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**İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME**



**AGRESSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHARACTERS: A
STUDY IN AUGUST WILSON'S SELECTED PLAYS
MA THESIS**

**ZAINAB SADEQ KADHIM-ALARABI
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İSTANBUL, MARCH 2023

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MA PROGRAMME

ETHICAL STATEMENT

In this project, I prepared my manuscript in accordance with the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information and documents provided within the thesis within the framework of academic and ethical rules,
- I have submitted all information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with the requirements of scientific ethics and moral rules,
- I have cited all works that I have used in the project by appropriately referring to my sources,
- I have not made any changes to the data used,
- The work I present here is original, and if found otherwise, I declare that I accept all loss of rights that may occur.

27 /03 / 2023

ZAINAB SADEQ KADHIM-ALARABI

PREFACE

First and foremost, I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Sedat İŞÇİ for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. Without his assistance and dedicated involvement in every step throughout the process, this thesis would have never been accomplished. My sincere indebtedness goes to all my instructors in MA courses; I will be grateful for their constant help for good, especially Prof. Dr. C. Günseli İŞÇİ; words are not enough to thank her for the great attitude, assistance, and kindness she shows us.

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İSTANBUL, 2023

Zainab Sadeq Kadhimi-ALARABI

ÖZET

AFRİKA KÖKENLİ AMERİKALI KARAKTERLERİN SALDIRGANLIĞI: AUGUST WILSON'IN SEÇİLMİŞ OYUNLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Afrika kökenli Amerikalı oyun yazarı August Wilson'ın eserlerinde Amerikan halkı, belirgin bir şekilde betimlenen birçok sosyal meseleler ve kültürel sorunlardan muzdariptir. Realist bir oyun yazarı olan Wilson (1945-2005), sömürge sonrası meydana gelen psikolojik sorunların derinlemesine incelendiği oyunlarında Afrika kökenli Amerikalıların sömürge sonrası durumlarını tasvir etmiştir. Wilson'ın altını çizdiği psikolojik sorunlardan biri saldırganlık ve bunun altında yatan nedenler bu çalışmanın odak noktası olan bir temadır. Genel olarak, beyaz Amerikan toplumu, siyahi bireyler tarafından işlenen suçların yüzdesine referansla desteklenen bir bakış açısıyla, Afrika kökenli Amerikalı erkekleri saldırgan, suçlu bireyler olarak tasvir eder. Bu çalışma, siyahi erkeklerin saldırgan davranışlarına neden olan geçerli nedenleri ortaya koyarak bu olumsuz klişeyi ortadan kaldırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, iki teorisyenin çalışmasına dayanan sömürge sonrası bir psikanalitik yaklaşımı izler: Franz Fanon ve Amos Wilson. Fanon ve Wilson'a göre siyahi erkeklerin saldırganlığı ve suçlu davranışları baskının belirtisidir. Sömürge dönemi boyunca, binlerce kişiyi sömüren ve eziyet eden kölelik sistemi yüzünden Afrikalı erkekler ırksal olarak baskı altında olmuşlardır. Aksine sömürge sonrası dönemdeki baskı, genç siyahi erkekleri suçlu

bireylere ve saldırganlığa dönüştüren sosyo-ekonomik sıkıntı somutlaştırılmıştır. Böylelikle saldırganlık, Afrika kökenli Amerikan topluluğunu saran suçların sorumluluğunu taşıyan hegemonik beyaz Amerikalılara atfedilir. Saldırganlık temasını tahlil etmek için 20. Yüzyıl boyunca siyahi erkeklerin saldırganlığının izini sürecektir. şekilde kronolojik olarak üç oyun seçilmiştir. Netice itibariyle bu tez dört kısma bölünmüştür. Birinci kısım teorik ve tarihsel bir geçmiş bulundurmaktadır. İkinci kısım *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1981) kitabını ele alır ve saldırganlığın iki türünün farklı sonuçlarını ele alır. Üçüncü kısım *Fences* (1985) oyununu inceler ve saldırganlığın olumsuz sonuçlarına ışık tutar. Dördüncü kısım *King Hedley II* oyununa değinir ve Afrika kökenli Amerikalı erkeklerin saldırganlığına bir çözüm sunar. En sonunda ise, tezin sonuç bölümü çalışmanın bulgularını özetler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Saldırganlık, Afrika kökenli Amerikalılar, Sömürge Sonrası

ABSTRACT

AGRESSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHARACTERS: A STUDY IN AUGUST WILSON'S SELECTED PLAYS

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The American society suffers from various social problems and cultural issues that are vividly represented in the works of the African-American dramatist August Wilson. As a realistic dramatist, Wilson (1945–2005) depicts African Americans' postcolonial situation in his plays, which probe the psychological problems that emanate from postcolonial conditions. One of the psychological problems that Wilson has highlighted is aggression, along with its underlying reasons, a theme that is the focus of this study. Generally, white American society portrays African-American males as aggressive, criminal individuals, a perspective which is often backed up with reference to the percentage of crimes committed by black individuals. This study aims to dismantle this negative stereotype by divulging the pertinent reasons that provoke black males' aggressive behavior. This study follows a postcolonial psychoanalytic approach that relies on the works of two theorists: Frantz Fanon and Amos Wilson. According to Fanon and Wilson, black males' aggressive, criminal behaviors are symptoms of oppression. During the colonial era, African males had been racially oppressed through the system of slavery, which exploited and tormented thousands. In contrast, in the postcolonial era, oppression is embodied in the socioeconomic stresses, which transform young black males into aggressive and criminal individuals. Thus, aggression is ascribed to the hegemonic white Americans who bear the responsibility for the crimes that have pervaded the African-American community. In order to analyze this theme of aggression, three plays were selected chronologically so as to trace the aggressiveness of black males in the course of the twentieth century. Consequently, this thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One provides a historical and theoretical background. Chapter Two tackles *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1981) and dissects the different results of two

types of aggression. Chapter Three studies *Fences* (1985) and sheds light on the negative consequences of aggression. Chapter Four deals with *King Hedley II* (1999) and presents a solution to the aggressiveness of African-American males. Finally, the conclusion of the thesis summarizes the findings of the study.

Keywords: Aggression, African-Americans, Post-colonial.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USA : United States of America

US : The United States

M.L.K : Martin Luther King

TV : Television

qtd. : Quoted

UDHR : Universal Declaration of Human Rights

INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a word that is derived from the Latin word *aggressio*, which means "attack." It has been used in the English language since 1611 to refer to "an unprovoked attack." Nowadays, the Cambridge Dictionary defines aggression as "spoken or physical behavior that is threatening or involves harm to someone or something" (*aggression*). Aggression can be of two kinds: verbal and physical. Verbal aggression entails, for example, insulting and humiliating others, whereas physical aggression involves criminal acts, such as killing and beating (Belgrave & Allison, 2018, p.329).

Aggression is also defined as a behavior intentionally carried out to cause harm to another person who is motivated chiefly to avoid that harm (DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2012, pp. 449-466). This definition involves three significant characteristics. Firstly, aggression is an observable behavior. Only thinking about harming someone without attacking or feeling angry is not aggression. Aggression needs verbal action. Secondly, aggressive behavior should be intended to hurt someone. Accidentally bumping into someone does not consider aggression, regardless of whatever harm occurs, because it lacks intentionality. Thirdly, the victim should be motivated to avoid harm.

Plenty of forms of aggression exist, but the most commonly identified types are physical, verbal, and relational. Physical aggression is a behavior that includes physical actions with the intention of harm, such as hitting, kicking, stabbing, or beating the target. While hitting a child intending to educate him does not consider aggression, for it lacks the intention to harm. Aggression can also include intentionally damaging the victim's property, such as breaking his car or other belongings. Verbal aggression also involves using verbal behavior to hurt the target person, such as shouting, nasty name-calling, or spreading rumors. Relational aggression, as well, is behavior that is intended to damage the target person's social relationships, such as telling lies (and thus overlaps with verbal aggression), spreading rumors, and distributing embarrassing photos.

Ultimately, any behavior intended to hurt the target's social and personal relationships is aggression.

Disrespecting and ignoring someone is another form of aggression which is called passive aggression, for it involves intentionally behaving in ways that allow harm and psychological damage to befall a target person. Ignoring and disrespecting someone in a social context generally calls for pleasant social interactions and causes trauma inside the target person.

Theoretically, various forms of aggression can appear automatically in social behavior under different disguises. According to a recent model (Bargh, 1997, pp.1-61), three peculiar systems can operate and control outside of one's awareness to guide behavior. These systems are called cognitive, motivational, and evaluative systems, which can be affected by plenty of characteristics. Generally, environmental characteristics lead to unconscious processing in these systems. Although these systems are interactive and run in parallel, they have distinct operating mechanisms and features.

Essentially, the pre-processing of stimuli by these systems determines the individual's psychological state as he perceives it outwardly himself. Unconscious processing of environmental influences and characteristics that is put into action is generally adaptive and beneficial (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999, p.462). Automatically processing takes over the regularity in any individual's life, leaving more of the individual's limited conscious cognitive resources to deal with unprecedented and complex situations.

On the other hand, as discussed before, automatic processes can have negative aspects, for being unaware of the motives behind one's behavior naturally makes it difficult to control or eliminate that behavior. In numerous situations, people fail to see that their behaviors, perceptions, and judgments can be biased and felled to others.

Without awareness and knowledge of the actual (unconscious) motivated causes, they tend to attribute and rationalize behavior to socially desirable motives that fit with their general theories about the causes of this behavior (Wilson & Brekke, 1994,p.117). Specifically, regarding the applications to aggression research, plentiful studies document how environmental traits can automatically impact one's behaviors,

perceptions, and judgments related to aggression. Concluding that primary stimuli associated with aggressiveness impact an individual's perceptions and judgments of others; repeated exposure to aggression-related concepts can evolve into stable individual differences that are expressed in chronic accessibility to aggressive concepts; a primer can influence behavior directly; and goal-directed behavior can be automatically resulted by relevant situational traits.

As aggression-related traits have a complex background that is affected by genetic and non-genetic factors, every aggressive component must be influenced by multiple reasons that contribute to making him/her portrayed as an aggressive person. (Pavlov & Chistiakov & Chekhonin, 2012, pp.61-82).

Since aggression is a violent, unprovoked action and a feeling of hostility that arouses thoughts to attack, which is deliberately unfriendly behavior and an act of initiating hostilities, that is unacceptable. Concluding that aggression is a dangerous disease that causes massive damage to society, for it attacks all community components causing harm to the aggressive person and his victim. Many treatments and solutions must also occur wherever aggression occurs to eliminate this action.

Due to aggression motives and since communities have various levels of education, mental status, and different characters, every component would define, realize and deal with aggression differently from others. Regardless the aggression factors were genetic or not, horrible living conditions, bad environment, and sorrowful life events are almost considered as direct reasons for human being's aggressiveness. For instance, if a man suffers from slavery, violence, and abuse since childhood, he might grow up to find himself forgotten his origins, roots, and culture and turned to be aggressive, criminal, truculent, and hurtful to his kind.

Furthermore, suffering from racism, lack of respect, humiliation, and insult are vital causes that lead the victim to be aggressive and unable to control his anger. However, it is imperative to remember that regardless of the reasons behind it, a man should be able to control his anger and get rid of aggressiveness to be able to demand his human rights, keep his identity, and keep a strong bond with his past and origins. Like a significant segment of African-Americans who suffered and still suffering from

disrespect, racism, and white hegemony, they find themselves disenfranchised and unable to recover their stolen rights which mainly causes their aggressiveness.

The African-American aggression, its reasons, and ways of controlling it are essential issues to be discussed deeply in this study from different viewpoints. Nevertheless, before digging deep into the roots and reasons for their aggression, it is substantial to know that African-Americans, or Black Americans. They are a group of Africans who migrated from the South to the North due to different conditions, generally to escape the brutality of the South for a better life and better opportunities. However, after reaching America, they encountered a long history of enslavement, servitude, utilization, and abasement by White Americans. The colossal migration was mainly a promise of better conditions of living, better job opportunities, and a better future. Instead, the Africans, after reaching America, found ghettos, a lack of opportunities, injustice, and a place not better than the South.

Aggressive criminal behavior has often been associated with black males because of the theories of criminologists and researchers, such as Cesare Lombroso, who leaned toward a physiological approach to explain crimes. Lombroso proposed that there are certain physical traits by which a criminal can be identified, such as pointed ears, a thin, bridged nose, and thick skin (Wetzell, 2000, p.29). These traits are more likely to be found in black males. Thus, Lombroso contributed to the stereotyping of black males as criminal, aggressive people, and he proved that their criminality is innate.

Being exposed to violence, injustice, and persecution of White Americans since the 17th and 18th centuries, African-Americans grow up with different diseases. Effected mainly by terrible living conditions, they became aggressive, unable to control their anger, and harmful to their own kind. Besides that, throughout history, African-Americans have consistently been dehumanized, evidenced by the US constitution considering enslaved people three-fifths a person, the legalization of slave lynchings, the unjust laws, and most recently, police brutality against unarmed African-American males. When individuals are continually degraded and dehumanized, a feeling of anger is stirred inside them. White society's image of Black males makes them believe that African-Americans are the inferior group adopting the dominant group ideology,

resulting in acceptance of their inferior status as being deserved, natural, and inevitable. So, when they face this reality, they lose their identity and become aggressive.

Many African-Americans suffer from being disrespected and identity threat, as they believe in their inability to change the reality of their aggressiveness' and believe in identity contingencies assigned to them by the dominant White culture. Many Black children are exposed to disrespect, negative thoughts, and stereotypes about their culture and class distinction, often resulting in negative racial identities and angry feelings.

The media often portrays African-Americans, particularly males, as criminals, drug addicts, unintelligent, uneducated, and aggressive. When the Black society believes these images about themselves from childhood, they lose their self-respect, which affects their performance (self-fulfilling prophecy). They will impact the types of life they attain in the future, their socioeconomic status, their communities, and their family life.

As a result, African-Americans refuse these dire live circumstances aggressively. Being exposed to bad educational conditions full of racism, lack of awareness, misbelief in their ability, and poor educational outcomes of African-American males would drastically impact African-American families and communities because the best-paying jobs require a good educational background or some specialized training, including self-respect. Suppose African-American males drop out of school due to Whites' race, insult, and disrespect. In this case, they will likely live in a lack of respect and poverty and have a difficult time providing for themselves and their families, which causes a rise in their anger and aggression.

For enslavement, humiliation, and disrespect owners, their superiority over Blacks and wrong beliefs decide how African-Americans should be treated, never as individuals, but always as collectively. Hence, the racist premises on which policies and laws were based maintained societal perceptions of African-Americans. Even after slavery was ended, the standards of African-Americans treatment remained the same. When the enslaved population outnumbered the White population, political forces were established to regulate the African-Americans to "keep Whites safe" from enslaved people resisting the idealized expectations of Whites. The political forces were patrols

organized to enforce the superiority-inferiority complex held today toward African-Americans.

Since African-American aggression is a social problem, it must meet a treatment generally and from literary viewpoints specifically. Many literary works reflect the Black males' anger problem, for literature mirrors society. The history of African-Americans, the famous migration, and all reasons behind African-American's aggression will be discussed minutely in the following chapters of this study, for it focuses on the aggression of African-Americans characters, specifically in the literary works of an African-American dramatist, August Wilson (1945-2005).

Wilson discusses the dimensions of aggression, the types of it, the reasons behind it, and the solutions that might help eliminate Black African males' aggression from a dramatic point of view. Since Wilson is an African-American, he must have a strong reason behind presenting such issues in his plays. The study sheds light on these issues, clarifies the solutions Wilson implies in his plays, and discusses whether these solutions are realistic and might apply to daily life.

Moreover, Wilson seems to present an aggression issue in a specific period called the post-colonial era, where the African-Americans, as a colonized group, were portrayed as aggressive and criminals by the White Americans, the colonizers. Highlighting the circumstances that led Black Americans to show aggressiveness toward their kind, Wilson adjusts the validity of their actions. Also, he adjusts whether the reactions of colonized people towards the colonizer were genuine and in the right direction, which will also be fulfilled within the study. Furthermore, the study discusses Wilson's literary treatments to eliminate aggression from the dramatic viewpoint described in different plays.

Since African Americans are known for their aggressiveness, many literary works are meant to discuss their aggression and analyze the reasons behind it, as the three plays of Wilson's that are selected in this study Which are *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1981), *Fences* (1985), and *King Hedley II* (1999).

Each of Wilson's plays presents a different type of aggression, highlights the reasons that caused it, and its implications on society in the 19th century. All these plays

are equally significant for understanding the social structure at that time. Wilson seemed to believe that in this period, African Americans might be liberated from slavery, but sorrow and worries produced by an unjust society were only the beginning. Wilson speaks a universal language of the humanity of people who have dreams and want to be valued and are fighting and hustling for their worth. So, he employs his literary works to present the problems of black American society, explain its suffering with white domination, and the impact of the miserable childhood that black individuals lived on their lives after puberty. He believed that solutions must be found to eliminate these problems, so throughout his plays, he keeps reminding black Africans of their legacy and remarkable history as a motivation to prevent them from being aggressive individuals. He said in one of his TV interviews in 1987 that:

"We are in a process now of making a choice about our future and I think that it would benefit us to see what our past is; we are who we are today in society because of things that have happened prior to this moment. But we live in a culture where we forget what happened two weeks ago and to know who you are and what you should be doing you have to first know what your history is."

So, identify the description of aggression generally from a psychological viewpoint and specifically African American aggression from a literary viewpoint, analyze August Wilson's perspective on aggression in his dramatic works, and discuss and evaluate the solutions that he offers among the lines of eliminating African American's aggression will be the study's objectives.

Hence, the principal purpose of the study is to discuss the types and reasons behind the aggression of African Americans, as identified in Wilson's three selected plays in the post-colonial era; so, the post-colonial theory will be used to understand the study's aspects better. It is paramount to know that post-colonial theory is a literary approach that concerns literature produced in countries colonized by other countries. It discusses literature written by citizens of colonizing countries that take colonies or their peoples as its subject matter—the theory based on concepts of otherness and resistance (Lye, 1998, p.1).

To understand the relationship between the aggression of African Americans and the post-colonial theory, the post-colonial theorist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) clarifies that the depiction of the black male as an aggressive individual is correct, that, in other words, this aggressiveness does not stem from biological construction. It is, instead, induced by oppression, which can be defined as the unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power by one group at the expense of another. Oppression manifests itself as systemic, structural, historically naturalized violence that is normalized through hegemony, ideology, and sheer repetition of the dominant discourse.

Therefore, a description of colonialism, racism, and post-colonial theory besides African American history, how the Africans became American, the circumstances that led them to migrate to America in detail, and the famous migration of Blacks. Besides how they became colonized by the white Americans who became the colonizer, all will be identified in the first chapter of the study.

The thoughts and arguments of the theorist Fanon that he discusses in his book *Black skin, White masks* (1952), and his point of view regarding African-Americans aggression, his founds, and thoughts on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized will be presented, as well. Moreover, the theater of Black, its foundation and history, and the message it sends throughout the plays are going to be fulfilled within the first chapter of this study.

As mentioned before, this study is based on three plays by the dramatist August Wilson, so it is substantial to know his biography and personal experience with the white hegemony; besides Wilson's writing style, his philosophy regarding the role that literary works play in society, his role in enlivening the theatre of Blacks, and its importance in reflecting the suffering of African-Americans. Then the study will present the reasons behind African Americans' aggressiveness from both the theorist Fanon's and our dramatist Wilson's viewpoints to end chapter one of the study.

