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CLAUDE MC KAY'S POEMS AND THE FIGHT  
AGAINST RACIAL SEGREGATION IN THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate the present work to Débora Etekpo and Armand O.C. Challa.

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I would like to sing songs of praise to the Almighty and Loving God for creating me in his image. Like him, I have eyes that help me to see, I have ears that allow me to hear, I have a brain that helps me to understand what I learn and study. Also, I am able to think critically and appreciate things appropriately thanks to the outstanding gifts God has offered to human families, including me.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

From the seventeenth to nineteenth century, the Transatlantic Slave Trade or Triangular Trade tore almost twelve million Africans<sup>1</sup> from their homes, herded them onto ships where they were sometimes so tightly packed that they could barely move, and deposited in a strange new land to help facilitate the production of staple crops. Depending on locations, these crops included sugar, cotton, tobacco, rice, hemp, corn, wheat and coffee<sup>2</sup>. In addition to agricultural labor, slaves also performed numerous other tasks which varied from clearing the forest to serving as craftsmen, guides, trappers, nurses, handymen, gardeners and house servants<sup>3</sup>. 6% of black slaves (600.000 to 650.000)<sup>4</sup> came to the United States. In this area, as well as in other parts of the world where blacks were scattered, they experienced rough treatment, including the duration of daily work, poor diet and miserable health. Also, they were hopeless. Unfavorable and unsatisfactory conditions moved many black slaves to work through their freedom. Following the paths of Toussaint Louverture in Saint Domingue (Haïti), Olaudah Equiano in England, Frederic Douglass in the USA, a large number of black slaves freed themselves from the late eighteenth century to 1860. The best known of them include Douglass and Wheatley. Dealing with those African Americans who were not enslaved anymore, black author James Baldwin wrote in 1966: "To be born in a free society and not be born free is to be born into a lie"<sup>5</sup>. A century after the Emancipation Proclamation, Baldwin's words conveyed the pain and the passion that characterized the lives of free Blacks in America between 1619 and 1860. Many scholars suggest that during this period, free Blacks in America were "more black than free."<sup>6</sup>

As historian Leonard Curry explains: "Their educational attainment was limited, their social development was thwarted, occupations were closed to them, housing was denied to them, personal safety eluded them, and basic human dignity was begrudged them." Because they were blacks, Curry adds, "Freedom was always and everywhere for them cruelly incomplete."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Behrendt, Stephen, *Africana, USA, 1999, .p. 1867*

<sup>2</sup> Kolchin, Peter, *Slavery in the United States, Africana, USA, 1999, .p. 1728, 1729, 1731*

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*

<sup>5</sup> Alonford, James Robinson, Jr, *Africana, USA, 1999, p. 1729*

<sup>6</sup> *Idem, p 1731*

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*

Not happy with this situation, African Americans and a small minority of whites began a major American reform movement in the United States by means of a wide range of tactics and organizations. This movement was known as abolitionism.

The earliest movements against slavery started by late eighteenth century with the founding of the Society of Friends by Quakers<sup>8</sup>. The Quakers regarded human slavery not only as wrong, but as utterly indefensible and an affront to humanity, contrary to the Bible, the ancient Greek Democracy and the Roman Republic which had been for years reliable sources of moral obligations, but did not condemn slavery.

The Society of Friends, of the Quakers, took the lead in challenging the institution. The most important antislavery activists were New Jersey Quaker John Woolman, author of the pamphlet *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754), and Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet. Throughout the second part of the eighteenth century, the Society of Friends and their leaders played a key role in antislavery campaigns.

Also, the American Revolution played an important role in the struggle for blacks' freedom. During the eighteenth century the political discourse of American radicals emphasized the degradation of slavery and the need to defend liberty. Many politicians declared that liberty was a fundamental human quality and intrinsic to natural law. Patrick Henry of Virginia exclaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!"<sup>9</sup> Discussing the questions of freedom and equality in 1764, Massachusetts lawyer James Otis Jr. asked: is it "right to enslave a man because he is Black?"<sup>10</sup> In 1773, Philadelphia patriot Dr. Benjamin Rush portrayed slavery as a "vice which degrades human nature."<sup>11</sup>

Following the campaigns against slavery, Vermont abolished slavery in 1777. Three years later, in 1780, Pennsylvania followed suit. During the 1780s Massachusetts courts ruled that the commonwealth's 1780 constitution had in effect, outlawed the institution. Between 1784 and 1804 the States of Rhode Island,

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<sup>8</sup> Tuttle, Kate, *Africana, USA, 1999, p.1864*

<sup>9</sup> *idem*

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*

Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey adopted plans for gradual emancipation. The United States constitution set a date of 1807 for cessation of the African slave trade<sup>12</sup>.

During the 1830s and 1840s the effort to eradicate slavery took on a new energy and radicalism due to the many evangelicals who joined the crusade, leading to the creation of American Anti Slavery Society (AASS) by Garrison and two wealthy New York City businessmen and philanthropists, Arthur and Lewis Tappan<sup>13</sup>.

In addition to organizations, individuals, of both races played an important role in the history of abolitionism. Abolitionist leaders included figures such as Frederick Douglass, Theodore Parker, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Harriet Beecher Stowe with her interesting and motivating novel Uncle Tom's Cabin, William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Tubman<sup>14</sup>.

Garrison adopted a militant tone which differed strikingly from the more timid proposals of earlier abolitionists, who generally favored «colonization» of blacks away from the white society. Garrison demanded the immediate end of slavery without compensation to slave owners and equal right within the mainstream society for everyone, regardless of race.

In the initial declaration of American Anti Slavery Society (AASS), which appeared on December 14, 1833, Garrison wrote: “the right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it, it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body –to the products of his own labor–to the protection of law–and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely the sin is a great to enslave an American as an African<sup>15</sup>.”

Brought together, these forces led to manumission<sup>16</sup> and eventually slavery came to end with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln in 1863<sup>17</sup>. Blacks entered into a new era, the era of freedom.

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<sup>12</sup> James, Clyde, *Selman, Africana, USA, 1999, pp 10- 14*

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*

<sup>16</sup> *Thirteenth Amendment of the Us Constitution*

However, this era coincided with a period of intense racial segregation in the United States of America. People of color, most notably blacks, underwent poor treatment from white Americans.

They were prevented from enjoying their human rights. They were not allowed to share the same schools, places at church on buses, as whites. Also, they could be fired from their work at any time, and this made life more difficult for blacks.

As a whole, slaves were not satisfied with their conditions, no matter where they lived. But, they seemed to be more kindly treated in the northern States than in the South or elsewhere. Dealing with racial tolerance in Seattle<sup>18</sup>, Washington, for example historian Eric Bennett wrote: “In an era when other American cities faced massive immigration, racial tension, and ghettoization, Seattle seemed a stable and racially reconciled town”. He added: “African Americans in Seattle lived where they pleased, voted freely, and shared public transit with whites”<sup>19</sup>.

The same was true to New York and many other States in the North until the World War II at least. Contrary to the South, Blacks met the most pitiful form of violence and cruelty possible. There was an ideological gap between the North and the South<sup>20</sup>.

As northern states abolished slavery and then saw the growth of a small but articulate abolitionist movement, southern spokesmen-from politicians to ministers, newspaper editors and authors-rallied around slavery as the bedrock of southern society. For instance following a large campaign against slavery launched by black leaders, South Carolina took the step of declaring that: “Resolved, that the formation of the abolition societies, and the acts and doings of certain fanatics calling themselves Abolitionists, in the no slaveholding States of this Confederacy, are in direct violation of the obligations of the compact of the Union, dissocial and incendiary in the extreme<sup>21</sup>.” Also, blacks in the South became a disenfranchised people under the the Jim Crow Laws<sup>22</sup>. From Kate Tuttle, we read this: “African Americans living in the South during the first half

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<sup>17</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 14

<sup>18</sup> *Bennett, Eric, Africana, USA, 1999, p 1684*

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*

<sup>20</sup> *Kolchin, Peter, Africana, USA, 1999, p.1733*

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*

<sup>22</sup> *Tuttle, Kate, Africana, USA, 1999, p p. 1050-1051*

of the twentieth century saw graphic reminders of their second-class citizenship everywhere. Signs reading ‘whites only’ or ‘colored’ hung over drinking fountains and the doors to restrooms, restaurants, movie theaters, and other public places<sup>23</sup>.”

Along with segregation, Blacks, particularly in the South, faced discrimination in jobs and housing and were often denied their constitutional right to vote.

Under Jim Crow etiquette, African Americans were denied all social forms of respect. Whites addressed even adult Black men as “boy” and all blacks were expected to show deference to all whites. Worse Jim Crow laws gave way to anti-black rioting, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and lynching. Defined as mob execution, usually by hanging and often accompanied by torture, of alleged criminals, lynching was the most extreme form of racial violence.

It was not uncommon for the victims of lynching to be castrated. Many were burned alive. Other common tortures endured by blacks were to have their eyes gouged out, their fingers severed or their teeth pulled out- with the white lynch mob taking home various body parts as souvenirs. According to Tuttle, “Black men, were often tried, convicted, and executed on shaky charges.” Between 1882 and 1930, some 3386<sup>24</sup> known blacks were victims of lynching. Dealing with racial segregation in the south under Jim Crow laws, Langston Hughes explained this in “Merry go Round”:

“Where is the Jim Crow section!  
On this merry-go-round,  
Mister, cause I want to ride?  
Down south where I come from  
White and colored  
Down south on the train  
There’s a Jim Crow car.  
On the bus we’re put in the back  
To a merry- go- round!  
Where’s the horse  
For a kid that’s black?”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Op.Cit* p.612

<sup>24</sup> *Kate Tuttle, Africana, USA, 1999, p. 1210*

<sup>25</sup> *Hughes, Langston, in “Merry go Round”, New York, 1926*

As a result of racial violence in the South, there was a great migration of blacks from the South to the North during those years. Talking about the difference between the South and the North, which resulted to the migration, Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote:

“Well, I caught the fever that ruled the day,  
An’, finally, northward made my way.  
They said that things were better north,  
An’ a man was held at his honest worth.  
Well, it may be so, but I have some doubt,  
An’ thirty years ain’t wiped it out.  
That was lots of things in the North to admire,  
Though they hadn’t the warmth an’ passion an’ fire,  
That all my life I’d been ust to seein,  
An’ thought belonged to a human bein’.  
An’ a thing I couldn’t help but miss  
Was the real ol’ southern heartiness.  
Oh, praise the lamb that I shall see  
Once more the land so dear to me.”<sup>26</sup>

Black leaders took vivid and sometimes violent actions to protest against racial discrimination or segregation. There were a lot of stories of riots and uprisings. Also, several associations and movements were founded and were led by famous black leaders. They were often referred to as activists.

Other blacks, in contrast, reacted peacefully but efficiently. They used as a writer put it, their “pens as weapons”. Among them, poets Paul Laurence Dunbar, Marcus Garvey, Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Huston, W.E.B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Claude Mc Kay, whose works, notably his poems, will be central to this project.

In fact, some of Claude Mc Kay’s poems if not all, centered on racial segregation in the United States of America, will be examined. First, I will examine the biography of Claude Mc Kay. Then I will move to the overview of racial segregation according to Claude Mc Kay; third, I will see how Mc Kay responded to racial segregation; fourth, I will state other alternatives to poems and fifth and last, we will see the result of the struggle against racial segregation, expressed through the

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<sup>26</sup> Dunbar, Paul, in “Goin’ back” *Complete Poems*, Washington, 1915, p. 332

actions of the UN in Africa, the actions of Peace Corps in the world and especially in Africa, and the election of the first Afro-American as President of the United States of America.

# **CHAPTER ONE: BIOGRAPHY**

Festus Claudius Mc Kay later known as Claude Mc Kay was born in 1889 at Sunny Ville, Clarendon Parish, Jamaica<sup>27</sup>. He was the youngest of the eleven children of Thomas Francis Mc Kay and Hannah Ann Elisabeth Edwards, well-to-do peasant farmers and landowners. Strictly pious Christians, Claude Mc Kay's parents are respectively from Ashanti and Malagasy descents.

At four years of age, Mc Kay started primary school at the church he attended. At the age of seven, he was sent to live with his oldest brother, a school teacher, who owned a big library of English novels, poetry, and scientific books. There, he was given the best education possible. He spent long hours reading Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and the biological and philosophical treatises of Thomas Husley, Ernest Hackel, Herbert Spencer, to list just a few. Upon the completion of "his free-thinking" education, Mc Kay aspired to become a "peasant poet", supporting himself by farming in the Jamaican countryside. Mc Kay won his first prize of poetry at the age of ten.

In 1906, he decided to enter a trade school, but when the school was destroyed by an earthquake, he became apprenticed to a carriage and cabinetmaker known as Old Brenga. He stayed there for two years. During that time, in 1907, he came to the attention of Walter Jekyll<sup>28</sup>, an English gentleman residing in Jamaica who became a mentor and an inspiration for him. He encouraged Mc Kay to concentrate on writing. He convinced him to write in his native dialect and even set some of Mc Kay's verses to music.

On the influence of Jekyll, Mc Kay published his first volumes of Jamaican dialect verse, *Songs of Jamaica*, in 1911. In 1912, he published another one, *Constab Ballad*<sup>29</sup>. These volumes of poetry won Mc Kay, who had been introduced to a new world of literature, the gold medal of Jamaican Institute of Arts and sciences in 1912.

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<sup>27</sup> James, Winston. "Becoming the People's Post: Claude Me Kay's Jamaican years 1889-1912" in *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, March 2003, n°13, pp.17-45

<sup>28</sup> Cooper, Wayne F. *Claude Mc Kay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem renaissance: A biography*. NY: Schocken Books, 1990. PS 3525. A2478 5Z 63.

<sup>29</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Songs of Jamaica Kingston Daily Gleaner, Jamaican News papers, Jamaica*.

In the summer of the same year, Mc Kay left for Charleston, South Carolina, USA, to attend Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Because the school was demanding more than he had expected<sup>30</sup> Mc Kay quickly left to study at Kansas State University. At Kansas State, he read W. E. B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*, which had a major impact on him and stirred his political involvement.

