
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Political Concerns in Langston Hughes's *Scottsboro Limited*

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| ABSTRACT

This article aims to elucidate Langston Hughes's political concerns as reflected in his most important political play, *Scottsboro Limited* (1931). Langston Hughes is a distinguished African American writer who tried his hand in almost all literary genres. He epitomized the views and ideals of the African American literary movement known as 'The Harlem Renaissance'. In this play, he attempts to justify his race's need to pursue their political rights and fight for the achievement of equality and liberty. This is achieved by illustrating the contaminated political atmosphere and circumstances under which African Americans were leading their life. Furthermore, the reasons that led to Hughes's political resentment and indignation are all brought to light. In this play, he presents an outrageous example that shows the prevalence of political corruption inside the law system itself. What is noticeable about Langston Hughes is that he does not confine himself to discussing the conditions of African Americans, but he attempts to deal with the absorbed rights of other groups of people worldwide. Consequently, he saw that there was a need for an international revolution against whites' oppression. These harsh forces were represented by the white imperialists and wealthy persons both in Europe and the USA. In *Scottsboro Limited*, he encourages these helpless people to get united to be able to strive against their oppressors and attain their full rights. The last point that this article handles is Hughes's relationship with the communist part. His illustration of how the political rights of poor people internationally are down-trodden was the reason which lurked behind the racially-prejudiced attempts to relate him to the activities of Communism in American society. They accused him of being a communist, though he never was. All these aspects are crystalized in the analysis of the play.

| KEYWORDS

Harlem Renaissance, Black Americans, Political concerns, rulers and the ruled, equality and liberty, Langston Hughes

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 12 December 2023

PUBLISHED: 01 January 2024

DOI: 10.32996/ijts.2024.4.1.1

1. Introduction

Langston Hughes was one of the most domineering figures in the intellectual and literary life of black Americans. He was actually one of the most prominent founders of the 'Harlem Renaissance' or the 'New Negro Movement' whose impact on black literature was remarkable. He epitomizes the views and ideals of this literary movement. This point is emphasized by Standish, who states: "Langston Hughes is accompanied by a fervent legacy that embodies the massive cultural and artistic movement known today as the Harlem Renaissance (2018, p. 40). He was so highly deemed in the field of literature that he was labeled "Negro Poet Laureate and Dean of Negro writers in America" (Emanuel, 1967, p.17). In a symposium held in Kansas on February 28, 2002, he was even "remembered as 'the people's poet' committed to the 'common people'" (Smiles, 2002, p.10). He was also an energetic and brilliant writer who managed to act as an axis around which several critical essays and books revolved. This noted man of letters tried his hand in almost all genres of literature, and his efforts in the field of drama were distinctive because he attempted hard to employ his ideas, revealing the problems of his people and the oppression inflicted upon them on the stage.

There were certain circumstances which led to the emergence of Hughes's involvement in the political surroundings in the USA. Naturally, the sordid social conditions of Afro-Americans and their ill-treatment at the hands of their white compatriots encouraged this tendency. He was deeply immersed in the ocean of his race's agony and pain. He was that sort of man of letters who did not

try to isolate himself from the miserable aspects of life crushing his people or be satisfied with living in an ivory tower. Looking around him, he saw how Negroes were brutalized by whites. At the same time, he was convinced of the idea that these colored people's rights, including the political ones, were entirely ignored and screened off. Instead of enjoying life as free American citizens as they had been promised by great American leaders such as Abraham Lincoln before, Negroes were treated as third-degree persons. Even though they were enfranchised, they actually did not have the chance to participate effectively in the political life of the nation.

Besides, this writer, like many other brilliant literary figures, did not engage himself within the boundaries of his country. He accepted to work as a correspondent for an African American newspaper to report the Civil-War that was going on in Spain at that time. This gave him the "opportunity to deepen his commitment towards social causes and the struggle of the working class for the eradication of racism" (Alonso and Del Rio, 2022, p. 71). This experience widened his scope and helped him to find the connection between his people's oppression, on the one hand, and the persecution of the poor countries all over the world due to the interference of the imperialistic forces, on the other. Jeff Westover emphasizes this viewpoint, indicating that Hughes "brilliantly conveys ... the devastation wrought by Western imperialism" (2002, p. 1215). He noticed that powerful and advanced nations like Britain, France, and Spain were extending their deadly and destructive hands to reach the weak countries in Africa, Asia and South America. The main purpose of these hateful colonial endeavors was to suck the marrow of these parts of the world and exploit their wealth. A great number of the poor and helpless nations were occupied by the imperialistic armies who did their best to carry loot to their people at home. These stone-hearted men did not attempt to help the occupied countries in any manner. To put it in another way, they completely enslaved such nations. Hughes analyzed these affairs and scrutinized the causes lurking behind them. He also observed the similarities between the conditions in which black Americans lived and the circumstances in which the oppressed people in other countries were trapped. All these ideas had an evident and tremendous effect on the mentality of this literary figure.

