

The Challenging Motives of Anti-racism in Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*

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Abstract

Racism in America has always been present since the inception of the colonial era. This is manifested in laws and practices, which segregate other groups based on their ethnicity. The concept of racism in America is majorly perpetrated in education, land acquisition, and legal matters. The minority groups such as African Americans have experienced determent in their social, and economic freedoms, which have seen them victimized in different arenas. The present article analyses and studies the changing motives of anti-racism that shaped James Baldwin's personality in his novel *The Fire Next Time*. James Baldwin is a great author. Though he was born in the ghetto of Harlem city during the preoccupation, he managed to struggle against the racial white supremacy in his black community.

Keywords: Supremacy, racism, ethnicity, ghetto, Harlem city.

الملخص:

لطالما كانت العنصرية في أمريكا موجودة منذ بداية الحقبة الاستعمارية. يتجلى ذلك في القوانين والممارسات التي تفصل بين المجموعات الأخرى على أساس العرق. يتركز مفهوم العنصرية في أمريكا بشكل كبير في التعليم، وحياسة الأراضي، والمسائل القانونية. شهدت مجموعات الأقليات مثل الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي قيودًا في حرياتهم الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، مما جعلهم يقعون ضحايا في ميادين مختلفة. يحلل هذا المقال ويدرس الدوافع المتغيرة لمناهضة العنصرية التي شكلت شخصية جيمس بالدوين في روايته النار في المرة القادمة. جيمس بالدوين مؤلف عظيم. على الرغم من أنه ولد في الحي اليهودي هارليم سيتي خلال فترة ما قبل الاحتلال، إلا أنه تمكن من النضال ضد تفوق العرق الأبيض في مجتمعه الأسود.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفوق، العنصرية، الأثنية، حي اليهود، مدينة هارلم.

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1. INTRODUCTION

James Baldwin is one of American literature's most respected and influential figures, who is renowned for his engagements with race as an author and activist. His novel *The Fire Next Time* remains a poignant testimony to the continuing effects of racism in America. This article contends, examines, analyses and studies the changing motives that Baldwin's writing affirms anti-racist activism as it continually wrestles with how to confront entrenched racism without perpetuating white supremacy. *The Fire Next Time* discusses Baldwin's life and experiences, which were not completely objective, mainly where he could connect all these experiences back to his own, which can be very lethal as personalization is prone to prejudice. In his opinion, Baldwin's portrayal of white America as biased was no less valid. He also stated that it was no less valuable because it did not reflect the country's true colors. However, he insisted that his objective should not be affected by his failure to be completely objective (David, 2006, p. 25) The only thing that matters is that he is honest with his audience.

Historically speaking Baldwin James was an outstanding persuasive personality and a radical American author whose work was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and the Civil Rights Movement, where his writings, he exposes racial discrimination in America. therefore, indications show that he wants to write a novel that conveys what it is like to be Black in America, facing the prejudices of Whites. Throughout *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin expresses his opinions about White America by crafting his experiences as a young boy growing up in Harlem, New York, in the form of two letters; *My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation* and *Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind*. While these references are personal, Baldwin does not allow and refrain his feelings on race to affect the message he is trying to convey, successfully addressing the whole nation of America. *The Fire Next Time*, this worldwide heritage was written during the Civil Rights Movement. It is certain a perspective frozen in time, but not a modern account of how America has progressed toward racial equality.

Tracing back the first Baldwin's experiences and motives, as this study hopefully shows one can easily observe that these experiences were further molded by his time in Harlem, and the ghetto's cruelty made him reflect on his peers. In his novel, Baldwin talks about his life competences raising up in Harlem, describing first the hopelessness of the African American community (Baldwin, 1963, p. 18). He states that the boys did not have a chance of rising above their fathers' wealth. He also claims that school revealed itself as a game one could not win. (Baldwin, 1963, p. 17) So, it is certain that, this is a self-fulfilling prophecy as if one cannot achieve anything with an education, then one will never have a chance to make a difference in the world. (McDonald, 2009, p. 16). While Baldwin's views on the education system are certainly not ideal, they are still relevant to time. It is also a reminder of how far the African

American community has to go to break through the glass ceiling to enter the free space where racial prejudice is non-existent.