But despite his superior academic performance in 1914, Mc Kay decided to move to New York, where he married his childhood sweetheart Eulalie Lewars on July 30. A month later, after his wife got pregnant with his only child, Ruth Hope, they divorced.

Between 1914, and 1919 Mc Kay worked at various jobs including as a dining car waiter on the Pennsylvania Railroad, an experience later rendered in his novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928).

Despite his hectic schedule due to his jobs, Mc Kay devoted himself to writing, especially poems. In fact, in 1917, he published two poems in *Seven Arts* under the alias Eli Edwards. Two years later, while working as Co- Executive Editor in *The Liberator*, he published his most famous poems, "If We Must Die"<sup>31</sup> during the *Red Summer*, a period of intense racial violence against black people in Anglo American Societies.

During the twenties, Mc Kay exhibited a strong interest in communism and travelled to Russia and then to France where he was welcome enthusiastically. His view points and poetic achievements in the earlier part of the twentieth set the tone for the Harlem Renaissance and gained the deep respect of younger Black poets of the time , including, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen and Jean Toomer.

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<sup>30</sup> WWW. Google bj

<sup>31</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *If We Must Die*, First published in Max Eastman's *The Liberator* in 1918 and then in *Harlem Shadows*, New York, 1919, p. 53

Mc Kay was involved in politic affairs, and he had to work hard for living. However, he devoted a great deal of his times to poems. In fact, between 1919 and 1923, he published a large series of works including two volumes of poetry, *Spring in Hampshire* (1920) and *Harlem Shadows* (1922)<sup>32</sup>. And also, at Cambridge Magazines he published *After The Winter, the Barrier, Love Song, the Lynching, Rest in Peace, etc.*

From 1923 to 1933, he left the USA for Europe and North Africa. During this time he wrote his first novel, *Color Scheme*<sup>33</sup>. In 1928, he published *Home to Harlem*<sup>34</sup>, which was a popular success. This novel, which gained substantial readership, won Mc Kay the Harmon Foundation Award for distinguished literary achievement in 1929.

The novel was followed a year later by another one, *Banjo*<sup>35</sup>. In 1932, came out *Gingertown*<sup>36</sup>, a book of 12 poems, followed by works *Banana Bottom*<sup>37</sup> in 1933. Despite these pertinent and timely works by Mc Kay, they didn't sell as expected. Rather, they left him in debt<sup>38</sup> to their publishers and without assurance of employment Mc Kay sailed back to Harlem, New York, on February 1, 1934 after a twelve year hiatus. He faced many obstacles amid the economic crisis of the great depression. Plagued by health problems and the effects of poverty, Mc Kay also experienced the pain of loneliness and isolation.

In 1936 he published his autobiography *A Long Way from Home*<sup>39</sup> in which he stressed the need for blacks to develop cultural and economic solidarity in order to take their place in a new socialist world. In 1937, he won his third prize: James Weldon Johnson literary Guild Award. Mc Kay's last book, *Harlem: Negro*

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<sup>32</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Spring in Hampshire Liberator, Magazine, vol.2 (August 1919), p.46 And Harlem Shadows (1922), New York*

<sup>33</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Color Scheme, Novel, New York, 1926,*

<sup>34</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Home to Harlem, Novel, New York, 1928,*

<sup>35</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Banjo, Novel, New York, 1930*

<sup>36</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Gingertown, Volume of Poetry (the 5th ), New York, 1932*

<sup>37</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Banana Bottom, volume of poetry (the 6th), New York, 1933*

<sup>38</sup> *Www. Google bj*

<sup>39</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *A Long Way from Home, an autobiographical book, New York, 1937*

*Metropolis*<sup>40</sup>, published in 1940, was written from the research made during his employment at the Federal Writers Project, a government relief program designed to offer jobs to unemployed writers.

The next decade, during which Mc Kay became a US citizen, was both a decade of physical problems and spiritual prosperity for Mc Kay. High blood pressure and heart disease led to a steady physical decline, and in a move that surprised his friends, Mc Kay abandoned his life-long agnosticism and embraced Catholicism from 1942.

Upon the invitation of Bishop Bernard Shell, he moved to Chicago in 1944, where he joined the Catholic Church a year later<sup>41</sup>. In the essay titled *On Becoming a Roman Catholic* and the poem *Look Within*, Mc Kay explained this astonishing conversion. Claude Mc Kay's declining health and his heavy responsibility to the church did not prevent him from writing.

In 1946, he published a poem: the *Middle Ages*, and an essay: *why I Became a Catholic*. During the last years of his life he compiled his autobiography of his youth titled *My Green Hills of Jamaica*. Both books were published posthumously. Mc Kay died of heart disease in Chicago on 22 May, 1948<sup>42</sup> and was buried in Calvary cemetery, Woodside, New York.

Even though Mc Kay is no more alive, his work is representative of the black artists' struggle to gain recognition in the western world. Like so many other artistic geniuses who lived their lives as outsiders, Mc Kay remained the peasant poet in the modern age, a poetic visionary devoted to awakening the minds and spirits of all humanity.

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<sup>40</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, New York, 1940

<sup>41</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Autographical book*, New York, 1940

<sup>42</sup> *Phylon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester, Atlanta Ga, 1953

# **CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF RACIAL SEGREGATION IN THE USA**

## 1- Definition of racial segregation

Racial segregation is a phrase made up of two words: racial and segregation. “Racial” is an adjective derived from race. Segregation is a noun from the Latin word “segregatio” which conveys the idea of separating from the herd. When segregation is connected to race, then one talks of racial segregation.

Simply put, racial segregation can be defined as separation of humans into racial groups in daily life. The separation may apply to institutions such as schools, churches, hospitals, and facilities like parks, playgrounds, restaurants, restrooms. It can also apply to domains as diverse as job opportunities and the rental or purchase of a home, etc.

Racial segregation usually coincides with discrimination, intolerance and injustice, and can be accompanied by suffering and sometimes torture. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance defines segregation as follows: “the act by which a person separates other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds without an objective and reasonable justification in conformity with the proposed definition of discrimination. As a result, continues the Organization, the voluntary act of separating oneself from other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds does not constitute segregation.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, while discussing the same issue in term of racial segregation, the UN Forum on Minority Issues states this: “The creation and development of classes and schools providing education in minority languages should not be considered impermissible segregation, if the assignment to such classes and schools is of a voluntary nature.”<sup>44</sup>

Hence, separation is not always segregation, and a situation that arises when members of different races mutually prefer to associate and do business with members of their own race would usually be described as separation or “de facto” separation of the races rather than segregation. In the United States, racial segregation was legalized for many years and it has been the expression of ascendancy of whites over groups, notably Blacks.

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<sup>43</sup> *European commission Against Racism and Intolerance, www. com.*

<sup>44</sup> *UN forum on Minority Issues, www. com.*

## 2- Presentation of racial segregation

Throughout their life, from their enslavement until recent years, millions of Blacks, scattered in many lands including the present United States of America, have firsthand experience with racial segregation. Slaves in the early days, especially, were quite separated from their masters, whites. They didn't have rights. They just had to work hard and complete their daily tasks.

Some slaves in the United States labored under the "task" system: they were assigned a certain amount of work to complete in a day. Others, however, worked in gangs, under the supervision of overseers or slave drivers. In certain areas the death rates were high because of poor or harsh treatment.

The full emancipation, officially signed and proclaimed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, failed to put an end to racial segregation in the United States as expected by former slaves, the blacks. White's mind toward blacks remained steadily unchanged. There were developing theories about inferiority of Blacks prevailing throughout the country. Considered second-class citizens, they usually were not allowed to share the same faculty, bus, house or restaurants, as whites. Also, job opportunities for blacks were very limited, which posed the crucial problem of how they could gain a salary.

To top it off, blacks from rural regions in the South were seriously humiliated. During the Jim Crow period, a system of laws and customs, blacks in the South of the United States saw graphic reminders of their second-class citizenship. There were everywhere signs reading "whites only" or "colored"<sup>45</sup> hung over drinking fountains and the doors to restrooms, restaurants, movie theaters, and other public places. Along with segregation, blacks in the South, faced discrimination in jobs and housing and were often denied their constitutional right to vote.

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<sup>45</sup> *Op. Cit*

During the same period there developed in the South lynching: mob execution, usually by hanging and often accompanied by torture, of alleged criminals.

Although lynching has been used against members of many different ethnic groups, the vast majority of victims have been African Americans. Sometimes, instead of being the result of formal charges, lynching was merely, as has noted historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “a powerful tool of intimidation.” In less than a half century, there were thousands of Black victims of lynching.”<sup>46</sup>

This rough treatment, combined with other reasons including the expansion of industry in the North, stimulated about 7 million<sup>47</sup> African Americans to leave the South for urban cities in the North between 1916 and 1970.

Claude Mc Kay, who was believed to have been born with rebellious blood in his veins, exposed these sad conditions in some of the poems he had written after his departure for America. Here are some of them:

“Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,  
And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,  
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess  
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!  
Her vigor flown like tides into my blood,  
Giving me strength erect against her hate.  
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.  
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with not a shred  
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.  
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders there,  
Beneath the touch of Time’s unearring hand  
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Tuttle, Kate. *Africana, USA, 1999*, p. 1210

<sup>47</sup> J.H.F. *From slavery to freedom p. 464 and Negro Migration, Africana, p. 923*

<sup>48</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. “America”, *First appeared in Opportunity, Journal. vol.2. (May 1924), p.142 and later in Harlem Shadows, New York, 1930, p. 6*

‘Their shadow dim the sunshine of our days,  
 As they go lumbering across the sky,  
 Skwaking in joy of feeling safe on high,  
 Beating their heavy wings of owlsh gray.  
 They scare the singing birds of earth away  
 As, greed-impelled, they circle threateningly,  
 Watching the toilets with malignant eye  
 From their exclusive haven-birds of prey  
 They swoop down for the spoil in certain might,  
 And fasten in our bleeding flesh their claws.  
 They beat us to surrender weak with fright,  
 And tugging and tearing without let or pause,  
 They flap their hideous wings in grim delight,  
 And stuff our gory hearts into their maws.’<sup>49</sup>

These poems and others, well illustrate how blacks were treated in the strange land of America.

In the first verse of the first poem, Mc Kay talks about the bread of bitterness he was fed by “she.” The “she” of the line is referring to America and the “me” is referring to Claude Mc Kay as well as to other blacks in the country. If, after their release from the yoke of slavery and their emancipation, blacks in the USA ate to their full, the injustices, resulting from racial segregation, weighed over them and this, even while eating, might rob them of the joy they would have felt. The following lines compared America to a tiger’s tooth into the throat of its enemies, blacks. And the purpose is to a steal their breath of life.” The tiger is a ferocious animal that uses his teeth to hurt his prey. This image well fits how cruel whites were against blacks.

Entitled “Birds of Prey”, the second of the three poems mentioned above mentions some words or phrases closely connected with suffering: scare, threateningly, toilers, malignant eye, tugging, tearing, maws, etc. These words are characteristic of the suffering that blacks underwent.

The third poem, “Outcast”,<sup>50</sup> sets a comparison between life in Jamaica and life in the New World. The author was so much seduced by the former that his spirit longed for it. He also mentions how free he used to be, both in actions and words, in

<sup>49</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. “Birds of Prey”, *Workers’ dreadnought, Magazine*, (Oct. 1920) p.5

<sup>50</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. “Outcast”, *Literaty Digest, paper*, vol.75 (oct.28,1922), p.33

Jamaica. Things are different in America. Instead of freedom, it was rather imprisonment and constant menaces.

Indeed, after Emancipation, whites still refused to have anything in common with blacks. They still continued to consider them second-class citizens and whatever their age, knowledge, social rank, whites would not show them any respect. Also blacks were not entitled to share the same school as white, the same places in churches, the same hospital etc., as whites. As a matter of fact, in 1917, traditionally cited as the natal year of the Harlem Renaissance, there were 2132 African Americans in colleges and universities with probably no more than 50 attending “white” institutions. This minuscule vanguard of minority, a fraction of 0.1 percent of the racial total, is a powerful testimony of racial segregation.

Even places on buses were also segregated. And this went on until the early half of twentieth century. Furthermore, blacks were not granted decent jobs and living was more and more challenging in the strange land of America.

Racism reached his height under what were termed Jim Crow Laws, the Ku-Klux-Klan and lynching. Although lynching, defined as execution without the due process of law, has been used against members of many different ethnic groups, it was instead synonym of black massacre. Used as powerful tool of intimidation, lynching claimed 3386 blacks between 1882 and 1930. It is surely about this that Mc Kay wrote in “The Lynching”:

“His spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.  
His father, by the cruelest way of pain,  
Had hidden him to his bosom once again,  
The awful sin remained still unforgiving.  
All night a bright and solitary star  
(Perchance the once that ever guided him,  
Yet gave him up at last to Fate’s wild whim)  
Hung pitifully o’er the swinging char.  
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view,  
The ghastly body swaying to look, but never a one  
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue,  
And little lads, lynchers that were to be,  
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. “The Lynching”, *Harlem Shadows*, NY, 1933, p. 51

The second verse mentions “pain”, the fourth line mentions “the awful sin” that will for long be remembered and even “unforgiven”. Verse 8 mentions one of the cruelest ways lynching was executed: “hanging”. The fourth following lines show how people, certainly whites, including women, with a sense and feeling of victory, were eager to watch the “ghastly body”. Instead of being in sorrow they “danced round the dreadful thing” to an interesting tune.

