

Racism of Black and White

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A Perspective

Racism simply refers to a system in which a person or a group of people belongs to a particular ethnic, cultural, and religious background. In the United States of America, racism is an old issue that has been deeply rooted in the culture and society of the country for many decades. The concept of racism and its impacts on the lives of people are elaborated in a book, *Black Like Me*, written by a white American, John Howard Griffin. He explained his own personal experiences when he changed himself into a black American to figure out the real problems in the society of white people. The book is based on Griffin's arguments about the critical life structure of black people and how he faced several troubles in his life due to changing his identity. After facing so many troubles being black, he changed himself to his own identity. When he changed his identity to his real identity, he stated that "I felt strangely sad to leave the world of the Negro after having shared it so long — almost as though I were fleeing my share of his pain and heartache" (143). It shows that Griffin deeply felt the troubles, pain, misery, and hardships of black people in the country and shared their pain as a white person.

Griffin was a white journalist living in Texas in the United States of America. He wanted to explore the troubles of black people and learn about their real-life scenarios. He wanted to be like the black one so that he could clearly identify the real experiences. He wanted to explore the hardships and troubles, but he found lots of other factors, including insults. Being black, he faced hardships and insults wherever he went during that time period. Later on, after his experiences, he wrote the book so that people of the world would know about the real scenarios of black ones experienced by a white man.

The overall theme of the book is to show the audience the transformation of one man into two different identities to understand the extent of prejudice and racism in the cultural context of the United States. Griffin stated, "The completeness of this transformation appalled me. It was unlike anything I had imagined. I became two men, the observing one and the one who panicked, who felt Negroid even to the depths of my entrails. I felt the beginnings of great loneliness, not because I was a Negro but because the man I had been, the self I knew, was hidden in the flesh of another" (12). It shows that the author was not only horrified by the experience but also felt everything that he had not even imagined. Being a white man, he was observing the situation of the black one, and being a black one, he was missing his own identity. His experience was valuable as it showed the audience the real picture of having a black identity and their miserable life in the early 20th century.

The author tried to experience a real-life scenario but faced several unimaginable hardships. He was not expecting the outcomes and results of his decision. However, he faced several severe

consequences due to his decision to change his identity. Griffin stated, “Suddenly I had had enough. Suddenly I could stomach no more of this degradation- not of myself but of all men who were black like me” (132). It shows that the author had faced enough trouble and left no confidence to experience any more degradation. When the experience was over, and Griffin had faced enough hatred and prejudice, then the news was out, and everyone knew about his experiment. His town and people go against him and start to criticize his actions. He had to shift to Mexico with his family because, in his own area, everyone was against him. His life became difficult due to his experience, and he never estimated the outcomes of his acts to change his identity. He should consider the outcomes of his actions and how he will react to these specific outcomes. However, due to his lack of research skills, he faced several troubles and hardships during and after that experience.

The book *Black Like Me* is no doubt an important and valuable work by the author because it is based on real-life experience. The author was white but changed his skin color to experience the life of black people and faced several severe conditions of hatred, insult, prejudice, racism, and aggression. Griffin deeply felt the troubles, pain, misery, and hardships of black people in the country and shared their pain as a white person. He explained his hardships and troubles in detail to the audience and told the audience about the miserable lives of black people. He had not even imagined the consequence of his experience, but he had faced several hardships during and after his experiment due to his decision. But he bravely fought with his fears and accepted that black ones were the ones who were living a pathetic life. As a whole, the book is not only interesting but also valuable for having a deep insight into black people’s lives.

Works Cited

Howard Griffin, John. *Black Like Me*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1961. Print.