2. Baldwin's challenging motives

2.1 Racism Traumatic effects

As noted earlier, a variety of other challenging motives that faced Baldwin and made his novel as a memoir of his life beginning with the hardships he had to go through, including family violence and poverty. Not only did he have to fight the prejudice of Whites, but also the Blacks too. (Dombrowski, 2016, p. 172) As an African American, he had to face what it was like to be ridiculed at school by other Black children because they were jealous of him. He describes their reactions as if they were an extension of what was happening in America, which was prevalent in the country. Baldwin writes about how he was forced to adapt on his own as he struggled with poverty and discrimination. James Baldwin expresses his opinion on White America, and how racism has affected his views on the world, he confirms that the Black man's role in this country is always to be subservient and refers to White Americans as an alien and immoral force that has destroyed the Black man's mind. This shows the deep traumatic effects of racism on Baldwin's way of thinking, and created what is called racial double consciousness entity.

During the 1960s, a large diversity of incidents and events happened due to the Civil Rights movement, such as many cases and other reports described the races, and the proliferation of literature outlined experiences with injustice and discrimination. (Nabayi, 2008, p. 8).

In 1962, James Baldwin wrote *The Fire Next Time* in response to the protests happening around him, therefore, his views are depicting how the African American community had been consistently oppressed and marginalized. *The Fire Next Time* focuses on two main characters: James Baldwin and Elijah Muhammad. Another important motive is that Baldwin is a writer who grew up in Harlem, describes his many experiences while living there, where tensions between the young Baldwin, his father, and the rest of Harlem. Baldwin imagines him as one of the many boys in Harlem who faces injustice daily. (Baldwin, 1963, p. 22) He believes that, his brother, represents every African-American child growing up in America during this period. The novel references to race, interracial relationships, homosexuality, and racism which prevailed the United States during this era.

2.2 The Fire Next Time: Letter to My Nephew

In *My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation*, Baldwin started directly teaching his fifteen-year-old nephew using a phrase like "I am sure that your father had told you something about all that, "which declares that James was the only audience when he was writing the letter. He later states, "I am writing this letter to you, to try to tell you something about how to handle them, for most of them do not yet really know that you exist",

(Baldwin, 1963, p. 10), which suggests that he is addressing the whole nation of America. In his second letter, *Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind*, Baldwin addresses no one in particular, claiming that the letter is from "a region in my mind." He further shows the differences in the changes in his peers, both boys, and girls, of how girls became "matrons before they had become women" and were focused on finding husbands. Yet, the black boys dropped out of school and began "fighting the man," (Baldwin, 1963, p. 34) whom Baldwin depicted as the white man, who was obviously holding them down (Baldwin, 1963, p. 88). Baldwin acknowledges the humiliation shown to black men who came back from World War two that even after all the effort they put in the war, they weren't respected. One should furthermore mention that in his letter, Baldwin talks about how African Americans have endured beauty and pain.

He states that one cannot truly be who one is without suffering. He says that African-Americans have a strong feeling and profound sense of who they are because of this. They were able to manage the endurance of teaching their children how to love others, since they know well all that matters in this life.

It is worth noting that, in the first essay, Baldwin talks about his childhood, and he never ever realized that his parents did not go to college (Baldwin, 1963, p. 34). At this age, they did not have the chance to go to school where they could educate themselves. On the contrary, they had to start working very early in life and learn from their parents. Baldwin also mentions how his teachers were encouraging him by making him believe that anyone who wants to do something should be able to do it no matter what their background is. In school, his teacher Orilla Miller would refer to him by a white name "Bill" and this made him admire White people, lulling his racist activism.

