Name

Instructor Name

Subject

Date

The Humans

Fiction and real-life events share proximity. Similarly, historic events influence literary fiction as well. They recollect the human experiences and their sense of identity in times of crisis. The 9/11 incident is one of those historical events that brought a shift in American literary fiction since multiple works were based on the theme of the 9/11 incident. This essay views the experiences of two characters, Erik and Aimee in the play, *The Humans* by Stephen Karam.

The family values of the Blakes have been highlighted in the play by the playwright Karam and he has drawn parallels of the crumbling family values with the twin towers in ground zero. Likewise, the towers were a symbol of American prosperity and strong economic value of the country in the avenues of international trade markets. In the same manner, the Blakes took pride in their family values and the Thanksgiving dinner signifies their crumbling familial relations. Each family member is going through a state of crisis at an individual level and in their family discussions, the 9/11 incident appears as a motif. Momo’s dialogue, “You can never come back… you can never come back/… you can never come back… cannevery you come back…” (Karam 11) points to the horrific incident of 9/11 which is etched in their memories. Erik is a senior American citizen and throughout his life, he never came across such an incident which would result in a massacre. His dialogues and actions in the play reveal that after witnessing the incident, he has become a patient of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. When he listens to the noise coming from upstairs, he gets uneasy and starts looking out the window.

In his heart, he fears the bustle of New York and cannot seem to move on from the tragic incident. Similarly, when his daughters sense his unusual behaviour, they question him, “You hate traveling to New York” and “I do not hate traveling to New York, no, no, I don’t . . .” (Karam 10). The incoherent and disorderly speech pattern reveals his guilty state and the traumatic past. Besides, in the thanksgiving dinner, Erik confesses his extramarital relations with another woman. This news acts like a final blow to the already crumbling family values, and the trauma of 9/11 acts as a reminder for Erik to discuss the hidden truths with his family. Moreover, he compares the contemporary New York City to the old times and says, "When Momo almost killed herself getting outta New York—she didn’t have a real toilet in this city, and now her granddaughter moves right back to the place / she struggled to escape” (Karam 12). Through this comparison of memory and contemporary events, Erik shows his dislike for metropolitan cities.

The character of Aimee depicts the thought of the youth who are both fearless and view the past ideals of economic and family values in their vulnerable state. They take uninformed decisions and no longer prioritize family over their respective careers. Moreover, she perceives the 9/11 incident as another bad day and does not care about the casualties that resulted in the mass destruction. These lines signify that she has moved on from the past, “Because for me it doesn’t carry special—hey I’m telling you what I think, I think it means the two of us were in New York on a terrible morning. / That’s all . . .” (Karam 65). In the same manner, she overlooks the traumatic condition of her father and enjoys living her life in the metropolitan city.

These contrastive attitudes of both characters reveal the generation gap in America. Likewise, the impact of the traumatic incident of 9/11 and the worries of Erik signify his discomfort in the ideas of the contemporary era, whereas, the choices of Aimee symbolize the carefree attitudes of the younger generation in America.

**Work Cited:**

Karam, Stephen. *The Humans (Revised TCG Edition)*. Theatre Communications Group, 2016.