There were many other contemporary writers as well as poets that testified to racial segregation before and after the Emancipation in the USA. One of them is Paul Laurence Dunbar. In his poem, inspired by the act of protestation of Mary Britton, against the Legislative Assembly, following the law about segregation of public transports, you could read this:

“God of the right, arise  
And let thy pow’r prevail,  
Too long thy children mown  
In labor and travail.  
Oh, speed the happy day  
When waiting ones may see  
The glory-bringing birth  
Of our real liberty!  
Grant thon, O gracious God,  
That not in word alone  
Shall freedom’s boon be ours,  
While bondage-galled we moan!  
But condescend to us  
In our o’erwhelming need,  
Break down the hing’ring bars;  
And make us free indeed.”<sup>52</sup>

For his part Langston Hughes brought to the fore the moods of bitterness of Blacks in the USA in the “Minstrel Man”:

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<sup>52</sup> Dunbar, Paul. *oak and Ivy, Kentucky, Indiana* p. 30

“Because my mouth  
Is wide with laughter  
And my throat  
Is deep with song,  
You do not think  
I suffer after  
I have held my pain  
So long?  
Because my mouth  
Is wide with laughter,  
You do not hear  
My inner cry?”<sup>53</sup>

The second poem, “The Jester” goes this way:

“In one hand  
I hold tragedy  
And in the other  
Comedy,-  
Masks for the souls.  
Laugh with me.  
You would laugh!  
Weep with me.  
You would weep!  
Tears are my laughter.  
Laughter is my pain.  
Cry at my grinning mouth,  
If you will.  
Laugh at my sorrow’s reign.  
I am the Black jester,  
The dumb clown of the world,  
The booted, booted fool of silly men.  
Once I was wise.  
Shall I be wise again?”<sup>54</sup>

The words “suffer”, “pain”, “cry” that appear respectively in the sixth, seventh and twelfth verses well depict blacks’ sufferance in the middle of Americans. Very usually, this sufferance verged on death.

The second poem mentions “tragedy”, “weep”, “tears”, “pain” “grinning mouth” ,that characterized the life of black Americans on whom weighed the burden of racial segregation or racial injustices.

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<sup>53</sup> Langston, Hughes. “Minstrel Man”, *The keeper and other poems* p. 38

<sup>54</sup> Hughes, Langston. “The Jester”, *Complete Poems*, p. 1781

As far as James Weldon Johnson is concerned, he presented racial segregation with all its tragedies in "White Witch"<sup>55</sup> in which he described white Americans as witch, who like a hunter, uses "snare", "blight", to catch his prey, black Americans.

However, what were the reasons of segregation in the USA those years?

### **3. Reasons of Racial Segregation**

Mc Kay dealt with reasons why whites segregated against black Americans in some of his poems. He enumerated four different reasons: hate, prejudice, might and skin color.

#### **3-1) First Reason: Hate**

The poems "America" as well as "The White House" illustrates the first reason, hate. Here are these poems:

"Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,  
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,  
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess  
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!  
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,  
Giving me strength erect against her hate.  
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.  
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with not a shred  
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.  
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders there,  
Beneath the touch of time's unerring hand,  
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand."<sup>56</sup>

The poet utterly asserts in the sixth verse the first reason, hate. Elsewhere, in "The White House", he refers to this hate in verse 14 as "poison invented by whites." Clearly, hate, according to Mc Kay, was one of the reasons behind segregation in the USA. And this became manifestly a truth with the legislation about the transportation industry.

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<sup>55</sup> Weldon, J. James. "The White Witch", *Fifty years* p. 19

<sup>56</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. "The White House", *Liberator, paper. Vol.5 (May 1922)p.16*

In 1890, for example, a law requiring separate railroad cars was taken to regulate movements for black and white passengers. The ruling, fueled by hate, led to legalized segregation in education, public parks, and libraries. Other laws did not specifically mention race but written and applied in ways that discriminated against African Americans from voting. For example, though more than 130,000 blacks were registered to vote in Louisiana in 1896, only 1,342 were at the rolls in 1904.

### 3-2) Second Reason: Racial Prejudice

Another reason behind segregation against blacks was racial prejudice. The poems “In Bondage” and “Whe’ Fe Do?” brought this to the fore. “Bondage” goes this way:

“I would be wandering in distant fields  
Where man, and bird, and beast, lives leisurely,  
And the old earth is kind, and ever yields  
Her godly gifts to all her children free;  
Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,  
And boys and girls have time and space for play  
Before they come to years of understanding  
Somewhere I would be singing, far away.  
For life is greater than thousand wars  
Men wage for it in their instate lust,  
And will remain like the eternal stars,  
When I am bound with you in your near graves,  
Oh black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.”<sup>57</sup>

Some lines of the second poem, “Whe’ Fe Do?” are the following:

“We nigger had a tas’fe do,  
To conquer prejudice dat due  
To obeah, an’t’ings not a few  
Dat keep we progress back fe true -  
But whe’ fe do?”<sup>58</sup>

Long after the end of slavery African Americans continued to suffer from inferior legal status. In many States especially in the South, they were unable to choose freely where to work, live, eat, or go to school. Until the Civil Rights movement of the

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<sup>57</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. “In Bondage”, first pub. *Liberator, magazine*, vol.4 (August 1921)p.10 and later in *Harlem Shadows*, NY, 1922, p. 28

<sup>58</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Whe’ Fe Do?*, *Songs of Jamaica* p.28

1960s<sup>59</sup>, most southern African American could not exercise their constitutional right to vote. If they no longer faced the threat of death at a hangman's noose, they were still vulnerable to being beaten, fired from their jobs, or arrested for whatever a white person might accuse them.

Whatever their faith, white Americans in general, felt no regret about the conditions of blacks. No wonder, almost everyone believed in the pseudo science of eugenics, according to which blacks are inferior to whites. For many whites, blacks half way between animals and whites.

### 3-3) Third Reason: Skin Color

Another reason for segregation was skin color or to be more precise, the difference between colors. Mc Kay points to this in the last lines of "The Barrier"

For there's the barrier of race,  
You're fair and I am dark."<sup>60</sup>

By contrasting the "fair" ness of Whites and the "dark" ness of Blacks, Mc Kay was pointing to this difference in the skin color as one reason why whites segregated against blacks in the USA. This contrast appears in "My House". It reads:

"For this peculiar tint that paints my house,  
Peculiar in an alien atmosphere  
Where other houses wear a kindred hue,  
I have a stirring always very rare,  
And romance- making in my ardent blood  
That channels through my body like a flood.  
I know the dark delight of being strange,  
The penalty of difference in the crowd,  
The loneliness of wisdom among fools,  
Yet never have I felt but very proud,  
Though I have suffered agonies of hell,  
Of living in my own peculiar cell."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Civil rights Movement, history of African Americans in les poètes nègres des USA by Wagner, p.143*

<sup>60</sup> *Mc Kay, Claude. "The Barrier" liberator, paper, vol.2(July1919),p.20*

<sup>61</sup> *Mc Kay, Claude. My House, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922,p 60.*

With a sense of pride, Mc Kay stressed this factor in verses 7 and 8 by using the words “strange” and “difference”. In addition to skin color, there are also other physiological aspects that differentiate whites from blacks. Among them, the color and length of hair, the color of eyes, the size of nose, to list just a few.

### **3-4) Fourth Reason: Might**

The fourth reason among those listed, is might. Since Mc Kay’s days and even many years before, the USA had been a symbol of might, force or power, wealth, strength, wonders, bigness, golden glory, etc.

Many poems by Mc Kay present this aspect. Some of them are “America”, ”Enslaved”, “America in Retrospect”, “Compensation”, “Like a Strong Tree”, “Russian Cathedral ”Birds of Prey”, ”When Dawn Comes to the City” .Some verses of these poems deal with the notions above mentioned. The last four verses of “America” are an example. It reads:

“Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders there,  
Beneath the touch of time’s unerring hand,  
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.”<sup>62</sup>

Another example is these verses of “When Dawn Comes to the city”:

I see the mighty city through a mist-  
The strident trains that speed the goaded mass,  
The poles and spires and towers vapor- kissed,  
The fortified port through which the great  
And the old milk carts go rumbling by  
Under the same dull stars.  
Out of the tenements, cold as stone.  
Dark figures start for work;  
I watch them sadly shuffle on,  
‘Tis dawn, dawn in New York.’<sup>63</sup>

Other examples appear in verses 3, 4 of “Compensation”, “ Like a Strong Tree”, verses 9-14 of “ Russian Cathedral” the sixth line of “ Exhortation: Summer

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> *Wagner, Jean.Negro poets of the USA,Pris, 1963,p.302*

1919” the seventh and fourteenth lines of “America” and verses 9,10,11,12 of “ Birds of Prey”.

Here are these poems respectively:

“Den let me not t’ink hard of those who use  
Deir power tyrannously an’ abuse”<sup>64</sup>

“Like a strong tree that reaches down, deep, deep,  
So woold I live in rich imperial growth,  
Touching the surface and depth of things,  
Instinctively responsive into both,  
Tasting the sweets of being and the stings,  
Sensing the subtle spell of changing forms,  
Like a strong tree against a thousand storms”<sup>65</sup>.

“Bow down my soul and let the wonderful light  
Of beauty bathe thee from her lofty throne,  
Bow down before the wonder of man’s might  
Bow down in worship, humble and alone  
Bow lowly down before the sacred sight  
Of man’s divinity alive in stone.”<sup>66</sup>

“And its golden glory fills the western skies”<sup>67</sup>

“Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.  
The tiger in his strength his thirst must slake!”<sup>68</sup>

“They swoopdown for the spoil in certain mighty,  
And fasten in our bleeding flesh their claws.  
They beat us to surrender weak with fright,  
And tugging and tearing without let or pause.”<sup>69</sup>

One domain of great technological advances was transport. Some examples of means of transport were motorcycles, cars, lorries, trains, ships and planes. Even if some of these existed many years before Mc Kay, there was progress in the way of making them. This era also saw great advancement in health. Thanks to hard working and dedicated persons, the domain of health experienced a rapid expansion. There

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 310

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Op. Cit* p.34

were more available medicines for the treatment of illnesses and diseases like malaria, measles, leprosy etc.

Communication was also a field in which technological advances achieved astonishing progress. Radio, television, cinema, telegram, web site, satellite, etc. were more efficiently designed and helped people to efficiently keep in touch. To top it off, in very recent years, there has been the invention of the internet and the telephone with their various functions.

Also, there were advances in engineering, that is, scientific knowledge applied to the design of buildings and control machines, roads, bridges, electrical equipment, etc. These advances contributed most to the beauty of towns and cities in the USA, in which cities and towns one could see not only well fitted buildings, including skyscrapers, but also bridges and roads cleverly made with electricity everywhere.

Agriculture too, experienced scientific and technological progress. With the development of machines like tractors, chemicals, the agriculture helped to face the needs of Americans in terms of diet.

All these reasons combined fueled the schism of whites' supremacy over blacks and led to racial segregation in the USA.

But it is important to note that reason, in this context at least is not the same as rightness. In fact, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines reason as "cause or explanation" while rightness is related to 'justice' according to the same source. We are stating or establishing this dissimilarity to prevent any confusion. Now, if you are preoccupied with the answer to the question as whether white Americans were right or wrong, we will say first that the answer to this question may vary depending on the knowledge, experience and even the color of the person who is answering. However, I think that three factors should be taken into account.

First, it is important to understand that the question of racial segregation those days was ideological. Black Americans had just broken the chains of slavery. It would

require time for white Americans to treat them fairly. Also, blacks were not considered as human as whites. No wonder why Fitzhugh still wished the state of slavery for them instead of freedom. Fitzhugh wrote that “blacks have neither energy nor enterprise” and that their “liberty is a curse to themselves and a greeter curse to the society around them.” To support his belief, Fitzhugh added with almost sincerity: “The Negro slaves of the South are the happiest and in some sense, the freest people in the world”<sup>70</sup>.

A careful look around the world and notably in Africa proved Fitzhugh right. The mismanagement of Liberia, the first country in Africa under the rule of Westerners is just an example.

It is also important to note that African Americans were not the only people who were victim of racial segregation. In fact, it seems that racial segregation has always existed in all countries in the world and it has been the root of wars between people of the same country.

Hence, asking the question whether white Americans were right or wrong would mean judging many countries divided, destroyed by wars on the ground of the issue of race. South Africa along with its apartheid regime, war between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and World War II are but some examples.

Another aspect that is worth considering is blacks’ mentality, wherever they are. Blacks as a whole suffered from inferiority complex. They think that they are naturally inferior to whites. And black Americans are hardly an exception.

In “Discourse on Colonialism”, Aimé Césaire noticed this concerning blacks’ attitudes toward whites: “they took whites for gods and expect of them everything one expects of divinity!”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Martin Luther King’s father said: “nobody can make a slave out of you if you do not consider yourself slave.”<sup>72</sup> Clearly, if Blacks were enslaved, it is because they wanted to be enslaved, if they were put aside, excluded from society, they were responsible for that to some extent.

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<sup>70</sup> Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*, Trans. Joan Pinkham, version pub. Monthly Review Press: New York and London, 1972. Originaly pub.as *Discours sur le Colonialisme* by ed. Présence Africaine, 1955 p15.

<sup>71</sup> *Op.Cit*

<sup>72</sup> Luther, king Martin , *Autobiographical Book*, USA, 1959

Black Americans, as suggested by Aime Cesaire needed “to undergo a de-brainedwashing.”<sup>73</sup>

You could see now how hard this would be to pronounce judgment on racial segregation in the USA. However, whether white Americans were right or wrong, racial segregation brought about dire consequences.

## **4- Consequences of Racial Segregation**

### **4-1) Negative Aspect**

Racial segregation in the USA sometimes resulted in violence expressed in various ways including burning, termination of employment, oppression, and even killing and imprisonment.

Until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, most southern African Americans could not exercise their constitutional right to vote.

They were also vulnerable to being beaten, fired from their jobs, or arrested on shaky accusations and charges. One example is the trial of Rosa Parks following her refusal to give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus. Blacks in Montgomery reacted through the boycott of Montgomery buses, which was organized and led by King at the head of Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). King aroused his people’s courage with these words “There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression.” On February 1, 1956, a bomb went off in King’s home. Shortly thereafter he was assassinated.

Even in Harlem considered as the Mecca of Negroes, a neighborhood of New York City where blacks outnumbered whites by a ratio of 3 to 1, undoubtedly nurtured by the depression of 1930, racism led to the exclusion of Blacks from decent jobs industry.

Responses to injustices often expressed through riots and boycotts often ended in injury, conviction and assassination of blacks.