Despite Baldwin's negative views on the education system, his statement is still relevant to the time. He is still shedding light on the issues affecting Harlem's African American community. Even if he is off-balanced, his perspective on the subject is still relevant to the time. Despite Baldwin's use of his experiences to create a distorted view of America, his assertions about the country's racism are still valid. For instance, when he talked about his peers dropping out of school, he refused to follow in their footsteps. (Baldwin, 1963, p. 34) He had already encountered many people who could easily become successful in their fields.

While Baldwin may have used his own experiences to create a distorted view of America, his point is still relevant to the current state of the African American community. He believes that education is not a viable option for everyone, especially those in his community who still struggle to make ends meet. Baldwin's intention was not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the education system in Harlem in his book, but he wanted to provide a deeper understanding of the issue. In particular, he talked about the ghetto trap he grew up in, which is an example of the multiple issues that affected the African American community during the 1960s. Baldwin did not imply that the white establishment had the right idea to keep the African American

community down. Instead, he talked about how his friends would spend their time "fighting the man." (Baldwin, 1963, p. 34).

This is not a submission to the reader, who might think that the establishment had something planned to keep the African American community down. Instead, Baldwin provides a detailed analysis of how the continuous oppression affected the young people of his generation. In his book, Baldwin doesn't make any entitlements about the white establishment but rather shows people's reactions to the racial tensions in the country during the 1960s. Even if Baldwin was genuinely biased against white people, the point of his book is still the same. Despite Baldwin's anecdotes, the main point of his book is that the white establishment's dire outlook during the 1960s was perpetuating the racial discrimination that African Americans experienced. The anger and vagrancy these men exhibited only reinforced the racist stereotypes they had been exposed to.

The negative outlook of the white establishment was directly responsible for the cycle of racial discrimination that African Americans experienced during the 1960s (Hooks, 1996, p. 30).

Baldwin seems to hold some biases against the behavior of African Americans. He claims that he could find them drinking whiskey or talking about a jug of wine in a hallway, but they could not explain what was happening to them. In his book, Baldwin talks about how African- Americans had no way of removing the cloud blocking them from their lives' achievements, such as love, power, and life. Although he doesn't directly blame the white establishment for the negative attitude towards African Americans, he also uses the cloud metaphor to describe the individuals' responses.

3. Attempts of Collaboration and Motives of Struggle

3.1 Findings and Discussion:

Although, he is not proud of his African American friends, and he most likely sees them as having negative activities, such as fighting and drinking. However, he does not blame the white establishment for their behavior. He may relate his feelings about being harassed by white police officers when he was a child, and he may blame the establishment for the humiliation and shame. The book is a testimony to the struggle that African Americans had to endure during the 1960s. (Brown, 2001, p. 64)

Baldwin does not try to make any claims about the police officers, nor does he assume they are evil or motivated by any wrongdoing. Instead, he states how he felt when he saw them. Indeed, one is not likely to miss this important that Baldwin tries to defend white people against the racial discrimination they have experienced. He tries to explain to his nephew that a white man can be innocent and racist. He also asks him to refrain from looking at white people in an anger-filled manner. Baldwin also says

that it is very hard to accept people despite the anger and frustration that he may feel towards them (Wang, 2000, p. 58).

He tries to show his nephew that racial equality is impossible until people stop holding anger and hatred in their minds. He believes that this can create a biased environment that will destroy people's chances of success.

Despite his attempts to fight against white people, Baldwin does not want to fight a war against them, instead wants to collaborate with them. This shows that he wasn't a racist or if so; he wouldn't have to resolve to join hands with them in the first place. During the Jim Crow South, Baldwin was a gay African American man. One would have a strong mind and will to reject his affection and love of oppression, but Baldwin did not allow himself to do so. Instead, he focused on what he knew. He did not want to write a manifesto containing all his thoughts on racial equality in the US. Baldwin uses a strategy like his approach of fighting and struggling against white people in the book. He starts by asking his nephew to take no for an answer and urges him to trust his own experience. This is a powerful message that he hopes to carry throughout the book. Baldwin's message is very important, as people are prone of making assumptions beyond their knowledge. In history, there are always gaps in our knowledge. It is impossible to know everything that happened in each moment, and it is possible to have no idea what motivated or affected the situation (Ivarsflaten, 2021, p. 125).

