

comparison

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Comparison of Racial Discrimination as depicted in Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*
and Gansworth's *Apple: Skin to the Care*

Most of the texts, especially the ones that were written by African American and other minority authors, examined one common theme, racism, and racial discrimination. This essay seeks to compare the similarities of how two texts examined this class depicts the concept of racism and racial discrimination. The paper focuses on how Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* has similarly portrayed racism with Gansworth's *Apple: The Skin to the Care*. Even though authors from different minority groups write them, they have both expressed the harsh experiences and the effects of social conflict on their respective identities from a personal perspective.

The two texts have expressed racial discrimination as a social construct similarly. For Du Bois' text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, the meaning of race is associated with cultural hierarchy and dominance. Du Bois provides the experiences of blacks and whites and the racial prejudices that African Americans faced in the 19th and even early 20th centuries. He writes that "the passion of its human sorrow, the struggle of its greater souls" to show the implications of racial discrimination beyond the physical suffering (Du Bois 3). For Du Bois, racial discrimination caused psychological pain and inflicted an eternal mark on the souls of black people. As Sandra Barnes further explores in *A sociological examination of WEB Du Bois' The souls of black folk*, Du Bois' somber tone highlights his observation of the horrific experiences of a minority like him (1).

Similarly, Gansworth depicts racial discrimination and racism as a social construct. He also tells a story of racial hierarchy and dominance the way Du Bois also portrayed the black experiences. Even though many texts have only examined racial discrimination from the perspective of one minority community (blacks), Gansworth's text affirms that the other minority, like the Native communities, also received their fair share of the discrimination. Gansworth describes the voices of students in boarding schools. The author uses boarding school both literally and symbolically. Literally, the boarding schools actually existed in the United States where students from the minority, especially the Native communities, were taken to learn how to integrate with and assimilate into the white population (Sheahan 95). Symbolically, Gansworth has also used the term "boarding schools" to depict and portray the social structure and racial hierarchy, just like Du Bois depicted in his text *The Souls of Black Folk*. Gansworth portrays how these schools served as interrogation sites for the native "apple" to learn how to assimilate into the majority. As he writes, the Natives who learned "to act white when necessary" were described with the term "apple" (Gansworth 323). He shows how racial superiority inflicted emotional and psychological suffering to the Natives who had gone to school. The derogatory term "Apple" was not meant to soothe or encourage them for having gone to school. Besides, the experiences they went through while in these boarding schools painted a different picture of the intentions of their interrogators. Therefore, the metaphor, "Apple," was meant to demean them in the eyes of their white counterparts.

Furthermore, the authors have also expressed the effects of social conflict caused by racial discrimination through a personal perspective. Each of the texts has involved first-person pronouns in the narration, which tells that the authors had a

personal experience with the social conflicts they described. First, in Du Bois' work, he presents the double-consciousness of being an American and a Negro at the same time. From his experience, it was difficult for a Negro to cope with the American identity because they never belonged to the rest of the society. Even though African Americans experienced problems with the negative structural forces like racism and classism, they (blacks) continued to try "to remain intact and ready to fight another day" (Barnes 1). ⁴ In the first chapter, *Of Our Spiritual Strivings*, Du Bois writes that "O water voice of my heart, crying in the sand; As I lie and listen, and cannot understand" (7). Here, Du Bois uses the first person (singular) pronoun to express how he personally experienced the experiences that black minority groups went through. He tells his audience that he was part and parcel of blacks' experienced before and after World War I. In the entire text, Du Bois has involved using personal pronouns to show how intimate he shared the experiences of racism and social conflict created by racial discrimination.

Similarly, Gansworth *Apple: The Skin of Care* portrays the minority experiences personally. Like Du Bois, Gansworth also gives the story from a personal story. However, unlike Du Bois, he does not use personal pronouns but instead shares his experiences using his family members' family photos and experiences. Gansworth has successfully integrated the family history and experiences into his multimodal memoir with the "images taken from Haudenosaunee" (Sheahan 96). Gansworth traces the root and history of his family through these images while also sharing the racial discrimination and systematic racism perpetrated by the government against the minority. In his case, he shares the genocidal plans and brutalities that the minority students in the boarding schools in Carlisle and other places in the United States perpetrated by the government. He asserts that the brutalities and bad experiences

affected his family, especially his grandmother, because they lived on even after practice (13). He further describes how the ghost of the founder of Carlisle continued to linger around and "whispered lessons" to his grandmother even after she had left the school (Gansworth 30). For Gansworth, the brutalities that Native communities who went to the boarding schools experienced lived with them throughout their lives, like his grandmother's case.

Both authors have explored the effects of the fatal division of the American nation based on the minority identity. When they both wrote the texts, racial, sexism, and classism were the main problems causing this fatal division. In Du Bois' work, he deconstructs the fatal division in the nation caused by the experiences that exposed the minority groups to double consciousness. For Du Bois, the double consciousness has resulted in the dehumanization of the physical and spiritual life of the black people. He relies on the strong emotionalism and experiences of inner degradation and dehumanization of the black people. He asks that "why did God make" him "an outcast and a stranger in" his own house (8). This question presents the double-consciousness created by dehumanizing experiences of racial discrimination. Gansworth, on the other hand, describes a response to the inherited history of societal pressure and forces. He offers critical and generative experiences and struggles with racial discrimination.

In conclusion, reading Du Bois' text *The Souls of Black Folk* and Gansworth's memoir *Apple: Skin to the Core* helps one experience the racial discrimination and racism experiences that the authors and their families went through. This paper has examined how the two authors have depicted the concept of racism and racial discrimination in the two texts mentioned above. The paper focused on how each author depicted the theme of racial discrimination from a personal perspective to

depict the social relations between the minority and majority groups. The authors have narrated the experiences from a personal perspective, which also helps the readers to walk the paths of their experiences and ordeal. They may have come from different minority groups (Du Bois from African American while Gansworth from the Indian Native American), but they shared the racial discrimination experiences from a common perspective that enabled the readers to share and walk the paths they walked almost a century ago. Both authors trace their own experiences through different approaches that help the readers connect with the painful experiences and the transient identity of the minority groups in the 19th and 20th centuries. This approach enables them to create a space for their generation to imagine a possible and hopeful future that does not involve systematic and structural racism.

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