As a matter of fact, the suppressed indignation of Langston Hughes at the harshness as well as the stolidity of oppressors either inside or outside the USA found its natural outlet in his writings. So, he attempted to employ his talent as a man of letters to describe these miserable conditions of the persecuted people who suffered from the brutality of the harsh white people all over the world and to express the possible ways of disposing of the shackles of enslavement. He started to assume the role of a physician, and that was why he devoted his pen to diagnosing the disease, spoiling both the social and political life of the whole world, in general, and in America, in particular. The connection between his indignation at the privileged white class, who controlled the production means in all fields, namely, the capitalists and the proponents of imperialism in Europe, is clarified by Moglen. This critic affirms this idea when he says: "He [Hughes] was also thinking with particular intensity about the relationship between the expansion of capitalism and the spread of a racially based European imperialism" (2002, p.1189). His efforts were not confined to demarcating the symptoms of oppression, but he, as a writer, attempted to urge people to understand their political rights and strive hard to acquire them. Simultaneously, he wanted the persecuted men to stand up against the devilish forces that tended to cause them a lot of agony and to unite (Moglen, 2002, p.1189). He stimulated them to fight against these diabolic powers if necessary in order to oblige them to acknowledge their freedom and their right to stand on equal footing with them.

Hence, Hughes displayed these viewpoints, clarified above, in his literary works, in general, and in his drama, in particular. His interest in politics and the issues related to it is overtly discussed by St Clair Bourne and Roweena Jelliffe:

Bourne: Now was Langston a—what about his politics? In
his poetry and his plays, did he include politics in his
Jelliffe: Well, yes, I guess he did (1997, p. 84).

Many of Hughes's views touching his political attitude were clearly explicated in some of his poems. For instance, he dealt with the deviation of the machinery of law out of its natural course in his poem "Scottsboro Limited", in which he spoke about "the Scottsboro trial [that] became the first international case" (He, 2022, p. 37). The same incident that was to be further elaborated in his play bearing the same title. Another poem written by Hughes was devoted to illustrating how the persons who were responsible for applying the law and spreading the feeling of security among people reversed their noble vocation and submitted to corruption and evil. This work of art was entitled 'Black Maria'. This title is a slang term used by black Americans to refer to a "prison van" (Patridge, 1984, p. 88). In this literary work, the poet focuses on the brutality of the police and their ill-treatment of Negroes. As for his dramatic production, he exerted effort to discuss the political ideas that preoccupied him in a number of noteworthy plays. This attempt to brood over the suffering of his people and their frustration due to the overlooking of their rights as free citizens is quite clear in his two famous political dramas, *Scottsboro Limited*.

Throughout his literary works, Hughes concentrates on the features of his people's persecution, especially in the field of politics. His interest in such an issue was sometimes implicitly expressed and other times explicitly handled. According to the circumstances surrounding him and the possibility of expressing himself in a free way without risking the loss of his freedom or jeopardizing his

safety, he figured out a suitable mode of dealing with and clarifying these concerns. This part of the study is employed to elucidate Hughes's political ideas in his fore-mentioned play. The researcher attempts to pinpoint the atmosphere that led to the handling of the author's political concerns in this drama. Therefore, the themes clarified, as well as the techniques used in this literary work, are to be obviated in a way which manifests how the writer discusses the political corruption in America and all over the world at his time and the need of all oppressed people to unify their forces and strive against oppressors whoever and wherever they were.