The aggressive scenes presented by African-Americans overrun a critical place in many literary works. African-American writers tried to shed light on this problem, such as Wilson, who employed characters in his plays to discuss Black males 'violence and aggressive acts. Through these theatrical characters, we can analyze the personalities

of African-Americans in reality and try to solve the problem of aggressiveness. Wilson's plays, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1981), *Fences* (1985), and *King Hedley II* (1999), will be analyzed in the following three chapters of the study.

The second chapter presents Wilson's disclosing the aggressive dimensions that African-Americans prevailed due to the violence they faced by two characters, Levee and Ma Rainey, who have contrastive aggression in his play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The chapter starts with an introduction, then a discussion of Levee's negative function of aggression in contrast with Ma Rainey's positive function, and contains plenty of quotations from the play to clarify the study's aims. By the end of this chapter, two types of aggression will appear with their primary source and how each character deals with it, where Wilson passes his implied messages to the African-Americans on how to deal with aggression positively.

The Third chapter analyzes Wilson's *Fences*, one of the most famous American plays discussing the psychological and economic issues Black Americans suffer due to White American domination. Throughout the protagonist character of the play, Troy Maxson, Wilson sheds light on the racial policies of the USA and their effects on Black Americans, showing how these policies cause considerable damage to the Black community. Wilson tells the story of Maxson from childhood to adulthood, which will be studied in this chapter. The chapter starts with an introduction to the play and then tells the story of young Maxson under aggression and elder Maxson riding the aggression, and ends with a comparison between these two characters and the same person, including the moral lesson of Wilsons.

The fourth chapter of the study analyzes *King Hedley II*, where Wilson accuses the US policies of being responsible for the collapse of the African American community and the spread of crimes and illegal activities in black neighborhoods during the 1980s.

By employing the play's main character, *King Hedley II*, and unlike his previous plays, Wilson generalizes the problem of aggression to the black community. He blames the white government by putting forward many causes that lead to the spread

of violence in Black society. He also implies some solutions to the black-on-black aggression within the acts of the play.

Finally, the study ends with a conclusion that answers all the inquiries that might come to mind while reading, such as the roots of aggression, the reasons behind it, the aggression of African Americans, and why White Americans portray Black Americans as aggressive. What are the circumstances that led them to aggressiveness? Since African Americans' aggressiveness is a significant social problem, how would the literary works highlight it, and what resolutions might limit or eliminate such problems?

How would a Black American dramatist like August Wilson discuss such a problem in his dramatic works? What motivates him to shed light on the aggression of Black males specifically? Moreover, the study will answer the essential question: whether the solution that Wilson presents to eliminate the aggression of male Black Americans is considered a realistic and genuine solution.

1.HISTORICAL AND THEORATICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Colonialism

It is a commonly accepted fact that the arrival of African people, under compulsion, to the American continent was an outcome of colonialism. The first Africans who stepped onto the American shore in 1619 were dehumanized and enslaved until the end of their lives. And this makes their history. It is a history of a marginalized group that has fallen victim to repressive regimes and of a hegemonic white culture that has defined them as the “other.” Before this history is reviewed, it is necessary to know what colonialism is.

Colonialism is a historical phenomenon based on cultural, political, and economic exploitation. It usually signifies the conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods (Loomba,2007, p.2). The European empires started this phenomenon in the fifteenth century, mainly for economic gains and purposes. Firstly, they traded their goods with African people, and then the trade extended to include human beings, so establishing what became known as the Atlantic Slave Trade. ‘Africans were snatched from their homes and deported to the colonies, where they were put to work in mines and plantations as slaves. With the increased demand for slaves, Europeans recognized the need to organize trade with African leaders, who, subsequently, bartered their African captives for a certain amount of goods. During the following three hundred years, nearly twelve million Africans were “exported” to different parts of the New World; two-thirds of the captives were men (Painter, 2006, p.30).

The unhealthy relationship between colonizer and colonized was based on violence, which was used as a means to dominate and intimidate the colonized countries. In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire has asserted that in colonialism there is no human contact but, instead, relations of domination and submission (1972, p.6). The colonizers vindicate this violence through creating a discourse that constructs the

collective consciousness; this is the rank of an individual within a community and how that individual identifies himself within a certain social group. The process of creating this discourse has been explained by Edward Said. According to Said, European civilization legitimizes its territorial conquests and domination over peripheral cultures by bringing colonial discourse, a system of statements within which the knowledge about the colonial people is constructed (Griffiths & Tiffin, 1998, p.42). This discourse is based on an unfair comparison that presents the colonized people in distorted images, such as inferior and inhuman individuals, in order to relegate their social status. The dissemination of colonial discourse across the globe has been engendered by literary writings.

In “The White Man’s Burden,” Rudyard Kipling reinforces these tokens by indicating that the white man, through the process of colonization, has taken upon himself the duty of civilizing and developing the primary groups. For Kipling, the white man has the ability to help the countries that suffer from famine, poverty, and diseases. In consequence, the development of these countries rests upon the white man, who cannot achieve that development without colonialism. The poet even incites the colonial countries to participate in this arduous responsibility and to conquer the non-white subjects:

Take up the white man’s burden—
The savage war of peace—
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Fill full the mouth of famine.
Watch sloth and heathen folly
Bring all your hopes to nought. (Line 17–24)

With the help of such works, negative images about African people made their way to the European and African consciousness.

Consequently, binaries of civilized/savage and Christian/heathen have been shaped in order to validate the superiority of the white colonizers and to verify the inferiority of the black colonized. The discovery of America enhanced these stereotypes and generated the systematic advantage of Europeans, who presented themselves as discoverers and as the superior race (Hogue, 2012, p.14).

Similarly, the African people who were sent to the British colonies in North America, in the territories which would later become the United States of America, went through the same experience. They were also subject to the hegemony of the American colonialists, who negated the culture and humanity of the colonized, and who built up their own superiority by defining the African people as the “other” (Semmes, 1992, p.1). The negation of African culture was achieved through slavery, which was a system made to exploit the labor of black people and to impose an inferior status upon them by stripping them of their identity, heritage, folklore, and language and by presenting them as the property of white masters (Lovejoy, 2011, p.1).

High colonialism, this phase started at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and during it the number of African slaves in colonial America started to increase, thereby forming black communities. Wayne C. Miller has revealed that:

By 1708, there were approximately 12,000 Blacks and 18,000 whites in the colony and by 1758 those numbers had increased to approximately 120,009 and 178,000 whites [...]. In part, it had been created out of the white man’s fear of the growing number of blacks in America, and in fact, in the Carolinas, whites saw themselves outnumbered by 90,000 to 40,000 in 1765. (1976, p.3).

This increase in the black population frightened the white colonialists, especially when the African slaves converted to Christianity and emulated their colonizers’ language, dress, and manner. In this situation, the white colonialists realized that more violence tactics and the use of new binaries, white/black binaries, as a means

of distinction were very much necessary. Accordingly, slavery became connected with the skin color of a particular group (Hogue, 2012, p.25).

This racial distinction created a cultural heterogeneity and a certain privilege to the white race within the American community. It can be seen as the essence of racism in the United States of America (USA).

At the turn of the century, there were many changes in the American community, one of which was that the slaves were freed in the Northern states. However, the institution of slavery was persistent in the South, and that provoked many resistance movements, such as that led by Nat Turner in 1831.¹ Although such movements were put down violently, they drew the attention of social and political leaders to the slaves' cause.

Late colonialism, this stage began during the second half of the nineteenth century and witnessed the eruption of the Civil War between South and North (1861–1865). This war ended with the emancipation of the slaves, and thus the African-American community turned into a *postcolonial* society. Nevertheless, their social status was not ameliorated due to the so-called “Jim Crow laws,” which segregated the blacks/post-colonized from the whites/post-colonizers, so intensifying the racial inferiority of the African Americans and aiding in the obliteration of the African American culture.²

On the other hand, the end of physical colonization, slavery, did not mean the end of violence. Conversely, violence persisted throughout secret, racially organized white groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan. The goal of this movement was to terrorize, subdue, and control Negroes by intimidation and threats as well as by actual physical violence; in fact, the organization identified violence as an act of virtue (Butcher, 1972, p.191). It proved their hatred and hostility toward the African race. The movement

¹ Nat Turner was a black American slave who led the only effective slave rebellion in US history. His uprising caused the death of sixty whites, thus spreading terror within the white community of the South; the uprising was ultimately ended when Turner was captured and hanged.

² The Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation.

quickly spread in the South and included prominent figures in its ranks. The members of this movement believed that they were protecting their American civilization from the intruders (Butcher, 1972, p.192). The adoption of such ideologies caused the deaths of many black people, who realized the necessity of immigrating to the North. With this immigration, the Negro population of the North jumped from 1,027,647 to 2,409,219 (Butcher, 1972, p.193).

Nevertheless, new problems such as unemployment, poverty, and crimes started to appear in the industrial North. This led to the association of black migration with increased rates of crimes. These rates awoke the enmity of the white Northerners, who started riots against the African Americans. These riots were ugly and cruel. They drew the attention of many white and black personalities, who would see the need to establish movements to fight against racial ideologies. W.E.B. Du Bois was one of those figures.

In 1903, Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which he attacked “Jim Crow laws” and exposed the effects of racism and oppression on the black identity. He argued that these laws not only denied African Americans from fair access to job opportunities but also weighed heavily on their souls, hindering them from living like normal human beings. He introduced the term “double consciousness” to discuss the strange duality that African Americans feel when they attempt to be both American and African in a white society where one identity is considered more superior than the other. He defined the “double consciousness” as “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du, 1989, p.8).

In the end, Du Bois used the metaphor of lifting “the veil,” which meant that the whites should recognize the equality of African-American citizens. Furthermore, Du Bois, along with other activists, established movements such as Niagra Movement that called for ending racial discrimination and segregation (Finkelman & Wintz, 2004, p.903). Thus, Du Bios became a central figure in shaping the movements that ended segregation.

The laws of cultural segregation were defied by many movements, but the civil rights movement (1955–1965) headed by Martin Luther King (M.L.K) (1929–1965) put an end to these laws. Firstly, King was an African-American minister and cultural leader. He led the Montgomery Bus Boycott, through which he announced his ideology of “non-violent resistance” and stood out as a national figure.³ According to King, his technique aims to preserve the African-American culture and to obtain their rights as American individuals without physical aggression. He also averred that his technique opposes the aggressive actions of the white Americans, but in a peaceful way (Finkelman & Wintz, 2004, p.7).

M.L.K arranged large marches during which African Americans refused to accept their position as “the other” and called for equality. The demonstrators, however, encountered the hostility of the Euro-American society that rejected their simple demands. Ultimately, these marches led to legislation that prohibited racial distinctions and that gave black people the right to participate in political elections. Though the civil rights movement succeeded in ending legal segregation, it did not succeed in dissolving the white/black binaries that associated blackness with inferiority. Ostensibly, African Americans have blended into the American society, but in reality, they are still treated as second-class citizens, who live in terrible conditions. In addition, the increased rate of murders in the USA during the 1960s, including the assassination of M.L.K, proved the inefficiency of this movement.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, African Americans deviated from the pacifist techniques of the civil rights movement and engaged in the Black Power movement that spread throughout the country and encouraged black people to use the power of arms to defend themselves from the bigot whites. The leaders of this movement asserted that violence existed in the heart of the American social system and that “non-violent resistance” could not be the solution for all their problems. The writer and activist Robert F. William stated that “it is precisely this unchallenged violence that allows a

³ The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a political and social campaign against the policy of racial segregation on the public transit system of Montgomery. It began after the arrest of Rosa Parks, a black woman, for not giving up her seat to a white passenger on a city bus.

racist social system to perpetuate itself” (William, 1998, p.76). Though many dramatists and writers joined this movement, such as Amiri Baraka and Maya Angelou, it declined without making changes in the African-American situation.

1.2 Post-colonialism

The political, social, economic, and cultural conditions and circumstances that the postcolonial era has introduced are complex, huge, and continuous. Of course, these conditions have altered the lives of the colonizer and the colonized. They were in a continuous process of “transculturation,” which is a constant feature of “the contact zone.” Firstly, “contact zone” is a term coined by Mary Louise Pratt, and it points to places of “colonial encounter, the spaces in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (2007, p.6). Accordingly, the USA can be viewed as a contact zone. Secondly, Pratt has pointed out that the word “transculturation” is used by ethnographers to describe how the subordinated groups reconstruct their identities due to their contact with the dominant culture, thus producing hybrid groups (Loomba, 2007, p.68). Moreover, it is not only the cultural identity that changes, but even the discourse. There is an intersection between language and culture, and any mutation in culture will inexorably cause a mutation in the linguistic system that props it up. For instance, the mixed linguistic forms (pidgin and creole languages) are byproducts of the linguistic-cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonial subject. In this case, African-American English is considered to be a semi-creole language that combines two languages and has a unique structure.

Hybridity emerges in the contact zones, creating new forms that could be racial, cultural, and linguistic (Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, p.118). The concept of hybridity has been clarified by the Indian theorist Homi K. Bhabha, who has analyzed the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer and conceded that cultural identity is something fluid that transforms with exposure to other cultures, so recreating a new hybrid identity that is a mixture of both. In this process, there is no equal cultural exchange because it is

the cultural identity of the colonized that changes not the colonizer's (Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, p.119). Thus, hybridity embodies the colonizers' cultural domination or, to use another term, "hegemony."

Hegemony is another vital term in the postcolonial setting. It is derived from the Greek word *hegemonia*, which means "lead." The word has a long history of uses and denotations. It signifies the ideological, cultural, and political domination of one state over others. Tony Bergonzi has defined "hegemony" as "the useless impact which was exerted by the regime over a certain society" (2006, p.8). According to this definition, hegemony turns out to be geopolitical domination over other countries, which can be seen in the colonization of Asia and Africa (2006, p.10). In the nineteenth century, hegemony indicated the economic domination of one group or class over the other classes in a society. However, in the twentieth century, it came to have intellectual, cultural implications, "domination by consent" (Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, p.29).

Indeed, hegemony has gained attention in the works of the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. He has clarified this concept by building his discussion on Machiavelli's suggestion that power is obtained via "force" and "deceit." In his *Prison Notebook*, Gramsci argues that the capitalist class maintained its power and control over the working class not by violence alone but by transforming the ideologies and beliefs of the subaltern. The term "subaltern" refers to the social group that is oppressed and deprived of any access to power. This transformation is achieved by an ideology which is "the medium through which certain ideas are transmitted and more important held to be true" (Loomba, 2007, p.29). The ideologies of the ruling class are indoctrinated inside the others via different social institutions that ensure their consent and submission.

In "*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*", Louis Althusser, a Marxist thinker, has expanded Gramsci's notion of hegemony by indicating two components: "Repressive State Apparatuses" and "Ideological State Apparatuses," which assist in gaining domination. Althusser goes further and confirms that the "materialistic existence" of ideology for it exists in institutions and the practices specific to them (2006, p.112). The social institutions, or "Ideological State Apparatuses," such as school, church, and even literature have an influential role in molding the attitudes and beliefs of

individuals and, thus, assure their acceptance of the capitalist system. This process is known as “interpellation,” which is ideology’s power to give individuals identity by the structures and prevailing forces of society (Bressler, 1999, p.173).

Additionally, a wide range of thinkers have employed the concept of hegemony in the analysis of colonialism and postcolonialism. In fact, colonialism entails a great deal of suppression and compulsion, and, consequently, it cannot be seen as a process that depends on the consent of the colonial subject. However, recent postcolonial studies have suggested that the consent of the colonized is to be seen in the transformation of his beliefs and practices, which is part of the process of domination (Loomba, 2007, p.31). This transformation is accomplished through the colonial discourse, which interpolates European values, assumptions, and beliefs in the mind of the colonial subject to the point that it becomes accepted.

The process of adopting these values is elucidated by the psychiatrist and postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Fanon theorizes that when the colonized is in the presence of a white man, a feeling of inferiority will arouse inside him that—slowly and subtly—with the help of newspapers, schools and their text and advertisement, film, radio—work their way into one’s mind (1967, p.152). Consequently, the colonized will embrace the European views and lose his identity. Despite all the endeavors to mimic the colonizer, the colonized remains an inferior person. One can conclude that hegemony refers to the success of the colonizer in dominating the colonized people, whether by force or by consent. In the two cases, the colonized will be oppressed because the colonial discourse highlights the social, cultural, and racial differences among people.

1.3 Racism in American Society

Racial oppression continues in the United States society. Blacks and dark-skinned racial and ethnic minorities are three times more likely to be poor than Whites, earning 40% less than Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p.12). Even with the same levels of education, Blacks face unemployment and lower wages much more than Whites.

Sociologist Joe Feagin has documented discrimination in health care, the criminal justice system, housing, educational institutions, insurance industries, employment (including hiring, career advancement, and pay), and other institutions, enabling him to conclude that “being black means living with racial oppression from cradle to grave” (Feagin, 2001, p.173).

The situation for Black males is particularly precarious. Most recent research reveals that: black men in the United States face a far more dire situation than is portrayed by joint employment and education statistics . . . and it has worsened in recent years . . . the pool of poorly educated Black men is becoming ever more disconnected from the leading- stream society, and to a far greater degree than comparable white or Hispanic men. (Eckholm, 2006, p.20).

In fact, the number of unemployed Black men and the number of Blacks in jails has increased. Black men are disproportionately arrested, tried, and sentenced by White hegemony so that today one third, of all Black men between the ages of 18 and 40 can expect to be imprisoned or jailed at some point in their lives (Weathersbee, 2006, pp441-448).

The criminal justice system treats Black men much more harshly than White men. African American men face a double whammy, for they experience discrimination as perpetrators and victims. Although men of color are more vulnerable to violent crimes against them, society’s responses to men’s victimization are based on that man’s status in society. Because the White media construct African American communities as violence-prone, violence against Black men is often accepted by the criminal justice system as normal.

Contemporary racism and white supremacy are still underpinned by the historical constructs of race and gender upon which the US nation was founded. The persistent discrimination that African Americans suffer today is often justified by deeply rooted stereotypes of Black men in the minds of Whites. Historically, African Americans were defined as animals and possessions that White men ought to have and own.

Racist imagery and stereotypes have taken on gendered forms, and Black men were also constructed as aggressive and inherently violent. They were defined as beasts who had to be controlled and tamed by White men to be put into service. This violence portrayed Black men as inherently unsuitable for work until they were trained by White men and placed under their control and discipline. White elites created two images to explain the relations between African-Americans and White Americans. The controlling image of the buck represents a human animal that had achieved partial domestication through slavery. In contrast to the images of African natives who roam their wild homelands like beasts untamed by civilization (colonialism) (Collins, 2005,p56).

Previously, these images and stereotypes were attributed to biology, while nowadays, consistent with the continued racism, they are instead attributed to African culture. They used to justify inequality as a result of the inherent characteristics of Black people themselves, not forgetting the damaged relationships and values among Blacks as the root cause of Black social disadvantage (Collins, 2005, p.180).

