
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Racial Discrimination and Dilemma of Colorism in Afro-American Drama

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ABSTRACT

African, black, coloured, Negro, and, more recently, Afro-American, or African-American, was the most often used and accepted terminology. These phrases were included in legislation limiting people's freedoms and human rights. So, racial discrimination is one of the most discussed topics nowadays and throughout history. It means the denial of opportunity for a specific group of people. It is usually based on a number of factors, such as race, the color of skin, social class, and religion. The present research aims at showing racial discrimination and the dilemma of color in two Afro-American female and male playwrights. They are Zola Neale Hurston (1891-1960) and Langgston Hughes (1920-1967). In her play *Color Struck* (1926), Hurston sheds light on the problem of colorism and its effect on women. It deals with the dilemma of Emma, a young black lady whose deep color-consciousness leads to an inferiority complex under miners in her own life and future. Hughes also addresses the realistic source of conflict in *Mulatto* (1935), which is the color line that individuals must transcend in order to embrace each other as human beings. The study concludes with a conclusion that summarizes the findings.

KEYWORDS

Afro-American, Racial Discrimination, Dilemma of Colorism, Zola Hurston's *Color Struck*, Hughe's *Mulatto*.

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1. Introduction

When characterizing individuals, the term "black" usually refers to someone who is of equatorial (African, Negrito, Aboriginal, or South Indian) ancestry and/or has an extremely dark complexion. Physically defining or characterizing a black person is impossible in the end. In the face of superficial acceptance by people who would otherwise see blacks with contempt or disgust, blackness is linked to a history of struggle, oppression, and a feeling of individual integrity. There is much debate over who qualifies as black in history, particularly when it comes to civilizations in Northeast Africa.

2. Racial Discrimination in America

From the beginning, the Africans did not come to America willingly for a better life and greater opportunity. Instead, the European master used them as slaves. The idea of a superior European heritage proved to be false as the Africans had a rich heritage.

Racial discrimination has been one of the nation's biggest issues ever since it was founded. Afro-Americans had a poor quality of life when they first arrived in the United States of America in 1619 because of slavery, segregation, and class distinction. It is generally agreed that racial discrimination was the major cause of their suffering. According to American novelist James Baldwin, the root of Afro-American discrimination is directly related to "skin color"(Quoted in Jones, 1966,p.121). These words were echoed in William Edward Burghardt Du Bois's speech when he stated that the main problem of the twentieth century in America was the "color lines"((Quoted in Harison, 2005).

"Race is a term and a category that may describe a "person's color, caste, culture, and capabilities, usually depending on what historical, political, or social factors are at work," according to Nicole King(Kinng,2002,p.214). From a sociological standpoint, the

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term "race" refers to a "group of individuals who share physical features as well as significant cultural and social commonalities." (Vorster, 2002,p296).

For Afro-Americans, the problem of skin tone is never addressed; it impacts every aspect of their lives, including their self-concept and image. More importantly, any definition of discrimination must place a strong emphasis on conduct. "Discrimination is separate from racial prejudice (attitudes), racial stereotypes (beliefs), and racism (ideologies), all of which may be connected with racial disadvantage," writes L. Quillian. "Discrimination may be driven by prejudice, stereotypes, or racism," he continues, "but the concept of discrimination does not presuppose any one-of-a-kind underlying reason." (Quoted in Pager and \shepherd,2008,p.182).

Historically, the texture of a person's hair and, in particular, the color of their skin have played a significant influence in developing racist attitudes against black people. The color black is associated with sin, desire, wickedness, filth, death, and so on in the minds of most average Western citizens(Ronald C. Hall, 2010,p.5). As a result of cultural and social tradition, white Americans discriminate against people of African origin.

Racism is defined as "the idea that all members of any race possess features, talents, or qualities unique to that race, especially in order to identify it as inferior or superior to another race or races"(Racism, 2011,p112).

Judging black people based on their skin color reinforces their inferiority and encourages white-dominated society to subjugate them to their own beliefs and perspectives. Because it contrasts with that of the American mainstream, their skin tone is a powerful and noticeable trait. (Hall, p.9). Racism, as an American phenomenon, is generally agreed to involve prejudice plus power since prejudice would not be able to emerge as a pervasive cultural, institutional, or social reality without the support of political or economic power(Carlos Hoyt Jr).