2. The Causes of Hughes's Political Resentment

Actually, in his play *Scottsboro Limited*, Hughes attempts to justify his race's need to pursue their political rights and fight for the achievement of equality and liberty. He clearly states that African Americans' resentment and indignation did not come into existence out of a vacuum. He himself tasted the bitterness of the persecution inflicted on Negroes. To emphasize this point, Gwendolyn Brooks says: "Naturally, he [Hughes] would feel the pain of his own people, of which his own pain was a part" (Bourne, 1997, p. 104). As a result, these human beings had all the right to hate the white people who were persecuting them and to do their best to dispose of the fetters of racism which were stifling them.

The dramatist asserts that these helpless men were surrounded by harshness, brutality and persecution. When these people found themselves immersed in the world of racial discrimination and injustice, they began to look for someone who could express their complaints through political institutions, but unfortunately, they found none. The reason was simply that they were not acknowledged as free American citizens who had the right to vote or to choose their political representatives who could do their best to protect their interests or to strive for them. John L. Garder capsulates the whole predicament of blacks in America by indicating how they suffered from "an oppressive second-class citizenship" in their own country (Garder, 1999, p. 190). American political leaders intended to isolate these helpless creatures and prevent them from reaching the status of full citizenship. These harsh persons behaved so because they believed that whatever was given to blacks was to be taken from them. And, of course, they were utterly selfish. They wanted to accumulate wealth depending on the exploitation of blacks and enjoy political supremacy at the expense of their colored compatriots' inferiority. Carolyn Fowler asserts this point by indicating how Hughes "stresses ... the uneven distribution of wealth" and the greediness of the rich (Fowler, 1981, p. 85). The result was that persecution, especially in the field of politics, dominated and transformed Negroes' life into an unbearable hell.

The prevalence of injustice among colored Americans is obviously indicated in *Scottsboro Limited*, which is regarded by Amiri Baraka as "a really avant-garde revolutionary play" (Bourne, 1997, p. 35). This literary work discusses the dilemma of "nine young black men were arrested in Scottsboro and charged with raping two white women named Victoria Price and Ruby Bates" (Miller, 2011, p.43). They were falsely accused and tried despite the lack of solid evidence. Murray, Jr. comments on this play, saying:

"One of the prolific authors who wrote about Scottsboro was Langston Hughes, who had visited the boys in prison and had spoken on their behalf. In November 1931, his one-act play "Scottsboro Limited" was published" (1977, p. 82).

The sheriff, who is entitled to investigate this case, clearly encourages these two white whores to present a false testimony against the colored boys. Accordingly, Hughes clarifies the predominance of oppression at the very beginning of the play. The eighth boy says:

That sense of injustice
That death can't kill (Hughes, p. 38).

In this situation, it becomes quite clear that Negroes were completely entrapped in the cage of injustice. At the same time, they had no hope of getting rid of the unfair treatment at the hands of their white countrymen. As illustrated by the dramatist himself, the lack of justice represents the real and the main source of blacks' misery and anguish. In this way, the seeds of all the pain and wretchedness of these human beings are briefly and precisely displayed.

The features of injustice which struck Negroes severely came in several forms. Two of these hateful aspects were poverty and ignorance. Euro-Americans persistently sought to impoverish colored people and tighten the grip of destitution round their necks. Hence, they did not provide them with any opportunities to improve their financial conditions or to cope with the demands of life. They were keen on keeping them behind the high walls of indigence. Blacks were simply low-standard workers, cotton-pickers, servants or bus-boys. To suffocate any hope of getting out of the prison of destitution, the racially-prejudiced whites imposed ignorance upon black Americans. These supremacists were well-aware of the idea that education could be deployed as a ladder which might be used by any human being to leave the bottom of his society and get promoted. Simultaneously, when man gets educated, he can think of the causes of his problems and seek solutions to them. He may also scrutinize his situation and relate his difficulties to any political oppression prevalent in his nation. All these ideas were well-understood by whites in the USA, and, therefore, they did not allow blacks to search for any chances of bettering their financial circumstances or promoting their awareness through education. This viewpoint is overtly presented by Hughes in the same situation handled above. The second

boy tries to complete the speech started by his fellow-colored defendant in which he refers to their awareness of the different features of injustice imposed upon them. The miserable little creature addresses the other characters around him as well as the audience as a whole, clarifying the idea that racists have imprisoned his people in the jail of sordidness so as to ensure that they will never try to get out of it or improve themselves. He points out that they were made poor and ignorant deliberately by Euro-Americans because this would guarantee the continuity of their inferiority:

2nd Boy: (pointing to comrades)

Look at us then:

Poor, black and ignorant.