1.4 Black Theatre

Black Theatre in the USA has grown out of the minstrel show, which was a variety show performed by white actors who darkened their faces in order to emulate blacks' physical traits. The purpose of these shows was to amuse the white audience through the performing of songs and skits that ridiculed black slaves and that distorted their speech, music, and dance (Penrice, 2011, p.290). The minstrel's characters played a huge role in characterizing black people as ignorant, lazy, carefree, and unreliable (Dicker, 2013, p.22). The reason behind the creation of this offensive stereotype was to affirm whites' superiority and blacks' inferiority through playing upon the common sense of both white and black people (Toll, 1974, p.99). It is worth mentioning that black men's participation in minstrel shows was not allowed until the end of the Civil War. With the start of their performances, black performers found themselves obliged to

cover their faces and to imitate their imitators in order to be accepted by the white spectators (Peterson, 1990, p.50).

The necessity of dismantling the negative images of black people was emphasized by the New Negro Renaissance, which was a social, intellectual, and artistic movement that bloomed in the 1920s and that inspired different branches of literature. The name of the movement was taken from a book of essays titled *The New Negro*. The essays and poems therein aim to express the African-American experience in all its verities and complexities as realistically as possible (Locke, 1952, p.xxv). With this aim, the book seeks to replace centuries of identity tied to slavery for a positive social identity, so looking to Africa as an alternative to the European cultural tradition and, thus, changing the negative stereotype of black identity with a new positive image. The tenets of Alain Locke's anthology were adopted by the New Negro Renaissance, which encouraged African-American writers to express themselves and their culture according to their own standards rather than the standards of the American theatrical structure.

The leader of the New Negro Renaissance, W.E.B Du Bios, founded the aesthetics of the Black Theatre and invigorated black writers to introduce theatrical subjects that deserved treatment. He argued that the same elements that were used in spreading racist and negative images about the black race, as in the American minstrel shows, could also contribute to elevating the status of black people (Pinkney, 2004, p.13). Accordingly, he called for dramatic or literary works that expressed blacks' social protest against their images in literary works and that stimulated new positive imageries for African Americans. In addition, Du Bios shed light on the need for establishing Little Negro Theatre

Groups so that the plays could be written, performed, produced, and directed by African Americans. In "Kwigwa Players Little Negro Theatre," he explained this by saying that the drama should be:

1. About us. That is, they must have plots which reveal Negro life as it is.
2. By us. This is, they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just what it means to be a Negro today.
- 3.

For us. That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval. 4. Near us. The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro people. (Du, 1989, p.134)

Unfortunately, these values were not adhered to by black dramatists, and the plays depicting blacks' lives remained primarily written by white playwrights. August Wilson ascribed the lack of black drama to the economic conditions that prevented black dramatists from funding theatrical groups. In "The Ground on Which I Stand," a speech on black theatre at Princeton University, Wilson said as follows:

In terms of economics and privileges, one significant fact affects us all in the American theatre of LORT theatre, there is only one that can be considered black [...]. I will tell that black theatre in America is alive [...]. It is vibrant [...]. It is vital. [...]. It just isn't funded. [...]. The economics are reserved as privileges to the overwhelming abundance of institutions that preserve, promote and perpetuate white culture. (1996, p.16)

The demise of the New Negro Renaissance in 1930s marked the beginning of another era, called the "Assimilation Era," which lasted for three decades, during which the African American Theatre developed. In this era, black dramatists wrote their plays according to the European literary style, modern realism, with the intention of dissolving into the American mainstream (Wilson, 1996, pp.17-18). Many of the plays that were written during this period were performed on Broadway. They mirrored the desire of the black community to assimilate into the American society and to abolish racial stereotypes. The most significant play in that period was *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. In this play, Hansberry draws on the Eurocentric style, in portraying the dilemma of the black family in a racist society. Though Walter Lee's quest for money is entrenched in the American Dream, it implicitly emboldens the African American to

revolt against the postcolonial situation. Arguably, *A Raisin in the Sun* has paved the way for the next era, the Black Revolutionary Era (H. Miller, 2014, p.187).

The Black Revolutionary Era started in the mid-1960s and witnessed the appearance of the Black Art Movement, which is a cultural and literary movement motivated by two political and cultural movements: the Black Power Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement. The ideologies of these two movements nurtured many African-American authors such as Ed Bullins (1935–2021), Larry Neal (1937–1981), and others (Barrios, 2008, p.10). The theorist and playwright Amiri Baraka wrote an essay titled “In Search of the Revolutionary Theatre,” which became the major manifesto for this period. According to Baraka, the theatre is an arena that should be used in raising the cultural and political awareness of the African-American people. He believed that by uncovering the racial attitudes against blacks, he would ignite the anti-colonial spirit and thus achieve an effective change.

In fact, the Revolutionary Era reintroduced the New Negro Renaissance ideology, especially the concept of demolishing the white aesthetics and creating new aesthetics for African-American drama. Yet, the Revolutionary Theatre was more radical because it called for the changing of the conditions of African Americans on all the levels, stressing the socioeconomic conditions. Moreover, during the Revolutionary Era, African-American drama became concerned with the lives of black people and the necessity of preserving the inherited values. Such commitment led to many excellent plays that dealt with the African-American experience, such as Lonne Elder III’s *Niger* (1973).

By the 1980s the racial and political tension escalated. African Americans were searching not only for their rights but also for their lost identities. The removal of the inferiority complex from black people was the aim of black dramatists during that period. They refused Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness,” which describes the internal conflict that African Americans experience due to their residence in a white-dominated country: seeing themselves through the eyes of their oppressors as an inferior people, they, therefore, try to attain whites’ ideals, despite the fact that white Americans have rejected them. The black dramatists saw that the only way to resolve blacks’ inferiority

complex was to encourage them to return to their African heritage, which would make them aware of their self-worth.

Among the dramatists who recognized the importance of African heritage is August Wilson. His dramatic work combines all of that. He was involved in the Black Power Movement and described himself as a “black nationalist,” who took upon himself the task of raising the social and cultural awareness of his community through his plays (Bloom, 2009, p.11). His plays reconstructed the history of the African-American people and scrutinized the social ills that they suffer due to the hegemony of white society. In order to understand his drama and how he has written his plays, the following sections shed light on these points.

1.5 August Wilson’s Biography

The hybrid dramatist August Wilson was one of the prominent writers of the twentieth century. Originally named Frederick August Kittle Jr., he was born in 1945 to a German immigrant and an African-American woman named Daisy Wilson. Kittle’s parents met in a grocery store in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and after a few dates the couple got married and had six children. August was the fourth. However, their relationship did not endure, and after a while Frederick August Kittle Sr. became estranged from his family.

August Kittle Jr. grew up to develop a distorted image to the violent, abusive, intoxicated father who abandoned his family due to his inability to accept African Americans and their culture (Lahr, 2007, p.36). The image of the violent father would be later employed in August’s plays. By 1957, Daisy Wilson divorced her husband and married an African-American man, David Bedford, who was a former prisoner and football player. After the marriage, the family moved to Hazelwood, a district largely inhabited by whites, where they encountered various types of hegemony, especially Kittle, who had to struggle with it unceasingly.

Kittle's battle with white society and its violence started at an early age due to the white schools that he had attended. He was rejected by his classmates, who used to call him "nigger." Such words teased Kittle and agitated his anger to the extent that he would be physically aggressive (Lahr, 2007, p.37). At the age of fifteen, August dropped out of high school, and the reason behind this decision was the racist treatment that he received from the school's administration. Nevertheless, he spent the following years working in unskilled jobs and reading literary and philosophical writings. The powerful expressions of literature attracted Kittle, who aspired to be a poet. This dream would not come true until 1964.

Between 1950 and 1964, Kittle was, in a sense, lost. His European and African ancestries created a conflict inside him, and he did not know to which part he belonged. The postcolonial situation that surrounded Kittle nourished his identity crisis. He found redemption in disavowing his white origins and in embracing his mother's African roots, so calling himself August Wilson. Any reader can easily observe that Wilson makes use of personal experiences in most of his plays. He represents male characters whose confrontation with white society restricts them in their otherness and produces many psychological problems, such as the loss of identity and aggression.

Aggression is the hub of Wilson's four plays: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II*. In these plays, the protagonists are aggressive and criminal men, through whom Wilson explores the reasons for the emergence of aggression. In *Joe Turner Come and Gone*, Wilson spurs the black youth in the play to discover their identities by returning to their African roots. Herald Loomis, the protagonist, has lost his identity after being captured by Joe Turner's gang. After his release, Loomis sets off on the road to find his wife, Martha. During his journey, Loomis meets many characters. All the characters share the same journey: the journey towards "self-discovery." Loomis, in particular, does not have a sense of cultural connectedness. His earlier experience of mandatory slavery binds him to the white culture that treated him as property for many years. At the end of the play, Loomis breaks the bonds that restricted him by ignoring the European values. Only then can Loomis find his identity when he accepts his African origins.

In 1964, Wilson's dream became a reality when magazines such as *Black Lines* and *Black World* published some of his poems. However, Wilson's career as a poet did not last long, because he soon turned to drama. The theatre attracted Wilson as he saw it as a powerful platform for expressing his ideas. Having little erudition about the theatre, Wilson turned to the founders of "The Black Art Movement": Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. These two authors influenced Wilson's writings. Baraka's drama gripped Wilson's attention, in seeking to alter the white-grounded reality and to expose that reality from the perspective of the oppressed and abused as a means toward fulfilling a moral obligation to the spiritual purpose of African-American existence. However, Baraka's revolutionary approach did not suit Wilson whose main concern lay in uncovering African Americans' internal struggles and in aligning them with their culture and community. Thus, he shared Larry Neal's tenets of opposing the concepts that distance the artist from his community (Bigsby, 2007, p.9). Similar to Neal, Wilson also believed that black artists should engender new forms, new symbols, and mythology.

Nonetheless, Wilson's reputation as a playwright only truly emerged in the 1980s, when Lloyd Richards, the director of Yale Repertory Theatre, discovered Wilson's talent and staged his first play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The two formed a close friendship and created many successful plays, such as *Fences*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Two Trains Running*.

In a close examination of Wilson's plays, the influence of the blues can be found in the essence of his works. Firstly, the blues is a musical form that has been part of African-American life since the time of slavery. The main functions of the blues include countering the hegemony of white society and defining African Americans away from the binary opposition of white/black that possessed the American nation (Hogue, 2007, p.147). Besides registering and transmitting the values and history of African Americans to the next generations, the blues helps in reconnecting African Americans with their past. This is what makes blues one of Wilson's main sources of inspiration. Other influences included Jorge Luis Borges and Romare Bearden.

The influence of the Argentinian author Borges can be seen in Wilson's method of narrating events and in his concentration on describing how an incident took place. In

Seven Guitars, for instance, the audience knows from the very first scene how the play will end, and the focus is, instead, on the circumstances that lead to this end. The painter and activist Romare Bearden, who is known for his collages that depict the African-American way of living, inspired Wilson to create characters such as Herald Loomis in *Joe Turner Come and Gone* and Boy Willy in *The Piano Lesson*. While Bearden used art, Wilson used the power of words to reveal the struggle of African-American people who suffer from poverty and oppression. Though the two never met, Wilson acknowledged how much he admired Bearden's:

What I saw was black life presented on its own terms, on a grand and epic scale, with all its richness and fullness, in a language that was vibrant and which, made attendant to everyday life, ennobled it, affirmed its value, and exalted its presence. In Bearden I found my artistic mentor and sought, and still aspire, to make my plays the equal of his canvasses. (qtd. p.474)

After writing some plays, Wilson announced his desire to write a series of ten plays, nine of which would be set in Pittsburgh, and they would all be designed to represent African Americans in the US during the twentieth century. Thus, *The Pittsburgh's Cycle* was born, and it heralded the name of August Wilson as one of the important dramatists of his era, along with Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and others. Throughout his career, Wilson received innumerable awards, including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the American Theatre Critics Award, among others. Unfortunately, August Wilson was diagnosed with liver cancer, which ended his life in October 2005.

1.6 August Wilson's Style & Philosophy

Wilson's dramatic style remained essentially realistic in comparison to the fragmented imagery of his contemporaries. His plays rely on realistic narrative and long monologues that expose the characters' pasts, along with their inner thoughts. The

structure of these plays is influenced by musical rhythms, mainly the blues that are rooted in Wilson's earlier poetic tendencies and that are most evident in the dialogue of his very early plays. Furthermore, Wilson's personas speak a vernacular language, which, while it might be grammatically incorrect, is used to amplify the African-American voice. This is a vision or aim that he shared with other dramatists and novelists such as Ntozake Shange and Zora Neale Hurston. These two writers are more rebellious in comparison to Wilson's style, especially Shange. Her plays are characterized by the absence of any kind of punctuation or capitalization. Such a style expresses the writers' resistance to Western hegemonic discourse.

According to the postcolonial and feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak, the oppressed people cannot speak about and voice their own experiences because they are hegemonized by Western discourse. Even the elites of the subaltern groups do not represent themselves because they adopt the discourse of the colonizer, which marginalizes them (Morton, 2003, p.58). Ultimately, the subaltern groups remain poorly represented, or even not represented at all. However, writers such as Wilson, Hurston, and Shange have challenged this assumption and brought a discourse that is centered upon the subalterns/African Americans.

Wilson's cycle reveals the dangerous issues that confronted the African Americans since their liberation from slavery. He places his characters in historical situations in order to present the African-American situation innovatively. His plays are male-centric and do not involve many white characters; rather, they exist through the lives and stories of the black characters. By restricting the appearance of the white characters, Wilson turns the attention toward the life of the black characters, which is governed by the whites, so indicating that they are the reason behind the suffering of black characters, whether directly or indirectly (Üsekes, 2003, p.88). Wilson's theory of writing has been expounded by Jay Plum, a theatre and culture critic. According to Plum, Wilson was not writing history, but he was "righting" it by "altering his audience perception of reality to give status to what American history has denied" (1993, p.562). Through contextualizing the African-American experience, Wilson depicts the

postcolonial situation and the psychological problems that African Americans have suffered, such as aggression, which is the focus of this study.

1.7 African Americans Aggression

Aggression term means attacking anyone without provocation, and it is a feeling of anger that causes violent behavior. As has been noted earlier, the colonial discourse, which is a dominant discourse, associates the black/colonized people with backwardness, irrationality, and savagery in order to warrant the violent practices pursued against them (Fanon, 1963, p.42). Gradually, the black/colonized individuals endorse the perspective of the colonizer, leading them to evaluate themselves through the eyes of the colonizer and giving rise to aggressive and self-destructive conduct among the oppressed class.

Under the umbrella of oppression, the individual starts to suffer from different mental disorders, which Fanon diagnosed after examining his patients. As a psychiatrist, Fanon noticed that when the colonized person encounters the violent practices of the oppressive white culture, he is filled with a sense of rage and frustration. If these sensations can find no release, they will evolve into aggressive acts. Usually, the colonized directs his aggressiveness against his fellow men:

When the [white] settler or the policeman has the right to strike the native, to insult him and make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching out for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native: for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother. (Fanon, 1963, p.54).

The colonized tries to deal with the violent acts of his oppressors patiently and with a fake grin, but when the violent assaults accumulate, the colonized reacts aggressively (Bulhan, 1985, p.143): we thus see the colonized holding his knife and

killing one of his own race at the slightest provocation—a misplaced rage caused by not confronting the real obstacle to his liberation, which is oppression.

According to Fanon, the black/colonized should utilize his aggressiveness in liberating himself rather than in killing the members of his own racial group. Fanon encouraged black people to direct their physical aggression toward the colonizer and, thus, instigated the process of decolonization. The process of decolonization, or any violent act directed toward the colonialist, has the effect of empowering the colonial subjects, while also helping them to retrieve their humanity, which had been negated during the colonial rule (Bulhan, 1985, p.94).

By means of Fanon's theory, the aggressiveness of African-American males could be analyzed. African Americans are racially, socially, and economically oppressed. They received all the kinds of physical tortures, including beatings, lynching, and body mutilation during slavery (Staples, 1974, pp.19-20). After slavery was abolished, the aggressiveness of white Americans continued in an indirect way, which can be seen in the socioeconomic pressures that are inflicted upon African Americans. Due to these pressures, the rates of black crimes increased. This increase drew the attention of many African-American psychologists, such as Amos Wilson (1941–1995), who analyzed black-on-black crime through introducing theories similar to Fanon's theory. According to Wilson, the aggressive conduct is the result of a psychopathological social system that wants to oppress black people. In *Black-on-Black Violence: The Psychodynamics of Black Self-Annihilation in Service of White Domination*, he contends that the sources and motivations of African Americans' aggressiveness are socially determined. If the social context that causes the aggressiveness of African-American males is ignored, those who are in fact the victims are blamed and regarded as innate criminals. This is what the white society would like others to do so that they can hide their own criminality (Staples, 1974, p.8).

The American nation has been founded on one of the most horrific crimes in the history of humanity, which is the crime of enslaving Africans and exploiting their labor. To rationalize this crime, white Americans have portrayed African-American males as aggressive, criminal individuals and, thus, created a false consciousness. The

goal behind the process of criminalizing the black males is to maintain the dependency and the relative powerlessness of the African-American community. Amos Wilson avers:

“Black criminality is not accidental, coincidental, or aberrant, but speaks to an apparent need in the White American community to induce criminality in a significant proportion of the Black American community, as well as its need to perceive African Americans as innately criminal, just as it exhibits the related need to perceive the average African Americans as innately intellectually inferior “(2020, p.34).

However, these projections will not remain mere stereotypes. When the white individuals have the power that they have, these projections will become creative efforts (Wilson, A. 2020, p.40). In another sense, they would bring these stereotypes into life by imposing poverty and unemployment on the African American males. Through controlling the socioeconomic conditions, the white society frustrates the black males and creates stresses within them. Out of these stresses arises aggression and criminality.

Definitely, the inability of black males to provide the material needs of their families can make them resort to destructive behaviors such as robbery and homicide, especially “black on black crime,” which is detrimental to the African-American community. Accordingly, the frustration of African-American males is aroused by the violent and oppressive treatment that they have received throughout their lives, thereby making them aggressive.

Once the criminal, aggressive males are created, white society induces their preexistence so as to confirm their projections and justify what they were doing in the first place. Thus, African Americans are caught in a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. The responsibility of ending these destructive behaviors, in Amos Wilson’s standpoint, falls on the African-American people, who should unite their efforts to save their community from annihilation (Wilson, A. 2020, p.120). The aggressive acts committed by African-American males occupy a notable place in plays such as *Ma*

Rainey's Black Bottom, Fences, and King Hedley II, which are going to be analyzed in the next chapters.



2. CONTRASTIVE AGGRESSION IN *MA RAINEY'S BLACK BATTOM*

This chapter, which is entitled “contrastive aggression,” displays two different types of aggression in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1981). The play represents the actions that occurred during a recording session of Ma Rainey, the blues singer, and her band in Chicago in 1927. After its premiere, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* received reviews that varied from positive to negative criticism. For instance, the critic John Simon attacked the play by stating that it “is only an intermittently drama” (1984, p.148). Other critics and reviewers praised the play, such as Frank Rich, who stressed that “this play is a searing inside account of what white racism does to its victims and it floats on the same authentic artistry as the blues” (1984, p.13). Ultimately, the play achieved enormous success and won many prestigious awards.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom is set in the 1920s, during the phase of the New Negro Renaissance. During that phase, black art and literature have ameliorated and prevailed along with black music, which was thriving, witnessing the emergence of new musical styles and musicians. However, the discriminatory laws of Jim Crow in that period facilitated the exploitation of black musicians. Taking black musicians' suffering into consideration, Wilson set himself the task of shedding light on what had been overlooked to be demonstrated as the axis of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*.