3. Of Being Black: Problem of Colorism

Dark complexion has an impact on almost every aspect of life, including partner selection, general stereotyping, and judicial treatment. It is a "Master status," as Ronald E. Hall puts it, that separates victim-group individuals of color from the rest of the community. He goes on to say that "racial superiority is scientifically untrue, morally condemnable, socially unfair, and hazardous and that there is no basis for racial discrimination anywhere, in principle or practice"(Hall, pp.8-12).

Racial discrimination has emerged as a result of the rise of a white supremacist ideology. Slavery is seen to be the root of black inferiority and white supremacy; being a slave implies being subhuman, ugly, and lower in status than a white person who is respectable, attractive, and superior to a black person. The proponent of slavery says that "Negros" are intrinsically inferior, that their poor status is the consequence of divine ordination that forces them to stay in service, and that their darkest complexion allows them to withstand the sun's heat and harshness.

Conditions are better than white people (Golfarb,1983, p.420). The term "colorism," coined by Alice Walker in 1982, refers to a type of prejudice in which individuals are treated differently due to the social repercussions of their skin color. (Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 5).

In the United States, it is a chronic issue for people of color. Colorism, also known as skin color stratification, is a system that favors light-skinned people of color over dark-skinned people in areas including money, education, housing, and marriage. It is linked to the wider system of racism in the United States and around the world. (Ibid)

Colorism can have an impact on how a person views and feels about himself, how he or she treats themselves, and how he or she behaves in certain settings. For certain black women, skin color is linked to self-esteem, with darker skin tones being connected with poorer self-worth. (I bid).

As a result, color plays a role in deciding who obtains success, status, and recognition. Skin that is lighter in hue is always more attractive and denotes a better social status. A darker complexion is associated with ugliness and is always classified as lower class(I bid). "Those with white blood (mulattoes) are thought to be socially, culturally, and/or physiologically superior," writes Delia Caparoso Konzett. (Konzett, 2002,p.94)

These racial sentiments have their origins in centuries of racism and miscegenation, and they pervade men-women relationships as well as the societal system as a whole. Calling someone black is an intentional insult, and remarks regarding their skin tone, particularly when aimed at women, aggravate the situation. Black men, who think that women with darker complexions are evil, support this contemptuous attitude toward black women. They assert that:

If a black woman visited your home on a Monday morning, it was bad luck for the next week. They slept with their fists balled up, ready to fight and squabble even while they were asleep. They even had evil dreams. White, yellow, or brown girls dreamed about roses, perfume, and kisses. Black gals dreamed about guns, razors, ice picks, hatchets, and hot lye (Racism, 2001, p.112).

Hurston strives to modify this perception through her writings. She investigates black people in their own words. She focuses on prejudice within the African-American community. She portrays race as a performed or experienced social drama rather than a codified sociological process (Ibid, p.7). Race, for her, is a "complex cultural creation replete with contradictions and multiplicities." Furthermore, she claims that "At times, I don't care about my race; I'm just myself... I am not a member of any race or period of time. With its string of pearls, I am the everlasting feminine "twenty-first.

Although Hurston recognizes race prejudice as part of the fabric of black culture and a source of humor and pain, she argues that:

Race prejudice, I was instructed, was something bad that white people used on us. It seemed that white people felt superior to black ones and wouldn't give negroes justice for that reason. Race pride was something that, if we had it, we would feel superior to white. Black skin was the greatest honor that could be blessed on any man. Race consciousness is a plea to Negroes to bear their color in mind at all times (Cilfarb, 1083, pp.2250226).

Hurston admits that racism and violence exist not just in Jim Crow society but also inside the black community. Many of her peers are afraid to venture into this territory for fear of jeopardizing the fight against racism. Hurston, unlike them, is capable of confronting black male misogyny and brutality against women, as well as criticizing black male leadership. She analyzes how gendered spaces are contested in the black community, how race frequently takes a second seat in class, and how color remains a significant element in daily life via her works. At a time when white violence against black people was killing thousands of people in both the North and the South (Patterson, 2005, p.92), this was a courageous stance.