Trusting one's own experience is also very important, as it can help a historian make an unbiased assessment (Ivarsflaten, 2021, p. 132). If historians were to be bitten by a dog, their assumptions would be heavily biased and imbalanced (Baldwin, 1963, p. 65). However, if the person stated that their previous interaction made them fear dogs, their bias would be erased by removing as many gaps as possible. One of the most important factors people can control is their own experience. This can help them avoid making assumptions not based on their knowledge (Hooks, 1996, p. 32).

Furthermore, Baldwin focusses also on his anti-bias mechanism called single-mindedness. This mentality allows him to avoid making assumptions that are not based on his knowledge. Although Baldwin does not explicitly condemn the people who hold this mentality, he does not believe that it is a negative mindset. He first discussed this concept in his church, where he would refer to the girls as having a frightening single-mindedness.

He describes the most significant change these women experienced during their development as they transitioned into womanhood.(Ponzo, 2020) In another instance, Baldwin talks about single-mindedness during a dinner conversation with Elijah Muhammad, Illinois's Black Nation of Islam leader. He stated that, Elijah's power was derived from his single-mindedness (Baldwin, 1963, p. 44). At the dinner table, Muhammad discussed the white man as the devil. Baldwin believes that Muhammad's insistence on saying everything he is saying makes him seem like he is not a nefarious

or manipulative individual. Ironically, his reluctance against religion has also allowed him to control his own bias. As a former Baptist, Baldwin still exhibits some bias against religious people. Despite alluding to his religious yearning, he still holds a degree of prejudice against them. Baldwin sees religious people as having single-minded beliefs, which he uses to set his consciousness in a way that will correct their actions (Baldwin, 1963, p. 40). He avoids being consumed by his fear and anger, similar to Muhammad's. At times, Baldwin tries to keep an open mind.

Unlike Baldwin, Elijah did not seek to comprehend the thoughts of those who disagreed with him. Rather, he focuses on criticizing and attacking Baldwin for what he sees as his failure to understand the true meaning of disagreement. According to Baldwin, the main reason why he failed to realize the devil was because he had been exposed to white teaching. Instead of fighting back, Baldwin asks himself why he holds

these beliefs. He then considers Muhammad's argument and continues to ask questions. Even though it was very offensive to him, he still considers Muhammad's argument valid, rather than succumbing to defeat, Baldwin tries to understand instead of suppressing his biases. This approach allows him to maintain a balanced and accurate analysis.

Despite the variety of race nature during the 60s, Baldwin still makes a valid point. The brilliance of this strategy is twofold: It allows Baldwin to sustain a balanced, explicit and authentic analysis while also making his point resonate with other people (Ross, 2011, p. 111).. For instance, by talking about the feelings of the African American community, he was able to illustrate how single-mindedness can affect people. He also tries to perspective this issue by discussing it with Elijah Muhammad.

Instead of labeling white people as evil due to the state of African American civil rights, Baldwin emphasizes about empathy. He encourages his nephew to accept white people. In his letter to James, Baldwin said that what white people believe does not justify their inferiority. He also stated that there is no basis for their insistence on being like them. He urged his nephew to be clear about what lies behind the word's "acceptance" and "integration." Baldwin encouraged his nephew to adopt this strategy in the narrative first section (Baldwin, 1963, p. 11). He then showed an example of how to do it by leaving Elijah with no ill feelings. He also tried to perspective this issue by discussing it with Elijah Muhammad at The dinner they had together which exhibited the same traits of fear, racism, and excessive optimism that he warned his nephew about.

Contrary to what Muhammad claims, Baldwin does not target white people. Instead, he focuses on African Americans to try alleviating the anger and frustration he feels about them. He encourages white readers to understand how to feel about accepting the establishment (C.Ikuta, 2001, p. 18).. As a rational white person would probably never admit of reading Muhammad's radical views, Baldwin encourages

African Americans to feel ashamed of themselves even though they are still the product of fear, terror and marginalization.