In his play, Wilson gathers together a cluster of black American musicians and probes their social, cultural, and economic concerns. He preferred to choose a setting that would serve a functional purpose; therefore, the entire play is performed during one afternoon. Ma Rainey is supposed to come to record some new songs. The other musicians kill time by talking about their issues and problems while they are waiting for Ma Rainey to arrive. By doing so, Wilson manages to put the white hegemonic influences behind the curtain, as it were, so as to highlight black people's conditions under white domination. Through this technique, Wilson aims to reveal how blacks feel

and behave when they experience maltreatment and marginalization. Thus, the play gradually discloses the aggressive dimensions that black characters, Levee and Ma Rainey, have deployed as a result of the oppression and violence that they have endured.

2.1 Levee's Negative Functioning of Aggression

In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Wilson illustrates the gravity of aggression through Levee Green's persona. Levee, the antagonist, is an ambitious young man in his mid-thirties, who works as a musician in Ma Rainey's band. Wilson depicts Levee as an aggressive, emotionally unbalanced character, who suffers from some psychological problems. Analyzing Levee's aggressiveness entails a return to his past because the essence of that aggressiveness is the physical violence that he witnessed in his childhood. When he was eight years old, a group of white Southerners capitalized on the absence of Levee's father to raid his farm. On that day, Levee's mother was raped. In spite of Levee's young age, he behaved like a man and attacked the rapists with a knife. Unfortunately, one of them wrested the knife from the boy and wounded Levee. Levee's wound would have been fatal, had it not been for his mother, who, despite her pains, helped him and carried him two miles to sew his wound. When his father, Memphis Green, returned home and heard what had happened, he decided to sell his farm and immigrate to the North. After moving his family, he returned to the South seeking retaliation, but the white men caught him and burned him alive. This story serves as a reminder of the otherness of the African-American community and of the atrocities committed against them in the South.

Rape violates one's dignity and honor. It leaves the victim with perpetuated stigma and memory. Levee carries not only the memory of his mother's rape but also a physical mark, which reminds him of the African Americans' inferior status: thus, Levee is branded with an ugly scar, which could symbolize his otherness or, perhaps, the physical and psychological pain that the white man has inflicted upon him. As Crow and Banfield have noted, "Levee's wounds are psychological as well as physical, and despite

his apparent self-assurance *they have never fully healed*" [emphasis is added] (1996, p.48).

The memory of his mother's rape frustrates Levee and fills him with rage. This rage must find a release, either in retaliation or in forgiveness. Otherwise, it leads to self-destruction. Levee has not been able to retaliate against or forgive the white man; as a result, he becomes a self-destructive person. His aggressive and self-destructive behaviors become evident with the unfolding of the events.

After he moved to the North, the subsequent actions in Levee's life can be easily predicted. He grows up in poverty, without a father, in a hegemonic society that exploits the labor of African Americans by limiting them to specific menial jobs. Like any other young man living in America, Levee has the American Dream, which is, essentially, a dream of becoming richer and of realizing a better life and better opportunities (Adams, 1955, p.214). Levee dreams of power and wealth because he wants to change his economic situation. He sees his musical talent as an easy shortcut to this end. Nevertheless, black musicians, like all African Americans in the 1920s, are under the hegemony of white production companies that seize the financial gains received from recording African-American music, while they offer very little in return. These companies perpetuate the violence of early colonialism but in a new form, mainly realized through socioeconomic oppression. When Levee became a musician in Ma Rainey's band, he was put under the oppression of the white man.

From the beginning of the play, Wilson draws a sharp distinction between Levee and the three older musicians: Cutler, Slow Drag, and Toledo. The first musician is the trombonist, Cutler, who is described as the "most sensible" character. His style is "solid and almost unembellished" (Wilson, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*: 20). The second musician is Slow Drag, a bassist, who is "deceptively intelligent, though, as his name implies, he appears to be slow" (20). The third musician is Toledo, a piano player. He is the only educated member in the band and his "insights are thought-provoking" (20). Levee is presented as a flamboyant trumpet player with a "rakish and bright" temper (23). Wilson also hints at the fact that Levee and the band members do not have the

same musical tendencies. While Levee prefers the newly booming swing style, Cutler, Slow Drag, and Toledo are more into the blues.

As a musical genre, the blues evolved from African slaves' work songs and field hollers. The blues songs took their characteristic, now widely recognized form at the end of the nineteenth century. The songs echoed the anxieties of the African-American people and their depression (Ellison, 1964, p.18). For Wilson's characters, the blues is more than a musical genre but a means to keep them close to their culture and ancestors. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Wilson explains this crucial cultural element by stating that the blues songs "contain the cultural responses of blacks in America to the situation that they find themselves in" (Ellison, 1964, p.63). Thereby, the blues songs reflect the history of African Americans and contain the values that should be conveyed to the coming generations.

The end of the 1920s witnessed the fading of the classic form of the blues in favor of more danceable and cheerful styles such as jazz and swing. Therefore, Levee's musical style attracts Sturdyvant, the white producer of Ma Rainey's album. Sturdyvant's character stands for the economic power of the white race and their oppressive nature. Wilson renders Sturdyvant as an opportunistic person who is obsessed with money. As a materialistic person, the only thing that counts for him is how many records he sells. When Sturdyvant notices that the blues music is no longer a required genre, he decides to record Levee's songs mainly because Levee's style is more fashionable and suitable for Northerners' musical tastes. He tells Irvin, Ma Rainey's manager, "Times are changing We've got to jazz it up Put in something different. You know, something wild With a lot of rhythms" (19). In this case, Sturdyvant deals with Levee only because he sees him as an opportunity to obtain more money and nothing more.

Levee is gifted with a prodigious talent, which could turn him into a star, but his insistent quest for wealth and power have trapped him in what could be called the eternal dilemma of minorities. African Americans are considered to be a minority that suffocates under the domination of white American society. So, when a black musician

wants to succeed, he must acquire the acceptance of the majority that happens to be his persecutors.

In an attempt to gain the white producer's approval, Levee composes his songs in the way that Sturdyvant wants, and he imitates the white men's fashion. Despite his blatant indigence, Levee spends a whole week's wages on purchasing expensive shoes. He seeks to compensate or even reject his stereotype since "wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse" offers the colonized a sense of equality with his European colonizers (Kallawy, 2017, p.14). The new shoes reflect Levee's desire to be the equal of the white men; these shoes also function as a symbol of Levee's dreams.

Moreover, Levee adopts Eurocentric values and observes his culture and people through that lens as inferior and backward. He also denies any connection between himself and Africa. Earlier in the play, Slow Drag asks Cutler for a cigarette and recites some of their shared memories to get one. Toledo characterizes this action as African. However, linking Africa with savagery, Levee responds, "I know he ain't talking about me. You don't see me running around in no jungle with no bone between my nose" (32). These words reveal the great distance between Levee and his origins. Fanon stated that the African individual feels that he "is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption to the mother country 's cultural status" (Fanon, 1967, p.18). That is precisely what happens with Levee.

Levee thinks that by relinquishing his Africanism, he will be attached to the power of European civilization; therefore, he detaches himself from the band members and refuses to rehearse with them. His refusal emanates from the belief that he is better than them as he knows how to compose songs. Thus, he asserts:

I ain't like you I got talent! Me and this horn ... we's tight. If my daddy knew I was gonna turn out like this, he would've named me Gabriel. I'm gonna get me a band and make me some records. I done give Mr. Sturdyvant some of my songs I wrote and he say he's gonna let me record them when I get

my band together. ... I know how to play some good music ... not this old jug-band shit. I got a style. (26)

Here, Levee has detracted from the importance of the blues by calling it “old jug-band shit.” By rejecting the music that delineates the origins of the black race, Levee denies his African American identity and past.

Levee’s rejection of his identity and culture is criticized by Toledo, who is acutely aware that Levee’s mistaken beliefs have shaken his conception of the whole situation. For Toledo, the consequences of Levee’s action are dangerous because when a black American depends on white Americans and waits for their approval, he will lose his own identity and become a mere imitation of the white man. Toledo forewarns Levee:

As long as the Colored man look to white folks to put the crown on what he said As long as he looks to white folks for approval ... then he ain’t never gonna find out who he is and what he’s about. He’s just gonna be about what white folks want him to be about. (37)

Here, Toledo’s reference to the mental colonization reflects Wilson’s major concern that even after the end of African Americans’ physical colonization, which is slavery, they are still mentally colonized. The colonizers have implanted the seeds of inferiority in their minds, and this makes them unable to discover who they are. Thus, they have to decolonize their minds if they want to progress.

Moreover, Toledo, in the following quotation, explains the African-American situation and the fact that they are considered to be the “leftover”:

Everybody comes from different places in Africa, right? Come from different tribes and things. Soon awhile they began to make one big stew. You had the carrots, the peas, and potatoes and what not over here [the North]. And over there [the South] you had the meat, the nuts, the okra, corn And then you mix it up and let it cook right through to get the flavors flowing together Then you got one thing. You got a stew. Now you take and eat the stew. You

take and make your history with that stew. All right. Now it's over. Your history's over and you done ate the stew. But you look around, and you see some carrots over here, some potatoes over there. That stew's still there. You done made your history, and it's still there. You can't eat it all. So what you got? You got some leftovers. That's what it is. You got leftovers, and you can't do nothing with it. You are already making you another history Cooking you another meal, and you don't need them leftovers no more. What to do? See, we's the leftovers. The colored man is the leftovers. (57)

Toledo here speaks about African Americans metaphorically. They were forcibly brought to America from different parts of Africa due to colonialism. Through centuries, they were exploited by the system of slavery, which is considered to be the basis of their mutual experience. After the end of slavery, the African American became the "leftover," toward whom the white developed nothing but hatred. Therefore, they are alienated from the American mainstream (Bogumil, 1999, pp.26-27). But now, according to Toledo, the African Americans are at a crossroads, where they -must either resist or assimilate; African Americans should act as one big group and resist their inferior status and, thus, change their conditions.

Wilson apparently manages to advocate Fanon's analysis of the colonial subjects through Toledo's persona. He avers that the colonized should not imitate his colonizers, but instead the colonized should resist and stick to his cultural roots if he wants to survive; in this way, he will be able to accomplish his dreams and his freedom and independence, removed from the colonizer's control.

However, Toledo's socio-political ideas incite Levee's anger and make him a target for Levee's aggressiveness. In *I Ain't Sorry for Nothin I Done: August Wilson's Process of Playwriting*, Herrington has asserted that Levee attacks Toledo verbally because the latter possesses a quality that Levee lacks, which is self-actualization (88). Toledo is reconciled with his African origins, in contrast to Levee, who is incapable of acknowledging his past. Toledo develops a complete understanding of the problem that

faces his people, and he tries to advise Levee not to fall prey to the white producer's oppression. Nevertheless, Levee refuses to listen.

Levee's dreams hinder him from recognizing the larger truth, which is that he has turned into a submissive man, who prefers his oppressors even at the expense of his friends and own society. He has adopted ideologies that alienate him from his ethnic affiliations. His deviation from the African origins and traditions renders him a selfish man. In an interview with Suzan Lori Parks, Wilson underscores the fact that Levee has cut the social ties that bind him to his brothers, African Americans, so that he can collect his fortune, without considering what he will lose in return.

Wilson displays his critique of Levee's actions through the band members, who taunt Levee for his compliance toward and approval of white hegemony. When Strurdyvant comes to the band room and orders Levee to rehearse, Levee responds, "yesssir." Levee's response starts a controversy between him and the band members because it characterizes his fear and servility. They start commenting:

CUTLER. You hear, Levee? You hear this nigger? —Yessuh, we's rehearsing, boss.

SLOW DRAG. I heard him. Seen him too. Shuffling them feet.

TOLEDO: Aw, Levee can't help it none. He's like all of us. Spooked up with the white men. (67)

Levee reacts aggressively to these comments. He does not understand that they are advising him because they care for him. They are a second family that compensates for the loss of his biological family. He declares:

I can say yessir to whoever I please. What you got to do with it? I know how to handle white folks. I have been handling them for thirty-two years, and now you gonna tell me how to do it. Just cause I say yessir don't mean I'm spooked up with him. I know what I'm doing. Let me handle him my way. (68)

To justify his submissive behavior, Levee explains that just because he says “yessir,” this does not necessarily mean he is afraid of the white man. These words are only a suitable means to get what he wants: money and power. Therefore, he believes that the only way to attain what he is looking for is by pleasing white men and giving them what they want to hear. He goes further, though, and states that he has learned this attitude from his father, who had sold his land to the gang that raped his wife, smiling in their faces. After that, he had returned and killed four of them before they could catch him. Levee, however, has modified his father’s strategy and given it another meaning. His father, Memphis Green, had indeed smiled in the faces of his oppressors in order to hide his real intention of killing them, while Levee uses this strategy for personal ends. As Sandra Adell has commented, “Levee lets his ambition dictate how to do battle with his oppressors” (60).

Levee is dealing with his oppressors, the same people who are responsible for the death of his father and the rape of his mother. Instead of attacking them, Levee accepts their domination and seeks an alliance with them, even if that means opposing Ma Rainey and changing her music (Clerk, 2009, p.58). He hopes that by doing this, he will overcome oppression. Yet, Levee’s sense of victimization arises when Ma Rainey refuses to record his version of “Black Bottom” and brings her stammering nephew, Sylvester, to help her in performing the song. Ma Rainey’s conduct angers Levee, who now views her as an obstacle in the way of accomplishing his dreams. So, he releases his anger on her nephew by making fun of his stammering. He begins in this manner:

LEVEE. What kind of . . . All right, Cutler! Let me see you fix that! You straighten that out! You hear that shit, Slow Drag? How in the hell the boy gonna do the part, and he can’t even talk!

SYLVESTER: W-w-w-who’s you to tell me what to do, nigger! This ain’t your band! Ma tell me to d-d-d-do it and I’m gonna do it. You can go to hell, n-n-n-nigger!

LEVEE: B-b-b-boy ain't anybody studying you. You go on and fix that one, Cutler. You fix that one and I'll . . . I'll shine your shoes for you. You go on and fix that one. (65-66)

According to Levee, his version of "Black Bottom" is the best version, and there is no reason for rejecting it; for Ma Rainey, Levee's version distorts her song. He has composed it to please the white producer, and for this reason she discards it.

In the second act, the feeling of victimization and oppression that Levee has hidden ignites his anger. He vents his wrath in aggressive reactions that are displayed in two scenes. In the first scene, Cutler and God are the targets of Levee's anger. Cutler tells the story of the black minister, Reverend Gates, who was insulted by a group of white men who had taken his Bible and cross and had made him dance until they grew bored. Cutler narrates this incident to prove that white individuals do not respect the black man, even if he is a churchman. This incident reminds Levee of his mother and her prayers during her physical assault.

Embittered by this memory, Levee pours his rage on Cutler's God, asserting that his God does not care for black people who are repressed by the white men because he is the "white man's God" (98). Levee argues that if God does not discriminate among his creatures, then God should have been present when his mother was raped, when Reverend Gate was humiliated, and when African Americans were lynched and killed for centuries. He states, "God hate niggers! Hate them with all the fury in his heart. Jesus don't love you, nigger! Jesus hate your black ass" (98). Levee loses not only his African-American cultural identity but also his faith in God. Wilson refers to that in the first act when Levee announces his intention to sell his soul to the devil: "I ask about the devil . . . to see him coming so I can sell him this one [soul] I got. Cause if there's a god up there, he done went to sleep" (34). Levee's blasphemy sparks a fight between the two. Levee's aggressiveness is so intense that he brandishes a knife and challenges Cutler's God. He shouts:

I'll cut your heart out! Come on, turn your back on me! Come on!
What's the matter? Where is you? [. . .] Turn your back on me! Come on! [. . .]

(Levee folds his knife and stands triumphantly) Your God ain't shit, Cutler.
(100).

Through highlighting this incident, Wilson points out that African Americans were stripped of their religion and forced into worshipping a

God that does not resemble them. They are venerating the white image of God, the image that is used to oppress them and define their blackness as a sin (Freedman, 1987, pp.39-40). Wilson does not reject Christianity but the Christian tenets and imageries that endorse whiteness. He also uses this incident as a foreshadowing of how the play will end.

Levee's aggression escalates only at the end of the play, when Sturdyvant reneges on his promise and refuses to produce Levee's songs. Instead, he decides to buy these songs at a low price. Thus, Sturdyvant crushes Levee's dreams and leaves the band's room. Only at this moment does Levee understand that he is "the leftover," having experienced the economic exploitation that African Americans inevitably encounter under white oppression. However, this realization comes too late because he has already become a victim.

The anger and frustration that Levee feels at the dashing of his dreams, behind which lies the whole history of white brutality directed against his family, suddenly explode into violence when Toledo steps on his shoe. These shoes have come to be a sign of Levee's ambition and self-esteem. When Toledo accidentally scuffs them, Levee finds in Toledo an ersatz to the white man who has rejected his songs. He starts yelling at Toledo, "Look at what you done to my shoe, nigger! I ain't stepped on your shoe! What you wanna step on my shoe for?" (109). Toledo tries to ignore Levee, hoping that he will calm down, but this minor incident becomes the focus of Levee's rejection and frustration.

Blinded by rage, Levee heads towards Toledo and stabs him. According to Wilson, Levee releases his anger in the wrong direction. He kills a man who shares his suffering and who feels the same powerlessness, a man who can help in constructing the racial awareness of his nation. Toledo also serves as Wilson's mouthpiece since he

instructs his friends on their identity, heritage, and problems. For example, Toledo airs Wilson's views on the need for education, the need for black people to know their history and culture, and the need to work collectively for the welfare of the community. Accordingly, his needless death as an indirect consequence of white oppression is a great loss to the black community. Levee should have killed his oppressor, the one responsible for his suffering, and not an innocent man whose only fault was being present in the wrong place at the wrong time. By killing Toledo, Levee destroys himself and ends up in prison for committing what is called black-on-black crime.

2.2 Ma Rainey's Positive Functioning of Aggression

Unlike Levee's aggression, Ma Rainey's aggression can be described as a protective reaction that she adapts to consolidate her own identity. Before Ma Rainey's aggressiveness is analyzed, it should be noted that Ma Rainey's character is based on a real historical figure, a professional songstress known as Gertrude Pridgett. Gertrude, or Ma Rainey, was born on April 26, 1886, in Georgia, Alabama. At the age of fourteen, she made her theater debut in a talent show called "The Bunch of Blackberries," which introduced her vocal capabilities. After the talent show, she continued her career as a singer, performing in black minstrel shows with her husband William Rainey. Despite her humble beginnings in festivals and circuses, Ma Rainey became one of the most popular female down-home blues singers in the country. She sang beside legendary musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Buster Baily, and others. In the 1920s, the Paramount company decided to produce her records, and, thus, Ma Rainey's voice was commoditized by the hegemonic production companies that exploited her. Ultimately, her fame did not last long due to the widely spread racism that put her in financial distress. Her career declined in the 1930s, and she secluded herself in her hometown of Georgia, where she died.

Ma Rainey's songs reflect not only her sincere commitment to her southern roots and African heritage but also her rebellion against the white discourse that

degrades her race and that forces undesirable conditions upon them. Throughout her songs, Ma Rainey defies the limitations set on oppressing African Americans, and she comments on the political and social issues. Wilson chose her to be the protagonist of his play because he wanted to prove that aggressive acts can come from two different sources but can have different outcomes. Accordingly, the dramatist contextualizes a black female and a black male in order to reveal to the audience how they employ their aggressiveness in different ways.

