Fences By August Wilson

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Introduction

Fences was written by August Wilson, who was an American writer; the play became famous for exploring the African American experiences in race relations. The negro head of the family who was struggle ling for money in the play is the center of attention for many people belonging to African American race. The play was adapted into a film in 2016 and was chosen as one of the top ten films by the American Film Institute. The theme of Fences was set by an African American writer back in the 1960s who had a strong passion for highlighting the issues of the black community. By that time, some progress had been made in race relations, like the uniting of professional sports teams. However, the entire nation of America had a long way to go in terms of building strong relationships with people from different races (Wilson, 1998).

The 1950s and 60s were important eras for African Americans in history when America stood at the summit of the world. The U.S. became the strongest military power in the world during the 1950s, and the economy was booming, more consumer goods were developed, and more conflicts arose in the 50s than ever before. There was an element of racial discrimination in American society that highlighted the inequality among African Americans and white races. A growing group of Americans spoke out against inequality and injustice during the 1950s. African Americans had been fighting against racial discrimination for centuries.

Analysis Of Fences

The main theme of the play/movie Fences is race and racial issues in American society. In the 1960s, slavery was abolished in the United States, but the shadow of slavery still existed in many areas of life for the African American people in the form of racial discrimination. The characters of the play show that they had to face the serious issue of racism in American society every day. The article was written before the advent of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, but a decade ago, Fences proved to the world that this movement would be the fate of the African American people in the next ten years (Wilson, 1990).

The Supreme Court of the United States announced separate facilities for education for the black community in the 1950s because of racial discrimination; white people thought that children of black people were unequal to their kids. They were a victim of intimidation and violence at the hands of

white students in schools. A new movement was born in 1955 with Rosa Parks, who refused to give her seat to a white person on the bus and got arrested. The Cold War between the USSR and the USA also began to increase the tension in the area. Keeping in mind all these issues, the author portrays a real image of society in his writing.

The characters were trapped in a troubled time when racial discrimination was at the top in America; the play shows that racial discrimination had a way of bringing stress and anxiety to American families living in the 60s. The main tension between the two characters of father and son, i.e., Troy and Cory, shows that Troy did not learn much from his father and repeated the same old mistakes. The play throws a question of morality over men, and one can ask the question many times: What does it take to become a good man (Wilson, 1990)?

In the 1950s, Benjamin Oliver became the very first African American Fir Force General after playing his part in the war in Korea; that was a strange phenomenon for the black people who cheered it much. Martin Luther King was also elected as the president of the Montgomery Improvement Association in 1955. The system of America was against minorities, and national television was not helping the black community to raise their voices. Therefore, Fences was an effort to open the eyes of the public and bring that matter to notice.

There is no doubt that in the play, a harsh example is set by the father for his son, which creates his idea or concept of manhood. At the end of the play, Cory learns to become a man and leaves the negative influences of his father behind. Racism and morality are the two continuous themes of the play Fences. Troy has to fight to the death in the play, and he eventually wins the battle; he, therefore, taunts death on several occasions. He dared death to come again and take his soul away. Fences seem to view human mortality as both a dark inevitability and our ultimate chance for peace (Wilson, 1990).

The death of Troy allowed his family and son to heal; Troy never let his fear of death control his mind. Therefore, he set an example of courage. The fact that the protagonist wanted to take his baseball career to the next professional level, but he failed to do so because of the racial issues and discrimination problem in America is intriguing and speaks about the negative black experience in America. The writer, Wilson, was a black person who wrote about the American experiences in his play; there is a human experience highlighted in his characters in addition to the general American experience. It is the most important African American play, which was converted into a movie that won Oscar awards. It is an important piece of writing in the history of America. Cory’s chances of becoming a professional college player were destroyed by the cruel hands of society when he no longer pursued his dream. That is the reason, towards the end of the play, that Cory must find a new dream to pursue; he has lost his old one (Bryer, 2006).

Troy, in the play, is left in the end like a bitter person who can never achieve his goals or dreams and is always expected to achieve more than he can. Troy was robbed of his baseball career, which is a symbolic representation of racial discrimination in America. The shadow of this injustice by society

took a toll on his mind, and he became a bitter person. The play makes a better definition of drama; the tone from the author is also a unique representation of the African American dialect and poetry. It is rather an indirect approach to address the all-important issue of a society that affects the lives of characters negatively (Bryer, 2006).

The writing style of Wilson has always been realistic and true; the writer shows the relationship of society with the everyday lives of people, especially with the lives of African Americans. Everyday situations were discussed brilliantly, with black characters in focus who spoke in an African American tone. Fences is a simple yet powerful message to the world about how the writer feels about the African American community and their struggles and injustices during the 1960s. It is both a heartbreaking story of father and son and also funny at times. The characters are complex, but one can relate to them easily if they are hardworking men belonging to the African American community (Bryer, 2006).

The fate of African American people brought them to the shores, where they were dissatisfied with their lives. Troy is the best example in the opening scenes of the play; putting a stop to his dreams due to racial discrimination means the writer wants public attention towards this menace of racism in America at a particular time period. Troy even challenges racial discrimination at the workplace, while his love affairs simply show that there is a tender touch in the play about his relationship with his wife and other women (Bryer, 2006).

References

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