Baldwin becomes disillusioned by Christianity when he follows the steps of his Christian father when he joined Christianity to escape the traumatic events impacted his neighborhood. He believes that life is asymmetrical and that Love should be between both whites and blacks. In fact, he further writes to his nephew that he must survive, “because we love you” (Baldwin, 1963, p. 11). This thought dumbs his Activism and he relents in his fight against Racism. Baldwin in his second letter depicts that the church assumes the existence of a white God to whom Black people are expected to be inferior.

However, after some time, he is adamant that if the universal concept of God is not meant to foster solidarity and unity among people and bring freedom then it should be done away with.

Since his childhood, James Baldwin has deeply witnessed that the true problem of racism is more profound and complicated than one that anger alone can answer. It is how these lives are destroyed through the expectation of mediocrity, condescension, platitudes, and the enforcement of an entire infrastructure of reality that his reader (his nephew) had no part in constructing. The calls of liberals in the 1960s to wait, to be patient, to integrate (as if Harlem’s blacks were not integrated already in brutal and horrifying ways) all come tumbling down in this honest and powerful letter.

The lack of empathy by the white establishment is clearly expressed in Baldwin’s debate with William F. Buckley two years after *The Fire Next Time*. Buckley fails to express any real empathy. Indeed, he misses the point entirely. Many people perceive race as a “natural” classification considering contrast in their consanguinity in the respective classes of their origin. These racial classes are mostly connected with people’s physical distinctions, eminent in their origin. Such a conception has been the basis or root for the cause of differences in the social groupings. Our ethnicity is what classifies us socially in society and not our biological. As the hierarchy in which we belong to society uses generic biological characteristics as a criterion for classification, these traits’ accountability is only achieved when reflected or mirrored into the classes identified.

For instance, an explanation of race is given by social convention, not by the subject of biology. In separate periods and locations, racial distinctions are displayed differently as opposed to other places. In the U.S, an individual is presumed black when they come from the African continent. This way of ranking racial groupings exhibited an unfair mechanism identified as the criteria for aligning the United States’ social races after the Civil War. What will be the difference portrayed by altering social groups’ substance in America? Should they change the mode or way of classifying individuals in society? Would any individual originating from Europe be assumed as white? Brazilian, as opposed to the United States, groupings of races are arranged in a

more continuous spectrum. Americans and all East Asians are all considered as people from the same race.

The Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese are a separate race in East Asia. Therefore, racial classification is not about birth or origin; it has more to do with society's cultural practices or beliefs. This can be cited from the examples such as the German classified Jews as a separate race under the Nazis since they did not conform to the former's spiritual levels. African recently are holding a view that the Tutsi and Hutu of Rwanda are a distinct group. Therefore, our biological descent is not a determinant of our racial groupings. This has a lot to do with the complex history of a race and our study's cultural beliefs for quite some time. Racial classification is not merely about biological attachments but also about individuals' behavior, views irrespective of their geographical location, and even how they relate to others. However, the truth is that racism as seen by James in his main famous novel 'The Fire Next Time, which came to existence along with civil rights movement. This made racism well grasped and clearly enough where one main question was asked to the Muslim nation compared to African American nation.

The novel consists of one short essay, written in the form of a letter to his nephew, called "My Dungeon Shook" and one long essay "Down at the Cross," which among other things, tries to answer the question about why the Nation of Islam was becoming

such a popular movement in the 1960s. So, the essay moves from the personal to the political, and being published together we can guess Baldwin saw the two as intertwined.

By challenging the different power structures at play between white and black people, *The Fire Next Time* explores human race, identity, and power in America. Baldwin explains that a record of black oppression is established in the United States by the conventions of power and the chronicled narrations perpetuated by most of the American races surrounding their authority.

Baldwin shows that fathers mainly black fathers essentially train their children from a young age a model of injustice, which prepares the platform for the continued disenfranchisement of the black African Americans with regard to how these long-standing power assumptions are made. Baldwin James shows clearly at the beginning of his letter "My Dungeon Shook" and the following essay "Down at the Cross", the inceptions of young people drawn into the previously mentioned racial hostilities and the plight of the country express the significance and the awareness of being in control of the daily events that people live and tell to one another about what they were preached and what they believe in, in other words who they are first.