Ma Rainey is a member of a community that lies at the bottom level of society. Understanding this, the reader realizes that Ma Rainey is oppressed, just like any African-American individual. As Wilson stresses, Ma Rainey's records make enormous profits for the white entrepreneurs, Irvin and Sturdyvant, yet she earns only \$200 for the recording session. In comparison to the average annual income of the 1920s, which is \$1,236, Ma Rainey's income is far below the average. Thus, the revenue from her music records goes primarily to the white producers. Besides the economic exploitation, she has been maltreated by the white society. An incident with a racist taxi driver who refuses to drive her because of her skin color exemplifies the racism that she and all African Americans have experienced in the US.

In fact, the incident develops into a brawl that ends with Ma Rainey being arrested and charged with assault. Through putting Ma Rainey in such a situation, Wilson sets the stage for her entrance. In her first appearance, Ma Rainey refuses to be detained or treated like any other ordinary person. She reacts aggressively and orders Irvin, her manager, to tell the police officer who she is.

MA RAINEY. Tell the men who he's messing with!

POLICEMAN. Do you know this lady?

MA RAINEY. Just tell the man who I am! That's all you gotta do.

POLICEMAN. Lady, will you let me talk, huh?

MA RAINEY. Tell the man who I am!

IRVIN. Wait a minute . . . wait a minute! Let me handle it. Ma, will you let me handle it?

MA RAINEY. Tell him who he's messing with!

IRVIN. Okay! Okay! Give me a chance! Officer, this is one of our recording artists . . . Ma Rainey.

MA RAINEY. Madame Rainey! Get it straight! [. . .] (48)

Ma Rainey's declaration of her identity affirms her strong personality.

From the first moment of the play, Ma Rainey is presented as a powerful, defiant woman who threatens the superiority of her white oppressors and challenges their dominant discourse by imposing her music upon them. She knows that they deal with her only because her records make more money than any other records. Accordingly, she acts in a demanding way to legitimize her authority and to force the white producers to treat her in the way she wants. However, Ma Rainey's behavior enrages Sturdyvant, who is unable to tolerate the fact that such an African-American woman can reduce his authority. He puts it in an obvious manner when he declares as follows:

STURDYVANT. I don't care what she [Ma Rainey] calls herself. I'm not putting up with it. I just want to get her in here . . . record those songs on that list . . . and get her out. Just like clockwork, huh?

IRVIN. Like clockwork, Mel. You just stay out of the way and let me handle it.

STURDYVANT. Yeah . . . Yeah . . . You handled it last time. Remember? She marches in here like she owns the damn place . . . Doesn't like the songs we picked out . . . Says her throat is sore . . . Doesn't want to do more than one take . . .

IRVIN. Okay . . . okay . . . I was here! I know all about it.

STURDYVANT. Complains about the building is cold . . . And then . . . trips over the mike wire and threatens to sue me. That's taking care of it? (18)

Sturdyvant complains about Ma Rainey because he finds her behavior inappropriate in comparison to the collective norms that determine how black individuals should behave in the presence of white people. During the Jim Crow era, black people were expected to be submissive, but Ma Rainey breaks the norms. She is an exceptional character, who has controlled her own life and gained economic sufficiency. The satisfaction of the white producers is not on her agenda. Her delayed appearance in the first act is a manifestation of her power and her abhorrence to the white hegemony.

In a conversation with her bandleader, Cutler, Ma Rainey relates her degradation at the hands of her manager. Despite the supposed close friendship between the two, she has only once been invited to Irvin's home in order to perform some songs in front of his friends. Such actions are the reasons behind her anger. She states as follows:

They [the whites] don't care anything about me. All they want is my voice. Well, I done learned that, and they gonna treat me like I want to be treated no matter how much it hurt them. They back there now calling me all kinds of names . . . calling me everything but a child of God. But they can't do anything else. They ain't got what they wanted yet. As soon as they got my voice down on them recording machines, then it's just like if I'd be some whore and they roll over and put their pants on. Ain't got no use for me then. (79)

This, in fact, unfolds her resentment of the hostile world in which she lives, a world that takes everything she has and gives her nothing in return, a world in which her talent is exploited by the white man (Pereira, 1995, p.20).

Ma Rainey goes further and articulates the bitter truth: "If you coloured and made them some money, then you all right with them.

Otherwise, you just a dog in the alley" (79). She knows very well that black artists are considered mere entertainers and that black people are stereotyped as lazy people; this fact bothers her and deepens her frustration. Consequently, she turns into an

aggressive person, but, in contrast to Levee, her aggression is geared towards her oppressors, not toward her own race.

With her adherents, Ma Rainey reveals the caring and loving side of her personality when she encourages her stuttering nephew, Sylvester, and gives him an opportunity to perform with dignity, so disregarding all the qualms about his incapability to sing or speak properly. She already knows that life is difficult for African Americans—and harsher still for a stammering boy just at the beginning of his life. Like any other young man, Sylvester needs to discover his identity and to find his place in the larger society. Consequently, Ma Rainey decides to help him by securing a job for him in her band and getting him to her side.

IRVIN. He stutters, Ma. They say he stutters.

MA RAINEY. I don't care if he can do. I promised the boy he could do the part . . . and he's gonna do it! That's all there is to it! That's all there is to it. He don't stutter all the time. Get a microphone down here for him. (74)

On the other hand, Ma Rainey's aggressiveness appears whenever she confronts her oppressors. In her first scene, Ma Rainey uses an aggressive tone in addressing Sturdyvant because she knows that he exploits her. Her aggressiveness is verbal, but it increases when she learns that Sturdyvant and Irvin have decided to change her song "Black Bottom." For her, the blues songs not only contain the history of the African-American people but also connect them with their cultural traditions. She regards her music as a means to assert her African identity. Any interference in her songs is regarded by her as an infringement upon her identity. Therefore, Ma Rainey scolds Irvin for condoning her opinion and planning to record Levee's version of "Black Bottom," saying:

You decide, huh? I'm just a bump on the log. I'm gonna go whichever way the river drift. Is that it? You and Sturdyvant decided [...]. I'm gonna tell you something Irvin...and you go up there and tell Sturdyvant. What you all say

don't count with me. Ma listens to her heart. Ma listens to the voice inside her.
(63)

Ma Rainey reminds Irvin that she is not a passive person and that he, along with all the other musicians, works for her; therefore, she has the final say, and no one can force her into something she does not want. This aggressiveness is needed because without it Ma Rainey might not be able to survive.

Her aggressiveness extends to Levee because he is eager to change the music that defines the history of his race. Whereas the main aim of Ma Rainey's music is the immortalizing of African-American history and heritage, Levee effaces this history by endorsing Sturdyvant's orders, and he does not stop there. Levee acts arrogantly toward Ma Rainey, flirts with one of her acquaintances, and harasses her nephew. After the end of the recording session, Ma Rainey fires Levee because she realizes that his beliefs cannot be altered.

At the end of the play, Ma Rainey leaves the studio victoriously because she has preserved her identity and dignity by signing a contract that reserves her right to perform in the way she likes. She demonstrates that her adherence to African-American culture is the only way for black people to survive. Moreover, her actions bear the seeds of resistance that will develop into a revolution or movement, namely the civil rights movement, aimed against the colonizer.

In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Wilson has dissected two kinds of aggression: positive and negative. In Levee's character, negative aggression is induced by a personal injury that is embedded in his childhood. Levee's inability to handle this injury brings forth negative emotions that are prejudicial and that cost him his own freedom and the life of an innocent person. Ma Rainey's aggression is positive since she channels it in the right direction. She deals with the impact of white hegemony in wise, practical ways, and this alters the situation. She proves herself to be a strong, independent woman who stands against her oppressors, protecting and confirming her African identity.

3. DOUBLE AGGRESSION IN *FENCES*

Fences (1985) is one of the American plays that addresses the psychological and economic problems that confront black males in the US due to the white hegemony. The play has been praised by many critics, such as Ladrica Menson-Furr, who described it as “an American dramatic masterpiece” (2008, p.41). *Fences*, as the name suggests, alludes to various societal and economic barriers that a black American figure encounters and sees. Wilson employs this title as a collective metaphor that tellingly encompasses physical, non-physical, and spiritual circumstances, under which black characters suffer and which they yearn to reform. Furthermore, the plural form this appealing title also connotes the plurality and multiple nature of the black. As this chapter observes and illustrates, how the applying metaphoric perpetual denotative and connotative nature, that is offered by *Fences*, becomes a lifelong experience that the characters, especially Troy Maxson, have to deal with.

Troy Maxson, the protagonist, has been oppressed and abused by both his father and white society. For that reason, “double aggression” is a suitable title for this chapter. Oppression is seen in the socioeconomic pressures that white Americans create in order to protect the existing monopoly of power. Troy, as Wilson presents him, is an aggressive man who is unsatisfied by his inferiority and by the socioeconomic conditions of the life he is living. His dissatisfaction incites him to release his suppressed anger on his family members. Consequently, this release of anger leads to the destruction of the family

August Wilson intentionally sets the play in 1957, a sensitive time in the history of African Americans, during which civil-rights activists defied their post-colonizers and the forces of racial segregation preventing them from uplifting and from merging their race with the American mainstream. It was due to the efforts of those activists that legal segregation was erased in 1964. However, one ought not to ignore the substantial effects on the African-American psyche of the oppressive racial policies pursued in the US. These policies have turned the US into a breeding ground for different aggressive and

destructive behaviors that can lead the individual to his own destruction or the destruction of the people surrounding him. To analyze aggression in this play, Troy's life must be divided into two parts: young Troy, under aggression, and elder Troy, riding aggression.

3.1 Young Troy Under Aggression

In the course of the play, Troy's evolution into an aggressive person has been preceded by many parameters that have impacted his life. Sequentially, these various factors have rendered him the victim of the racist white society. The illustration of Troy's position as a victim requires a close examination of the oppression enacted by his father.

Troy's father is a frustrated man because of his inability to support his family. Wilson presents the father as a sharecropper, whose gains are not enough to raise eleven kids. Through Maxson's character, Wilson illustrates that the African-American man's inability to support his family results directly from the economic limitations that worsen his poverty and that drown him in debts. It is worth noting that during the first half of the twentieth century, African-American males had to tolerate all kinds of oppression and discrimination, including poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of financial sources. As a result, they turned their frustration into aggressive attitudes, directed toward their families, particularly their wives, being the closest to them. Thus, in the story, thwarted by racial oppression, Troy's father victimizes his own family. Many African-American women, on the other hand, could not bear the brutal behavior of their depressed husbands and took the path of abandonment as a means of salvation. Thus, in the story, unable to tolerate the brutality, Troy's mother runs away and leaves her children to further pressures, suffering not only racial oppression but also paying the price for her departure.

Without their mother, Troy and his brothers find themselves oppressed by an aggressive father, who enslaves them to pay his accumulated debts. He knows that paying the debts requires more money, and the only way to obtain it is by making his

children work for him. Thus, his children become field hands. The years that Troy has spent in his father's household have affected him the most because he has not seen any compassion from his father. He stoically discloses:

Sometimes I wish I hadn't known my daddy. He ain't cared nothing about no kids. A kid to him wasn't nothing. All he wanted was for you to learn how to walk so he could start you to working. When it come time for eating . . . he ate first. If there was anything left over, that's what you got. Man would sit down and eat two chickens and give you the wing. (Wilson, *Fences*: 50-51)

This dearth of affection and asperity are what push Troy away from his home. In Act One, Scene Four, Troy accentuates his father's aggressiveness by reminiscing about a violent incident that happened between them in his childhood. As Troy recalls, the stimulus of their physical brawl was a young girl whom Troy loved, and for whom, he discerned, his father also had affections. Accordingly, when old Maxson caught his son in an intimate situation with that girl, he started to beat the fourteen-year-old Troy. The young Troy does not fathom why he has been beaten until he sees his father trying to rape his girlfriend; at that moment, Troy loses all his fears and engages in a physical confrontation with his father.

In that battle, Troy notices for the first time the negative effects of white hegemony and how their oppression changes the personality of African-American males, turning them into aggressive individuals who might harm their own families. When Troy raises his head and glimpses his father's face, just before he beats him up, he recognizes the toughness of his father's life and how white society has flogged his father into subjection—to the point that he abuses his own son. This is Troy's first indirect glance at oppression, and the damage it can cause. Troy's narration reflects the psyche of an aggressive figure:

Now I thought he was mad cause I ain't done my work. But I see where he was chasing me off so he could have the girl for himself. When I see what the matter of it was, I lost all fear of my daddy. Right there is where I become a

man . . . at fourteen years of age. (Pause) Now it was my turn to run him off. I picked up them same reins that he had used on me. I picked up them reins and commenced to whupping on him. The gal jumped up and run off . . . and when my daddy turned to face me, I could see why the devil had never come to get him. .. cause he was the devil himself. I don't know what happened. When I woke up, I was lying right there by the creek, and Blue . . . this old dog we had . . . was licking my face.

I thought I was blind. I couldn't see nothing. Both my eyes were swollen shut.
(52)

Beaten and cast down beside a brook, Troy suddenly realizes that he has lived under the oppression of his violent father for many years. Separation now has become a necessity for freeing himself from his father's enslavement and for discovering his own subjectivity. Thus, Troy decides to leave the South and to move to the North.

Troy is just like his mother in this way: the hardships of life and the cruelty he has encountered force him to abandon those whom he loves and to set out on the road to true coexistence. Bono, Troy's best friend, confirms this fact by saying,

A lot of them [blacks] did. Back in those days what you talking about . . . they walk out their front door and just take on down one road or another and keep on walking. [. . .] Just keep on walking till you come to something else. (51)

From a historical perspective, the movement from one place to another was not unusual for African Americans. Their ancestors had already been removed from their native lands in Africa. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, black immigration to the North had been undertaken voluntarily. Yet this emigration is condemned by August Wilson, who believed that the African-American situation might have been better if they had remained in the agrarian South and had kept close to their culture:

We were land-based agrarian people from Africa. We were uprooted from Africa, and we spent 200 years developing our culture as black Americans. And we left the south. We uprooted ourselves and attempted to transplant this

culture to the pavement of the industrialized North. And it was a transplant that did not take. I think if we had stayed in the South, we would have been a stronger people. (qtd. in Shannon, p.13)

Through Troy's character, Wilson dramatizes the negative impacts of leaving the South and of ignoring one's cultural heritage because this leads to nothing except an increased sense of frustration. For Wilson, the African Americans moved to the North in order to get rid themselves of slavery, but they ironically found themselves confined by social and economic barriers that white society had delimited (Gantt, 2009, p.9).

A new chapter has been opened in Troy's life through his immigration to the North as he also completes "two stages of his emerging new identity ... and both involved separation leading to freedom—from his father and from the farm" (Pereira, 1995, pp.39-40). His liberation does not lead him to a paradise or a better future but into an inferno, a metaphoric hell in which he directly faces the white man's pressures. Before reaching the North, Troy thought that he would find a job, start a decent life, or at least be treated just like any ordinary American citizen. These expectations collapse when he settles in Pittsburgh and discovers that the city is dominated by white men who reject African Americans and treat them as the "other." He describes the situation in the following way:

I walked on down to Mobile and hitched up with some of them fellows that was heading this way. Got up here and found out . . . not only couldn't you get a job; you couldn't find no place to live. I thought I was in freedom. Shhh. Colored folks living down there on the riverbanks in whatever kind of shelter they could find for themselves. Right down there under the Brady Street Bridge. Living in shacks made of sticks and tarpaper. Messed around there and went from bad to worse. Started stealing. First it was food. Then I figured, hell, if I steal money I can buy me some food. Buy me some shoes too! One thing led to another. (54)

Actually, Troy finds himself in another hostile environment, but this time his father's image is replaced by the white man. The aggressiveness of the white race is translated through the discriminatory treatment that African Americans receive. Troy narrates the fact that it is because of his race that he does not receive any warm welcome in this new racial community, which keeps referring to him as an unwanted other. Socially besieged, Troy clarifies that he has lost the ability to improve his economic status.

Generally, from an historical perspective, white citizens could not accept the presence of black Southerners in their Northern states. Therefore, they intentionally relegated the economic status of black people by creating a gap in racial employment. During the 1940s and 1950s, there was a preference for white immigrants in industrial sectors at the expense of black laborers. This led to a lack of employment among African Americans, and even those who were employed could not find better occupations than, for instance, waiters or janitors. Unemployment is one of the major problems that confront African-American males till the present moment. In the second half of the twentieth century, the rates of unemployment witnessed a rapid increase among black youths, who, in return, resorted to robbery as a way to earn a living (Gibbs, 1988, p.8). Hence, the increased rates of crimes coincided with the pervasiveness of unemployment, and Troy's character is a good example of this fact.

In Pittsburgh, Troy discovers that he cannot access the same jobs and wages as white laborers. Accordingly, he becomes a criminal. Initially, Troy steals to provide his daily needs. When he marries Lyon's mother, he finds himself burdened by the responsibility of feeding three mouths. Being an outlaw, Troy ends up in prison for killing a man in one of his robberies. He narrates as follows:

Now I got to worry about feeding you and her. Got to steal three times as much. Went out one day looking for somebody to rob. .. that's what I was, a robber. I'll tell you the truth. I'm ashamed of it today. But it's the truth. Went to rob this fellow, pulled out my knife and he pulled out a gun. Shot me in the chest. It felt just like somebody had taken a hot branding iron and laid it on me. When

he shot me I jumped at him with my knife. They told me I killed him and they put me in the penitentiary and locked me up for fifteen years. (54-55)

Troy is imprisoned for a crime he has not willingly committed. In fact, Troy's transformation into a criminal is caused by the white Americans who denied him a place within their society. If Troy had found adequate conditions in which to live, he would not have resorted to crime and so lost fifteen years of his life behind the walls of confinement. Consequently, the white race is responsible for Troy's devastation.

3.2 Elder Troy Riding Aggression

Troy's aggressive personality has not emerged overnight. Its emergence has been a gradual process, engendered by the frustrations he has gone through, especially after his release from prison. Prison, first of all, is a social-reforming institution that is part of a white system that seeks to control blacks. The main reasons behind the erection of this institution are to rehabilitate criminals and to reduce delinquency. Though black males are under the white man's observation, there is no tangible decrease in crimes, and black-on-black crime continues even within the confines of prison. Thus, prison, the presumed correctional institution, fails in reforming the black males and becomes a subversive institution.

Troy escapes from the violent atmosphere inside the prison by learning how to play baseball, which offers him a new direction, a new opportunity to correct his wrong path and attain self-esteem. The life of a baseball player is onerous, and playing for baseball teams means moving from one place to another and spending most of the year on the field. Troy quickly shows a full commitment to this sport and proves himself to be one of the best players.

As a game, "baseball has long been regarded as a metaphor for the American dream: an expression of hope, democratic values, and the drive for individual success" (Koprince, 2006, p.349). Before completing his sentence and leaving the jail, Troy

believes in the American Dream and imagines his life in terms of being a successful baseball player; however, after his release, Troy soon discovers that his blackness prevents him from participating in the major baseball leagues. Deprived of the chance to become a baseball player, Troy loses his faith in the American Dream. For him, the American Dream is an illusion, and African Americans will never attain it because they are not given equal opportunities. This is the straw that breaks the camel's back, turning Troy into a frustrated man who blames the white world for his misfortunes.

In the real world, Troy finds that with his illiteracy and lack of skills he can only gain employment as a "garbage collector" in a sanitation department, which is a "menial, back-breaking job that at its best parallels the physicality of picking cotton" (Hannah, 2007, p.167). Subsequently, he meets Rose and marries her; she gives birth to his second son, Cory, and life goes on. When the play commences, Troy has already been laboring as a "garbage man" for eighteen years.