Can't read or write-

But we come here tonight.

Man: (sitting down jauntily on the edge of stage) Not supposed

to read or write. You work better without it (38).

This is an implicit expression of Negroes' political oppression at the hands of whites. It is quite clear that no one can ever ask for equality or freedom without transcending the pangs of hunger or the darkness of ignorance.

Obviously, Langston Hughes's heart seems to be entirely imbued with indignation and bitterness. He believes that white Americans are apparently intent on taking everything for themselves. Selfishness is evidently the main mark which characterizes the personality of a white man in this country. Whites are keen on reaping the resources as well as the wealth of the whole nation. They benefit from the unfair system, which is built on injustice and segregation. They are accustomed to being treated in a kingly way, securing the preferential aspect. Due to "the stultifying constraints of ... [their] supremacy", Euro-Americans do not accept less than the lion's share on a daily basis (Baldwin, 2002, p. 808). In almost all fields of life, in hospitals, schools and even churches, they want to be treated as superior creatures. They also think that they have the right to feel disgust towards the other races because, according to their understanding, they are inferior to them. People who belong to other races are considered lustful animals that must be controlled because unleashing them can conduce to the destruction of civilization and the annihilation of humanity. This is the reason why whites do not allow them to take all that they need; little is enough for them. This viewpoint is evidently handled by the dramatist in *Scottsboro Limited*. When the sixth boy speaks about the fields which are rich in cotton and other agricultural crops, asking who is going to benefit from all these resources, the third boy, who is another victim of the racially-prejudiced people, answers, elucidating that it is the 'White folks' who are going to reap all these things and take them all for themselves (Hughes 40).

It was quite clear that Negroes suffered from oppression, especially in the field of law. When a man speaks about law, he implies justice, order, freedom and security. Men of law are supposed to help society to stand upon firm grounds, to move forward, to use what is good to reach what is better and to guarantee the continuity and the improvement of individuals' lives. But this picture is usually transformed into something dim and ugly when the law is ignored or down-trodden by the persons who are in charge of protecting and supporting it. As for the case of African Americans, they waited for a long time to have good politicians whose intentions were clear and humane. They were repeatedly promised by politicians that the law was to be respected and applied. This meant that their hopes were to be achieved and equality was to be finally reached. Yet, the corruption striking those working in the field of politics stretched out its poisonous hand to spoil these bright and encouraging promises, burying the sublime principles of liberty and equality in a deep and dark hole.

In *Scottsboro Limited*, the playwright presents an outrageous example showing the prevalence of corruption, especially in the legal system. He elucidates that Euro-Americans used to bribe the police officers or elect them after securing their promise to do whatever was needed to guarantee their superiority and to work for their interests. This frustrating feature also had an effect on procedures, even in courts of law. It was not unfamiliar that witnesses would be bribed in order to present false testimonies against colored people. The sheriff, in the play, urges the two white whores to testify against the innocent black boys in return for getting a sum of money. He says: 'We'll have a trial and burn 'em up. And you'll get paid for testifying and your pictures in the papers. Which ones' (Hughes 41)? These lines reflect the hideousness of the dealings in the courts of law. They also show the playwright's love of justice. In an interview between St Clair and Jelliffe, the latter says: "I think if you look deeply enough into almost anything he [Hughes] wrote, you see his love of the people, his love of fairness and his sadness at anything that was less than completely just and fair" (Bourne, 1997, p. 84). So, instead of being keen on applying and preserving the items of law, the sheriff works totally against it. He also points out that these two bad white women can gain a lot from mass media by allowing them to publish their false stories together with their pictures. In other words, he tries to prove that corruption pays well.

Hughes's emphatic concern with the ignored rights of his people as a minority who were deprived of having the chance to lead a respectable life in a nation dominated entirely by whites was widened to encompass other categories in his society. He did not confine himself to addressing the sordid living conditions of African Americans, but he attempted to deal with the absorbed rights of other groups of people. He noticed the big similarity between the suffering and misery of blacks, on the one hand, and the pain and wretchedness of the poor white workers in America, on the other. These interests made some critics believe that he was a left radical. Rampersad puts it:

Hughes was so far to the left politically for a good part of his life, and was so brilliant and prolific as a propagandist for the far left, that his Marxism should be seen separately from, for example, his anti-colonialism, which is also a form of radicalism (1987, p. 308).