Baldwin insists that a strategy by African American fathers filtrates power on their children, gradually teaching them to live from an early age under a double consciousness mind. He asserts that for every black parent, there is another moral type one doing some sort of white control. The child perceives the hierarchical structure that his or her father works in, the racial background conspiracies of the white

patriarchal power is also managing, if a black father educates, instructs, or even shows affection. This will harm and influence the child perception in both internal and external world and for himself too.

3.2 Baldwin narratives and the double consciousness entity.

Assumptions and fundamentals in the fire next time.

By challenging the different power structures at play between white and black people, *The Fire Next Time* explores race relations in America. Baldwin explains that a history of black oppression is established in the United States by the conventions of power and the narratives perpetuated by Americans of all races surrounding their influence. Baldwin shows that parents (including black parents) essentially teach their children from a young age a model of injustice, which sets the stage for the continued disenfranchisement of African-Americans with regard to how these long-standing power assumptions are made. In both the opening letter (“*My Dungeon Shook*”) and the subsequent essay (“*Down at the Cross*”), the initiations of young people into the previously identified racial animosities and the plight of the country demonstrate the importance of being aware and in control of the stories that people tell themselves about who they are and what they believe.

Baldwin claims that a project by African-American parents “filters” of authority on their children, gradually teaching them to live from an early age under a complex subjugation form. He asserts that behind every black parent stands another more total and intangible type of control: the white man. The child perceives the hierarchical structure in which his or her parent works, the background machinations of an ever-present and patriarchal figure of white power, if a black parent scolds, instructs, or even shows affection. This impacts the manner in which the child perceives both the world and himself.

In *My Dungeon Shook* and *Down at the Cross*, *The Fire Next Time* discusses this cultivation of injustice, though each piece approaches the problem somewhat differently. “In the first instance, Baldwin advises his young nephew, James, saying, “You can only be killed by believing that what the white world calls a nigger are you? As such, he encourages his nephew to deliberately participate in constructing his own identity instead of simply acquiescing to the narrative handed down to him by his ancestors, who have already taken their cues from the existing racial norms. On the other hand, *down at the Cross* begins with a look at the author’s impressionable adolescence as he worked through his relationship with his father, the primary figure of authority in his life. Rather than succumbing to a drug-filled life on the streets, Baldwin attended a different church than the one his father preached in, which implicitly challenged his father’s authority. But instead of seeking freedom, Baldwin stumbled upon yet another human, assuming a position of control over him: a pastor

ready to take him into the fold, asking, "Whose little boy are you?" Baldwin understands this question in retrospect to mean ownership and, therefore, power.

Ultimately, by becoming a youth minister in a church that was not the one to which his father belonged or preached, Baldwin could finally escape the influence of his father, with the justification that he needed privacy to concentrate on his sermons; "I ruthlessly pushed this advantage because it was the most effective way I had found to break his hold on me."

It should be noted that Baldwin laid waste to his father's position of power by following the same path that his father had taken in the first place (a religious one), so, he and his father extracted power from the same source, which was a religion that had justified apartheid, imperialism, colonialism, and barbarism for centuries.

Baldwin writes about his father, "I immobilized him." "It took me more time to realize that I had immobilized myself as well and had escaped from nothing. According to Baldwin, the futility of his attempt to question authority arose because faith is one of many "gimmicks" that give African-Americans who wish to escape racial inequality hollow solace. Every "gimmick" is a stand-in for white-ruled society's more essential subservience paradigm, offering little in the way of true liberation, whether it comes in the form of religion, street life, or even prize-fighting.