To portray the inferiority of African Americans, Wilson opens the first act with Troy and Jim Bono (Troy's friend from prison) standing on the back of a truck, emptying garbage cans. They start a conversation in which Troy unravels the inequalities and the economic exploitation that African Americans face in postcolonial America, where they are expected to perform low-paying, unskilled labor while the best jobs are given to whites. Troy's sense of victimization emboldens him to question the white authorities. He asks, "Why you got the white men driving and the colored lifting? [. . .] What's the matter, don't I count?" (2). Unable to answer such a question, Troy's supervisor sends him to the labor union.

Essentially, Troy's sense of victimization springs from the psychological pains that were engendered through his being denied the opportunity to play baseball with the major teams. Though two decades have passed, he cannot get over this incident because of his love for baseball. At the start of the play, Troy lives in a promising era that carries the signs of change, but he refuses to acknowledge these changes. Accordingly, when a college recruiter offers Troy's son a football scholarship, Troy opposes the idea, believing that whites will not let his son play, even if he is talented. According to John M. Hannah, Troy refuses Cory's recruitment because he "can only envision his son in

terms of the forces that shaped his own life” (2007, p.159). Troy does not want his son to go through the same experience and end up frustrated just like him. He states, “I decided seventeen years ago that boy wasn’t getting involved in no sports. Not after what they did to me in the sports” (2007, p.39). Bono and Rose try to convince Troy that times are changing and that they are living in an era of greater civil rights, where equal opportunities are provided. Troy, however, has lived under oppression his whole life and knows that the new legislation does not announce the change of African Americans’ circumstances. Troy has his own philosophy and viewpoint concerning their position as the “other.” He believes that their position as the “other” cannot be altered unless hearts change. It seems that Wilson has opted to present the one and only solution for African Americans’ problematic “other” state through Troy’s point of view.

The love of power is deeply rooted in whites’ hearts to the extent that they would not allow any improvement in African Americans’ conditions; this explains their poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. To illustrate how white hegemony aggravates black males’ frustration and poverty, Wilson creates a scene where a group of white men come into the black neighborhoods and easily seize any amount of available money. Firstly, Wilson introduces Mr. Glickman, a white salesman who sells furniture to black Americans who cannot afford to buy these goods from furniture stores; however, Mr. Glickman does so on the condition that lifetime charges are incurred by his customers. Subsequently, Wilson depicts the police and the courts as government institutions that detain black males from the streets in order to exact fines from them and that strongly reaffirm the whites’ power. Accordingly, the white-controlled economic forces penetrate the African-American community and add another layer of expenditures so as to maintain the poverty of black citizens.

Troy admits that his conditions are connected to his skin color and that he is thereby doomed to live in such circumstances. While Rose believes that one’s economic conditions can be improved by chance, this belief pushes her to try her luck at gambling. She does not bet large sums of money because she knows that her luck might work against her. In contrast, Troy regards gambling as a waste of money because he has

already lost all his chances and knows that there is no possibility for change. So, he tells Rose, “You ain’t doing nothing but throwing your money away” (Hannah, 2007, p.29).

As Kim Pereira has suggested that the only thing that Troy has succeeded in is survival, but even that could not have been done without the injury of Gabe, Troy’s younger brother (1995, p.43). Gabe is presented to the audience as a former soldier in the American army, who lost his sanity during World War II. Gabe believes that he has died and gone to heaven; therefore, he acts like an angel. Every month, Gabe receives three thousand dollars from the American government as compensation for his mental disability. Gabe’s pension has been taken by Troy, who invests the money in erecting his own house. Before the play commences, Gabe has left his brother’s house and is renting out two rooms. Thus, he leaves Troy once again with the fact that he cannot afford the costs of living without his disabled brother. This reality agonizes and depresses Troy.

The socioeconomic pressures magnify Troy’s anger and turn him into an aggressive person just like his father. This recurrent situation reminds the readers of Fanon’s thread that the colonial experience, with the oppression it involves, renders the colonized person unreasonable. He vents his wrath on his race for the slightest provocation. Fanon (1963), in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, says that:

He [the colonized] is incapable of grasping detail when looking at the whole, and he absolutizes the element and takes the part for the whole. Thus, he will have total reactions when confronted with particular incitements and with insignificant causes such as a fig tree, a gesture, or a sheep on his land. His congenital aggressivity finds ways of expressing itself on the slightest pretext. It is a state of aggressivity in its purest form. (p.300)

In Troy’s case, the aggressive attitudes are elicited by what he considers to be inappropriate responses from his family members. Thus, his family is the only aggrieved. In contrast to his father’s physical aggression, Troy’s aggression takes a verbal form, which is mostly directed against his sons, Lyons and Cory.

Wilson presents Cory, Troy's youngest son, as a seventeen-year-old boy who has athletic skills and who aspires to get a football scholarship. On his first appearance in the play, it is evident that the relationship between father and son is not harmonious. It is more of a colonizer-colonized relationship than a father-son relationship. To clarify the nature of this relationship, Wilson represents the father and the son building a fence together. The fence here signifies the otherness of African Americans or, in other words, the color barrier that has divided them from the American community and prevented them from having any kind of development.

During the chore of building the fence, Troy perceives that his son believes in the American Dream. Therefore, Troy uses the color barrier as a providential proof for the fact that the American Dream is unattainable for African Americans (Koprince, 2006, p.350). He does not want his son to have any contact with the sports world that prevented his own admission to its ranks. However, their discussion turns into an aggressive argument: Troy denies the possibility that a prosperous future can be built by playing sport with whites because they will not allow his son to play frequently. According to Troy, learning a trade or any other skill would be more profitable than playing football. Cory refutes his father's claims about the inequalities that the black athlete might face and insists on his beliefs, replying, "They got some white guys on the teams that don't play every day. You can't play everybody at the same time" (34). Cory's dream has a solid foundation because many black players have joined segregated teams and managed to play. Troy, on the other hand, negates Cory's potentiality to survive in such teams and believes that a black player has to be extremely talented to get a chance to play:

The colored guy got to be twice as good before he get on the team. That's why I don't want you to get all tied up in them sports. Man on the team and what it gets him? They got the colored on the team and they don't use them. (34)

What angers Troy is the fact that his son has resigned his job in the A&P store in order to pursue his football practices. From Troy's point of view, this foolish act proves his son's immaturity. Instead of encouraging Cory to follow his dreams, Troy clips his son's wings by commanding him to return to his job and to forget the football team (Pereira, 1995, p.43). Troy states:

The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with the football no way. You go on and get your book learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use.(35)

Troy's consent for Cory's football scholarship is one of the requirements for attending college; Troy, however, will never give his consent because he cannot reconcile himself with and look beyond his past.

Without realizing, Troy has internalized the oppression that has been practiced upon him and tries to oppress all the people around him, so demanding their respect. He states:

I'm the boss . . . you understand? I'm the boss around here. I do the only saying what counts. [. . .] Nigger, as long as you in my house, you put that sir on the end of it when you talk to me! (37)

Such words cause considerable damage to Troy's relationship with Cory, who is now unsure of Troy's affections and inquires whether his father has ever liked him. To this question, Troy retorts that there is no law on earth that obliges him to like Cory. He goes further and delivers a hurtful speech, and through it he reveals that what connects him with his son is parental duty. He has brought Cory into the world; therefore, the responsibility to provide Cory's material needs falls on his shoulder. He says:

It's my job. It's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house . . . sleep you behind on my bedclothes . . . fill you belly up with my food . . . cause you my son. You my flesh and blood. Not cause I like you! Cause it's my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you. (38)

In fact, Troy is warning Cory about the difficulties of the outside world, but in a gruff manner. As Harry Elam has noted, "Troy's self-involved concept of familial duty and responsibility prevents him from seeing the harm he causes, the pain his decisions inflict on other family members" (2007, p.131). Troy's experience as a black man has awakened him to the animosity of the white world. Therefore, he tries to prepare his son for this hostile world by showing no kindness to him (Wattley, 2010, p.6). Unfortunately, Troy's message injures Cory and hurts his feelings, when it is, in fact, intended to strengthen him. Even Lyons, Troy's oldest son, is not immune from Troy's severity.

He is a talented musician in his mid-thirties but "he is more caught up in the rituals and 'idea' of being a musician than in the actual practice of the music" (Wattley, 2010, p.13). Lyons does not have a permanent job, and like many black musicians, he experiences difficulties in making a living. Therefore, he resides with his girlfriend, Bonnie, and depends on her income. This style of living is criticized by Troy, who taunts Lyons for his musical tendencies and his lack of responsibility every time he lends Lyons money. For Troy, Lyons must leave music and find a real job through which he can support his family. Music for Lyons, however, is an escape from the pressures of life. Thus, when Troy criticizes Lyons' lifestyle, he forces his son into a verbal confrontation. In this confrontation, Lyons reminds Troy that he played no role in his upbringing; therefore, Troy's opinion does not count. In contrast to Cory, Lyons can bring this dispute to an end with a decisive response, "You can't change me, Pope. I'm thirty-four years old. If you wanted to change me, you should have been there when I was growing up" (18).

On the other hand, the dispute between Cory and Troy reaches its climax when the latter goes to the A&P and discovers that his son has not returned to his job as

promised. Troy views Cory's insistence on playing football as disrespect for his authority and power as a father, and he will not allow such disobedience. Therefore, he decides to impose his decision on his son by meeting Mr. Zellman, Cory's coach, and requesting Cory's exclusion from the team. With this act, Troy prevents Cory from achieving his dreams and, thus, destroys his relationship with his son. From Cory's perspective, Troy's disapproval emanates from his sense of jealousy, and he reveals this bitter truth: "Just cause you [Troy] didn't have a chance! You just scared I'm gonna be better than you, that's all" (58). Whether Troy's disapproval is motivated by jealousy or protection, he has deprived his son of the chance to enter college and, thus, limited him professionally.

In Act Two, Scene One, Cory's verbal confrontation with his father at the end of Act One turns into a physical combat when Troy declares his adulterous affair with a woman called Alberta. This declaration hurts his wife, Rose. Wilson presents Rose as a devoted and self-sacrificing woman who has stood by her husband through thick and thin. Through the whole period of their marriage, Rose has put her marriage and family at the top of her priorities. In spite of Troy's shortcomings, Rose loves Troy unconditionally and wants him to remain by her side. The fence that she has asked Troy to build expresses her desire to preserve the stability of her marriage and to keep the family members close to each other. It seems that Bono, Troy's friend, understands Rose's intention:

CORY. I don't see why Mama wants a fence around the yard anyways.

TROY. Damn if I know either. What the hell she keeping out with it. She ain't got nothing nobody wants.

BONO. Some people build fences to keep people out . . . And other people build fences to keep people in. Rose wants to hold on to you all. She loves you. (61)

Kim Pereira remarks that Troy is continually postponing the erection of the fence due to his fear of the familial constraints that might prevent him from seeing Alberta (1995, p.49). Troy realizes that he needs to admit to his betrayal only after

Alberta's pregnancy. The cognizance of this betrayal devastates Rose and hurts her dignity. She has fulfilled her role as wife and mother and did not expect this betrayal. She contends, "I done tried to be everything a wife should be. Everything a wife could be. Been married eighteen years and I got to see the day you tell me you been seeing another woman and done fathered a child by her" (67). For many years, Rose has endured Troy's misplaced anger, sacrificing herself for his comfort. She does not deserve such a betrayal.

What increases Rose's pain is the fact that her husband refuses to end his affair and considers it a relief from his daily anxieties. He tries to justify his deed by claiming that he has been fenced in by his responsibilities and financial worries to the extent that he has forgotten how to live happily. Only Alberta can make him laugh and can help him to look at life from a different perspective.

Troy confesses that he does not want to abandon Alberta because she is the only person with whom he feels free and tastes the taste of life. He recounts:

TROY. It just... she gives me a different idea . . . a different understanding about myself. I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems . . . be a different man. I ain't got to wonder how I'm gonna pay the bills or get the roof fixed. I can just be a part of myself that I ain't never been.

ROSE. What I want to know . . . is do you plan to continue seeing her. That's all you can say to me

TROY. I can sit in her house and laugh . . . I can laugh out loud . . . and it feels good. It reaches all the way down to the bottom of my shoes. Rose, I can't give that up . . . I done locked myself into a pattern trying to take care of you all that I forget about myself. (68-69)

For Rose, Troy's justification is senseless because she has dedicated herself totally to him. Nevertheless, her hard work to perpetuate her marriage has led her into a life of sacrifice, a sacrifice that Troy does not acknowledge:

But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . . with the darkness falling in on me . . . I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man in the world. And wherever you was going . . . I wanted to be there with you. Cause you was my husband, cause that's the only I was gonna survive as your wife. You always talking about what you give . . . and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take . . . and don't even know nobody's giving. (71)

For the first time in her life, Rose stands up to Troy and attacks him verbally because he marginalizes the sacrifices that she has made for him and the family. His selfishness, as Rose illuminates, impedes him from considering what she has given to the family. He is so preoccupied with what he has given that he does not realize what he has taken in return. Rose's words unleash Troy's physical aggressiveness: he holds Rose's arm very tightly and hurts her. At this moment, Cory intervenes and strikes his father. According to the stage directions, "(CORY comes up behind TROY and grabs him. TROY, surprised is thrown off balance just as CORY throws a glancing blow that catches him on the chest and knocks him down. TROY is stunned as CORY)" (72). Cory's reaction heightens the tension between him and his father, who stands up with the intention of punching Cory. Unconsciously, Troy has emulated his father's attitudes, but Rose's intervention halts him.

With the passing of the months, the gap between Rose and Troy has widened as the latter remains with Alberta and spends his time outside the house. He has no intention of mending his familial relationships as he alienates himself from them. Even his friendship with Bono has deteriorated, and the two rarely meet due to Troy's promotion to the position of "truck driver." By giving Troy this job, Wilson wants to emphasize an idea he has mentioned earlier in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, namely, that the closer an African-American man comes to the white community, the further he estranges himself from his racial group.

Rose realizes that even if her husband is physically present with her, he is emotionally absent. To confirm Troy's selfishness, Rose accuses him of having Gabe committed to a mental hospital purely for the sake of claiming half of his brother's pension. The two argue over this accusation, but their argument is interrupted by the news of Alberta's death. This news relieves Rose and, at the same time, enrages Troy, who is now determined to build the fence as an attempt to protect his family and keep them close to him. Ironically, Troy has already built a "fence" between himself and his children by distancing himself from them.

After Alberta's death, Troy brings his baby girl, Raynell, to the house and begs Rose to help him in raising the girl. At the beginning, Rose finds it difficult to accept Troy's child because she believes that Raynell's arrival might disrupt the unity of her family. After careful reflection, however, Rose decides to raise Raynell. Rose's decision comes at a great cost for Troy because his role as a husband will be eliminated. She tells Troy, "From right now . . . this child got a mother. But you a womanless man" (79). Eric Sterling has noted that "Raynell supplants Troy as the primary object of love and affection in Rose's life" (1998, p.55). Accordingly, Rose immerses herself in motherhood and neglects Troy, who now discovers that he has lost both his mistress and his wife at the same time.

In Act Two, Scene Four, Troy's obstinacy leads to physical combat between him and Cory. In this scene, Cory returns home to find Troy intoxicated, sitting on the doorsteps, and singing to himself. Embittered by Troy's decisions that have stifled his dreams, Cory tries to pass by his father and enter the house without saying "excuse me." This disrespectful behavior enrages Troy who comments:

Oh, I see . . . I don't count around here no more. You ain't got to say excuse me to your daddy. All of a sudden you done got so grown that your daddy don't count around here no more . . . Around here in his own house and yard that he done paid for with the sweat of his brow. You done got so grown to where you gonna take over. (85)

Troy's insistence on being an obstacle in Cory's way instigates their conflict. Throughout the conflict, Cory counters his father with the fact that it is not his house. Troy has bought the house with Gabriel's money and then had him committed to a mental hospital. Therefore, he cannot prevent Cory from entering the house. Suddenly, Cory loses all his fears and dares to tell Troy:

You ain't never gave me nothing! You ain't never done nothing but hold me back. Afraid I was gonna be better than you. All you ever did was try and make me scared of you. I used to tremble every time you called my name. Every time I heard your footsteps in the house. Wondering all the time . . . what's Papa gonna say if I do that? . . . What's Papa gonna say if I turn on the radio? (86-87)

Troy interprets Cory's statements as a challenge to his authority and power, and so the tension between the father and son escalates into a physical confrontation. Cory picks up Troy's baseball bat to swing it at him. Troy grabs the bat "from Cory and stands over him ready to swing. He stops himself" (88). Trying to avoid the physical abuse he has been exposed to, Troy controls his anger and decides to banish Cory from the house instead of beating him.

Throughout the play, Troy has shown his resistance to the idea of becoming an aggressive man just like his father, but the pressures of white hegemony have driven him to embracing aggression and inflicting his agony on his family. Consequently, Troy's aggressiveness destroys his sons, who escape from Troy in order to find themselves confined within grander white institutions. For instance, when Cory leaves his parents' home, he enrolls in the Marines, a situation which could put him at risk of losing his life during a war or of suffering from a mental or physical illness just like his uncle Gabriel. In contrast, Lyons forges some checks and ends up in a penitentiary. Gabe is also incarcerated, but in a sanatorium, and there are no limits set for his incarceration.

4. OVERWHELMING AGGRESSION OF *KING HEDLEY II*

In *King Hedley II* (1999), August Wilson elaborates on the incidents of a story that he introduced in *Seven Guitars* (1995), in which Ruby, a young pregnant woman, comes to Pittsburgh to live with her aunt, Louise, after the murder of her husband. During her residence in Pittsburgh, Ruby meets King Hedley I, a sick and unstable man, who earns his living by selling chicken sandwiches. Ruby's beauty infatuates Hedley, who chooses her to be the mother of his children. Unwary of Ruby's pregnancy, Hedley is deceived into believing that Ruby's unborn child is his.

With the passage of time, Hedley dies, and Ruby begins to travel in order to pursue her singing career, so leaving her son to be raised by her aunt Louise. *King Hedley II* starts two months after Louise's death. King Hedley II, a young man in his thirties, lives with his wife Tonya and his mother Ruby, who is now a former singer. The plot of this play revolves around King Hedley II and his struggle to have a fresh start after being released from prison. However, King's life turns upside-down when Elmore, Ruby's ex-lover, reveals the concealed secrets of King's pedigree. These secrets increase King's anger and aggressiveness. King's aggressive acts annihilate him in the end.

4.1 The Play and Its Zeitgeist

The play is one of the darkest in *Pittsburgh's Cycle*. It depicts the outbreak of serious criminal violence in the black neighborhoods during the 1980s. To understand the reasons behind the prevalence of gun homicide in that period, Wilson links the criminal acts to the economic conditions. To give some historical context, Ronald Reagan assumed the US presidency during the 1980s and launched a set of economic policies known as "Reaganomics." These policies were intended to reinvigorate the

economic conditions of American citizens by cutting the capital taxes and reducing expenditure on social programs, including social security and disability insurance.

Based on “trickle-down theory,” Reagan and his proponents argued that if the costs for corporations were lowered through tax cuts, then companies would be encouraged to channel these savings into investments. They assumed that more money for corporations would mean more jobs and higher wages for workers. However, the results of these policies were counterproductive; they led to an accumulation of wealth at the hands of capitalists. Giving corporate tax cuts while cutting the funds for domestic, social programs was a policy that favored the rich and intensified wealth inequality.