Hurston thinks she owes a moral duty to her society, which she must fulfill via her work as an artist and folklorist; thus, she pursues a form of expression that violates gender conventions. She's always been treated with hostility, criticism, and even outright rejection. Because of this, she is considered a "highly misunderstood historical figure" (Quoted in Ibid, p.5).

4. Racial Discrimination and Delimma of Colorism in Afro- American Drama

Color Struck (1925) by Zora Neale Hurston examines the problem of Colorism and its effects on a young black woman. Colorism is widely acknowledged to exist both interracially and intrracially. Intra-racial colorism occurs when members of a racial group create differences between members of their own race based on skin color. When individuals of one racial group create distinctions based on skin color between members of another racial group, this is known as interracial colorism (Herring, 2004, p.19). Hurston's play is on intra-racial colorism, particularly in the Black community. "Anyone hoping to get a taste of negro life in Florida shouldn't miss this performer, (Quoted in Kolin, 2007, p.20)." said one of Rollins College's directors.

Michael North claims that Color Struck is "a word for Emma's infatuation as well as the retreat it causes" (Noryh, 1994, p.175). Hurston, on the other hand, popularized the term "color struck" during a party following the 1925 Opportunity awards banquet, when she "[triumphantly screams], 'Calaaaahstruuuck.' Hurston imbues the shout with such victory, which North sees as what she meant to achieve with the play. North also discusses the cakewalk's historical context. "The cakewalk [is] a cliché of black existence," he says, referring to its minstrel beginnings. (Ibid)

Emmaline, the play's protagonist, is black, impoverished, and from the countryside, and she feels that her darker color disqualifies her from finding love. Emma is very black, maybe too dark for her own comfort, and her color consciousness leads her to be alienated from others, even her lifelong love, John, who is described as "A Light brown-skinned man" (Hurston, 2008, pp.35-50). by the stage director.

Hurston emphasizes Emma's emotions of isolation and dislocation by presenting the audience with a multitude of themes as early as the first words of the play. The subject of colorism is addressed directly in the title. The protagonist's name has a lot of weight behind it. She is Emma throughout the performance and even in the stage directions. However, the 'line' that is linked to her name in the dramatis personae introduction refers to an impassable color line that she is unable to transcend. This line denotes the internalization of racial and stereotyped stereotypes, which is a continuous process. Furthermore, the opening scene is set in a Jim Crow railway car in Jacksonville, Florida; It serves as a harsh reminder of the nation's long history of discrimination and persecution against people of color. John and Emma's late arrival and their disagreement about Emma's morbid jealousy expose Emma's feelings of inner insecurity and her struggle to get over her fascination with the dark color of her skin. Furthermore, in sharp contrast to the forward movement of the railway train, Emma moves backward throughout the play until she is left alone in the last scene, bemoaning her wretched life.

Emma's fascination with the color black leads to an inferiority mentality, which manifests itself not only in self-deprecating behavior but also in establishing her place and identity. "The play analyzes how one's discontent with one's hue may lead to an inferiority mentality that destroys one's entire existence," says Lillie Howard (Konzett,2002,p.24). As a result, the play focuses not just on color prejudice and self-pity but also on the protagonist's shattered identity and inner dislocation.

Color struck is a four-scene drama set in the year 1900. It begins with a group of laughing, lively friends boarding the Jim Crow train car in Jacksonville, Florida, to compete in a cakewalk event in St. Augustin. When they get there, John says that Emma's charge that he was flirting with Effie is the reason for their tardiness:

EMMA (removing the hatpins from her hat, turns furiously upon him). You wuz grinning at her, and she wuz grinning back jes lake a ole chessy cat. (1-37)

John denies this, but Emma insists:

EMMA (about to place her hat in rack). You wuz. I seen you looking jes lake a possum...Jes the same every time you sees a yaller face, you takes a chance (1-37)

The word 'yaller, yeller, or High yellow' is important here. It influences how Emma sees herself in relation to others, as well as reflects the long history of color-based classification of individuals in the United States of America, which stretches back to the end of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. Emma engages in what sociologists refer to as "between-group" social comparison here, as she has on prior occasions. The core of Emma's problem (Farsides, 2012, p. 16) is a self-evaluation process that involves a constant process of comparison with females with a light complexion. The cakewalk, as a kind of social competition,' is an excellent way to show one's inner potential while also revealing one's position in terms of talents and abilities. Although John and Emma have a good chance of winning the event since they are "the bestest cakewalkers in dis state" (1-36), Emma's jealousy and self-hatred force her to lose out to the 'Yaller' girl Effie, who eagerly accepts to dance with John.

