

From Harlem Renaissance to Trump's America

“If We Must Die” By Claude McKay 1919

In “If We Must Die,” Claude McKay’s diction relates to today. In this poem, McKay is rallying Black people to not take oppression and to fight back. Below are phrases and words I took meaning from.

“Like hogs” -- like pigs who are slaughtered by their owners. Simile

“Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot” -- relating to segregation back then: still so much segregation (not by law, but societal)

“Mad Hungry Dogs” -- metaphor, relating to people looking for fights like some cops look to harass people of color and Americans also harassing someone, ex: when the white woman assaulted a black teen because she thought he took her phone.

“Our accursed lot” -- means they are cursed, mistreated by the majority of people.

“If we must die, O let us nobly die” -- if they're going to die from racist attacks, police brutality, etc. let it be fighting back against these things and fighting back against a racist policy

“Precious blood” -- I think because so much "blood was spilled" from police brutality, racist attacks, and etc. their blood should be special?

“Honor us though the dead” -- they want to live..they did not accept the "life" racist people wanted for them. they never settled for that. Just like people don't settle today and people are fighting back.

“Though far outnumbered let us show us brave” -- also relates to how the government is white and white people are privileged and have the power. Although they are outnumbered, both in people and in power, they will continue fights and put up a strong brave force

“for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!” -- after all the blows physically from racism and mentally, still a very racist society (uses of the slurs and people's actions)

“lies the open grave?” -- life is already hell, and they are going to die eventually, so why not retaliate

“murderous, cowardly pack” -- life is already hell, and they are going to die eventually, so why not retaliate

“Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!” -- such as George Floyd was pressed to the floor. Black people and other people of color have experienced discrimination, physical abuse, and murder.

Maya Angelou Inaugural Poem, “On the Pulse of Morning” Read at Bill Clinton's Inauguration (1993)

- “yet , today I call you to my riverside, if you will study war no more” = juxtaposing words
- “The speaking of the tree” = when things were better
- “Woman, children, man” = putting the minority groups first
- New new new --uses purposeful repetition
- “Don't be wedded to fear” = don't hold on to fear forever
- “Horizon leans forward” = personification + going in brighter future
- “No less to midas than the mendicant” = this country belongs to the richest of the rich and poorest of the poor → country for all meaning doesn't belong more to the rich than to the poor
- Angelou speaks to the nation about confronting our past. She wrote: “History, despite its wrenching pain, can not be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

Amanda Gorman Inaugural Poem "The Hill We Climb" Read at Joe Biden's Inauguration (2021)

- Alliteration
- Repetition of words
- "We lay down our arms" = law down our guns
- "Let the globe" = world is watching everything going on with America (personification)
- "March back" = protests
- "Go back" = we're not gonna go back to separate but equal
- "Bruised but whole" = all the mental and physical abuse
- "interrupted by intimidation, because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation"
- "Better and beautiful" = acknowledging that today to get out of this it's gonna be tough, juxtaposed next to each other
- A poem for all about how the nation had to come together

"How to be an Antiracist" by Ibram X Kendi

Chapter 1 "Definitions": Summary and Quotes

Dr. Kendi lays out his definitions of racism and antiracism. Someone is being a racist if their actions or inactions supports a racist policy, and someone being an antiracist is when their actions or expressions support antiracist policies

In the 1970s, Kendi's mom and dad were supporters of the Black liberation theology preacher Tom skinner. He taught that Jesus was a revolutionary who dedicated himself to fight for equality. This led Kendi to grow up with his liberation ideas focused on the definition of Christianity. His parents followed religion in these times. Over time, Kendi realized that "defining our terms so that [they] could begin to describe the world and [their] place in it" (17). Kendi also said, "some of my most consequential steps toward being an antiracist have been the moments when I arrived at basic definitions."

Definitions: Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing. Racial equity is when two or more racial groups are standing on a relatively equal footing. A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequality between racial groups. An anti-racist policy is any-measure that produces or stains racial equity between racial groups.

"Racial discrimination" is another popular term; however, it confuses individuals' acts of decimation which often takes away from the real source of racial inequities; racist policies, and racist policymakers.

"There is no such thing as nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups" (18)

"Focusing on "racial discrimination" takes our eyes off the central agents of racism: racist policy and racist policymakers, or what I call racist power" (19)

"There is no such thing as a not-racist idea, only racist ideas and antiracist ideas" (20)

Chapter 2 “Dueling Consciousness” Summary and Quotes

At the beginning of the chapter, Dr. Kendi again lays out definitions for assimilationist, segregationist, and Antiracist.

An assimilationist is one who is expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group. A segregationist is one who is expressing the racist idea that permanently inferior racial groups can never be developed and is supporting policy that segregates away that racial group. An antiracist is one who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity.

Ibram discuss this idea of a dueling conscience that is “yielded on strife between Black pride and a yearning to be White” (32). This idea that assimilationist ideas have stopped him and other black people from realizing that there are acts, policies, etc. that are racist. Specifically, President Regan’s claim of “War on Drugs” when in reality the view was never the big picture of drugs, but to blame people individually; black people.

“White people have their own dueling Consciousness, between the segregationists and the assimilationists: the slave trader and the missionary, the pro-slavery exploiter in the anti-slavery stabilizer, that eugenist and the Melting Pot Turner, the mass incarcerated and the masked developer, the blue lives matter and the all lives matter, and not racist Nationalist and then not racist American” (31)

“Why We Need a White History Month” The Amber Ruffin Show

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdRAuBuZMNQ>

Summary:

United States History is so white-washed. It is constantly white people telling the story of the traumatic experience of slavery and the constant war black people faced of gaining their basic human rights. In this video, Amber Ruffin explains that there should be a white history month to explain the truth behind textbooks, the KKK, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. She is basically stating to not idolize “stars” or “heroes” in history like Paul Revere for his riding skills or George Washington having 18 slaves before he was 18 years old. All of these are important facts to also be aware of along with the influence these people have made on history.