Name

Instructor Name

Subject

Date

Essay 3

In his book, *Between the World and Me*, Coates has written letters to his fifteen-year-old son about the origins and positioning of African Americans in the hierarchical structure build in the White supremacist rule. In a calm yet low-spirited tone, he is telling his son about his routine at Harvard University; however, his letters are full of cultural and historical references. In one of his letters, he says that he likes libraries more because they are open as compared to the classrooms. This line is meaningful because he is describing the importance of self-education over the knowledge given in classrooms through textbooks. This essay analyzes this line of Coates, about his idea of self-education, more enlightening than the formal education. Self-education means that he is leaping into library books so that he can educate himself better. He is taking the right path of self-education because, in this way, he can explore his ethnic history, the idea of White supremacy, horrors of colonization, and power of narrative control.

Formal education has a value of its own, but in the background of racial practices in America, Coates is highlighting the importance of self-education concerning African ethnic history. Books are a great mean of imparting knowledge, but they can be misleading when it comes to racial profiling if minority groups such as African Americans. In the past, African history was misquoted, and children were made to absorb it so they could grow up under the influence of White supremacist ideology. As in an instance, Coates tells his son that as a kid, he could not enjoy or explore his surroundings because he was told at every point about his separate identity and his position in comparison to the majority groups. It is every child's fundamental right that he should be made aware of the virtues of equality and harmony, whereas, in America, White children are given education with an informed sense of superiority. Similarly, Black children are reminded that they belong to a minority group, and they do not have a voice of their own. Through the library books, Coates self-educates himself about his history that his ancestors were not uncivilized as portrayed in the textbooks. He calls them "exiled kings" in the book because they were displaced from their land illegally, and they are still the preservers of their glorious history (Between the world and me). He is also pointing to the practice of racial institutionalization in America to create a sense of hegemony in minds of future White generations because such practices were held before as well. Coates shares his memory from his son that as a kid, he was not told about school as a place for learning; instead, it was presented to him as an escape from doing hard labor jobs. History carries significant importance in developing a sense of identity for every race, and it also carries erroneous errors when it comes to twisting the facts. Coates’s reason for choosing library over classroom validates itself because it does not promote equality, instead of through this repeated practice, real historical anecdotes can be misquoted to spread racism and prejudices in a multiethnic society.

The idea of White supremacy manifests itself in formal education because it racially profiles Africans based on their ethnicity and facial skin. This idea gives them domination and through this baseless reasoning, they enjoy the freedom of snubbing the legal and fundamental rights of the minority groups. Coates develops a contrast between the books written by the Black people with academic books and proclaims that Africa has a distinct culture that is not highlighted in academia. Education empowers and enlightens the mind, but it can also be controlled by the power structures so they can legitimize their control over masses. This racial ideology results in the corruption of mind towards the other race and two of them cannot come on equal terms. Academia is also soaked in racial discourses while pointing to French revolution and slavery anecdotes, he proclaims that during the French colonization of Africa, their race and the facial color was not a problem for them as compared to Americans who consider them as rather distant beings. He has used the words "nigger" and "national guild" to amplify the treatment of his race in hands of White supremacists (Between the world and me). He elaborates that racism does not come from a race; it is in actual a discriminatory belief or a pedestal upon which the other race is placed. The idea of supremacy does not stem from differences or singularity of one race over the other. In the backdrop of racial practices in America, White supremacist ideology is designed to control the other race and turn them into submissive beings. Self-education creates a sense of morality where a person can read the twofold nature of ideologies. Ideologies can be inherited easily, and they can control the cognitive abilities of masses in return. Formal education is the repeated retelling of a White supremacist ideology in American society.

American colonization of Africa has resulted in more into the psychological damage as compared to the loss of land. Africans have suffered the loss of their cultural heritage, as a result of colonization. African culture is full of mythological and spiritual teachings and they take pride in their communal practices. However, colonizers took away their cultural essence by forcing them to assimilate in their culture and at the same time, they treated them as Others. The idea of civilizing the Africans under the adopted political move of the white man's burden also describes the illegitimacy of this colonial rule. Africans were pushed into slavery for the longest part in history and they were given a very low sum of their hard-earned labor under strict colonial rules. They were further subjugated when their sense of identity was lost while assimilating in their home culture. In the book, Coates has mentioned: "Uncle Ben” and his newly found fame among the White ladies describe the notion of black male identity (Between the world and me). Neo-colonialism is an extension of colonizing the discourse and confusing the identity of the native race with the colonial identity. In this regard, Coates learns a lot about his past through the accounts of colonization.

Narrative control comes as a byproduct of colonization because it enables colonizers to present a unicentric view of the colonized nation. For instance, Coates mentions the book "Middle Passage," written by Robert Hayden and states that he was not present on any slave ship nonetheless, but he could feel their suffering in Baltimore(Between the world and me). This points to the discriminatory treatment and hatred towards African Americans, which is still prevalent because of knowledge present in the unicentric books. This single point of view, discussed in the texts written by White American authors glorify their race and call the other race heathen. They put their false claims in these books and use it as a soft tactic to exert control in the global literary market. Coates has mentioned the difference between “black aesthetics” and “negritude” as an attempt at exoticizing the Africans while keeping the hatred for them intact. Formal education in America is based on this narrative control, as Coates suggests in the book. Moreover, these accounts do not show the side of the colonized nation because they are deliberately silenced. Self-education and discussions ensure that masses can get to know both sides of the story, and for the longest time, the world has known about the history and culture of Africa through the lens of White supremacists. It is through self-education that Coates read the Black history written by the Black authors such as Frederick Douglas and DuBois.

Self-education and formal education cannot be the same because Coates got a formal education and always remained doubtful about his history, past, ethnicity, and position in the hierarchy of White supremacy. It is with self-education that he got to know the narrative voice of the colonized ones or his ancestors.

**Work Cited:**

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the world and me*. Text publishing, 2015.