The Fire Next Time in both pieces "My dungeon Shook and Down at the Cross" discusses race abuse, black community discrimination and white supremacy, even though each literary piece tackles the problem of racism differently. At the beginning James Baldwin instructs his young nephew, James, saying, "You can only be killed by believing that what the white world calls a nigger are you." By uttering this piece of advice, he encourages his nephew to be deliberately rely on his own rather than acquiring what is provided him by his ancestors, who have already got trained by the present racial conflicts. Adding to that, Down at the Cross starts with a deep outlook at the childhood of the author and his interrelationship with his parent, the author's first symbol of authority in his life, mainly when working with him at the church. To get away of his patriarchal authority, Baldwin attended another church rather than the one his father preached in. By doing this double consciousness action, the power of his father was deeply challenged, but instead of striving freedom away from his father, Baldwin lost it when the new pastor was waiting to take him under his authority by asking him, "Whose little boy are you?". Baldwin grasped this message in double consciousness meaning different power and authority.

Ultimately, by getting rid of the father subordination, Baldwin became a minister in different church where he was seeking privacy to do his sermon perfectly. "I pushed this advantage ruthlessly, for it was the most effective means I had found of breaking his hold over me. That was the most frightening time of my life, and quite the most dishonest, and the resulting hysteria lent great passion to my sermons-for a while"

(Baldwin, 1963, p. 25) Baldwin writes in “My Dungeon Shook,” “Please try to be clear, dear James, about the reality behind the words acceptance and integration, through the storm that rages around your youthful head today. There is no justification for you to become like white people, and for their impertinent presumption that they have to tolerate you, there is no ground whatsoever. The awful thing, old friend, is that you’ve got to embrace them.” Think for a moment about what it means to be welcomed into a culture that previously kept you at bay and what it means to be adopted into the very same society: explain how the contradictions between the two are outlined in Baldwin’s 1963 letter to his nephew.

Since segregation occurred legally in this country in 1954 (with the *Brown v. Board* decision), why would Baldwin argue that black people’s social and political status has not strengthened or changed? What proof does Baldwin offer to justify his argument that white people ought to be welcomed by black people? Why does he see these two points as mutually exclusive rather than part and parcel of one another (white people accepting black people vs. black people accepting white people)? In what ways did our country’s history both restrict and encourage acceptance and integration? Baldwin stipulates in his “Letter from a Region in My Mind” that there is practically little hope of a meaningful improvement in what the Negro’s are going through without revisiting the fundamentals of their political and social systems since this has more significant implications for the outcome. That’s why, because most are otiose and have no visualizing capacity, white Americans cannot adopt all these improvements.

It must be understood that if in truth, he ever could have, the Negro himself would no longer agree with the white American in good faith. Reflect for a while about the political and social picture of 1963 (as outlined in both kinds of literature) and depict the kind of change that Baldwin debates needed to take place but did not. What facts does Baldwin offer to defend his assumption that white America is unwilling to affect the types of changes that he believes need to occur? Why do you think that Baldwin believes that black people probably never consented in white America’s good faith? It has been 55 years down the line since the Fire Next Time; in a nutshell, report whether or otherwise the changes that Baldwin described have occurred. Adding to that Baldwin criticized the issue of ‘Black Muslim movement’ in his article “A Negro Assays the Negro Mood, «published in the New York times magazine March 12th, 1961, for the purpose of showing the two power poles either the Negro student movement or the Muslim movement which increases daily to be the most powerful movements. Which made Baldwin clearly understood the truthful racism and had the right abilities to overcome its endeavors which can be summarized in the following:

- The language acquired by James Baldwin from the church that he used to go to and the African background heritage, adding to that his trip to France, highly enriched his endeavor to be an excellent preacher, speaker, and a worldwide antiracism writer.

- Baldwin's narratives, talks and preaching reinforced the consciousness and the perception of the black community of racial practices and white oppression. His

faithfulness and clean charisma added to his knowledge and experiences on his political endeavors of his community issues mainly racism in an international context challenged the white America to fulfill the values it promised on equality, legality, and justice, chiefly principally, the right to be free from prejudice based on race, gender, national origin, color, age, or sex.

- Each novel of Baldwin has its own Protagonists and antagonists, but they do treat the same issues such as: racism, segregation, White supremacy, homosexuality, Islam and Christianity. Baldwin's endeavors issues even if some members of his black community used to call him "uncle Tom" to humiliate a black man who got good contacts with white community.

