tries to say

that Lank is a productive human being if he is given a chance to. "I know. I'm safer here than anywhere I've been in my whole life" (175).

Caroline works in the basement and served them during the peak of 1967 discrimination. Morisseau does not wish to reverse the master-slave image and reduce her character's motivation to revenge.

BUNNY: Folks can't wait to get served by a white girl over here! White girls can get the joint jumpin' every time. You even mention some kinda blue eyes and niggers will stop what they doin' to get close enough to have a gaze. Swear it—white girl is a natural aphrodisiac (140).

Caroline admires the music and culture of African Americans. She knows about their lives and habits and even the type of drink they prefer. Caroline is an example of cultural appreciation. She dances and sings as she listens to Motown music. Caroline shows her appreciation for the roots of black people. She blends two cultures without boundaries (Study Driver). Bunny and Chelle comment about Caroline's behaviour:

BUNNY: She a nigger lover.

CHELLE: Bunny! What you talkin'?

BUNNY: I'm tellin' you . . . she is.

CHELLE: Girl, you too much for me.

BUNNY: You hear that? Bali Hai? What's a white girl doing drinking Bali Hai? That's some ghetto smooth if I know anything 'bout liquor. She got some colored taste in her or she knows her liquor. It's one or the other, or both I can tell you that much . . . (143).

He asks her:

LANK: Curious is okay with me. I like curious. (*Beat*) you like Motown?

CAROLINE: Yeah . . . I like it. . .

LANK: You diggin' on Nigger music?

CAROLINE: Somethin' wrong with that?

LANK: I wouldn't have picked you for a lover of Negro music.

CAROLINE: What's wrong with Negro music?

LANK: Nothin' wrong with it. Just seem like you'd listen to those ol' classical cats. Beethoven or Chopin. The piano dudes.

CAROLINE: What's a Beethoven?

LANK: What's a Beethoven?!

(*Caroline laughs and shakes her head. Lank looks at her*)

Ohhh . . . I see . . . You pullin' my leg. Havin' a little fun with me

CAROLINE: Maybe.

LANK; So you like Negro music, and I like Negro Music. But only one of us is a real Negro.

CAROLINE: Maybe.

LANK: Maybe? (152).

Caroline is the formation of two different cultures. She forms a new space of duality, having white skin being a Negro lover. She and Lank's offering can be regarded as colour blind. These hybrid characters represent a cross-cultural interchange.

With the looting and the chaos in the city of Detroit. Lank decides to go out and defend his property. When his sister prevents him from going, he tells her, "Because I have to protect our business" (Morisseau 185). Lank is arrested alongside his fellow friends in the community, and he is not given a chance to defend himself.

The cops do not want Caroline to be with the African American because she knows about their crimes. Caroline warns him of police officers and what they can do to the African Americans. She is involved with one of the cops in a relationship. She represents the truth of the corruption of the system "They don't want me around. Not with everything I've seen" (186).

CHELLE: Lank got a lotta blind spots. I got twenty-twenty. I know what it means to have somebody like you get into his skin. He starts believing things in this world is different than they really are. He starts believing it's possible to be you. To live like you. To dream like you. And it ain't.

CAROLINE: How do you know it's not possible?

CHELLE: Because I do! I been living like this a lot longer than you have. Just cuz you hanging 'round over here don't mean you know what it's like to be us.

CAROLINE: I never said I did. But I know what it's like to be me! To never have a family or a place to call home. You have that, at least. You have something here . . .with each other . . . Something I never had with anyone . . . until Lank---

CHELLE: You and him can pretend to be cut from the same cloth all you want. But outside this basement tell a different story. Lank got his eyes on the sky but Detroit ain't in the sky. It's right here on the ground. A ground with a lot of dividing lines. We on one side and you on the other.

CAROLINE: And what about when the lines are blurred? When you feel something that can't be cut up or divided? When you know you belong somewhere even if people tell you you're not allowed? That'd where we meet, Lank and me. Somewhere outside of all the zones and restrictions. Some place where we're not stuck. Maybe that's a place you refuse to go, but that's where someone like Lank and someone like me are exactly the same. And if you don't want to see that, maybe you're the one with the blind spot.

CHELLE: I'm the one with the blind spot? (Beat) You can run out of here right now. Leave town with these cops chasing you. They can harass you and bruise you and even try to kill you. That may make you the same. But if you survive it, you can leave. You can disappear and reappear wherever else you want; in any zone you choose. Live a new life without permission or boundaries or some kinda limits to your skin. Can Lank do that? Can any of us? Everywhere we go, the lines is real clear. Ain't nothin' blurred about it. You might dream the same. You might even feel the same heartbreak. But still he has the same title to this world that you got, you and him ain't gon' never be the same! And that ain't blindness tell me that. That's twenty-twenty (187-88).

The cops kill Lank's best friend sly at the end of the play. He and his friend try to protect their property (bar) from looting. Despite that loss, Lank insists on fulfilling his dreams "How we stood our ground through the fire, even if the rest of Detroit 'but dust. We got somethin' we started and we gonna finish it. That's what I'm a tell folks" (196). Lank asks his sister to tell Sly's sister that her brother "wasn't looter. Tell them he was a businessman. A dreamer. That's what he was" (Ibid).

The play ends with Chelle's singing:

CHELLE (*Singing*):

Now if you feel that you can't go on

Because all of your hope is gone

And your life is filled with much confusion

Until happiness is just an illusion.

And your world is crumbling down, darlin'

Reach out . . . Come on girl, reach on out for me . . . (197).

Due to systematic racism, each character represents a perspective of what African American people suffer from. Bunny, through Mimicry, wants to escape her harsh reality through a fantasy world by reading magazines of white society and mimicking their lifestyle. Chelle is the system victim due to Detroit's actions in 1967. While the opposite of Lank is a dreamer who resists the system as he seeks his dream, to establish his own business (buying a bar). So, each character is different from the other one due to the effect of the system on her/him.

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