African Americans were not aloof from the negative consequences of Reaganomics. These policies have accelerated the economic deterioration of the black population and increased their frustration (Swinton, 2020, p.49). The gnawing need for money has propelled black males to indulge in illegal activities such as robbing, murdering, and drug dealing. Consequently, Reaganomics, which stands for white hegemony, is partly responsible for the collapse of the African-American community and the spread of crime.

4.2 The Collapse of the African-American Community

Wilson employs Aunt Ester’s death as a symbol for the deterioration of the African-American community. Aunt Ester is a 366-year-old wise woman who was born in 1619, the same year in which the first African slaves reached the American colonies. Wilson presents her as a spiritual and cultural mentor, who has adopted the task of aligning African Americans with their cultural origins and of healing their spiritual wounds.

Due to her age, Aunt Ester epitomizes the African-American experience. She has witnessed all the inequities that the African Americans have encountered over many centuries, and for this reason she symbolizes African-American history and heritage (Colbert, 2010, p.101). Her first appearance was in *Two Trains Running* (1990) as an

offstage character. *Two Trains Running* was set in a decade marked by the assassination of prominent political, sociocultural leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Their demise created an intellectual gap inside the African-American community. To fill that gap, Wilson gives Aunt Ester the role of a sociocultural leader who guides and advises the shattered black community. Her ability to solve the personal crisis is commended by the characters in *Two Trains Running*, such as Holloway, who confirms that Aunt Ester possesses a spiritual power because she has “an understanding” (22). By saying “understanding,” Holloway means that Aunt Ester is versed in African-American history. Her knowledge about the African-American past facilitates her mission in guiding the distressed and displaced souls who are in pursuit of cultural identity. However, she cannot heal those who are unwilling to reconnect with their past. As Joan Herrington has explicated in “*King Hedley II: In the Midst of all This Death*,” this makes Aunt Ester a reminder of the necessity to reconnect with the past (1998, p.172).

Surprisingly, this immortal woman dies in *King Hedley II*. Her death becomes a marker, an index to the dangerous conditions and hopelessness of her society. In an interview with Rob Kent, Wilson has compared the environment that surrounds Aunt Ester to “a war zone” to indicate the fact that physical violence has been amplified among the black males during the 1980s. In the 1960s, there had been signs of change and improvement in the African-American situation, but with the advent of the 1980s, these signs were expunged. The conditions of African Americans were in incessant deterioration due to Reagan’s policies, which, in turn, left thousands of black males jobless and with no federal support. As a matter of fact, the inclination for delinquency would permeate the blacks’ soul whenever they realized their poverty. This, of course, would be reflected in the rapid increase in the rates of crimes. In “*King Hedley II: In the Midst of all This Death*,” Herrington has asserted the following regarding the high rates of crimes:

US Department of Justice statistics for the late 1980s reveal that African Americans represented 12 percent of the population but were responsible for 50 per cent of all homicides and 66 percent of all robberies; 50 per cent of all urban

blacks were arrested for a serious crime at least once in their lifetime. Most of the crimes occurred within dominantly or completely African American communities.(p.169).

According to the statistics, the African-American community occupies only a small fraction of American society, but most crimes occur within its domain. This crystallizes the idea that the majority of black males have engaged in criminal activities and, consequently, have drifted away from their origins.

When the world is plagued by chaos and the loss of cultural connection, Aunt Ester's existence becomes absurd. She has to die. In the prologue, Stool Pigeon, a madman who has been a friend to King's father, illustrates this idea:

Times ain't nothing like they used to be. Everything done got broke up. Pieces flying everywhere. Look like it's gonna be broke up some more before its get whole again. If it ever do. Ain't no telling. [. . .] The people are wondering all over the place. They got loss. They don't even know the story of how they got from tit to tat. (Wilson, *King Hedley II*: 7-8)

Aunt Ester's death signifies the collapse of the African-American community. According to Wilson's viewpoint, Aunt Ester's death is a direct outcome of the incompetence of the post-colonized African Americans to sustain their cultural connections as they sink in a wave of crimes that threaten their existence.

Moreover, Wilson gives a religious dimension to Aunt Ester's death by quoting verses from the Bible. These verses explain how God takes the righteous people out the physical realm so that he can chastise the sinners:

STOOL PIGEON. [. . .] The Bible say, "I will call the righteous out of the land. I will gather thee to thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place."

KING. Sound like he talking about Aunt Ester.

STOOL PIGEON. He had to get her out of the way before he bring the fire. (20)

Aunt Ester is one of the righteous. Accordingly, her death becomes part of God's plan to punish African Americans for their misbehaviors. They kill each other blindly without any kind of mercy or pity. Thus, God takes Aunt Ester from them as a retribution for their violence and moral deterioration. The lack of mercy paves the way to various aggressive acts that typify menace to the African American community.

4.3 King Hedley II Inheriting Aggression

Aggression and black-on-black crime have been recurrent issues in Wilson's plays. In the two previous plays discussed, the aggressive, criminal acts have been committed by a few individuals such as Levee and Troy. However, in *King Hedley II*, these acts have spread throughout the community. To highlight the seriousness of this issue, Wilson presents Pittsburgh as a violent milieu where black citizens live in fear of losing their lives at any moment. Therefore, they carry their guns in anticipation of an imminent attack. By presenting this condition, Wilson reinforces the idea that black individuals have lost their cultural connection and started to kill each other for trivial reasons. To denote the diffusion of black-on-black crimes, Stool Pigeon gives examples from his collected newspapers and the incidents that he has seen in his life. He states as follows:

STOOL PIGEON (showing newspaper). Look at that! "City Violence Escalates. Teen Killed in Drive-By." You got to know that!

ELMORE. "Teen Killed in Drive-By." I'm tired of hearing that.

KING. I used to be you get killed over something. Now you got killed over nothing.

STOOL PIGEON. I seen a man get killed over a fish sandwich. Right down there at Cephuss. Had two fish sandwiches . . . one with hot sauce and one

without. Somebody got them mixed up and these two fellows got to arguing over them. The next thing you know it was a surprise to God to find out that one of them had six bullet holes in him. (34)

This incident, when one person kills another over a fish sandwich, demonstrates the moral deterioration of black males and also the senselessness of their crimes, which would surely enhance their image as aggressive, criminal individuals.

King Hedley II is marked as an aggressive man because he has killed a black man. Before the play starts, he has spent seven long and harsh years in prison. Harry Elam has rightly asserted that the factors that have contributed to shaping King's personality are the environment and heredity (2006, p.82). Overall, when an individual lives in a violent environment, he would be imbued with this violence. In King's case, environment and heredity work in tandem because his father, King Hedley I, had also been a culprit.

In *Seven Guitar*, Wilson gives a glimpse into Hedley's past. He has been reared in the South and experienced the poverty that the white men have imposed on African-American males. His father had spent his whole life breeding horses for white men, who, in return, only paid him a small amount of money that did not cover his family's monthly living costs. Seeing his father toiling all day long without gaining what he really deserves, Hedley starts to wonder why his father does not act like Toussaint L'Ouverture, a black figure who led the Haitian revolution against the French colonialists in 1791 and who overthrew the white man's power. One day, however, Hedley has the courage to ask his father, "How come you not like Toussaint-L'Ouverture, why you do nothing?" (92). When he utters this question, his father hits and silences him. Instead of directing his rage on the dominant social structure that has oppressed him, Hedley's father vents his wrath in the wrong direction.

As Hedley grows up, he absorbs his father's misdirected aggression. His physical aggressiveness manifests itself when a black man refuses to call him King. He confesses,

I killed a man once. A black man. I am not sorry I killed him. [...] He would not call me King. He laughed to think a black man could be King. I did not want to lose my name so I told him to call me the name my father gave me, and he laugh. He would not call me King and I beat him with a stick. (73)

Hedley's opponent could not cope with the idea that a black man could be given a royal name such as "King." From his perspective, the black population is a marginalized group that lives under the white man's rule. So, how does a black man become King? Hedley, on the other hand, conceives the black man's behavior as an intended degradation to his identity; therefore, he kills him without hesitation.

When King Hedley II grows up, he prides himself for being the son of a man who has killed to preserve his identity and self-worth. In fact, he inherits his father's aggressive conduct and refusal to take any insult. To demonstrate this, Wilson makes the motives behind their crimes identical. As Wilson explains, King's crime has been stimulated by his black neighbor, who has kept calling him "champ." King reveals, —Pernell called me _champ.‘ I told him my name's King. He say, _Yeah, champ.‘ I go on. I don't say nothing. I told myself, _He don't know.‘ He don't know my daddy killed a man for calling him out of his namel (Wilson, *King Hedley II*: 73). Pernell's words strike a strong chord, which is King's identity, mainly because King's name is associated with his identity and self-worth. Thus, when Pernell calls him "champ," King considers it an insult. On the other hand, Pernell could not accept King's correction, and so in their next encounter, he cuts King's face without uttering a word.

Pernell deforms King's face and leaves him with an ugly scar that runs along the left side of his face. Consequently, King feels that he must avenge his disfiguration. He follows Pernell to a phone booth and kills him. King narrates:

I don't know who he was calling but that was the last call he made. I saw my scar in the window of the phone booth. I tapped on the glass. He turned and looked and froze right there. The first bullet hit him in the mouth. I don't know where the other fourteen went. (75)

By killing Pernell, Wilson substantiates the notion that King has inherited his father's aggressiveness.

In contrast to Wilson's earlier protagonists, King Hedley II directs his aggression to both whites and blacks. To demonstrate this difference, King's aggression could be divided in terms of: external aggression against the other and internal aggression against the family.

4.3.1 External Aggression Against the Other

King's aggressiveness toward the other (the white man) is the result of his grasping the strategies that the hegemonic whites use in order to perpetuate the poverty of blacks. As Amos Wilson has elucidated, these strategies depend on the economy and educational institutions that eliminate blacks' job opportunities to control the material aspects of the blacks' lives and that ensure their poverty (2006, p.49). King himself has been a victim of white hegemonic institutions, such as during his time at school. King remarks that the white school teachers, instead of educating him and widening his prospects, eradicated his aspirations by telling him that he only could be a good janitor. Whites limit black individuals to such menial, low-paid jobs in order to fortify their poverty.

King refuses to accept this poverty and rebels against the white hegemonic system that limits the economic opportunities of African-American males, in spite of their marvelous potentialities. As King explicates, his ability to work and perform exceeds anything. The limitations stem from a white society that restricts young black men to menial jobs, even if they are educated. King, for instance, has a high-school diploma and can work in any job, but whenever he applies for a new job, they ask him, "What can you do" (55). King retorts, "I can do anything. [. . .] Ain't nothing I can't do. I could build a railroad if I had the steel and a gang of men to drive the spikes. I ain't limited to nothing" (55). Accordingly, African Americans possess great potentialities, and the limitations of their achievements are externally imposed.

In fact, white society intentionally constrains job opportunities because it does not want African Americans to gain money and achieve economic independence. King asserts:

Every time I try to do something they [the whites] get in the way. Especially if you try and get some money. They don't want you to have none of that. They keep that away from you. They got fiftyeleven way to get money and don't want you to have none. Hop been tearing down buildings his whole life and all of a sudden he don't know what he doing. He don't know how to tear down buildings. They can't give him the contract. They afraid he gonna make a little bit of money. (54)

From King's perspective, it is virtually impossible to accomplish financial success while being limited by an oppressive society that blocks black individuals from participating in the economy. To supplement his argument, King mentions Hop as an example. Hop, a black contractor with whom King works, has offered the lowest bid to obtain the contract for tearing down a hotel in East Liberty. However, the white authorities do not want to follow the rules and give Hop the contract. They even use his low bid as a substantiation for his inefficiency, thinking that he might make some money.

This imposed poverty frustrates King, who indicates that the conditions and self-worth of African Americans are in an accelerating decline because of the economic hegemony of white men who rebuff the idea of maximizing black males' wages. King states, "I used to be worth twelve hundred dollars during slavery. Now I'm worth \$3.35 an hour. I'm going backwards. Everybody else moving forward" (55). This huge decline in the perceived worth of black people infuriates King and triggers his aggressiveness.

Just like Toledo and Ma Rainey in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, King is aware of the strategies that whites employ in order to degrade his race. As Fanon theorized in *The Wretched of the earth* (1963), when the colonized apprehends these strategies and becomes unconvinced of his inferiority, he will direct his violence against his colonizers: "he [the colonized] is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler [the white man] is off his guard to fly at him". (p.53).

King's physical aggressiveness toward white men explodes when he goes to the Sears, a photographic studio, and discover that his wife's pictures have been lost and that there is no record of them. He shows them his receipt, but the white manager tells King that his receipt does not count. When the white man tells King that his receipt has no value, it is an indirect reference to the fact that African Americans are still considered as the other. Therefore, King reacts aggressively. He grabs the white man by his throat and shouts, "How in the hell the receipt not gonna count? That's like money" (p.52). The white manager calls the police to frighten King and take his receipt, but King refuses to cede. He tells his friend, Mister, "Without that receipt I'm going to jail. They gonna charge me with fraud, forgery, grand theft, larceny, second degree robbery and anything else they can think of" (52-53). King's insistence on his rights obliges the white man to take the number of King's receipt and track down his pictures.

Through putting King in such a situation, Wilson highlights two important points. First, in an era after the civil rights movements, the white system covertly fuels racial discrimination by creating different norms that sustain the inferiority and poverty of black people. Second, African Americans must challenge these norms and demand their rights even if it requires the use of power. King, for instance, would not get his pictures if he had not confronted the white men and claimed his rights.

These actions and behaviors are only one side of the coin. Wilson extends them to be the other side of the coin, when King shows himself to be continually aggressive against his own family members. He terrifies those who surround him. His aggressiveness lends itself to both the public and private domains. The former is caused by his marginalized identity as a member of society, while the latter is the result of his inability to express himself.

4.3.2 Internal Aggression Against the Family

King's aggressiveness toward his own family members represents the negative side of aggression that, as has been seen, usually leads to the destruction of the aggressor.

In *King Hedley II*, Wilson adds a slight twist so as to change the course of events and so bring the cycle of black-on-black crime to an end. Before analyzing King's aggressive and criminal acts, the motivators of his aggression deserve an in-depth examination. In other words, King's economic conditions should be expounded upon.

After his release from prison, King has the dream of regaining his life and starting a legal job that grants him financial security. However, King's dream is difficult to achieve due to the economic policies of the 1980s. These policies, in Wilson's view, deprived black males of the chance to amend their financial conditions and, consequently, instigated their delinquency (Bryer & Hartig, 2010, p.293). Subsequently, King's need for obtaining financial independence turns him back to criminality. Throughout the play he sells stolen refrigerators, and he robs a jewelry shop to collect the money required for opening his own video store.

King's criminal acts are opposed by his family members, Ruby and Tonya. Their opposition makes them the targets of King's verbal aggressiveness. King's aggressiveness toward his mother starts at the beginning of the first act, when Ruby has doubts about whether King's seeds will grow. According to Ruby, the seeds that King has brought will not grow because the soil of his backyard is infertile. In fact, King's seeds symbolize his own dream and desire to overcome the quandaries of life, while the infertile soil signifies King's criminal background. Therefore, when Ruby tells King that his "seeds [are not] gonna grow in that dirt" (10), she indirectly indicates that it is impossible for his dreams to be realized because of his criminality. Ruby's statement agitates King's anger, and he asserts that his seeds will grow, whether the soil is fertile or infertile.

Thereafter, Ruby advises King not to embroil himself in illegal acts that will lead him back to prison. Ruby's unsolicited advice unleashes King's verbal aggressiveness. He shouts:

Why don't you leave me go with my business. You ain't got to watch over me. You wasn't watching over me when you took off to East St. Louis and left me here with Mama Louise. You wasn't watching over me then. I don't need you to tell me nothing. Your time to tell me done come and gone. (28)

As King argues, Ruby does not have the right to interfere in his life because she abandoned him for the sake of pursuing her singing career. For that reason, King does not accept her advice.

Tonya, King's wife, experiences King's aggressiveness when she announces her decision to have a miscarriage. Throughout the play, King has expressed his desire to have a child that carries his name and continues his legacy. Yet, Tonya disregards King's opinion and insists on having an abortion. Her insistence springs from the fact that black neighborhoods have become unsuitable places for raising children.

In fact, Tonya opposes King's desire on the grounds that they are living in a violent, ruthless country, in which the life of any black individual does not count. She does not want to have a child and then go through the pains of losing him in an armed struggle. Tonya announces,

I ain't raising no kid to have somebody shoot him. To have his friends shoot him. To have police shoot him. Why I wanna bring another life into this world that don't respect life? I don't want to raise no more babies when you got to fight to keep them alive. (39)

To support her argument, Tonya recites the story of a brokenhearted woman who had lost her youngest son in a shooting:

You take little Buddy Will's mother up on Bryn Mawr Road. What she got? [. . .] One minute her house is full of life. The next minute it's full of death. She was waiting for him to come home and they bring her a corpse. [. . .] Somebody come up and tell her, "Miss Soand-So, your boy got shot." She know before they say it. Her knees start to get weak. She shaking her head. She don't want to hear it. Somebody call the police. They come and pick him up off the sidewalk. Dead nigger on Bryn Mawr Road. They got to quit playing cards and come and pick him up. They used to take pictures. They don't even take pictures no more. [. . .]. The only thing to do is call the undertaker. The line is busy. She got to call back five times. The undertaker got so much business he don't know

what to do. [...] I ain't going through that. I ain't having this baby . . . and I ain't got to explain it to nobody. (39-40)

Tonya's disregard for King's opinion stirs up King's aggressiveness. Thus, he starts to yell, "It ain't even born and you got it in a casket already. [. . .] Talking about you ain't got to explain it to nobody. [. . .] You got to explain to me" (40).

In addition to the violent environment of the 1980s, Tonya uses King's aggressive mentality as an excuse for aborting the child (Snodgrass, 2004, p.125). From Tonya's perspective, an aggressive man who walks with a gun in his hand and is ready to get involved in criminal acts is not qualified to raise a son. He will either lose his life or end up in prison and, thus, would leave his son without protection. Accordingly, Tonya demands a substantial change, not only in society but also in males' aggressive mentality.

To resolve Tonya and King's dispute, Ruby reminds Tonya that she cannot predict the fate of her son, that only God knows the destiny of his creatures. To uphold her point of view, Ruby retells the advice that Aunt Ester had given her when she was considering having an abortion. To prevent Ruby's abortion, people sent her to Aunt Ester. Ruby went to Aunt Ester, with the intention of having an abortion. However, she was surprised to see an old woman sitting in the room. After confessing her intention to have an induced miscarriage, Aunt Ester advised Ruby not to abort the child. Ruby narrates:

She put her hands on my head. I got real peaceful. Seem like all my problems went away. She told me man can plant the seed but only God can make it grow. Told me God was a good judge. I told her that's what scared me. She just laughed and told me, "God has three hands. Two for that baby and one for the rest of us." (41-42)

Aunt Ester comforted Ruby by assuring her that the destiny of her son had already been delineated by God.

The importance of King's destiny is accentuated when Aunt Ester gives him a golden key chain as a reward for mowing her grass. Stool Pigeon identifies this gift with the biblical story of "the key given unto the righteous that they might enter the kingdom," and he challenges King to find the key. As long as King has the key chain, he must find the key and fulfill his destiny. King's only hurdle is that he does not know how to attain his destiny. Therefore, he swerves from the proper path until the end of the play.