- "The person who distrusts himself has no touchstone. "If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of him" One can give freedom only by setting someone free"

"Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?" (Baldwin, 1963, p. 65)

4- Conclusion

Summarizing the salient points of this article, it is clear that Racism, isolation, existentialism, postmodernism, marginalization and segregation even some sort of homosexuality are features that, James Baldwin's work altered in all aspects of the American literature. The unique environment of his youth--a mix of Jewish tradition and American culture--greatly affected his writing. 'The fire next time', which deals with the main theme 'racism' reflects this atmosphere. The complex, self-observing White supremacy. Adding to that, one can state the following symbolic statements of the book '*the fire next time*' which summarize the above notes:

- "The treatment accorded the Negro during the Second World War marks, for me, a turning point in the Negro's relation to America. To put it briefly, and somewhat too simply, a certain hope died, a certain respect for white Americans faded. One began to pity them, or to hate them. You must put yourself in the skin of a man who is wearing the uniform of his country, is a candidate for death in its defense, and who is called a "nigger" by his comrades-in-arms and his officers; who is almost always given the hardest, ugliest, most menial work to do; who knows that the white G.I. has informed the Europeans that he is subhuman (so much for the American male's sexual security); who does not dance at the U.S.O. the night white soldiers dance there, and does not drink in the same bars white soldiers drink in; and who watches German prisoners of war being treated by Americans with more human dignity than he has ever received at their hands. And who, at the same time, as a human being, is far freer in a strange land than he has ever been at home."

- "Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don't be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man's definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name. You have, and many of

us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers - your lost, younger brothers. And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men have done great things here, and will again, and we can make America what America must become. It will be hard, James, but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and damned rivers and built railroads, and, in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of great poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, the very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and my chains fell off.”

- “Life is tragic simply because the earth turns and the sun inexorably rises and sets, and one day, for each of us, the sun will go down for the last, last time. Perhaps the whole root of our trouble, the human trouble, is that we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which is the only fact we have. It seems to me that one ought to rejoice in the fact of death—ought to decide, indeed, to earn one's death by confronting with passion the conundrum of life. One is responsible to life: It is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come and to which we shall return. One must negotiate this passage as nobly as possible, for the sake of those who are coming after us.” (Baldwin, 1963, p. 32).

In conclusion, James Baldwin, a black American novelist, wrote about being an anti-racist in the highly controversial novel *Fire Next Time*. To understand how James Baldwin interpreted items like oppression, white supremacy, and inequality, it is important to explore what he felt were the needs of black Americans. While Muhammad may have accused Baldwin of being prejudiced against white people, he upholds his relative neutrality by only talking about his experiences in his two essays. In the first essay, he describes the agony of trying to communicate with his nephew severally through the letter. He states, “I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times” (Baldwin, 1963, p. 9) however he doesn't quit and remains motivated in writing to his nephew James. He also states how he was raised in a poverty-stricken home and has come out of it despite the huge dark force of racism that gnawed at him from every corner of his academic journey. Though his negative views about the white establishment, Baldwin still maintains relative objectivity by talking about his experiences (Baldwin, 1963, p. 11). He also tries to avoid accusing white people of being biased. He claims to have a valuable source of information about the inner struggles of African Americans, and he refuses to attack those who are not well-documented. In one of Baldwin quotes, he said that the book, “*The Fire Next Time*, is not meant to be read as gospel. Instead, it is a collection of experiences that he has

experienced and aims to help readers grow their perspective on the subject (Roland.R.Sundstorm, 2003). Although Baldwin doesn't discuss his views on race, and segregation, he also provides readers with a gradual framework for developing their ideas on the subject and set them upon importance and priority. Despite his various biases, Baldwin's arguments are still within the acceptable range. He can maintain relative objectivity and remain balanced. Finally, by challenging the motives of racist actions and exploring the ideologies in America, Baldwin concludes that the true form of 'anti-racism' is not when one opposes racism but when one resists racism in oneself.

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