Because of her pale coloring and white background, Effie has advantages as a young girl. Unlike Emma, Effie, dubbed "the mulatto girl," is well aware of "her worth, both financially and sexual; she is conscious of her appearance and the value placed on her light brown complexion." (Benes,2011,p.61). The fact that Effie enters the carriage before John and Emma, and receives a warm welcome and quick adoration from a member of the opposite gender, demonstrates how deeply ingrained color prejudice is in Emma's town. "Howdy, Miss Effie, you're lookin' like a rose." If you weren't walkin' long, ah'd assume you were a rose" (1-36). The fact that Effie is compared to a rose indicates that she is "both appreciated for and conscious of what her skin color and appearance imply." (Ibid). In this way, Effie's physical beauty becomes a source of empowerment as well as a valuable economic and social asset.

"Jealousy, at least, reflects a feeling of 'ownership' given a world that limits her possession of 'things,' jealousy is an emotional possession, providing a fixed point in life," writes David Krasner in his article "Migration, Fragmentation, and the Identity: Zora Neal Hurston's Color Struck and the Geography of the Harlem Renaissance." (Rasner, 2001,p.553)..

The second scene takes place immediately before the cakewalking competition outside the dancing hall. The pair that wins the competition is expected to travel to the north. Except for Emma, who remains hesitant and skeptical, all of the partners are content. John attempts to reassure her once more. He says to her,

JOHN: You certainly are an ever loving mamma-when you aint mad.

EMMA (*smiles sheepishly*). You oughtn't to make me mad, then.

JOHN. Ah, don't make you! You makes yo'self mad, den blame it on me. Ah, keep on tellin' you Ah don't love nobody but you. Ah knows heaps uh half-white girls Ah could gitef Ah wanted to. But (*he squeezes her hard again*) Ah jus' wants you! You know what they say! De darker de berry, de sweeter de taste! (2-41)

John's phrase "De darker de berry, de sweeter de flavor!" has two meanings. On the one hand, John seems to be implying that Emma is sweating profusely and that the darker she becomes, the sweeter she becomes. It's an early reference to the slogan "The Black Is Beautiful," which grew in popularity in the United States during the turbulent 1920s. It was part of the black cultural movement's efforts to fight the mainstream American culture's belief that "Black" traits are less beautiful or desirable than "White" ones. The concept that "blackness" is ugly is widely accepted as being extremely harmful to the psyche of Afro-Americans, expressing itself as internalized racism(Carpenter, 2009,p.22).

Emma, in Hurston's novel, fails to transcend the barrier of colorism and spends her life trapped inside a cocoon she has created. Emma's resentment of John's feelings for Effie is shown in another event, which confirms her suspicions about his feelings for her.

Effie serves John and Emma a piece of pie as they sit across from each other on the couch. John's approval of the work, despite his knowledge that it will upset Emma, confuses Emma even more:

EFFIE. Y'll have a piece uh mah blueberry pie -it's mighty nice! (*She proffers it with a timid smile to Emma, who "freezes" up instantly.*)
Emma. Naw! We don't want no pie. We got cocoanut layer-cake.

JOHN. Ah-Ah think ah'd choose a piece uh pie, Effie. (*He takes it.*) Will you set down an' have a snack wid us? (*He slides over to make room.*)

Emma again stresses the same idea that obsesses her:

Naw, youse jus' hog-wile ovah her cause she's half-white! No matter whut Ah say, you keep carryin' on wid her. (2-41)

Emma is an example case of the "damaging repercussions of a Black fixation with skin tone," according to Martha Gilman Bower. The drama depicts the repercussions of being "color struck" as increasing rage, poor self-esteem, paranoia, and insanity. According to Bower, Emma does not show anger at segregation, but she is furious with the intra-racial hierarchy. Emma is "the sole sad character" because of her "psychotic preoccupation with color," which prevents her from genuinely being joyful, loving, or overcoming tyranny. Obsessions like this are self-destructive, distort perception, and have the potential to ruin opportunities (Bower, 2004, p. 730).