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<sup>73</sup> *Op.cit. p.17*

Furthermore, despite the hint of hope roused by Harlem Renaissance in late 1920s and in the early 1930s with the publication of “The Green Pastures” by Roark Bradford, “Not without Laughter” by Hughes, “The year of Grace” by Alain Locke and the “Black Manhattan” where James Weldon Johnson described Harlem as to be “in the process of making” with race relations ‘amelioration, the 1931 “Report on Negro Housing, presented to President Hoover, was very shocking. “Nearly 50 percent of Harlem’s families would be unemployed by the end of 1932. The syphilis rate was nine time’s higher than white Manhattan’s; the tuberculosis rate was five times greater; pneumonia and typhoid were twice that of whites. Two African American mothers and two babies died for every white mother and child. Harlem General Hospital, the single public health facility, served 200,000 African Americans with 273 beds. A Harlem family paid twice as much in terms of percentage its income for rent as a white family. Meanwhile, median family income in Harlem dropped 43.6 percent by 1932...”<sup>74</sup>

Even American Marxism, in which the Talented Tenth and most of the writers of Harlem Renaissance believed, failed to be the answer to the problem of racial injustices in Harlem. From 1935 to 1964, job discrimination, housing discrimination and police brutality regularly led to protests with dire outcomes: 10 blacks were killed, about 500 were injured and there were several hundred others arrested and millions of dollars in property damages. Mc Kay pointed to these conditions in lots of his poems. Some of them read:

Some of them are: “The Wild May”<sup>75</sup>, “In Bondage”<sup>76</sup>, “Enslaved”<sup>77</sup>, “The Lynching”<sup>78</sup>, “Through Agony”<sup>79</sup>, “Consolation”<sup>80</sup> and “My House”<sup>81</sup>. The first poem, “The Wild May” mentioned that Blacks were “among a chain of quaint” and that they “weighed down with fetters”. “In Bondage” mentioned “the thousand wars” that characterized life in America between Whites and Blacks.

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<sup>74</sup> Mendelsohn, Jim, *Africana, Harlem, New York, 1999, p.925*

<sup>75</sup> Mc Kay, Claude *Wild May, Selected Poems, NY, 1927, p 27*

<sup>76</sup> Mc Claude, *In Bondage, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922, p. 28*

<sup>77</sup> Mc Kay, Claude, *Enslaved, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922, p. 32*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *My House, Opportunity, magazine. Vol.4 (Nov.1926)p.342*

In “Enslaved” the poet wrote about Black Americans as “long suffering race” constantly “despised”, “oppressed” and “lynched”. While writing “Through Agony” Mc Kay was certainly denouncing how Blacks lost their identity. Actually, he wrote : “Something in me is lost..., some vital thing has gone out of heart. As to “The Lynching”, “Through Agony” and “Consolation”, their respectively mention “the cruelest way of pain “, “no peace, no rest” and agonies of hell”. In short, these poems are a perfect description of African Americans’ sufferance in the United States just before and after Emancipation.

Yet there are other poems that dealt with other drawbacks than the ones mentioned. An example is “One Year After”

Not once in all our days of poignant love,  
Did I single instant give to thee  
My undivided being wholly free.  
Not all thy potent passion could remove  
The barrier that loomed between to prove  
The full supreme surrendering of me  
Oh, I was beaten, helpless utterly  
Against the shadow fact with which I strove  
For when a cruel power forced me to face  
The truth which poison our illicit wines,  
That even I was faithless to my race  
Bleeding beneath the iron hand of thine,  
Our union seemed a monstrous thing and base!  
I was an outcast from thy world and mine.”<sup>82</sup>

This poem is surely the remembrance of an affair between Claude Mc Kay and a White lady. It reflects the forbidden romantic relationships between Blacks and Whites. Mc Kay refers to this law as a “cruel power”. Violating this law might not only mean betrayal and rejection from either world but also the cost of life to both man and woman.

Another similar poem about the interdiction of any loving union between blacks and whites is “The Barrier,” published in 1922.

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<sup>82</sup> *Mc Kay Claude, One Year After II, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922, p. 84*

Here it reads:

“I must not gaze at them although  
Your eyes are dawning day,  
I must not watch you as you go  
Your sun-illuminated way;  
I hear but I must never heed  
The fascinating note,  
Which, fluting like a river reed,  
Comes from your trembling throat,  
I must not see upon your face,  
Love’s softly glowing spark;  
For there’s the barrier of race,  
You’re fair and I am dark.”<sup>83</sup>

Because of the difference in skin color “one” “fair” and “another” “dark” Blacks were not allowed to gaze at Whites, to watch them. It seems that sometimes, Whites were appealing by blacks’ beauty going as far as manifesting their love in their voice and in their face. This is the conclusion that one could draw from the reading of verses 5, 6,7,8,9 and 10.

In such circumstances, Blacks could do nothing else than not respond, there’s in fact “the barrier of race”.

Yes, racial segregation could not be recalled without the damages it made. However, as every cloud has a silver lining, racial segregation could be found to have positive effects.

#### **4-2) Positive Effect**

The poet brought this fact to the fore in his poem termed “The Negro’s Friend” verses 13-14. It runs:

Oh, segregation is not the whole sin  
The Negroes need salvation from within.<sup>84</sup>

He defended this point of view in a passage of his novel *A Long Way from Home* in these words: “ Les Blancs ont fait aux Noirs de grands torts, mais ils leur ont

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<sup>83</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *The Barrier Harlem Shadows*, NY, 1922p. 79

<sup>84</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *A long way from Home, autobiographical book* : NY, 1937, p 43

aussi fait quelque bien, ils leur ont apporté les bienfaits de la civilisation moderne. Ils peuvent encore bien faire davantage’’.<sup>85</sup>

First, it helped blacks to be more united than ever. W.E.B Du Bois pointed to this unity in” *Returning soldiers*”, in these words “Dans des circonstances identiques, nous nous battrions, encore. Mais, par le Dieu du Ciel, nous sommes des lâches et des imbéciles si, maintenant que la guerre est terminée, nous ne rassemblions pas toutes nos intelligences et nos énergies pour livrer une bataille plus farouche, plus longue et plus impitoyable contre les forces de l’enfer déchaînées dans notre pays. ‘’<sup>86</sup>

True to Claude Mc Kay’s, W. E. B. Du Bois’ and many other black leaders’ wishes racial segregation ended up strengthening the black race as a whole. In fact, the tide has turned; the victims have become powerful and able to launch attacks against their foes. A wave of associations and movements followed.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Du Bois, W.E.B, Returning soldiers, Washington, 1924, p 95. Trans. By wagner Jean in “Les Poètes Nègres des Etats-unis*

<sup>87</sup> *See chap III for details.*

**CHAPTER THREE : CLAUDE MCKAY'S  
RESPONSE TO RACIAL SEGREGATION**

The assertiveness of blacks and their cultural identity has become more evident thanks to these associations and movements. Other activities resulting from the union of black Americans were the programs to promote excellence among black students and bonuses for black workers.

Another aspect was the resurgence of talented writers, artists, singers and poets.<sup>88</sup> This surely helped shape the minds of white Americans toward people of African descents.

## 5) Different Responses to Racial Segregation

### 5-1) Claude Mc Kay at War

Since he had been in Jamaica and later in Kingston as a mere school boy or student, Claude Mc Kay certainly heard the news about racial segregation against the people of color in general and particularly about blacks. How shocked he might have felt. However, his arrival in the USA in 1912 helped him experience really the realities of these practices. Seeking to live in peace by all means, Mc Kay resorted to hate, as he expressed in his poems. This became a weapon of defense and offense alike. Here is how this is expressed in verses 5 to 8 of the sonnet entitled “Mulatto”:

“There is a searing hate within my soul,  
A hate that only kin can feel for kin,  
A hate that makes me vigorous and whole,  
And spurs me on increasingly to win.”<sup>89</sup>

“The White City” is another sonnet where the poet expressed utterly his hate toward white Americans. It runs:

“I will not toy with it nor bend an inch.  
Deep in the secret chambers of my heart  
I muse my life long hate, and without flinch  
I bear it nobly as I live my part.  
My being would be a skeleton, shell  
If this dark passion that fills my every mood,  
And makes my heaven in the whites world’ hell,

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<sup>88</sup> *Op. Cit*

<sup>89</sup> *Mc Kay Claude. Mulatto, Selected Poems, NY, 1923, p 105*

Did not forever feed me vital blood.  
I see the mighty city through a mist  
The strident trains that speeded the goaded mass,  
The poles and spires and towers vapor-kissed,  
The fortified port through which the great ships pass,  
The tides, the wharves, the dens I contemplate.  
Are sweet like wanton loves because I hate.”<sup>90</sup>

Verses 3 and 4 of the poem show that the poet has for long beard the hate deeply in his heart without finding the opportunity of expressing it. And now, under the constant pressure of white oppression, he would find no excuse. He put forth all his efforts to avenge by hating in return. His hate was so deeply rooted that Mc Kay would not accept to toy with white Americans. So intense was this hate that according to “O word I love to sing”, even words failed to render it.

Yet, Claude Mc Kay went further than expressing hate in mere words. He wrote sonnets that depict the war he waged against his foes, the white Americans. Titled “To the white Fiends”, one of them reads:

“Think you I am not fiend and savage too?  
Think you I could not arm me with a gun  
And shoot down ten of you for every one  
Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?  
Be not deceived, for every deed you do  
I could match out match am I not Afric’s son,  
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?  
But the Almighty from the darkness drew  
My soul and said: Even thou shalt be a light  
Awhile to burn on the benighted earth,  
Thy dusky face I set among the white  
For thee to prove thyself of higher worth,  
Before the world is swallowed up in night,  
To show thy little lamp: go forth, go forth!”<sup>91</sup>

In the first and sixth verses, the poet shows how he, a former lover of peace, could suddenly turn fiend and savage to follow whites’ pattern and match every deed, misdeed of his torturers. Claude Mc Kay’s “To the White Fiends” was recognized by many critics as a militant sonnet. However, the sonnet loses its quality and validity

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<sup>90</sup> *Mc Kay Claude. The White City, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922, p. 23*

<sup>91</sup> *Mc Kay Claude. To the White Fiends, Paerson’s Magazine, paper, vol.39 Sept.1918, p.276*

with the mention “Africa’s son”, a symbol of Christ with the mission of bringing light in the world and to give his soul as a sacrifice. “To the white Fiends” was in fact a product of eras of lynchers and night riders and the mention of Jesus was untimely.

What then can be said about another poem of Mc Kay written one year previously? Entitled “If We Must Die”, the poem goes:

“If we must die let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot,  
If we must die oh, let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy shall be constrained to honor us though dead  
Oh, “kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;  
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal only one death blow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!”<sup>92</sup>

If “To the White Fiends” missed the point to some extent, “If We Must Die” in the other hand, coming at the right time, received general applause and almost all black Americans’ approval. Talking about the poem, the author said: “.Initially published in Max Eastman magazine, « The liberator», this poem was reprinted in all the Negro publications of any importance. It was read through in all the Negro churches...Pastors would recite it at the end of their sermons and members would answer: Amen. It would be repeated in Negro clubs, in Negro schools and during Negro meetings.

Negroes with no taste of poetry testified that they had “become a poet because of “If We Must Die”. Personally, Mc Kay confessed : “I was astonished because of the general favor granted to the poem. In fact, as a poet, I was so intensively subjective that, while writing the poem, I would become the instrument of the expression of public’s sentiment.”<sup>93</sup> Mc Kay’s testimony about the poem was confirmed by many people including Sterling Brown. Here is his declaration: “When his poems started appearing in our country, he

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<sup>92</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *If We Must Die, Harlem Shadows, NY, 1922, p. 53*

<sup>93</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *A Long way From Home: autobiographical book, New York, 1940 pp. 227- 228*

became what it is difficult to become: something like the poet of people. I found the enthusiasts of his poems in the most unexpected places: the kitchen of a hotel in Jefferson City and the boutique of a barber in Nashville. Intellectuals welcomed Claude McKay as a precursor.”<sup>94</sup> Even many decades later, people, blacks and whites alike inside and outside America continued to celebrate the success of the poem. As a matter of fact, 25 years after its first publication, the poem was reprinted in a Britannica Anthology, while Great Britain was facing the ordeal of World War II. Furthermore, in 1944 the poem was found written on the body<sup>95</sup> of a young white American, victim of the war. “If We Must Die” was written during the red summer of 1919, a period crucial in the life of black Americans who have been oppressed by whites. They needed a balm for their wound. And ‘If We Must Die’ seemed to be that balm. No wonder the poem received such applause.

Even if someone detested the poem, the effect it would have had on the people of color under trial was obvious and predictable. This is the conclusion you can draw from the discussion the poet had with Harris from Pearson’s Magazine. Regarding himself as the poem’s inspiration, Harris demanded the right to publish it in Pearson’s Magazine.

The poem had been promised to Max Eastman of Liberator Magazine and despite Harris’ protests; McKay refused to grant permission. Harris’s attitude was enhanced when the poem, published in Liberator Magazine in 1919, became overnight the most revered poem by a black man among black masses.

The analysis of the poem helps know “If We Must Die” really measures up the reverence granted to it. The first four verses are like an invitation to action. Here, McKay invites his people not to permit to undergo the same lot as mere animals, hogs in this case. During McKay’s days, a hog is among the animals which meat not only people, but also dogs enjoy, and when one is hunted and penned, people and dogs gather to take each one their part.

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<sup>94</sup> *Cambridge Magazine*, ed. C. K. Ogden. London, England, pp108-109.

<sup>95</sup> Lock, Alain. *The New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the wars*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1999

At the butcher's shop, you could hear dogs bark, discussing bones cut and thrown away. This image is almost similar to the treatment Black Americans underwent until the second decade of the twentieth century. They passively tolerated bad treatment and humiliation from white Americans. Now, they have to react actively and even violently even if such a reaction would cost their lives. If revenge would be a synonym of death for Blacks, they would have nobly died and their "precious blood" would not have been "shed in vain, as the poet meaningfully said in the two following verses. In these verses, Mc Kay refers to black Americans' adversaries as monsters' who, according to verse 8 would eventually "honor" blacks even if they would end up dead. In verse 9, the poet refers to blacks as kinsmen, which is an old fashioned term to talk about a relative, a brother. In fact, the battle of "humanhood"<sup>96</sup> helped blacks "in the USA as well as other countries of the world, to be more united, close as ever before and to become like 'kinsmen". In fact unity was necessary, indispensable for black Americans to confront white Americans, described at the second part of verse 9 as "common foe". They all have a strong and almost a patriotic rule or law to fight that "foe" or enemy. The tenth verse talks about an unfavorable condition that might appear as an obstacle to moving forward in the fight. True, blacks were numerous in the USA. However, when compared to the total number of whites, they were really "far outnumbered". Bravery would help them nevertheless confront whites. It is this quality that the poet invited his people to have by saying "let us show us brave" at the end of the verse.