He did not stand motionless in front of this demolishing persecution. He actually felt limitless indignation and decided to face the white oppressors, uncovering their ugliness and hideousness. He used his works to display the outrageous treatment of the poor laborers at the hands of these self-centered persons. As a result, he devoted a lot of his talent as a writer to elucidating the bad circumstances in which white workers and their families lived. These human beings were badly exploited by the owners of companies and the managers of projects. These non-humanistic persons used to employ helpless and poor white laborers in return for petty wages. They did not even provide them with the means of leading a respectable life. To them, these poverty-stricken humans were just like animals that could be used in fields. Field animals are supposed to have enough food and satisfactory rest in order to continue toiling on the land. But white laborers did not have the chance to get rid of their hunger or tiredness. This meant that they had to work without securing even the basic necessities of life.

White masters were not afraid of losing the workforce because they believed that there were plenty of hands ready to be employed. This belief increased their stubbornness and made it impossible for them to change their ill-treatment. In this way, these pathetic white people faced painful social conditions just like Negroes. To obviate this point of view, Hughes illustrates a situation in *Scottsboro Limited* in which the connection between the two cases of the poor Euro-American laborers and blacks appears clearly. One of the wretched black boys, who are involved in the cause handled in the play, clarifies that the cause of all problems lies in the harshness of the hearts of whites, especially those who are rich. Instead of helping their nation by paying satisfactory wages to their workers and performing charitable deeds, these wealthy men are so unkind that they determine to suck the blood of the have-nots. Regarding this point, they do not differentiate between blacks and whites. Three other boys continue to comment on this idea, emphasizing that the rich Euro-Americans do not care about the poor ones. They seem to be resolved to exploit them totally. The situation is expressed as follows:

- 2nd Boy: Yes, 'cause de rich ones owns de land.
 And they don't care nothin' 'bout de po' white
 man.
- 3rd Boy: You's right. Crackers is just like me-
 Po'whites and niggers, ain't neither one free.
- 8th Boy: Have to work like a fool to live and then you
 starve dead.
- 4th Boy: Man, this country is sho too bad (Hughes, 40).

By stretching his concern to reach the poor Euro-Americans, Hughes pushes away the accusation of being a writer who was blinded by his love for his race. Here, he seems to be a humanistic man of letters who is keen on addressing all human beings and who is highly concerned with the welfare of mankind as a whole regardless of the color of the skin. He does not like the exploitation of helpless humans, whether they are white or black.

3. The Need for an International Revolution against Whites' Oppression:

Due to his awareness as a noted literary figure who knew what was going on around him on a universal scale, Hughes attempted to outline the suffering of the poor countries as well as the helpless workers at the hands of greedy capitalists. These harsh forces were represented by the white imperialists and wealthy persons both in Europe and the USA. He believed that it was his responsibility to illuminate all poor people and laborers about the reality of what was happening to them and the cause of their pain and wretchedness. He also tried to urge them to unify themselves and form one solid front in the face of these heartless powers.

It is evident that one of the major political concerns of Langston Hughes, which is presented in his drama *Scottsboro Limited*, is to encourage all oppressed people and helpless workers to get united so as to be able to strive against their enemies and protect their interests even if this means the revolution against them. In order to tackle this major and significant viewpoint and to achieve his noble errand, the dramatist clarifies several issues. Out of his deep sympathy for his race, he starts by shedding a lot of light on the exploitation of Negroes as a minority and the lack of justice in America. Culp stresses that Hughes used to write "with the emotional strength of the oppression of his people" (1987, p. 245). He also extends his vision to encompass the reference to other oppressed categories all over the world. Before going beyond the borders of his country, Hughes shows his keenness in attracting attention to the misery of the poor whites who suffer from the ill-treatment of their fellow Euro-Americans who are interested in accumulating money at the expense of the anguish of these indigent humans. Then, he points out that several countries all over the world are badly exploited by imperialists. What is required, according to the writer, is to unify all these persecuted people to form a resisting force to strive against these cruel enemies. He exerts all effort to expose his attitude by explicating the need to revolt against the white supremacists everywhere in the world. He also focuses on the philosophy of resistance so as to encourage the helpless laborers and the poor people, especially in Africa and South America, to rise and fight against those who brutalize them and devour their rights. But he simultaneously informs these wretched human beings that they should try non-violent tendencies at first before resorting to violence.