Emma, as a black woman, is ignorant yet aware of her limitations. "Emma's deeper color and the societal constraints that are placed on 'blackness'" (Quoted in Kolin, 2010, p. 19). "Make her a subject to exclusion both outwardly and inwardly," says Krasner. In both the black and white worlds, her dark skin makes her an outcast. This places Emma in the "Perilous Zone of Not Belonging," a territory where "people are banished" (Quoted in Krasner, 2001, p. 553), as Edward Said (1935-2003) describes it.

Emma's ethnicity, poverty, and helplessness are to blame for her psychological displacement. Her irrational behavior stems from her irrational situation. The loss of her partner causes a sense of disowning and homelessness, which leads to a state of intense sorrow, which leads to instability and separation from others (Benes, pp. 59-60).

Jan Bene believes that John's fast selection of another dance partner means Emma is no longer required. Furthermore, Emma believes that light-skinned individuals, such as Effie, who tend to acquire professions inaccessible to dark black people, are impeding her social advancement. Emma now feels like a mule, as her anxieties have finally surfaced and manifested. John isn't satisfied with her dark berry and fried chicken; he wants to choose lighter fruit from a light-skinned girl's basket. Emma uses the metaphor of the mule to express her despair and powerlessness, which will be further underlined in the following scene (Ibid, p. 59).

A guy proclaims that Effie and John have won the cakewalk in the third scene. Emma stands alone outside, listening to the news; everyone inside is enthusiastic and cheerful, but Emma feels sad. This is the most dramatic scene in the play. Hurston gives a highly theatricalized account of the stage action as a sensitive writer:

Emma springs to her feet and flings the curtains wide open. She stands staring at the gay scene for a moment defiantly, then creeps over to a seat along the wall and shrinks into the Spanish Moss, motionless. (3-44)

The contrast is stark: Emma remains immobile and mute for seven to nine minutes while the rest of the cast, which are not ashamed to reveal their skin onstage, dance together. Emma's inability to speak up and be heard when she most needs it is noteworthy; it emphasizes the significance of silence or voicelessness as a condition of being for Hurston's creative and political purpose. Emma is colorblind (silent) and color-blind (blind), both of which are symptoms of resignation and powerlessness (Ibid, p. 58).

Emma chooses to consign herself to a marginal place by rejecting her own skin during a racial pride celebration, and as a result, she pays dearly by being left alone (Quoted in Ibid). Emma "had opted not to compete rather than risk being subjected to a derogatory remark" (Patterson, 2005, p. 92). She isolates herself, despite the fact that she cannot stop watching the dancing sequence, which hurts her and confirms her worst fears about herself and John's passion. She internalizes a sense of racial inferiority in this way.

Despite the fact that the audience hasn't seen Emma in twenty years, the play's closing scene contains no new information about her. The scenario takes place at Emma's home, which is described as a "one-room shanty" with "some light entering through the window and falling on the woman reclining in the low rocker." [...] The woman is seen rocking back and forth in the low rocker as the curtain rises. Except for the sound of the chair and the odd moan from the bed, there was complete silence" (4-45). Lou Lillian, Emma's illegitimate daughter with a white man, maybe heard groaning from time to time.

In terms of practicality, Emma's life has remained unchanged. She remains immobile, mute, alone, and engulfed in darkness. John returns to Emma's location in search of her. Hurston refers to Emma as "a woman" from the outset of the action, implying that Emma's seclusion is a metaphor for black women in the south who face similar self-doubt and division.