Being brave" as suggested by Mc Kay would help blacks to fight back by dealing at least "one blow" a "death-blow", for a thousand blows without caring about the consequences.

The mention of "men" in verse 13 conveys the idea of courage or bravery that would be needed to face the "pack" of savage enemies and the last verse expresses the determination of blacks to fight back "even at crucial moment, when there seems to be no hope because of being "pressed to the wall", "dying". In short, "If We Must Die "is a poem of action, a poem of determination and a poem of revenge. And true to the role

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<sup>96</sup> *Humanhood is synonym of human identity – the word is created for need*

it was assigned to, “If We Must Die” had a powerful effect on blacks. Many people became poet because of “If We Must Die” and by reciting the poem they surely felt proud and strong.

Mc Kay also wrote novels as well as other genres<sup>97</sup> where he discussed the problem of racial segregation and what, according to him appeared as the solution. But he was well known as a poet.

## 5-2) Other Poets’ Approaches

Yet, Claude Mc Kay was not the only poet to respond to racial segregation. There were other poets who did the same but in a little bit different way.

### 5-2-1) Paul Laurence Dunbar’s Approach

One of them was Paul Laurence Dunbar. Instead of protest, which prevails in Claude Mc Kay’s poems, Dunbar’s approach was rather passive. He resorted to God for revenge. Dunbar thinks negatively of those who soar. “Dark and Joy” is the poem where he shared his view of racial injustices and what he thought to be the best solution. It goes:

“God of the right, arise  
And let thy pow’r prevail;  
To long thy children mourn  
In labor and travail  
Oh, speed the happy day  
When waiting ones may see  
The glory- bringing birth  
Of our real liberty!  
Grant thou, o gracious god  
That not in world alone  
Shall freedom’s boon be ours,  
While bondage-galled we moan!  
But condescend to us  
In our overwhelming need;  
Break down the kind ‘ring bars  
And make us free indeed.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See 7.1

<sup>98</sup> Dunbar, Paul, *Dark and Joy oak and Ivy, Kentucky, Indiana, 1903, p.30*

Dunbar gave the reason why blacks would rather wait for God to react in a precedent poem: “Right’s security”. Therein, he described black Americans as “single”, “minorities”, “one man”. On the other hand, he resorted to whites as throng that is multitude.

Yes, even if during Dunbar’s days, “there were ten thousand thousands” blacks in the USA, they were still single and one man minorities comparing to the population of whites. They were like a drop of water in an ocean and any violent response to racial injustices might do nothing but worsen the situation.

However, when from time to time, the poet came to feel overwhelmed by the on-going situation, he would raise his voice to utter emotional songs in which he would defiantly complain about the fate of his people. One example of those poems is “Sympathy”. It follows:

“I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes,  
I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,-  
When he beats his bars and he would be free,  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart’s deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings-  
I know why the caged bird sings!”<sup>99</sup>

Here, the caged bird symbolizes black Americans on who weighed the burden of racial injustices.

### **5-2-2) Jean Toomer’s Approach**

Another poet who participated in the fight against racial segregation was Jean Toomer. If his approach was not exactly the same as Dunbar’s, they converge to the same goal. In a long but meaningful litany he brought forth what he thought the best answer: generous emancipation. Granted the emancipation suggested by the poet could make remind the one officially signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. However,

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<sup>99</sup> Dunbar, Paul, *Sympathy, complete poem, Kentucky, Indiana, 1903, p. 162*

Toomer's emancipation surpasses by far this since it really produces freedom. To reach the emancipation expressed by Toomer, black Americans had to consider themselves as humans instead of black race, they had to consider themselves from the earth instead of from a particular nation or region, they had to consider that they are of the human class instead of being male or female; they had to consider themselves religious instead of from a particular religion. In short, they had to uncase, unpod whatever impedes...The poem runs:

“Mend and clean, and then  
Uncase the races,  
Open this pod,  
Free man from his shrinkage  
Not from the reality itself,  
But from the unbecoming and enslaving behavior  
Associated with our prejudices and preferences.  
Eliminate these;  
I am, we are, simply of the human race.  
Uncase the nations,  
Open this pod,  
Keep the real but destroy the false,  
We are of the human nation.  
Uncase the regions  
Occidental, oriental, North, South,  
We are of Earth.  
Free the sexes,  
I am neither male nor female nor in between;  
I am of sex, with male differentiations;  
Open the classes,  
I am, we are, simply of the human class.”<sup>100</sup>

Jean Toomer shows some example of “emancipation” in another poem:

“Expand the fields  
Those definitions which fix fractions  
And lose wholes  
I am of the field of being,  
We are beings  
Uncase the religions,  
I am religious.  
Uncase, unpod whatever impedes.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Toomer Jean, See p. 306 in “les poètes Nègre des USA”, pub. by Wagner

<sup>101</sup> Toomer, Jean. *Essential*, NY, 1924, p.24

### 5-2-3) James Weldon Johnson's Approach

James Weldon Johnson was another poet who joined his voice to the fight. Instead of retaliation as suggested by Claude Mc Kay's "fighting back" in "If We Must Die", Johnson advised his people to flee. The poet goes:

"O, brothers mine, take care! Take care!  
Trust not your prowess nor your strength;  
Your only safety lies in flight;  
For in her glance there is a snare,  
And in her smile there is a blight."<sup>102</sup>

### 5-2-4) Langston Hughes' Approach

Langston Hughes was another poet who responded to racial segregation. In the poem entitled "Pride", he said defiantly:

"Let all who will  
Eat quietly the bread of shame.  
I cannot,  
Without complaining loud and long,  
Tasting its bitterness in my throat,  
And feeling to my very soul  
Its wrong.  
For honest work  
You proffer me poor pay,  
For honest dreams  
Your spit is in my face,  
And so my fist is clenched.  
Today  
To strike your face."<sup>103</sup>

Interestingly, the solutions suggested by the first three poets, Dunbar, Toomer and Johnson looked like one another.

According to them, it was preferable to leave things at the hand of God, or to look for emancipation, or to flee. These approaches are rather passive and oddly enough, they offer a stark parallel with Claude Mc Kay's eventual attitude as could be

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<sup>102</sup> Johnson, W. James. « *The White Witch* », *Fifty Years*, NY, p.19

<sup>103</sup> Hughes, Langston. *Pride, Opportunity, Dec.*, p. 371

seen in ‘‘Compensation’’ and with one point of Jesus’ Sermon on the mountain.<sup>104</sup> It is reported in the book of Mathew Chapter 5 verses 38 to 48.

On the other hand, the last poet, Langston Hughes’ response was that of revenge and violence. In fact the poet talked of his fist clenched in order to strike ‘‘your face’’ that of the torturer, the white man. It is similar to the Mosaic Law ‘‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’’<sup>105</sup>. Obviously, Claude Mc Kay’s poems as well as his contemporaries’ were finely written and the classical and Shakespearian style of some surely made them attractive. However, other genres than poems helped in the fight against segregation and constituted achievements for black Americans.

## 6-Other Genres

Some of them are novels, short stories, songs, beautifully framed by very talented African Americans.

### 6-1) Novel, Short Stories and So...

Some examples of these alternative genres are the three or at least two novels of Mc Kay’s *Home to Harlem*<sup>106</sup> published in 1928, *Banjo*<sup>107</sup> published in 1929, his essay ‘‘Why I became a Catholic’’<sup>108</sup>, the novel known as *Cane*<sup>109</sup> by Jean Toomer, *The Talented Tenth*<sup>110</sup>, and *The Souls of Blacks Folk*<sup>111</sup> by W.E.B. Du Bois, *God sends Sunday*<sup>112</sup>, published as a novel by Arna Bontemps, *The Negro World* and *The Future As I See*<sup>113</sup> by Marcus Garvey, *Nobody knows My Name*<sup>114</sup> and *Not Without Laughter*<sup>115</sup> by Langston Hughes in 1961 and *No Name in the Street*<sup>116</sup> published in 1972.

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<sup>104</sup> *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, Pub .by Jehovah’s Witnesses,ed.1985,,p.1930*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>106</sup> *Op. Cit*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>109</sup> *Op. Cit*

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>112</sup> Bontemps, Arna. ‘‘God Sends Sunday’’NY, 1931

<sup>113</sup> Garvey, Marcos. *The Negro World and the Future as I See*, Washington DC

<sup>114</sup> Langston, Hughes. *Nobody Knows My Name. The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970*. Garden City, New York:Doubleday, 1970

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*

We also have other genres, such as short stories, speeches, tales, songs to mention just a few, in which flourished throughout the twentieth century the notion of race. Some examples of black Americans and famous singers include Mickael Jackson<sup>117</sup> and Bob Marley<sup>118</sup>.

## **6-2- The Domain of Music**

In the domain of music, there were several African American musicians whose competence and skill were applauded by people of all ages, Blacks and Whites alike.

### **6-2-1) Bob Marley**

One of them was Bob Marley. Born Robert Nesta Marley on 6 February 1945, in Jamaica, Bob Marley was a singer and compositor. He was most known and respected as musician of reggae. Thanks to Bob Marley, the Jamaican music and rastafari movement enjoyed a planetary audience. As a teenager, he left the countryside to Kingston where he met singer Joe Higgs who taught him music. At 17 years of age, he wrote and published his first song “Judge Not”, in 1962.

In 1963, with two young singers, he formed a group known as “The Wailers”. Together they produced a lot of albums including “Stir It Up”, Selassi is the chapel” and ”Say It Loud”

True, not all their works strictly deal with racial segregation or racial justices. However, their works have all served either intentionally or not, as tools against discrimination, I’m black and I’m Proud” or “Black Progress”. Despite these albums, Bob Marley didn’t know success at the beginning.

Eventually the next albums: “Catch a fire” “Burnin’”, “Talking Blues” and “Nasty Dread” were the beginning of his success as professional and excellent singer. However, Marley’s famous album, the one that brought him to the attention of

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<sup>116</sup> W., Johnson. *No Name in the Street, Along This Way*. New York: Viking Press, 1968

<sup>117</sup> WWW Michael Jackson. com

<sup>118</sup> WWW Bob marley. com / WWW deezer. com / artist / 10133

millions of people in America and elsewhere, were “No Woman No cry” and “Vibration”, launched in 1976.

In his songs, Marley incorporated questions of race, slavery, colonialism etc. He expressed all his pride as a black and invited black Americans to defend themselves against the oppression of white people. He was believed to be a symbol of emancipation and liberty. Bob Marley’s songs expressed protestation (soul Rebel) as well as hard defense (I shot the sheriff). These discs as well as others, formerly published by Bob Marley sold well. All in all, he reportedly sold more than twenty million discs throughout the world. Bob Marley died on 11 May, 1981 in the USA.

### **6-2-2 Michael Jackson**

Another black American singer and compositor who caught people’s attention was Michael Jackson. Together with his siblings, he formed the preeminent family of pop music in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Michael was born on August 29, 1958 in Indiana. With the encouragement of his father, he started practising the guitar and writing songs with his four eldest brothers. Although he was the youngest, Michael quickly became the focus of the act, deftly imitating the devices of James Brown while singing with a sophistication and maturity that belied his young age.

The brothers won a talent contest in 1965 which led to a recording contract with the Indiana – based Steel Town Records. Then the Jackson Five toured regionally, opening for larger – name “Rhythm and Blues” (R & B) groups. In 1967 the brothers took first place at an amateur night at Harlem’s legendary “Apollo Theater”, and in 1969 they signed a recording contract with Motown Records. The Jackson Five achieved success almost instantly, scoring number one hit singles with their first four releases: “I want you Black”, “ABC”, “The Love you save”, and “I’ll Be There” published respectively in 1969 and in 1970. In 1978, the Jacksons – the new name adopted by the group produced the album “Destiny”, which many fans and critics consider the best of the Jackson brothers’ later work. Although the group continued to sing together throughout the 1970s, Michael stood out as a solo successful singer.

Mickael Jackson's success as a solo performer continued with his appearance to the scarecrow in "The Wiz"(1978), an African American remake of "The wizard of Oz". The movie led to his partner-ship with Quincy Jones, who composed the soundtrack, including Jackson's duet with "Diana Ross". Later that year, Michael and Jones collaborated on "The Wall" and that established Michael as a sophisticated adult pop star. "Off the wall" sold more than 7 million copies. Although Michael continued to perform with his brothers, this album signaled the beginning of a solo career that eclipsed the celebrity of the other Jackson children.

In 1982 Michael produced another album, "Thriller" which became the best – selling pop album of all time. More than 40 million people bought the album. Its success was bolstered by a well–planned marketing campaign that highlighted Jackson's dancing, fashion, musicianship, and commercial endorsement of Pepsi – Cola.

In the late 1980s and the 1990s Michael Jackson appeared to have difficulties in coping with celebrity. Numerous bouts of plastic surgery, allegations of pedophilia, and a secret marriage and publicized divorce with Lisa Marie Presley all exacerbated his public image as a troubled person. However, this problem did not prevent people from enjoying his later shows. An estimated 90 million people watched "Oprah Winfred" in 1993 and in 1995 there were 60 million viewers of "Time live".

### **6-2-3 Black Musicians in Africa**

Bob Marley and Michael Jackson were just two of several African American musicians whose songs, people, blacks as well as whites have enjoyed a lot. There are also a large number of blacks in Africa who perform excellently in music. Some of them are Congolese Koffi Olomidé, Beninese Angelique Kidjo, GG Vickey, Ivorian Douk Saga and Nigerians Haruna Ishola, Kollington Ayinla, Barrister Ayindé, Suny Ade and Wasiu Ayinde.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Archives

Together, these artists or musicians have shown that blacks, wherever they are could also be capable of thinking deeply and meaningfully.