The starting point that Langston Hughes employs in his treatment of this political issue is represented in his attempt to emphasize the idea that it is not Negroes only who are mercilessly crushed by the privileged rich Euro-Americans but the white poor citizens as well. He is keen on obviating this point in order to seek a meeting ground which can unite the two major categories of the persecuted people inside America, namely, Negroes and the indigent Euro-American workers. By so doing, he proves to be a person who is not racially-prejudiced at all. He is actually an intellectual whose head is full of noble intentions and sublime aims. In other words, he is not racially-motivated, but rather, all his attitudes are based on humanistic views. Hence, he brings to light the agony of the destitute white families and their helplessness in the face of those who are exploiting them.

In *Scottsboro Limited*, the playwright surprises the audience by presenting a striking example of the unselfishness as well as the limitless courage of blacks. While the wretched Negro boys are greatly suffering from the injustice of their society, they illustrate a significant viewpoint. One of the boys courageously declares that white supremacists are not interested in exploiting and tormenting African Americans only but also their white fellow citizens. In this case, Hughes uncovers the ugly views nesting within the dark bosoms of racists. These non-humanistic people want to affirm their superiority to both Negroes as well as the poor whites. This means that their claims about the inferiority of the other races, together with the necessity of eliminating them, are entirely false. To prove this idea, the dramatist assures that it is selfishness and blindness which motivate the exponents of racism. This is the reason why they attempt to take advantage of their richness and deprive the indigent white families of their right to lead a respectable life. When these cruel men think that someone, whether black or white, may hinder their pursuit of wealth, they are usually ready to get rid of him, even through killing. The eighth boy mentions this point by stating:

We ain't half as low as you!

Paid to kill people, that's what you do

Not just niggers- but your white brothers too (Hughes, 44).

These lines convey two contradictory pictures of the two opposing forces. Whereas the author elucidates the bravery of Negroes, he attracts attention to the cowardice of the white supremacists. It can be regarded as something very courageous of a Negro boy to declare in the middle of his dilemma that the persons who are oppressing him and his people are, in fact, cowards because they do not face them man to man. They pay money to others in order to get rid of them. At the same time, the last line of the above extract includes three significant words, which are 'niggers' and 'white brothers'. The significance of combining these words is intensified by employing the word 'too'. The playwright emphasizes the idea that white supremacists do not intend to exploit and torture Negroes only but the destitute whites as well. It is obvious that the word 'brothers' is deployed so as to denote a significant point. The author, speaking on behalf of blacks, attempts to remind the oppressors of the fact that those human beings whom they are treating badly are actually their brothers. The racists are blind to the human relations relating them to their victims. What they see is nothing but the skin color as well as the social status of others.

The preoccupation of the playwright with the same ideas is also evident at the end *Scottsboro Limited*. The boys come and utter these words:

Boys: All together, black and white;

Up from the darkness into light.

All: Rise workers, and fight (Hughes, 49)

The usage of this slogan to end this play signifies the author's desire to make it the last thing his audience listens to. He apparently intends to make it resonate within their minds. In this way, it becomes the most memorable issue presented to them. He hopes to encourage the victims to get united and strive for the sake of their rights.

Therefore, Hughes feels that it is his responsibility to help the destitute workers to read the picture correctly. Their local problem is actually part of the big international dilemma. It is not enough for them to concentrate on the problems surrounding them in their country; but they have to think of themselves as part of the resisting powers in the whole world. They should get unified with the other oppressed people everywhere in order to eliminate those greedy men who are sucking their blood and feeding on their pain. Their resistance will aim to clean the world of such morally corrupted and selfish human beings. This attempt, on the part of the writer, to urge people to stick together and revolt against the forces of imperialism is evident at the end of *Scottsboro Limited*.

4. Hughes and Communism

The relationship between Langston Hughes and the Communist Party in the USA and Communism as an international trend has been actually a controversial issue. Accusing him of being related to this political movement has raised a lot of controversy, for some people believed that the charge was true, and others said that it was false. As for Hughes himself, he affirmatively says: "I have never been a Communist" (Hughes, *My Adventures as a Social Poet*, 209). This point leads us to the discussion of the issue as a whole.