To pave the way for King's tragic end, Wilson discloses the secret of King's real paternity through the character of Elmore. Elmore, a sixty-year-old African-American man, derails the course of events in the play by revealing his role in killing Ruby's first husband, Leroy Slater. Elmore and Leroy had been close friends. Their friendship, however, was torn to shreds when Leroy married Elmore's ex-girlfriend Ruby. Sadly, this marriage did not last because Elmore, as Ruby claims, killed Leroy out of jealousy. Elmore refutes Ruby's claim, stating that he murdered Leroy over a gambling debt.

As Elmore narrates, he met Leroy for the first time in Alabama in the early 1940s, a time in which Leroy was nothing more than a poor young man with five dollars in his pocket. Leroy's destitution continued even after his marriage to Ruby. On one occasion, Elmore and another man called Ward Henry went to a crap game with the Mullin brothers, and on their way Henry suggested to take Leroy along with them because Leroy knew how to handle a gun, in the event that something happened. Leroy had no money to gamble with. Therefore, Elmore lent him fifty dollars on the condition that Leroy gave him half his winnings. On that night, Leroy won two hundred and fifty dollars.

When the time came to pay his debt, Leroy refused to pay it. Elmore states, "I told him say if he didn't pay me the fifty dollars I was gonna tell everybody I know. We argued about it and he turned and walked off calling a bunch of names" (91). Elmore thought that by shaming Leroy, he would urge him to pay his debt. However, this act infuriated Leroy, who, instead of paying his debts, shoved his gun in Elmore's face as a

kind of warning. After this threat, Elmore felt that his manhood was emasculated; to restore his manhood, Elmore pulled his pistol and shattered Leroy's skull:

When Leroy pulled that gun on me it gave me a headache. It wouldn't go away. Sometime it was all you could do to stand up. Gator was cutting his hair and Leroy was sitting in the chair laughing. [. . .] The bullet hit him right smack in the middle of the forehead. That was the first bullet. I couldn't stop firing. Blood went everywhere. A piece of his skull bounced off the mirror and landed about ten feet away. (94)

Elmore aggravates the intensity of his crime by revealing the kinship between King and Leroy Slater, who is King's biological father, despite Ruby's objection:

ELMORE. Tell him!

RUBY. He don't need to know that! Why you wanna do this to me?

ELMORE. Tell him! He need to know.

KING. What? Tell me what?

RUBY. No! No!

ELMORE. That was your daddy. Leroy was you daddy. (97)

Ostensibly, Elmore confesses his offense because he wants King to know the identity of his birth father, but the underlying motivation for this confession is Elmore's desire to find inner peace before his demise.

Obviously, Elmore's declaration strips King of the name that defines his identity. In lieu of discovering his real identity, King loses his identity and commits the mistake, which Wilson's earlier protagonists have also committed, of alienating himself from his friends and family. In contrast to Wilson's other protagonists, King isolates himself to apprehend his pedigree. However, King's silence and disappearance, as Mister assumes, are the calm before the storm because King has inherited Hedley's aggressiveness and will return to seek vengeance. To reestablish his sense of self, King

feels impelled to repeat the cycle of black-on-black crime. Before taking Elmore's life, King pays Leroy's debt and invites Elmore to a crap game so as to duplicate the scenario that led to his father's death. Thus, just to take revenge, King throws himself into a game that is based on chance. To accomplish his vengeance, King disregards his dreams and spends his savings, savings which are supposed to be used for opening a video store, on gambling with Elmore. Consequently, King's retaliation or aggression costs him the dream of having a prosperous life.

After losing a considerable amount of money, King notices that Elmore has switched the dice to win the game. Elmore's deceit evokes King's physical aggressiveness. King takes the machete that Stool Pigeon has given him and threatens to kill Elmore. Through holding this machete, King resuscitates the memory of his surrogate father, King Hedley I, who used the machete to slay another black man. Unable to reenact Hedley's crime, however, King drops his weapon and repeats the phrase that Leroy pronounced before deciding to spare Elmore's life: "Now you are a dead man twice" (101). Enraged by King's phrase, Elmore pulls his gun in King's face. Yet incapable of harming King, Elmore lowers his revolver and shoots into the ground. When Ruby hears the gunshot, she brings her pistol to defend her son. Sadly, her bullet hits King in the pharynx and ends his life.

By choosing forgiveness, King relinquishes his father's act of revenge and ends the cycle of black-on-black crime that has haunted African Americans for more than three centuries. This self-destructive behavior, as has earlier been discussed, originated from the oppressive social structure of whites that has implanted aggression in the minds of young males and then nourished it to ensure the destruction of the African-American community. To save the community from imminent destruction, August Wilson calls for a new tradition that has to be based on forgiveness rather than retaliation.

To affirm King's role in saving the African-American community, Wilson renders King's death the only way for resurrecting Aunt Ester. When King falls dead, his blood seeps into the grave of Aunt Ester's cat, which Stool Pigeon has earlier buried in King's backyard, claiming that if it had not used up its nine lives, any blood sacrifice would be sufficient for Aunt Ester's resurrection. As King's blood oozes, the sound of

Aunt Ester's cat can be heard backstage, an indication of the return of Aunt Ester. Yet Aunt Ester's return is a spiritual return that signifies the hope of overcoming violence and of finding cultural connections. Therefore, King's overwhelming aggression becomes a kind of spiritual revival that could take place in African society.



Conclusion

Despite August Wilson's mixed origins, his affiliation with African-American culture urged him to address African Americans-encounter issues. He recognized that African Americans, especially males, suffer from the oppression of white society. Accordingly, his plays are concerned with the psychological effects of oppression; one of the psychological effects that Wilson has raised is aggression.

In psychology, aggression is a destructive behavior generated by an individual's frustration and anger. Nevertheless, some theorists and criminologists analyzed aggression from a physiological approach in order to portray black males as innate criminals. Frantz Fanon and Amos Wilson delved into the reasons that drive black males to behave aggressively to negate this stereotype. According to their analysis, the principal reason for black males' aggressiveness is the violent practices that the oppressive white society has inflicted upon them. These practices enrage or frustrate black males. In the two cases, these negative feelings will be transformed into aggressive behaviors that can be physical or verbal. Wilson dramatically exhibits these types of aggression in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, and *King Hedley II*.

In *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the characters are oppressed by the white production companies exploiting black artists' labor. Wilson manifests the effects of oppression by comparing Levee and Ma Rainey, revealing their aggression to be contrastive. In Levee's psyche, the white man's oppression has a negative aftermath since it alienates Levee from his race and agitates his physical aggression. Levee's aggression is destructive because it is directed against his fellow African Americans, thus causing the death of an innocent person. On the other hand, Ma Rainey's aggression is positive since she directs it against the white men in order to confirm her identity and liberate herself from their domination. In this respect, Wilson encourages this aggression and views it as a means to attain stolen personal rights.

In *Fences*, aggression is seen as an outer and inner moire, a fence that surrounds the characters. Wilson divulges the reasons that spark aggression through Troy Maxson's persona. Throughout his life, Troy has not been an aggressive man;

however, his aggressiveness emerged after encountering his father's and white society's aggressiveness—double aggression. The whites' aggressiveness is expressed in the socioeconomic stresses that they invent in order to oppress African Americans and maintain their poverty. These stresses frustrate Troy, who has escaped from the oppression of the South only to find himself amid another violent milieu where he is treated as the other. His inability to find a job in the economic sector leads him toward criminality, a path that ends in prison. For Wilson, white institutions such as prisons and courts are presumed to be reforming institutions, but their practices destroy Black individuals instead of rehabilitating them. Troy's contact with these institutions transforms him into an aggressive man, affecting his perceptions and expectations of life. Therefore, when his son tries to join a white football team, Troy prevents his son from doing so and reacts aggressively. In this way, Troy thinks that he is protecting his son from the violent white society that marginalized him; however, Troy's verbal aggressiveness, in fact, destroys his son and shatters his family.

In *King Hedley II*, Wilson depicts the eruption of crime in a Black neighborhood in order to prove that there has been no development in the conditions of African Americans. In fact, their conditions are in decline due to the economic pressures that Reagan's policies brought. These policies, along with social institutions such as schools, failed in sustaining and changing African Americans' economic and social status because the improvement of this status would, in fact, threaten the superiority of white society. The failure of the American social institutions is the failure of white society to correct its hegemonic practices. These practices will only be changed if the conditions are changed. Thus, white society bears responsibility for the prevalence of crimes. To disrupt the cycle of black-on-black crime, where August Wilson calls for forgiveness. This appeal is presented through King Hedley's persona, who, despite his violent attitude, decides to forgive his father's killer. Through this act, Wilson conveys a vital message to African-American males: aggressive, criminal acts lead only to the destruction of the community. If people really want to avoid such destruction, they must learn how to resolve their anger and forgive each other.

Alternatively, August Wilson, after years of suffering from violence, racism, and class distinction, grew up to find himself becoming a character who creates great art contextualized with revolutionary messages. His messages encourage all African Americans to remember their origins, gain their identity again and try to reconnect them with their great past. His messages encourage African Americans to achieve freedom by directing aggression against the source of aggression itself.

As a realistic dramatist, Wilson's solution is far from being realistic. He depends on ethical and religious beliefs, such as oblivion and forgiveness, that cannot be adhered to by all African Americans. The goal of ending the delinquency of black males and their aggressive behaviors requires a tremendous change in the position and conditions of African Americans; this means better education, a better healthcare system, and more job opportunities. To realize these changes, African Americans, as a subaltern group, need to find their voice and unite their forces in order to claim their legitimate rights as human beings. It is not about the attitude and reaction of the African Americans toward the colonizer. However, it is also about how White Americans disrespect and ignore African Americans. Even if African Americans change themselves and tend to control their anger, White Americans will continue to treat and disrespect them negatively. So, it needs a great effort to make tremendous changes and build a society where Blacks have the same rights as Whites.

African American males are the most stereotyped and stigmatized group in America as criminals, gangsters, and aggressive groups. The race rumors, and societal stereotypes, in conjunction with numerous racial, political, social, and economic forces, interact to put African American, especially males, at extreme risk for adverse outcomes and behaviors and suggest clear implications for the continued structural conditions that portray life in the United States for dark-skinned groups and ethnic minorities. (Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990, pp.17-34).

Stereotypes are deeply embedded in US culture and often affect acts of prejudice and systemic racism, contributing to African-American males' inequalities. Social workers must continue to bring awareness and alertness to the devastating consequences of stereotypes and their effect on laws and policies perpetuating race

disparities in education and employment outcomes and arrests and sentencing in the judicial system. Social workers must also advocate for changes at the state and federal levels to mandate that cultural competency training is implemented in all state and federal agencies. This will help increase individuals' awareness and knowledge of other cultures, enhancing their effectiveness in working with culturally diverse populations. Social workers must promote tolerance, understanding, and friendship among nations and racial or ethnic groups.

African American is an ethnic minority subjected to political control and economic exploitation, and they cannot express their identity and cultural values without incurring severe consequences. White America's racist fabric denies Black Americans a basic humanity and thus allows the violation and infringement of their right to equal justice under the law for in America, the right to injustice is an inviolable right.

One of the essential elements in securing the citizenry's copy-write laws is the citizens' belief that the laws are just and fair. A prevalent view of the law among Black Americans is summed up in Lester's statement:

“The American Black man has never known law and order except as an instrument oppression. The law has been written by White men, for the protection of White men and their property, to be enforced by White men against Blacks in particular and poor folks in general.”(Lester,1968, p23).

Historically, the function of law in America was to regulate and establish the colonial relationship between Black Americans and White Americans in the United States. However, the colonial system was initially established by laws that legitimated and allowed the subordination of the Black population, and they lived a long time as a submissive group. While the Constitution is considered as the fortress of human freedom and equality, it denied the right to vote to African- Americans and made the political privilege an exclusive right of White American property owners.

Moreover, American society's colonial status tends to structure the pattern of crime. In the urban areas where the Black population lives, serious property crimes like burglary, larceny, and theft are committed by White men. Nevertheless, more Blacks than Whites were accused and sentenced for serious crimes of violence such as murder,

rape, and assaults, which made the White population more than Blacks. However, these crimes and violent actions are committed mainly by Blacks against other Blacks. (US Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001). Besides, the homicide rate for African-Americans is about ten times the rate for White-Americans, which is the fundamental cause of death among Black American males. In interracial crimes of violence, White Americans attack and assault African-Americans more often than African-Americans attack and assault White Americans.

These statistics follow the model pattern in the colonial community where the supremacy of Whites American values is affirmed by violence. The aggressiveness of Black Americans has infused the victory of these values into the ways of life and thought of the colonized, which means that their challenge to the colonial world will be to claim that exact violence as a means of breaking into the colonizers' forbidden areas.

According to Fanon, colonized men will essentially express this aggressiveness they have internalized against their own people; this was the period when the colonized beat and terrorized each other, while the colonizers or police officers had the right to assault the natives with inviolability, which is a pattern of avoidance that allows the colonized to negate their powerlessness and pretend as if the colonialism does not exist. Ultimately, this behavior leads to an armed revolution against colonialism and the cultural values of white supremacy that place a premium on the lives of Black Americans in the United States. (Fanon, 1967, p.43). A native American's death is of little importance to the continuation of colonial discourse, except that it may deprive a specific colonizer of the labor from a skilled worker. Hence, while Black Americans are generally given longer prison terms than White Americans for the same crime, they get shorter sentences for murder. (Wolfgang, 1964, p.82).

Increasing awareness about the adverse effects of stereotypes on African-American males is an essential step to increasing social equity mandated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), such as full participation in the cultural and political life in one's community, fair access to resources such as education, healthcare, jobs, and self-determination in meeting one's major requirements.

Many professionals are unwilling to believe that their peers' behavior and their institution's policies may struggle with their professional ethics and may be contributing to institutional racism. For this reason, it is essential to practice from a social justice framework to raise awareness about privilege and power and to encourage advocating against structural forces that violate human rights and immortalize racism. Many African-Americans are revealed to participate in school activities, receive medical treatment and mental health services, or interact with the police due to fear and lack of trust resulting from institutional racism. (Griffith, 2007, pp. 381-392).

Therefore, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, educators, business people, and politicians must recognize the biases that may negatively influence their services. Increasing awareness of how stereotypes affect decision-making is the most effective way to combat stereotypes. Awareness of one's beliefs is the first step to changing behaviors, beliefs, and values (Wahler, 2012, pp. 1058-107).

According to Patricia Grace, a professor of psychology, racial prejudice is an unconscious habit. The individual will have to become aware of the unconscious nature of their racial bias and stereotypes to break this habit, become concerned that they have this bias, and implement strategies that effectively retrain their automatic responses to racial stimuli. Devine found that increasing awareness of one's biases will increase their concern about how their biases affect their actions and will motivate them to learn strategies to amend their biases and how they affect their behaviors. (2012, pp. 1267-1278).

Devine also believes that plenty of activities, exercises, and surveys can be used to increase awareness about one's stereotypes. Asking questions regarding racial attitudes; and characteristics, beliefs, and perceptions of various populations can help identify a person's tendency to respond with prejudice. People need to be aware of when biased responses are likely to occur and how to replace those biased responses with responses more consistent with their values. Simply being aware that one has stereotypes will not change an individual's behaviors.

Awareness about aggression is fundamental; once individuals become aware of their stereotypes, they can increase their knowledge about other cultures and ways to

avoid stereotyping. Some effective strategies to replace alignment responses with non-alignment responses are the replacement of stereotypes, such as recognizing alignment responses, considering how the response can be avoided in the future, and replacing them with non-alignment responses. Moreover, counter-stereotype imaging, which means imagining in detail positive aspects of the group that contradicts their negative stereotypes, and individuating members of ethnic groups and looking at them as individuals rather than a group. (Devine, 2012, pp. 1267-1278). Social workers, teachers, police officers, health professionals, and business people can have this habit-breaking training within the context of their fields, which could reduce unjust treatment and institutional racism in schools, the justice system, health care, and businesses.

When dealing with African-American males, it is crucial to realize the traumatic effects of racism. All mental health professionals and social workers should acknowledge how stereotypes participate in racist acts, causing trauma. Future research should focus on the social and psychological effects of racism, such as increased stress, fear, anger, self-hatred, and depression on African-American males and how their experiences with racism affect their outcomes. Social workers should seek to understand the trauma African-American males are experiencing and provide culturally sensitive trauma-focused therapy rather than stereotyping African-American males as aggressive, paranoid, lazy, or substance abusers. Perhaps the aggression results from racist experiences, and the paranoia is justified due to continuous stereotypes and unjust treatment. Laziness may be a lack of motivation due to frustration and hopelessness due to institutional racism. Moreover, finally, substance abuse may be self-medicating behavior because mental health professionals are not treating the trauma.

Future studies should also examine and discuss historical trauma. As a result of institutional racism, slavery, and years of discrimination, traumas could be transmitted over generations. African-American males do not necessarily have to witness racism directly to experience traumatic effects. For instance, African-American males still witness how they are stereotyped in the media and often hear their parents talking about not getting jobs or promotions because of discrimination. They see reports of other unarmed African-American males being brutally killed by the police on the news.

Although they may not be experiencing these things directly, hearing and seeing these situations can be traumatic, instilling fear, anger, and mistrust. Social workers often experience secondary trauma (compassion fatigue) due to exposure to traumatic material they hear from their clients. Much consideration is given to this, and self-care is emphasized in social work departments to reduce the traumatic experiences associated with compassion fatigue. Perhaps, more attention should be given to historical trauma faced by African-American males and effective trauma-focused interventions that will benefit them. Social workers must take action and advocate that racism be included in discussions and definitions of trauma in order to provide appropriate culturally competent services.

Solving the problem of African-Americans aggression requires tremendous changes in the US laws and community. Starting with social workers' practice seeking to understand the nature of oppression experienced by African-American males from a human rights perspective. Address these problems by advocating for this marginalized group, and provide culturally competent services to ensure that African-American males receive fundamental human rights identified in the UDHR. Social workers are responsible for understanding the African-American, despite differences in values, beliefs, or choices, and empowering them to make their best decisions in life (Wahler, 2012, pp. 1058-1070).

Hence, the poor social, economic, and political conditions that African Americans lived in for a long time and the policies of America unfairly made them suffer from frustration, avoidance, withdrawal, disbelief, anger, defensiveness, uncertainty, confusion, resistance, anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. They wearisomely suffered from low living conditions, leading them to lose their identity and untie the bond with their origins, legacy, and moral values.

Overcoming all these life distortions, including aggression, need awareness and changes starting from educational institutions and training foundations, to qualify them and make them able and suitable to work for all governmental institutions. Provide equal job opportunities that match their mental and physical abilities with white Americans and develop an integrated health and care system to rehabilitate them—changing the

unjust American law and criminalizing any assault and disrespect for the rights of Blacks, considering them a population with the rights as White Americans, and imposing justice and equality on all residents regardless of skin color and origins, besides, changing the American criminal system and inventing one that equals Black Americans to white Americans regarding trailing, sentencing, and imprisonment.

Finally, criminalizing any racial, physical, or verbal violence directed against Black Americans by Whites will eliminate race on Blacks and establish respect. White Americans should respect Black Americans and learn how to live together as one component. Without forgetting that aggression is an internal feeling that stems from all the reasons mentioned in this study, the feeling of justice, equality, and tranquility in society is the essential solution to eliminate the aggression of African Americans.

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