## **7-) The Domain of Sport**

Sporting is another domain where black Americans did their best to prove their ‘humanhood’, that is their humanity. Most sporting competitions, foot racing or soccer track and field or athletics, boxing, wrestling, sprint, basketball, volley ball, etc. were segregated during slavery, and blacks could hardly compete with whites in America. However, in 1830, the Scotch American civic groups organized the Highland Games that featured interracial and interethnic competition. Foot racing and fast walking was among the events in which African American athletes excelled. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the performance of African Americans in short and long distance runners was celebrated. Francis Smith and Frank Hart were among the most notable of these athletes. Both were legendary walkers who dominated the sport in the 1830s and 1870s, respectively.<sup>120</sup> Also, despite some obstacles among them, the segregation of most sporting competitions, limiting the opportunities for blacks to compete against whites in foot races, a small number of black athletes did participate and did excel in track and field during the late nineteenth century. Most were students at predominantly white colleges and universities in the North. One of the earliest such stars was William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson, who attended Amherst College in Massachusetts (1890-1892).

In addition to Jackson, Napoleon Bonaparte Marshall (Harvard College, 1895-1897), Spencer Dickerson from University of Chicago (1896-1997), GCH Burleigh(University of Illinois), and another person to mark the world in the domain of sport in the first half of twentieth century was Jesse Owens. In 1936, German leader Adolf Hitler planned to use the Olympic Games to showcase what he thought was German athletic superiority.

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<sup>120</sup> Robinson, Alonford James, Jr. Track and Field in the USA, *Africana, The Encyclopedia of African American Experience*, pp.1861-1863.

Hitler believed that if German athletes could dominate the games, particularly those events in track and field, they would convince the world of the superiority of the Arian “race”. But Jesse Owens, a black sprinter from Oakville, Alabama, proved Hitler wrong. Owens won an unprecedented four Gold Medals at the 1936 Olympic Games and was reportedly snubbed by Hitler during the award ceremony. His success was a symbolic victory for America. In a matter of days Jesse Owens challenged every notion of black inferiority and challenged the popular racial stereotype.

However, some explanations concluded that blacks were successful in athletics because they lacked the mental aptitude for other endeavors. Hence, Blacks needed to prove otherwise their ‘humanhood’.

## **8- The Creation or Founding of Organizations and Movements**

The creation or founding of organizations and Movements were other options leading blacks resorted to they included: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter (BSCP), the Nation of Islam (NOI) the Congress of the Racial Equality (CORE), the Leader of Conference on Civil. Right (LCCR), the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee(SNCC), the Black Arts Movement (BAM), the Black Power, Leadership Conference( SCLC), etc.

These organizations, as indicated by their names, pursued almost the same goals. Their leaders, - WE.B. Du Bois, Mary Church Terrell, Oswald Garrison Villard, Ruth Standish Baldwin, Dr George Edmund Haynes, Marcus Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, C. L. Dellums, James L. Farmer, Joe Guinn, Edgar Nixon, Rosa Park, Dr Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Ella Barker, Stockly Carmichael, etc- sought to put an end to racial segregation and racial injustices that prevailed in the mainstream of America. They also were preoccupied with the general uplift of the people of African ancestry of the world and independent economic, social and political power.

**CHAPTER FOUR : WISER AND  
MORE PASSIVE APPROACHES  
TO ARTS, MOVEMENTS OR  
ASSOCIATIONS**

## 9-Developing Good Qualities

Silence, flight, forgiveness are qualities that black Americans needed in order to live peacefully in America.

This was the conclusion most African American leaders or authors came to after the many years they devoted to the fight against segregation.

### 9-1 Forgiveness

Claude Mc Kay dealt with one of these qualities in his poem or sonnet titled “Compensation”. The poem goes this way:

“Den let me not tink hard of those who use  
Deir power tyrannously an’ abuse:  
Let me remember always while I live,  
De noblest of all deeds is to forgive.  
This, not revenge, is sweet: this lif’ s de soul  
An’ meks it wort’ while in a empty  
Far better than an old an outworn creed  
Tis each day to do one such noble deed.”<sup>121</sup>

The poet ends up preferring forgiveness to revenge. And this choice is probably the result of dramatic events or occurrences that he has witnessed before. In fact, several rebellious or revolting actions from African Americans usually caused them harm or at least affected them, and they would be wiser to think of or to resort to forgiveness instead of revenge. Another reason why forgiveness is the best option is the impact it has on the victim’s health or well-being. According to specialists, forgiving can soothe the pain and then allow the victim to feel better, even to the point to forget for a while the problem they are enduring. A philosopher rightly wrote: “Forgiveness is a force and the demonstration of a perfect health.”

Another approach and similar to forgiveness is silence. This approach is rather suggested by Milton in “Samson Agonistes” The poem goes:

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<sup>121</sup> MC Kay, *Compensation, selected Poetry and Prose by Mc Kay, 1912-1948. Pub. Cooper, Wayne F. p.58.*

“His servants he, with new against  
Of true experience from this great event,  
With peace and consolation hath dismissed  
And calm of mind, all passion spent.”<sup>122</sup>

In the last verse of the poem, it is question of “calm of mind” and “all passion spent”. Before Milton, W.E.B. Du Bois suggested an idea almost similar to this. According to Du Bois, black people in American Society must endure petty insults with a smile, shut their eyes to wrong.<sup>123</sup>

### 9-2-Silence

Just as forgiveness is not an indication of weakness, so is silence. In fact, silence is a quality that shows how sound your mind is. Someone who can speak or who knows the response to a question is more respected if he can also be silent or quiet. Silence, in some circumstances at least, is like gold while word is like silver, which means that speaking, responding or reacting is not always the best option. Alfred de Vigny highlighted the importance of silence by saying this: “seul le silence est grand”<sup>124</sup>. Hence, while undergoing difficult challenges, blacks would rather stay still, calm and silent.

### 9-3-Flight

The third approach is flight. Flight would have also prevented black Americans from unnecessary sufferings like beating, punishment or even killing that they experienced those days following their rebellious actions in face of racial injustices. In the poem entitled “The White Witch”, James Weldon Johnson talked about this alternative in this way:

“Oh, brothers mine, take care! take care!  
The great white witch rides out to night,  
Trust not your prowess nor your strength,  
Your only safety lies in flight?  
For in her glance there is a snare,  
And in her smile there is blight.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Milton. *Samson Agonists*, appeared in *Complete Poems and also in Worker’s Dreadnought, Magazine*, Jan.10, 1920, p.107.

<sup>123</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. *Soul of Black People*, NY, 1903.

<sup>124</sup> de Vigny, Alfred. *La mort du Loup, les grands classiques, Poésies*. [Webnet.fr/les grandes classiques/poemes/...](http://Webnet.fr/les_grandes_classiques/poemes/)

<sup>125</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *The White Witch, Fifty Years*, p.19

James Weldon Johnson encourages his readers to trust neither their prowess nor their strength, but to flee instead. Obviously, the poet was afraid there should worse to come in case blacks decided to take revenge against what the poet referred to as the blight. According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, a witch is a woman or man who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things.

And undoubtedly, a snare and blight are some of the tools used by a witch to reach their goals. Here, the white man is compared to a witch to show the harm that he is able to cause to blacks, especially to stubborn ones. Hence, blacks in America would rather follow the poet's advice by fleeing or by hiding.

The common point of these three approaches wonderfully and interestingly parallel apostle Paul's Letter to Romans, in Romans chapter 12 verses 17 to 21: "Return evil for evil to no one. Provide fine things in the sight of all men. If possible as far as it depends upon you be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath for it is written: "vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah. But, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his head. Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good."<sup>126</sup>.

Nethertheless, while working wholeheartedly toward peace and stillness, and the end of segregation, blacks in America had to "accommodate themselves to the South and concentrate on economic self-advancement" true to the founder of the Tuskegee Institute and black speaker, Booker T. Washington.

## **10- Idea of a Return to Africa**

Another wise approach consisted for blacks in America on returning back to their countries or lands as suggested by Marcus Garvey, the founder and leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Thanks to the leadership of Garvey, UNIA was able to own a big enterprise known as Black Star Steamship Line. The enterprise was intended to provide means for black Americans to return to their country.

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<sup>126</sup> *Romans chapter 12 verses 17 to 21, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*

Unfortunately, the option of returning to Africa didn't appeal to many African Americans and failure to back Garvey's interesting idea led to the failure of the Black Star Steamship Line.

Why didn't Blacks in America support the idea of a return to Africa, a land which according to Langston Hughes' "Our Land"<sup>127</sup>, is full of "thick trees", with various species, trees they could use to meet their basic and fundamental need like shade, fresh or cool and pure, natural air, etc? Why didn't they prefer to come to Africa to enjoy the interesting and amusing chatter and trees coming from the top of the thick trees and well performed by birds notably "parrots"? Why didn't blacks rather prefer this land of "love and joy and wine and song" to America "where joy is wrong"? Why not quickly flee from this country where, in Uncle Jim's words "whites have decided to prove at all price their superiority over Blacks? Why not flee from these furnaces of hell"<sup>128</sup> where their economic conditions worsen more and more and day after day to the point that "white folk's recession is colored folk's depression"? Why not leave America for their own countries instead of waging a war in which all the weapons are gathered in the hands of their adversaries as described by Langston Hughes in "He was a man"<sup>129</sup> and "Old Lem"<sup>130</sup>?

Why not avoid a war that will likely claim their lives? Why couldn't black Americans leave America where, although they "work like cows" "the misery" due sometimes to slump in sales is their daily lot<sup>131</sup>

The answers to these questions certainly lie in part in "The White City"<sup>132</sup>, "When Dawn Comes to the City"<sup>133</sup>, "America in Retrospect"<sup>134</sup>, "Enslaved"<sup>135</sup> and "Cudjoe Fresh from De Lecture"<sup>136</sup> These poems mention respectively "the strident

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<sup>127</sup> Hughes, L. *Our Land the Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970.

<sup>128</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Two an'Six, Song of Jamaica*, PP 87 - 88

<sup>129</sup> Hughes, Langston. in *He was a man, The Weary Blues*, NY, 1940

<sup>130</sup> Hughes, Langston. in *Old Lem, The Weary Blues*, NY, 1940

<sup>131</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Two an'Six, Song of Jamaica*, pp87-88

<sup>132</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Harlem Shadow*, p.23

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid* p.60

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid* p.32

<sup>136</sup> Mc Kay, Claude, *Songs of Jamaica*, p.56

trains ” in “the mighty city”, “ the poles and spires and towers” “the fortified port” with “the great ships” “the tides, the wharves, the dens”, “the strength”, the “might”, “the great all-sweeping lights”, “the granite wonders”, “the white man’s world of wonders”, “a blessed place” , “cars”, etc.

These priceless treasures do too well fit in with many American cities in McKay’s days. In other words, the description is thoroughly exact and perfect. These beauties that characterized America have so much appealed to black Americans to the point where they have difficulty deciding to come back to Africa despite what they were going through.

Another reason behind their doubt is perhaps their fear of being able to build or reshape the image of Africa to equal the country they would have left behind.

What they ignored is that achievement resides most in what Langston Hughes referred to in “Dream”<sup>137</sup>. Like the first American founders or builders, they “need the faith, the might and the will”. And in the same way the dream has helped build prettily America, so will be to Africa provided immigrant Blacks have a community dream”.

Yet, if black Americans want to be treated fairly, as humans, they would need more than an exercising of the good qualities already mentioned or fleeing to Africa. They needed to prove their “humanhood”, human identity in domains like arts, sporting, and most importantly, they needed to sharpen their skill in sciences and technologies.

## **11- Sciences and Technologies**

In 1800, Volta from Italy invented electric battery, designed for many useful purposes. Four years later, in 1804 the Englishman Richard Trevithick invented the locomotive, which greatly developed transport. In 1824 Joseph Aspdin from England discovered cement, thanks to which there are today the construction of strong buildings such as houses, skyscrapers bridges, and soon. The sewing machine that was

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<sup>137</sup> Hughes, L. *Dream, Shakespear in Harlem, New York, 1963, p.108*

invented since the second half of the eighteenth century, was developed in 1851 by Isaac M. Singer of Pittstown, New York. Thanks to this device, people wear clothes of different designs and fashions. The same year, James Harrison from Australia invented the refrigerator. Still in 1851 was invented the burglar Alarm by Edwin T. Holmes from the US. In 1852, Elisha G. Otis from the US invented the elevator to prevent the unnecessary effort demanding the movement to or from skyscrapers.

Also the same year was invented the Airship-non-rigid by French Henri Giffard. The Automobile-Gazoline was invented by Karl Benz. This helped facilitate movements from one place to another. In 1860, the Italian Picionti invented the generator. One year later, in 1861 the English Alexander Parkes invented the celluloid that device that had a great impact in communications, was developed and trade marked by I. W. Hyatt from the United States of America in 1873. The same year Austrian Peter Mitterhoker invented the typewriter. Again at the end of 1873, Joseph F. Glidden from US invented barbed wire that was later manufactured at De Kald, Illinois. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell from the US invented the Telephone and the Microphone. Almost two years later, Thomas Alva Edison from the US invented the Phonograph. In 1882, the Electric Fan, the electric Flat Iron and the Skyscraper were respectively invented by Wheeler, H. W. Seeley and William Le Baron Jenny. They all are from the USA. In 1885, the earliest commercial machine was invented by William Burroughs (US) in St. Louis Missouri. In 1888, Nikola Tesla from the USA invented the Electric Motor (AC). In 1892 was invented the Tractor, first gasoline or petrol powered- engine by John Froelich (US). It was completed in Iowa on September 6 of the same year. In 1895 was invented-ray by Wilhem Conrad Roentgen from Germany. The cinema was invented in 1885 by August Marie Louis Nicolas Lumiere and Louis Jean Lumiere (France). Development pioneer were Etienne Jules Marcy (France) and Thomas A. Edison from the US. The 1895 was also marked by the invention of Diesel Engine by Rudolf Diesel from the Germany. One year later Antoine Baquerel invented Radioactivity.

