



TREATMENT OF BLACK NATIONALISM IN AMIRI BARAKA'S THE TOILET

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Baraka is one of the most prolific and creative authors of twentieth century American literature. The works of Baraka presents the harsh opinions of him on the contemporary politicians and their policies. He is the author of over forty collections of drama, poems, essays, and music, history and criticism. He is revolutionary political activist who has recited poems and lectured on political and cultural problems widely in the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and America. He is also popular for his poetry performance, when he lets himself the liberation to occasionally change or expand the poem as he makes-up with the Jazz music.

The role of Baraka in Black Nationalism targeted national attention on the main issue, the ghetto. He commented that in the twentieth century, African Americans are modernized and urbanized in a very distinct way, laying the modern foundations for an apparent black national political community. He also observed that in the ghetto black America further emerged into one of the most unique language communities of America. This emergence is because of African Americans who have migrated to northern urban industrial cities in huge numbers and increased their standard of education. As a response, urban bureaucratic racial frontiers would fuse with white racism to exempt an emerging group of educated black Americans. The rising black highbrow increasingly wanted to form parallel institutional developments where it may detect apt positions. Baraka draws a right settlement that the momentum of black nationality growth advanced as African Americans are urbanized.

Perspectives of nationalist notions in America emerged in the eighteenth century. From that period, this movement has bloomed in kinds that are at once different, complex, and frequently at odds with each other. Black Nationalism is grounded on political theories, cultural practices and social movements that prevail highly dominant in the modern time. The present chapter analyses about some of these developments, with specific attention to the ideological structures and historical outlooks concealed various organizations and leaders that have moulded Black Nationalism throughout its African American past.

Black Nationalism philosophically is a unique gist of ideas whose concepts have poured throughout the African American encounter. In general, it hinges on the notion that African Americans carry a collective identity and history developed during slavery. Black nationalists claimed interaction between people of African descent in the Caribbean, African Americans, and Africans in the continent of Africa itself. Black Nationalism is illustrated as the formation of all-black social commitments such as self-help agencies, religious organizations and educational institutions. Further, backing for group economic growth is fundamental. It is embodied through black co-operatives, by black campaigns to promote capital generation within the African American society.

Even though Black Nationalism does not have a general interpretation or insight among historians and scholars, there is a mutual base that it is one of the most complicated movements in America. It is also one of the main foundations in the black political panorama. Critics acknowledge that the starting point of the Black Nationalist period is not of current occurrence. This sort of nationalism reflects a convincing feeling of the overpowering majority of black people in America. In many regards, Black Nationalism dominated present-day black thinking and developed different facets of African American politics, religion, culture and economics.

Amidst American domestic problems that make dispute in American history is cultural nationalism. The present article analyses the impact of African American scholars on African American cultural nationalism with specific concern in Baraka, as a political activist. There are various parts of Black Nationalism but from one angle, Baraka is a lucid example. From another, he is the genuine sample of black activism in America in that time.

The complicated relationship between Black Nationalism and Baraka is the marker value of his time's achievements and failures, its rift and its impacts on the content and form of the nationalist vision of Baraka. To perceive Baraka's role as a progressive intellectual, it is essential to analyse the ambivalences and ambiguities of an era that endures to occupy the cultural and political insight of many non-American and American intellectuals.



Baraka, heretofore whose social image is that of an angry man and a Black author inclined to violence displays the spontaneity and violence of the progressive 1960s, when he is at the very crux of culture, politics and literature. A dynamic literary icon and versatile personality, he has been a formidable impact on African-American society. As a pioneering spokesperson of Black Nationalism during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Baraka performed a significant role in the establishment of the Congress of African People in 1970. During the same year, he also politicked energetically for Kenneth Gibson (a political advocacy he later rejected), who is elected the first black mayor of Newark. He performed a pivotal role in the establishment of the National Black Political Assembly in 1972. Yet, these political functions do not adversely influence his commitment in the writing of dramas and in their production. On contradictory, Baraka's dramatic activities and political activities complemented each other. In the context of the radical culture in African American theatre, it is honestly appropriate to analyse the contribution of Baraka as a dramatist to the revival of Black Nationalism.