The Communist Party, known generally as the Reds, emerged as a bright star in the world of politics in America, especially during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The leading figures in this political institution tended to take advantage of the bad social conditions of Negroes in this country and to convince most of them to join their movement of protest. It is worth mentioning that "progressive Russian writers have been concerned for centuries with the experience of the Afro-Americans in the United States" (Gilenson, 1975, p. 25). This point suggests the strong relationship between the two sides. When looking at the circumstances overwhelming blacks at this time, it becomes quite obvious that they suffered a lot from the persecution imposed by racial discrimination in almost all fields of life. The main feature that characterized the life of these creatures was their utter frustration, which surrounded them with high walls and drowned them with mighty waves. The bottomless abyss of this awful condition sucked African Americans into its darkness and crushed them with its merciless hands. These human beings were deprived of adequate schools, well-equipped hospitals and even respectable housing. They attempted to seek any possible solutions to their chronic problems.

Negroes' endeavors to improve their living circumstances took several forms, but, unfortunately, most of them failed. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) exerted limitless effort to help blacks get rid of their stifling problems and remove the tight fetters of racism which kept causing them agony and pain. The policy adopted by this political movement was represented in its continuous call for integration or assimilation. The advocates of this trend believed that blacks' rights could be attained and the reformation of their lives could be achieved in a peaceful way. In order to terminate these wretched people's torment, the American nation had to seek integration in the sense that all races in America were supposed to work together to improve their lives and contribute to the progress of the whole country. Conflicts were expected to vanish, and the bloody confrontations between blacks and whites had to be completely avoided. The nation was believed to achieve advancement only through the cooperation of all Americans and not through the struggle among them. But, unfortunately, the efforts of this association proved to be entirely fruitless. It even failed to help the innocent boys. McLaren comments on the failure of the NAACP, stating:

The inability of the NAACP to offer speedy assistance in the Scottsboro case and the subsequent support of the case by the International Labor Defense (ILD) caused many African American intellectuals and creative artists to move toward the left.

(1997, p. 6).

The failure could be mostly attributed to whites' unwillingness to cooperate or to make the call for this trend to blossom.

One of the aspects which strengthened Hughes's tendency to harbor the principles and views of the left political sector in America was the sympathy and supported the Communist Party displayed in their relationship with Negroes and the involvement in their causes. To the contrary of what Holcomb believes, the relationship between Communism and blacks was well-established (2001, p. 367). As illustrated above, Communists did not keep aloof from the miserable black boys who were falsely accused in the Scottsboro case. To indicate the sustenance the advocates of Communism presented to Afro-Americans, he was keen on alluding to and even clarifying the support of these people. He also expressed the resentment of Euro-Americans and their attempt to confront this alliance and eradicate any possibility of its fruition. To achieve his aims, he tried to express his views through some of his literary works.

In *Scottsboro Limited*, Hughes affirms the connection between the Communists and his helpless people. Blacks never stopped stating their valid complaints of injustice and ill-treatment. Their leading figures made use of any possible means of showing the validity of their people's resentment, and their grievances were displayed in a continuous manner. Unfortunately, Euro-Americans tended to ignore the problems as well as the suffering of Negroes most of the time. Some blacks seemed to be calling in the wilderness in the sense that the responses to their complaints were rare. This fact made these miserable human beings seem to be speaking to themselves. The proponents of Communism in America found that the time was suitable for them to fill in the gaps by expressing their readiness to listen to the complaining Negroes and displaying their sympathy towards them. Of course, whites did not approve of this relationship, and they did not hesitate to face it harshly. The attitudes of the three groups are elucidated in this extract:

Prison keeper: (Striking boy) shut up!

8th Boy: I won't shut up
I've nobody to talk for me,
So, I'll talk for myself, see.

Red Voices: And the Red flag, too, will talk for you.

1st Boy: Listen boys! That's true- they've sent a lawyer
to talk for me and you

6th Boy: But they told us not to bother with a communist.

8th Boy: But who else is there will help us out o' this (Hughes, 45)?

These lines are meant to show whites, who objected to the connection between Communists and blacks, that their injustice and harshness were the real supporters of this relationship. Instead of blaming their colored countrymen for establishing relationships with the left radicals, they should have had mercy on them and solved their problems. Had they listened to their complaints and treated them as their equal partners, the emergence of mutual sympathy between these two categories would have never come into existence.