The world entered into the twentieth century with other strange and astonishing wonderful discoveries and inventions. For example in 1900 were invented the Tractor

(Caterpillar) the Cell phone, the Airship (rigid) respectively by Benjamin Holt from US. Brandenberger from Switzerland and Graf Ferdinand Von Zeppelin from German. In 1903, Orville Wright and Willburt Wright from North Carolina (USA) challenged the natural law of “Pesanteur” with the invention of Airplane. In 1907 was invented the washing Machine(Electric by Huxley the US. In 1922, it was the turn of RADAR by Dr Albert H. Taylor and Leo C. Young (US); the term RADAR is an acronym for Radio Detection and Ranging. It is an object detection system which uses radio waves to determine the range, altitudedirection or speed of objects. It can be used to detect aircraft, ships, spacecraft, guided missiles, motor vehicles, weather formations, and tcrasing.

The modern uses of radar are highly diverse, including air traffic control, radar astronomy air defense systems, aircraft anticollision systems, ocean surveillance, outer space surveillance to list just a few. In 1923,Food frozen was invented by Birdseye(US). Italian d’Ascanio invented the Helicopter in 1930 and in 1937 Jet Engine came to the world thanks to Sir Frank Whittle from England. Two years later, the Russian Vladimir Kosme invented the Microscope ‘electron) electric computer was welcomed by the world in 1942 thanks to J.M. brainers from the USA. A computer is a general purpose device that can be programmed to carry out a finite set of arithmetic or logical operations. It is designed to solve more than one kind of problem. When connected to other computers through the network, the computer can serve as an efficient means of communication. You can also use it to make research, to entertain etc. In 1945, Julius Robert Oppenheimer from the US invented the Atom Bomb its effectiveness was tested during World War II. 15 years later, the American Dr Charles H. Townes invented the Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission or Radiation that is, LASER.

Also, in the twentieth century, there were discoveries of lots of vitamins. Vitamin A was discovered in 1913 by Elnier V. Mc Collum and M. Davis from the US. Vitamin B was discovered by Elmer V. Mc Collum three years later. In 1920, it was the turn of Vitamin C by S. Albert and Charles Glenking from the USA. Sir. Edward Mellan discovered Vitamin D that same year. He also seriously studied its same year. He also seriously studied its role in preventing Rickets. In 1922 Sir Herbert

Mc Lean Evans invented Vitamin E. Vitamin K. came to the world attention in 1923 thanks to the research Henrik Dam from Denmark and Edward Adelbert Doisy from the USA. The discoveries of these vitamins undoubtedly have a great impact on the treatment and prevention of diseases and the well being of human body.

In addition to these discoveries and inventions, there was also space flight that has become possible thanks to the ingenuity of Americans and Russians since the later part of 1950s to the present. On October 1957, Russians put first satellite of 83 kilos into space. It was called sputnik 1 and was unmanned. On November 1957, Russians put Sputnik 2 of a half a ton into space, carrying the dog Laika, which became the first living creature to orbit the earth. In 1958, Americans launched their first satellite, Explorer 1, weighing 14 kilos. In 1959 Russians launched Luna 1, a space craft that flies past the moon at a distance of 6,000 kilometers. In 1961, Russians put first man, Yuri Gagarin into space. He orbited the earth. In 1962, first American manned flight made three orbits in Friend – ship 7. The same year, Russian Adrian Nikolayev made 64 orbits in Vostok 3. In 1965 Alexi Leonov, Russian, was first to walk in space. He left his space craft wearing a space suit linked to his space craft by an oxygen supply line.

In 1965 and 1966, Americans perfected techniques (two or more spacecraft linked together in space) and working outside spacecraft wearing space suits. In 1969, true to President John Kennedy, Americans launched Skylab, an 85 ton science laboratory which orbited the earth. In 1981, Americans launched space shuttle for the first time – This was a spacecraft that could land horizontally, like an aircraft, and be used again. From the 1960s to the present satellites have been put into space for military reconnaissance, weather and earth observation, communications, navigation and other purposes<sup>138</sup>.

The appropriate conclusion is that Blacks in America and in Africa are absent in the questions of modern discoveries, inventions or creations Hence, in this domain at least they are in short of proofs of their “humanhood”. Black authorities, whatever their countries, should take this question seriously and struggle to make blacks

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<sup>138</sup> [www. Sciences. univ – bp Clermont.fr / en – wikipedia.org / ... / science and technology in United states](http://www.Sciences.univ-bp Clermont.fr/en-wikipedia.org/.../science and technology in United states)

involved in sciences and technologies to end racial prejudices. Despite of the incapacity of blacks to prove in all ways their “humanhood” there occurred in the world some important events that, to some extent signaled the end of racial segregation.

**CHAPTER FIVE : IMPORTANT  
EVENTS IN THE WORLD  
TOWARD THE END OF  
SEGREGATION**

While Blacks in abroad and Blacks in Africa were yet to prove totally their ‘‘human hood’’ until recently, there occurred in the world some important events since the end of World War II. These events, involving the UN, the Peace Corps and more recently the election of Barack Obama, are proofs of great changes as far as racial segregation is concerned. Let’s take a quick look at these events.

## **12- The Actions of the United Nations in Africa**

Africa has been the site of some of the United Nation’s<sup>139</sup> greatest achievements. The UN played an important role in assuring many African colonies’ peaceful transition to independence, and has since mobilized successful international campaigns for children’s health and the eradication of diseases. UN- sponsored diplomacy has helped solve a number of long-running conflicts, especially in Southern Africa.

When the UN was created in 1945, only Ethiopia, Liberia, and South Africa were independent nations in Africa. But for Europe’s colonial powers, the costs of maintaining Colonial Rule were growing unsustainably high, due in part to burgeoning nationalist movements through much of Africa.

Decolonization was thus one of the UN’s first concerns in Africa, and the transition to independence was a principal concern during the early postwar period. In accordance with one of the four guiding UN principles – the development of friendly international relations based on equality and self – determination – the UN General Assembly created a special committee to oversee conditions in colonial territories in 1947. The committee gathered information on territories and supported their right to self-determination.

In addition, after World War II the UN took over from the League of Nations trusteeships of six former German and Italian colonies in Africa, among them Tanganyika (now Tanzania) and Togo. Like most French, British, and Belgian colonies in Africa, these trusteeships were all independent by the early 1960s. White

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<sup>139</sup> *en – wikipedia.org / ... / List of United Nations.com*  
*www.uneca.org*  
*www.unesco.org/new/en/ Africa/ priority - africa*

minority rule persisted in much of southern Africa, however. In 1965 the UN imposed sanctions on Southern Rhodesia, but only after a long liberation war did Ian Smith's regime step down, leading to independence for renamed Zimbabwe in 1980.

The UN also supported independence for Portuguese-ruled Angola and Mozambique and opposed South Africa's occupation of South West Africa, now Namibia. These UN program to lead Namibia to independence was established in 1968. After years of resistance South Africa agreed to relinquish Namibia provided that Cuban troops left nearby Angola. The UN – supervised elections took place in 1989, and full Namibian independence was declared the following year. Finally, the UN General Assembly repeatedly condemned apartheid in South Africa itself. When apartheid was finally dismantled in the early 1990s, UN monitors observed the 1994 elections that swept to victory Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first black president.

Soon after the first wave of African decolonization in the early 1960s, UN diplomacy on the continent turned to conflict resolution and peacekeeping. The results have been mixed. The UN operation in the Republic of the Congo (1960-1964) became the first of many such endeavors. UN troops, mostly African, were called to the Republic of Congo after a succession attempt by Katanga Province led to intervention by Belgian troops, purportedly to protect Belgian citizens. Dag Hammarskjöld then UN secretary general, died in a plane crash en route to the Republic of the Congo. The UN troops left after the rebels surrendered, but ongoing civil conflict led to a coup in 1965 by Mobutu Sese Seko, whose dictatorship contributed to political instability in Central Africa for decades.

UN peacekeeping troops and observers have since served in many African countries, but two of their most controversial interventions occurred in early 1990s in Somalia warlords in the capital of Mogadishu, and for causing the deaths of 83 UN soldiers. Televised images of the bodies of dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets provoked outrage in the United States. In the wake of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, many both in Rwanda and abroad blames the UN peace keep force in the country for failing to prevent it. The UN has since defended its role, attributing the force's inaction to opposition from the United States.

The Rwandan genocide and their civil conflicts made refugee crises one of the UN's chief concerns in Africa in the 1990s. In 1995 the UN high commissioner for refugees estimated that some 4.5 million refugees from 30 African countries were in need of assistance. The UN has been extensively involved in food security in Africa. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) runs many programs to improve agriculture and nutrition. For example, a program was introduced in Zimbabwe in 1996 to reduce pesticide use through the introduction of natural predators, crop rotation, and disease-resistant plant varieties; and a 1993 erosion control plan in Burundi encouraged tree, shrub, and grass planting. The United Nations Development Program also devotes about 25 percent of its aid to food-related projects in Africa. Yet warfare and drought, among other factors, have led to repeated regional food shortages since the 1960s, including famines in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa in the 1970s and mid-1980s and in Sudan in the late 1990s. By the 1970s the FAO was heavily involved in distributing food aid, including emergency relief aid, through its World Food Program. The proportion of FAO resources devoted to disaster relief rather than long-term food security rose even higher in the early 1990s, but the organization is also engaged in crop research and development projects and in programs to improve food distribution systems in African countries.

Since the early 1980s the UN's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, commonly known as the World Bank, has engaged most countries in Africa in multi-year programs to reduce high national debts and promote economic growth. Known as structural adjustment programs, these initiatives tie multilateral loans to economic reforms, such as price and currency deregulation and the privatization of state-run enterprises. The World Bank also provides funds for many development projects in Africa as well as technical assistance and project evaluation. In the 1990s the World Bank became Africa's largest source of loan funds.

Another major player in the African arena is the UN's World Health Organization (WHO). WHO's most outstanding achievement may have been the eradication of smallpox. Starting in 1958 WHO mounted a massive international vaccination campaign. The last smallpox case was reported in 1977, and in 1980 the

disease was declared eradicated worldwide. WHO has also made great progress against onchocerciasis (or river blindness), a debilitating disease that had made large regions of Sahelian West Africa uninhabitable. WHO's Onchocerciasis Control Programmed, begun in 1974, has nearly eliminated the disease, WHO also hopes to eradicate both poliomyelitis and iodine deficiency disorders by the year 2000. WHO's Global Programmed on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was launched in 1985. With some 21 million Africans infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS – about 80 percent of the world's total number of cases-AIDS prevention and treatment have become major WHO priorities. The agency is also involved in stopping the spread of other diseases, especially malaria, the world's number-one infectious disease in terms of fatalities.

Other UN entities active in Africa include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Environment Programmed (UNEP). Both the present UN secretary general, Kofi Annan of Ghana, and his predecessor, the Egyptian Boutros - Ghali, are Africans in high-ranking UN positions and helping to focus UN priorities on Africa and other Third World regions. Secretary General Annan has urged member nations to devote more attention to the needs of the poor and to pay their dues so that the organization can more effectively address Africa's problems and conflicts.

True, the United Nations does not fundamentally belong to the USA. However, it plays a key role in the ruling of the organization. The US only houses 5 out of 6 principal organs of the UN. Thus Africa can be thankful not only to the UN but also to the USA for its involvement in the development of African countries.

### **13- The Actions of the Peace Corps in Africa**

The Peace Corps<sup>140</sup> is a volunteer program run by the United States government. Although several people link its birth date to 1961, the first initiatives of the creation of the organization date back to December 1951. Following the end of

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<sup>140</sup> [www. you tube. com / whatch ? v = fiQAtm - 05Xg](http://www.you tube. com / whatch ? v = fiQAtm - 05Xg)  
[www. spring - nutrition. org / ... / spring - partners - peace - corps](http://www. spring - nutrition. org / ... / spring - partners - peace - corps)

World War II, representative John F. Kennedy (D.Massachusetts) suggested to a group that “young college graduates would find a full life in bringing technical advice and assistance to the underprivileged and backward Middle East (...) In that calling the men would follow the constructive work done by the religious missionaries in these countries over the past 100 years. In 1952 Senator Brien Mc Mahon (D.Connecticut) proposed an “army” of young Americans to act as “missionaries of democracy.”Privately funded nonreligious organizations began sending volunteers overseas during the 1950s.

In 1957, 3years prior to the “University of Michigan” speech, Senator Hubert H.Humphrey Jr.(D.Minnesota) introduced the first bill to create the Peace Corps with many difficulties, raised by traditional diplomats, such as Senators including liberal ones, the program unworkable. In 1951, the idea receives serious attention in Washington when congressman Henry S. Reuss of Wisconsin proposed a “Point Four Youth Corps”. In 1960, he and Senator Richard L. Neuberger of Oregon introduced identical measures calling for a nongovernmental study of the idea”advisability and predictability”Both Senate Foreign Affairs Committed endorsed the study the later writing the Reuss proposal into the pending Mutual Security legislation.In this form it became law in June 1960.

In August the Mutual Security Appropriations Act was enacted, making available US 10,000 for the study and in November ICA contracted with the Maurice Albertson, Andrew E. Rice, and Pauline E. Birky of Colorado State University Research Foundation for the study.

During the 1960 Presidential his idea for such an organization at a late-night speech at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on October 14, 1960.On November1, on the steps of the Michigan Union he dubbed the proposed organization the “Peace Corps”. The stated mission of the Peace Corps includes three goals providing technical assistance helping people outside the United States to understand American culture of other countries. The work is generally related to social and economic development. Each program participant, a Peace Corps volunteer, is an

American Citizen with a college degree, who works abroad for a period of 24 months after 3 months of training. Volunteers work with government school non-profit organizations, non-government organization entrepreneurs in education, hunger, business, information technology, agriculture and the environment. After 24 months of service, volunteers can request an extension of service. Since when the program was established by Executive Order 10924 issued by President John F. Kennedy on March 1, 1961, over 200,000 Americans have joined the Peace Corps and have wholeheartedly served in 139 countries. Volunteers have participated in many programs including education, business, environment and health. Many directors have been appointed since the creation of the organization, among them a woman and African American, Caroly Payton.

For the organization to work well there was an installation of the Peace Corps' office Inspector General. The office is authorized by law to review all programs and operations of the Peace Corps. The OIG, an independent entity within the Peace Corps the Inspector General (IG), reports directly to the law enforcement arm of the Peace Corps and works closely with the Department of state, the Department of Justice, and other federal agencies.