John claims to have lived "up north" and to have been married for seventeen years before becoming a widower. Emma speculates that he married a fair-skinned woman:

EMMA. Bet you' wife wuz some high-yaller dickty-doo. JOHN. Naw she wasn't neither. She was jus' as much like you as Ah could get her. (4-46)

The great irony of the play occurs when John finds out that Emma's daughter is a mulatto girl. Despite her past accusations, it was she who bore a child to a lighter-skinned man:

Before he gets up from his chair, Emma quickly runs over to the bed and quickly covers the girl, putting her long hair beneath the blankets as well. He approaches the bed and casts a downward gaze at her face. She is mixed-race. slyly turns to face Emma. Speaking of my preference for high-yallers, my hubby had to be quite close to being white. (4-47)

Emma reveals that she has never been married before. John dreams of having a family and raising his daughter as his own. Lillian is gravely ill, so John dispatches Emma to find a doctor. Emma refuses to see a "colored doctor" and finally arranges for a white doctor to be sent to her. This implies that Emma is unknowingly discriminating against her people based on their skin tone. Emma hears John just as she is ready to depart, "Wow, she's going to grow a full head of hair! You're lucky you didn't let her cut it off." (4-48). Emma thinks John is fascinated by her because her child is half-white. Emma grabs John in a passion and threatens to murder him; he fights to get away from her hold and exclaims:

JOHN (slowly, after a long pause). So here is the woman I've been wearing like a rose over my heart for the past 20 years! She hates her skin so much that she finds it impossible for anybody else to cherish it. (4-50)

Emma's final words, "Couldn't see," might be interpreted in a variety of ways. It might be a reference to Emma's reluctance to see her own hatred for her kid since it reminded her of John's ambitions, as well as her problem about disliking half-white females. Or she couldn't understand that John is genuinely concerned about her well-being and that when he encourages her to visit a doctor, it's just to save her child's life. Or she could not understand that her instability and self-loathing lost her one true love and her daughter's life.

Hurston decides to finish the scene quietly as Emma rocks in her chair close to her newly departed child. Sitting and watching her rock is a more theatrically basic and effective experience than talking. Emma spends her life oblivious to her own prejudice based on skin color, and her racial fears cause her issues from the beginning of the play to the end, when she sits alone, saddened by her loss of everything. Emma's "self-hatred and misery is so profound that she kills the love she so badly yearns for," according to Paterson(Carpenter,p.22).

Carpenter provides an analytical look at the play in her landmark paper, "Addressing the 'Complex'-ities of Skin Color: Intra-Racism in the Plays of Hurston, Kennedy, and Orlandersmith." Color Struck's 'topical relevance,' she says, comes in its attempt to question the preconceptions around color consciousness. Hurston emphasizes the reality that color discrimination comes in various forms rather than "presenting the color-complex as a unilateral dynamic in which light-skinned blacks reject and separate themselves from their darker siblings." She goes on to say:

In effect, the dramatic twist Hurston portrays is twofold: both John and Emma are "color struck," albeit in opposing and unpredictable ways. Emma is drawn to light skin (notably, after her relationship with John fails, she presumably has a sexual relationship/encounter with a white man, resulting in the birth of a "very white girl"), while John exhibits color-consciousness in his preference for dark-skinned women (after the breakup, he consciously seeks out a darker-skinned wife that "was jus' as much" like Emma as possible(A ceaire, 1995, p.91).

Afro-American male playwrights have long contributed to the enrichment of the American theatrical heritage. They explore the difficulties that their communities face in America in their plays, and they portray people whose sufferings, actions, and decisions reflect what it means to be black in a white-dominated society(Kolin,p.1). *Mulatto* (1935), written by Langston Hughes (1902-1967), was the longest-running play by an African-American dramatist on Broadway in the 1930s.

Hughes mostly wrote for the stage in the late 1930s. *Mulatto*, his drama on miscegenation in the South, was the longest-running African-American Broadway play until Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958). In 1935, Hughes' play *Mulatto* debuted on Broadway, dealing with the dual themes of miscegenation and parental rejection. *Mulatto*, a two-act drama, premiered in October 1935 at the Vanderbilt Theater in New York.

The play had 373 performances, which was a record for an African-American dramatist on Broadway at the time. (Glicksberg, 1944, p.47). *Mulatto* is one of Hughes' plays set in the 1930s in the south when white authority over blacks was total and uncompromising. The play's initial notion as a story about "father and son" is a recurrent one. Colonel Tom Norwood and his mulatto son, Robert Lewis, are aware of their kinship, but they despise and reject each other.