The most famous drama of Baraka, *The Toilet* (1966), is more coherent and specific in its delineation of the struggles of the Black man with the world. In this drama the violence of the Blacks is pitted against the social codes of the society. The locale in a toilet at the end of the day in an urban high-school, the pity interests a gang of black youths who gather in anticipation of a fight between their leader, Ray, and a white guy, Jimmy Karolis. Ray is seemingly seeking revenge for a love letter Karolis has sent him, but, when the two characters meet it is obscure who made the first advance, in their encounter, Ray attempts to avoid fighting Karolis, who has already been beaten by some of the gang members, but Karolis forces the problem. When Karolis earns the advantage over Ray, the gang jumps on Karolis and beat him into unconsciousness. After the gang quits, Ray re-enter and cradle Karolis's head in his arms, weeping as the drama ends. The emotional end of *The Toilet* shows Baraka's uncertainty in his rapport with the white people. At this juncture he appears to be in a chaos as to how he would fully free himself from his connection with his past which is described in terms of a bond of friendship with his white friends of the Village. In "Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)," James Miller remarks in the following excerpt on this uncertainty:

On the one hand, the dialogue of the pity shows his increasing commitment to the literary possibilities of Afro-American urban speech. On the other hand, Ray Fooks, Jones's sensitive and culturally divided protagonist, is portrayed as victimized by the world, as is the white boy, Karolis. To the extent that *The Toilet* embodies a social statement, it indicts the brutal society - symbolized by the gang - that will not allow love to exist. (15)

Baraka obviously stresses in this drama the futility of love in a society of racial bitterness. But this is not as much the focal point of the drama as is the struggle between two antithetical thoughts in the psyche of Ray. Even though the drama presents the struggle between the white and the black races, scholars have observed, as it is easy to do so, the endurance of the uncertainty in Baraka's psyche in *The Toilet*. The main struggle of *The Toilet*, yet, rests within the divided consciousness of the hero. Tom between his identity as Ray the black gang leader, and Ray, the responsive individual, the hero of *The Toilet* appeared to reflect the struggle within Baraka himself. Simultaneously *The Toilet* is a realistic drama which analyses the interaction of the black and white cultures in America. It exhibits the hardship that a black individual experiences in creating a self-identity while living amidst contradictory cultural forces. The use of metaphors in the drama contrives the drama's paradoxical theme. On the one hand, the drama is realistic in its presentation of Black community; on the other, this realism is impaired by the overtones of metaphors. In "Cultural Conflict and Cult Ritual in LeRoi Jones's *The Toilet*," Owen E. Brady's remarks on this facet are worth citing here:

His setting of the play is a metaphor for the 'impersonal ugliness' of mainstream American society. It is a place of moral filth where black and white community commonly mixes and sometimes explodes. It also becomes a ritual place for Ray Fooks' loss of self-identity through an initiation into the filth of American society. (69)

This double feature of the drama makes it a transitional work. From this point on Baraka constantly moves away from his relationship to the white community to a closer fondness to the Blacks. Now he starts very aptly with a correction of his self-image through his denial of his white past.

The political and social incidents of the time - the Civil Rights movement, sit-in protests, bus-boycotts, court confrontations and other forms of demonstrations - converted him into an angry dramatist. The assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and the bomb blast in the Birmingham Sunday School in which four Black students are killed further inflamed his fury. These events made him understand that the only means to counter white racism is to fight back. The first step in this



direction is to found what he named “Black Power.” This “Power” is delineated as a wary of correcting the self-image of the African American people and of empowering the black male by provoking his masculinity.

Several other facets of Black Power are connected with redefinition of black man-woman relationship, father-son relationship, and, the most precarious of all, black man-white woman relationship; the black family; the black church and Christianity; poverty; education and employment; the contentment of the black bourgeoisie and other evils like racism induced by years of slavery. The basic target of Baraka at this juncture is to conceive a Black state through Black Power.

The racial tone of the American community during these stormy times does not propose that the white and black people will ever unite to achieve anything, but as an aesthetic philosopher, political activist and social critic, Baraka has attempted his best to provoke the sensibility of the Blacks about their self-respect, thereby making a space for artistic intervention in the archaic clash between the two races imprinted by mutual suspicion and acrimony. His Black Nationalism is a factor to reckon with in the context of the ongoing struggle of the Blacks for self-expression and dignity and freedom.

The choice in this research paper is thus made on a controversial and defying personality of Baraka due to his intellectual activism made various contributions to a better perception of the means Black Nationalism has debated widespread ideas of racial identity, black authorization and artistic manifestation. The distinct intellectualism of Baraka gives concrete and effective examples of the broader themes regarding the dynamics of cultural nationalism. The uncertainties of Black Nationalism and its dynamics are pivotal to this chapter and assist resolve general beliefs about black intellectualism and the role of spectators in enduring these discussions.

Historical rebuilding and scrutiny are certainly a necessary technique to pursue it to understand this complicated figure and its dynamic role in the dynamics of Black Nationalism. The used technique then sets up an endured serious analysis of the political rise and fall of Baraka as a political force. Furthermore, historical reconstruction is regarded essential to reveal the problems regarding Baraka. These problems counted and tracked those matters which are reconstructed in the face of the social, historical, and ideological changes that moulded the intellectual activist life of Baraka.

References

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