Obviously, the actions of Peace Corps volunteers don't feature idea of racial segregation.

#### **14- The Election of Barack Obama**

Son of Black Kenyan and a white Kansan of Irish American origin, Barack Hussein Obama<sup>141</sup> was born on August 4, 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii in the USA. In that year, the burden of racial segregation still weighed on people of color in the United States of America. Barack Obama was raised in Indonesia and that is where he had spent most of his youth. Later, he graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law School.

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<sup>141</sup> fr. [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack OBAMA](http://Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_OBAMA)  
[www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

After serving as a community organizer in the southern districts of Chicago during the 1980s, he became a lawyer in Civil Law at Harvard. As a community organizer in a disadvantaged area, Barack Obama had to work hard to reach his goals. He succeeded eventually in helping Bronzeville community to be organized economically and socially and to combat juvenile delinquency. In 1987 Obama applied to work at several universities. In the end he was accepted and took a post at Harvard in February 1988.

Due to his knowledge, experience and competence, Barack Obama was appointed chairman of the prestigious Harvard Law Review in 1990. He was the first Afro American to hold this post. That great responsibility, the first of its kind on the shoulders of a mere African American, was undoubtedly a precursory of what he would later become. From 1992 to 2004, he taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago.

In 1992, he married Michelle Robinson, a native lawyer in Chicago he had met three years before. As a renowned lawyer and an influential figure, Michelle will be very helpful to Obama in politics.

Barack Obama entered politics in 1996. He was elected to the Illinois Senate where he had three terms, from 1997 to 2004. He failed to secure the nomination of the Democratic Party for the House of Representatives in 2000 but got it in March 2004 for the senate of United States. He stood by his early opposition to the war launched by George W. Bush in Iraq and the speech he delivered in July 2004 during the Democratic National Convention, which gave John Kerry the candidacy for the Presidency, put Obama for the first time at the national level.

In the fall of 2002, he hired political consultant David Axelrod and he officially announced his candidacy for the senate of the United States in 2003. Among the members of the committee for the funding of his campaign was a notorious, Tony Perko. In July 2004, he delivered a speech, that of the Democratic convention in Boston, which gave John Kerry candidacy for the party in the presidential election. He is a supporter for the American dream. He called in his speech for unity amongst all

Americans and openly denounced the politics of division of George W. Bush and the war launched against Iraq. He bluntly stated on October 2, 2002 in Chicago: “I’m not someone who is opposed to war in all circumstances. I am opposed to stupid war, not based on reason, but on passion, not on principles, but on the policy. This “Audacity of Hope” speech was featured in the written press and television and made Barack Obama a democratic activist and a person known nationally.

Having been working as the United States senator since 2004, Barack Obama declared his candidacy for the democratic nomination for president of the United States on February 10, 2007 in Springfield. Then, he began the campaign for Presidential election Candidate for the representation of Democratic Party. Barack Obama received, in December 15, 2007, the support of the prestigious national newspaper, the Boston Globe.

Throughout 2007, he insisted on the fact that he embodied change and opposition to the current policy. His candidacy was enthusiastically supported by a great part of independent voters and youths. He also obtained the rallying of celebrities such as senator John Kerry, the businessmen Warren Buffett and George Soros, the actors George Clooney, Matt Damon, Will Smith, Ben Affleck, Robert de Wiro, the actresses Halle Berry, Sophia Bush and Scarlett Johnasson, rocker Bruce Springsteen, singer Nicole Scherzinger, the novelist Toni Morrison, the television host Oprah Winfrey, and extremely influential personality in theUS and some times later the filmmaker Michael Moore. On January 3, 2008, Barack Obama won the Iowa caucus with 38% of the votes east against 30% for senator John Edwards and 29% for former first lady Hillary Clinton. On January 8, he lost in New Hampshire with 37% against Hillary Clinton who won 39% despite polls announcing the great favorite with points in advance. His speech of defeat, with his new slogan: “yes we can “, prompted hope and action. Again on 19 January, he lost the Nevada caucus with 51% versus 45%. However, Barack Obama had a majority of 13 delegates compared with 12 for Hillary Clinton.

On January 27, he swept to victory in South Carolina with 55% against 27% for his opponent. The following day he gets the support of Caroline Kennedy, Edward

Moore Kennedy and Patrick Kennedy. On February 5, Barack Obama won 13 States, with 9 for Hillary Clinton. On February 9, he won the States of Washington, Nebraska and Louisiana as well as the Virginia Islands. The following day, 10 February, he won the State of Maine. On February 12, he won the three Democratic primary elections in Virginia, Maryland and the federal capital of Washington. He took an advantage in the race for the 2,025 delegates needed for the democratic nomination. All in all, Barack Obama won 1,231 delegates against 1,196 for Hillary Clinton. Not only did he receive the support of a good part of African Americans, but also, Barack was greatly supported by elderly and women. As a matter of fact, 53% of elderly voted Barack Obama against 47% for Hillary Clinton and 58% of women voted him against 42% for his opponent. Only whites remain rather favorable to Hillary Clinton (48% versus 51%). On 19 February, with more than 65% of the vote, the senator of Illinois, Barack Obama won the expatriate Democrats primary. In France, he exceeded the 70% bar.

On March 4, he won in the State of Vermont but lost in Ohio and Rhode Island. In Texas, he got more representatives to the Convention than Hillary against. He remained in the lead by over 100 delegates. On March 8, he won the Wyoming primary, and then that of Mississippi three days later. On March 18, Barack Obama delivered an important speech in Philadelphia on the racial issue. The verbal excesses of his former pastor, Jeremiah Wright as well as accusations of elitism surely led to his defeat on April 22, during the primary in Pennsylvania. On May 3, he won with only 7 votes the Guam caucus, Pacific Island with 50.08% of the vote against 49.92% for Hillary four days later he won the State of North Carolina with 56% of the vote but lost with 22,000 votes in Indiana (49% of the vote). On May 13, Obama lost the primary in West Virginia with 26% against 67% for Hillary; On May 20, Barack Obama won the primary in Oregon with 58% of the votes but he was defeated in Kentucky before Hillary who won 65% of the votes. On 3 June, at the end of the last primaries at Montana and South Dakota, Barack Obama reached the threshold of 2,118 delegates as well as the support of many super delegates. Despite the claim by Clinton of the majority of the popular vote and the refusal to declare herself defeated, senator Obama was now virtually guaranteed to be nominated candidate for the White House at the democratic convention at the end of August. On June 7, Hillary Clinton

suspended her campaign for the democratic nomination and her public support for Barack Obama in his presidential campaign against republican John McCain.

On August 27, 2008 the third day of the democratic convention in Denver, Obama was officially invested by acclamation, or roll call, initiated by Senator Hillary Clinton. Soon afterwards, Barack Obama began his presidential campaign, based on private funds, against Republican John McCain. With 63% of the registered voters, Barack Obama won the presidential election on November 4, 2008, with 9 million votes more than his opponent. The victory is clear both at the level of the electors (365 to 173, 74) and the popular vote (52,9 to 45,4%). Barack Obama prevailed in all the age groups, except among those over 65s and enjoys a strong mobilization of young voters of 54% of Catholics, 78% of Israelites as well as 67% of Latinos and 95% of the Afro Americans. On the evening of November 4, 2008, he announced before hundreds of thousands of people his victory speech in Grant Park, in the city of Chicago, Illinois. After thanking all his supporters, including his family, employees and voters he talked about the challenges of his mandate to come, in particular the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the economic crisis the country was experiencing. His speech is tinged with significant references to John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln and also speeches by Dr Martin Luther King Jr. He cited particularly word by word a passage of the speech given by Abraham Lincoln at this first inauguration.

The election of Barack Obama as a whole was very well received abroad, where it was often the occasion of popular celebrations. Kenya his father's homeland, ordered a holiday. Russia too, although traditionally in bad terms with the United States, sent congratulations to the new president. Other important personalities and authorities like Hugo Chavez, from Venezuela, Nelson Mandela from South Africa Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from Iran, Raul Castro from Cuba, etc. did the same.

Barack Obama was formally elected by electors on December 15, 2008 and the congress at the United States by Dick Cheney officially proclaimed his victory on January 8, 2009. Succeeding President George W. Bush, Barack Obama became the

forty fourth President of the United States, and the first afro American to have access to the White House.

After winning 52,9% of the vote and 365 electoral votes in the presidential election of November 4, 2008, against Republican John Mc Cain, Barack Obama came into service on January 20, 2009. His presidency began in context of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East crisis and severe recession of the US economy and financial and economic crisis worldwide. Barack Obama went out of his way to maintain peace. Little wonder he received the Nobel Prize for Peace in October 9, 2009.

During his first term, Barack Obama issued among others an economic stimulus plan in February 2009, the tax relief Act, the unemployment insurance reauthorization and job creation and on the protection of financial regulation in 2010. In term of foreign policy, he gradually withdrew the U.S troops from Iraq, increasing the number present in Afghanistan and signed a treaty with Russian Arms Control. He recommended also the operation which resulted in the death of Osama Bin Laden, killed by US special forces in Abbottabad in Pakistan on May 1, 2011.

On April 4, 2011 Barack Obama announced candidacy for second presidential term. Opposed to Republican Mitt Romney, he was re-elected on 6 November, 2012 for a second presidential term by winning 332 votes of the Electoral College against his rival 206 and 51% of the vote nationally.

# CONCLUSION

Evidently, the Jamaican and African American writer and poet Claude Mc Kay has thoroughly presented in most of his poems racial segregation. This fact in term of racial segregation has been testified by contemporary poets and activists like Paul Laurence Dunbar, Nat Turner, Alain Locke, Marcus Garvey, Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Arna Bontemps, etc. However, Claude Mc has gone further than just presenting or describing racial segregation. Four different reasons behind the phenomenon have been mentioned. The first deals with hate. The second is connected to prejudice. The third has to do with might while the fourth is based on skin color. Each of them has been thoroughly developed in Mc Kay's poems.

The 4 different reasons have been examined in light of other poets of the time. To the question to know whether white Americans were right to segregate themselves from blacks has found a relative satisfactory answer. The preoccupation to satisfy the curiosity of people has made it compulsory first to examine the context where racial segregation took place, to check the belief of whites and to look round the world and to notice that there is segregation almost in every country and within people in the world. Rwanda, South Africa, with its long lasting apartheid and the Nazism of Germany during WWII are just some examples of countries where racial segregation raged for years.

Another aspect is black Americans' mentality itself. Most of them have an inferiority complex. This encouraged white Americans to affirm more their supremacy.

This consideration makes it hard to blame white Americans. Hence, trying to gauge white Americans on the ground of the issue of race would require putting on the carpet many countries at the same time.

Racial segregation resulted in physical and emotional sufferings. Not only did they have little chance to get a good job, to live where they pleased, to go to school where they liked and to use whatever hospital and restaurant of their choice, but also black Americans were ruthlessly treated, severely punished for minor mistakes. They

were beaten, hanged, burnt alive and castrated. Also, blacks were not allowed to marry or to be married to whites.

These restrictions angered so much the poet Claude Mc Kay that he reacted through writings, notably poems. Other poets who did the same include Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, W.E.B Du Bois, Alain Lock, Cuntee Cullen, Jean Toomer and James Weldon Johnson.

However, poems were not the only tool they used in the fight against racial segregation. Adding to poems, there was prose such as novels, short stories and essays, songs public demonstrations, theaters and sport that played too, an important role.

The effort to eradicate racial segregation led to the creation of movements and associations like the NAACP, the NUL, the SNCC, to list just a few, run by African American leaders and activists, such as Philip Randolph, W.E.B. Du Bois, Bayard Rustin, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King.

Other alternatives to arts and the creation of movements and associations, as suggested by Claude Mc Kay and other poets consisted on exhibiting good qualities like forgiveness and silence, and the choice to return back to their native land, Africa. Another wiser option consisted of sharpening their skills in sciences and technologies and to take part in inventions or creations, like white Americans and other whites all over the world. This will force white Americans to think of blacks in America and elsewhere otherwise, without any prejudice.

Meanwhile, Africans, either in Diaspora or in their native lands can rejoice over the outstanding changes inherent to white Americans' behavior toward black Americans. Indeed, there is more and more integration instead of segregation in America. Also, justice and tolerance prevail today more than before. The actions of the United Nations (UN) in Africa the actions of the Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVS) in developing countries and notably in Africa and the unexpected election of Barak Obama as President of the United States of America, well illustrate the extent to which things have changed in the United States. These changes have fulfilled Claude Mc

Kay's wish in the first hand and in the other hand, they have fulfilled the dream of such poets and activists like Cuntee Cullen and Martin Luther King, Jr. – In "Tableau", Cuntee Cullen wrote:

“Locked arm in arm they cross the way  
The black boy and the white,  
The golden splendor of the day  
The sable pride of night.  
From Lowered blinds the dark folk star  
And here the fair folk talk,  
Indignant that these two should dare  
In unison to walk  
Oblivious to look and word  
They pass, and see no wonder  
That lightning brilliant as a sword  
Should blaze the path of thunder”<sup>142</sup>.

During a march on Washington (DC) for jobs and civil rights in Washington, Martin Luther King delivered on August 28, 1963 a keynote address to an audience of more than 200, 000 civil rights supporters:”I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out of the true meaning of its creed: We hold those truths to be self – evident, that all men are created equal....I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”<sup>143</sup>

However, while jubilantly expressing their happiness about their victory over racial segregation, Blacks in America and Africa should not rest on their laurels. Instead, they would be wise to keep in heart these words from Pope Benoît XVI: “Africa, stand up!”<sup>144</sup> as well as these words that appear in the fourth verse of "Exhortation: summer 1919": “Africa! Long ages sleeping, O my motherland, awake!”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Cullen, Countee. *Tableau, The Black Christ and other Poems*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929, p.19

<sup>143</sup> Myers, Aaron. *I have a Dream, Address by Martin Luther King during Civil Rights Movements*, appeared in *Africana*, p.1331.

<sup>144</sup> Benoît XVI's address during his visit in Benin, archives ORTB

<sup>145</sup> Mc Kay, Claude. *Exhortation: Summer 1919, Harlem Shadows*, NY, 1922, pp 49-50

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