The "color line"-the symbolic boundary that people must cross in order to acknowledge each other as human beings-is the realistic source of conflict in *Mulatto*. In the society shown in the play, this is both an ideal aim and an unattainable challenge. The inability or unwillingness to cross the boundary determines the pattern of behavior as well as the violent consequence. Colonel Norwood and Cora Lewis have shared a home for many years, and they get along swimmingly as long as he isn't confronted with questions about his fatherhood or authority over the plantation. However, until he is ready to give up his white identity, he would never acknowledge the four "yard blacks" on his property as his real offspring. (A.P Davis, 1968, p.288).

The exploitation of black women (detailed in Act I, speech 61), the front door of the Norwood home, Robert's concerns about Miss Gray, and his speeding with the Ford are all examples of dramatic realism. All of Robert's so-called "uppity" acts would be acceptable in white culture if he were white, but they suggest a state of insurrection since he is black. Additionally, Robert's identification as a half-white, half-black man—Colonel Tom refers to him as "yellow"—puts him in an uncomfortable predicament because he is neither sufficiently "white" nor "black" to be equal or subservient. The reality of his condition causes him to despise both whites and blacks, and the unexpected outburst of his rage results in uncontrollable violence.

A mulatto is a person who has both white and black ancestry and is the first general offspring of black and white parents. Mulattoes are often light-skinned yet dark enough to be considered part of the white race. One objection leveled against the use of the term "mulatto" in the United States is that it obscures North America's high incidence of racial intermixing, in which few persons have African heritage without traces of European origin. While the criticism is valid, it overlooks the fact that in the United States, the historic Anglo-American tradition of the One-Drop Rule (the practice of considering all people with any amount of African blood to be black) prevented mulattos from establishing themselves as a distinct ethnic group with members who saw themselves as such.

Mulatto is one of Hughes' most well-known works. In 1950, he reworked it into a libretto titled *The Barrier*, which composer Jan Meyerowitz put to music. In addition, in 1954, the play was translated and published in South America. *Mulatto: A Play of the Deep South*, which is more commonly referred to as *Mulatto*, was Langston Hughes' first full-length play. It was composed in the early 1930s and first performed on Broadway in 1935, despite the fact that it was not published until 1963 in Langston Hughes' *Five Plays*. This theatrical production broke the record for the most performances of an African-American play. Martin Jones directed and produced the play.

The play was so divisive in Philadelphia that it was outlawed. *Mulatto*, like many of Hughes' works, emphasizes stereotyped characteristics of African Americans of the period, such as uneducated speech. Hughes received a lot of flak from the African-American community because of things like these.

Mulatto, Hughes' drama, opens in the Big House on a Georgia plantation, a setting that remains consistent throughout the play. Sallie Lewis, his mulatto kid with his African American maid Cora, has not yet boarded the train that would take her to school for the semester, which has Colonel Thomas Norwood, the white plantation owner, upset. With Sam, his personal African American servant, he expresses his dissatisfaction. Robert, whom Cora refers to as Bert, is another of Norwood's mulatto offspring who is meant to drive Sallie to the station, but Bert has gone to town without Norwood's permission to collect some radio tubes. Bert should be picking cotton in the fields, Norwood argues, and he threatens to lash him.

On a fall afternoon in 1930s Georgia, the play starts. Colonel Thomas Norwood, a 60-year-old plantation owner, and Cora Lewis, Norwood's housekeeper and mistress of thirty years, are the first two characters presented. As the story begins, Norwood and Cora are discussing Cora's and Norwood's daughter Sallie's impending departure from school. The conversation immediately shifts to another kid, their son Robert (Bert), and how he has driven into town without permission. The Colonel expresses his displeasure at Bert's disobedience, stating that such insolence from a "darkie" - especially his own kid - would not be tolerated.