The strong relationship between Communists and Negroes was built on mutual interests. As for the left politicians, they needed Negroes to enlarge their ground within American society by getting as many members for their party as possible. On the other side, blacks were convinced that only the left politicians could sympathize with them and offer them help. They could consider them their faithful and sincere friends. Whites, especially in the South, tried to spoil this growing relationship and weaken it. Murray states that:

In the South, conservatives are certain that communists are instigators of the civil rights movement. American liberals hold that communists merely pose as advocates of civil rights in order that they may sabotage the aspirations of Negroes, thereby blackening the image of American democracy throughout the world. (1967, p. 276).

But these efforts did not succeed. The growing strength of the connection between the left politicians and the persecuted Negroes had its pillars. So, instead of hearing such labels as a white, a master, or a nigger, they were fond of employing the Communist word 'comrade'. The preference to use such a word is quite evident in *Scottsboro Limited*. The audience can hear the two sides calling one another 'comrades' (Hughes, 48) or friends at the end of the drama. Hughes indicates the possibility of being companions in their strife against white oppressors. This means that the strong affinity between them is obviated in the play.

Accordingly, when the devil-led white mob attending the trial of the innocent colored boys declare that Negro Americans have no right whatsoever to live in the country, forgetting the great contribution of this race to their civilization and progress, Communist voices can be clearly heard pointing out that they will not allow this to happen. These supporters of the persecuted and brutalized defendants state that they will do whatever is needed to help blacks get their rights, even if this means fighting. The alliance between the two sides reaches its peak in this situation:

Mob voices in Audience: You oughta be through-

Oughta be through.

In this white man's land

There's no place for you.

Number of Red Voices in Audience: We'll fight for you
boys.

We'll fight for you.

The Reds will fight for you (Hughes, 44).

In this extract, the dramatist presents a crucial viewpoint. He illustrates the possibility of joining the forces of both African Americans and the exponents of Communism so as to confront whites and oblige them to acknowledge the right of all human beings to be treated as free citizens and to enjoy freedom, justice and equality. What is significant here is that he attempts to warn Euro-Americans of the continuity of ignoring the wretchedness of colored people. To him, the resultant frustration could lead to the possibility of the outbreak of violence and counter-violence. This view shows that whites should take into account the dangerous outcomes of the explosion of Negroes' suppressed indignation and resentment.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this article has attempted to expose Hughes's political concerns in his play *Scottsboro Limited*. The analysis of this literary work is carried out elucidating the prominent themes handled in the play. The terrible conditions in which the low and middle social classes in America lived are illustrated. In addition, the main causes which led to the author's feeling of resentment in the field of politics are shed light on. The predominance of injustice in the USA striking the poor, especially the helpless Negroes is also stated. The predicament of blacks in America pushed Hughes to widen his scope and enlarge his vision. As a result, he draws the similarities between what happened to his people in his country and the abuse of African and South American nations at the hands of the European imperialistic forces. Consequently, Hughes presents a call for international unity among the oppressed human beings in all countries so as to face the arrogance and exploitation of their oppressors. Hughes's concentration on the necessity of this unity is tackled. The relationship between the writer and the Communist Party, together with its political left views, is also discussed. The researcher attempts to handle the accusation of the playwright of being a political radical with reference to his play.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that this article is strictly limited to Hughes's political concerns in his play *Scottsboro Limited*, as there is not enough space here to cover the other concerns and issues that exist recurrently in his other literary works. While conducting the study, the researcher has come across several thematic points that have not been fully explored. These include a number of social misbehaviors that were widespread among blacks themselves, like the spread of violence among Negroes, gossiping and these people's exploitation of one another, as well as his political views that are dominant in other dramatic works of his. Consequently, these themes can be recommended for further research. This could be conducted and further clarified through the thematic and technical analysis of other plays written by Hughes.

Note:

As far as the analysis in question, if not the research at large, is concerned, I am to acknowledge the late Professor Abu-Taleb M. Ahmed and dear Dr. Nadia A. Hassan. They have provided me with the theoretical framework of the related unpublished Ph.D. They have always consolidated my arguments with invaluable, illuminating remarks. (May God rest the soul of Prof. Abu-Taleb and grant him the highest status in Paradise. I wish Dr. Nadia the greatest success for her incessant and invaluable research advice. May God bless her ever).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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