Next, we meet Sam, an old black man who works as the Colonel's personal aide. Because the rear steps are difficult to navigate, Sam asks whether it would be alright to take Sallie's baggage out the front door to the vehicle. Colonel Norwood's buddy and local politician Fred Higgins is a white supremacist who believes in the supremacy of whites. Higgins arrives to inform Norwood that Robert has been making problems in town and that his activities may result in his death. The relationship between Norwood and Cora is also critiqued by Higgins. Higgins, unlike Norwood, wields an iron grip over his African-American employees. Colonel Tom Norwood's black housekeeper and mistress, Cora Lewis, had four live mulatto children with him. Cora met Norwood for the first time when she was fifteen years old. (R. M Dorson, 1968, p.187)

Despite the fact that slavery was declared illegal after the American Civil War, racism and prejudice continued to exist in many places, particularly in the American South. The drama, set on a Georgia plantation, examines the social roles of African Americans and whites in this period. Most whites thought that they should be superior to African Americans, who frequently toiled in cotton fields for them, much as their forefathers did when they were slaves in the 1800s. African Americans, for the most part, accepted their lot because they recognized that challenging the existing quo would have devastating results.

Mulatto was met with mixed reviews when it premiered on Broadway in 1935. The fact that the Broadway version of the play was substantially different from what Hughes had written contributed to the wide range of criticism. Martin Jones, the play's producer, made major changes to Hughes's original script. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the play was a huge success and established a record by lasting on Broadway for a year—at the time, the longest run of any play written by an African American.

Mulatto is a very emotional drama, as many critics have observed. The drama builds throughout the piece, exposing race-based tensions between African Americans and whites in the American South in the 1930s and ending in a sad conclusion. In the end, this tense drama has a purpose: to show that whites should embrace African Americans as equals since everyone loses in a racial conflict.

At first glance, Robert appears to be the source of all the tension in the play, instigating many clashes with Norwood. Norwood's genes and inconsistent conduct, on the other hand, are what make Robert who he is. Norwood has a soft spot for African Americans, and he appears to appreciate his one-on-one connection with Cora. Langston Hughes' 1935 play *Mulatto: A Tragedy of the Deep South* is evident in its focus on the continuous torture that Southern blacks endured at the hands of whites in the early twentieth century.

Throughout the performance, monstrous white characters appear and disappear like ogres, ready to pounce on nonwhite victims at any moment. While racist abuse is perhaps the most visible aspect of this narrative of racial mingling in the Deep South, it is far from the only issue that Hughes raises. Hughes, like many other Harlem Renaissance writers, is concerned with racism within the black community. *Mulatto* depicts the unusual condition of blacks having biases against other blacks as well as any Renaissance masterpiece.⁴⁹

Mulatto is a Spanish and/or Portuguese word that refers to first-generation African and European ancestors. Originally a feminine term, mulatress was coined from the word "negress." In Spanish and Portuguese, the forms "mulatta or mulata" still exist. Because of this, although many Hispanic and/or Latino Americans identify as mulatto, non-Hispanics seldom ever use the term. During colonial times, the word was used to describe children born to one European and one African parent or children born to two mulatto parents.

Most mulattos in the United States returned to Africa, and while they did bestow most current African-Americans with the European heritage that mulattos had, that lineage had become extremely diluted. This is in contrast to the popular understanding of the term mulatto, which refers to persons who have considerable quantities of both European and African heritage. In modern Europe, a society of current mulattos is slowly forming that is unconnected to the centuries of history of those who came before them. These are the children of European nationals and recent African immigrants from a variety of European nations.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this research is to follow and evaluate the subject of race and color. In Zora Neale Hurston's *Color Struct* and Landston Hughes' *Multatto*, the main female character has challenges and conflicts. Race is the key element in a racist system of supremacy in which one group controls and discriminates against the other, as the arguments presented in this research indicate. Afro-Americans are stereotyped based on physical characteristics such as skin color. In both Hurston's *Color Struct* and Landston Hughes' *Multatto*, The trains make a reference to their inability to get over some of the difficulties they encounter due to their ethnicity and color. The line connected to Emma's line represents the color line that has been unable to cross. According to Hughes, self-identification was not simply based on skin color but also on a deeper dement that allowed all of mankind to share all of each other's wonderful talents. He advocated for equal rights for all individuals, regardless of race or color.

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