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Bakalářská práce

African Americans in 1960s, Civil Rights Movement and its Reflection in Literature

**Afroameričané a boj za lidská práva v kontextu afroamerické
literatury 60. let**

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Tímto bych rád poděkoval vedoucí mé bakalářské práce PhDr. Alici Sukdlové, Ph.D. za mimořádnou ochotu a odhodlání v poskytování cenných informací ke zlepšení kvality celé práce, za podporu a připomínky, které mě posunuly dále ve znalosti anglického jazyka.

Abstract:

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to capture the peerless view on culture and situation and streams in the social tendencies in the USA in the post-war period. It should connect data and events in selected works especially of African American authors. The thesis will refer to fights for human rights, African American's discrimination in the late 50s and 60s, social situation of minorities. It will also come across social-politics events which contributed to the creation of post-war counterculture. Therefore Martin Luther King jr. will be mentioned in this work as well as fights of minorities for lawfulness, protests against discrimination, segregation and racism, which are obvious in social, cultural and literate context of the 60s. The main goal of this work will be a selection of the authors of the African American literature whose books directly refer to the existence of the social-critical topics not only to document them but also contribute to the solution of the social problems.

Anotace:

Tématem bakalářské práce je poskytnout ucelený obraz společenské a kulturní situace v USA v poválečném období s cílem sledovat odraz těchto událostí v literárním kontextu vybraných děl především afroamerických autorů. Obecně se práce bude věnovat tematice boje za lidská práva menšin, diskriminaci Afro-Američanů v období 50. a 60. let, sociální situaci menšin a konkrétním společensko-politickým událostem, které zapříčinily vznik poválečné kontrakultury. V tomto smyslu práce zmíní řeč M. L. Kinga jr., pochod ve Washingtonu, boj menšin za rovnoprávnost a protesty proti diskriminaci, segregaci a rasismu, které jsou příznačné nejen ve společenském, ale i v kulturním a literárním kontextu 60. let. Cílem práce bude vybrat autory afroamerické literatury, jejichž dílo bezprostředně reflektuje existenci společensky kritických témat a pokouší se je nejen zdokumentovat, ale i přispět formou protestu k řešení společenské problematiky.

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1. Introduction

In my critical reasoning, I have been curious about African American history as far as I can remember. All that violence against this minority has made me wondering about questions I was not able to answer.

I am also fascinated with all kinds of movies about African American slavery, sport achievements, history etc.

Reading books connected to this topic is also fascinating for me. I do not feel anything but absolute helplessness. I am very glad for these days, for this presence. On the other hand, racism is still here and we are dealing with it all the time. I am always surprised by seeing racists without any self-reflection. How cannot they be ashamed for their statements and opinions? I do not think there is a justification of such opinions.

Despite this, we all share the same planet, we all breathe the same air and we all look at the same sun. Where is that big difference which builds this imaginary wall between us? Why cannot we just tolerate each other? We are all humans after all, sharing the same interest. The population want to live here, create the new generations and die peacefully.

Why are there still people who are keen to hurt each other in order to look after their own interests and mostly just after their pockets?

Even though I am really strictly-minded in this, I will bring down absolutely objective view on the whole situation.

I will try to capture as many facts as I can. All these facts will come from the reliable sources and books of the authors I am going to mention.

2. The Social and Cultural Context of the 1950s and 60s in the USA

Music

Ray Charles

Ray Charles¹ was a famous musician who was actually blind and was born in the state of Georgia in 1930 and became one of the hottest discoveries in 1940s. Charles was famous for his originality and sense for performance. It was something new for the audience in a way how they had understood music those days. It was like climbing from the bottom of the classical music like old, boring traditional music right on the top of the mountain of young lively black music. It gave to the audience the feeling of freedom and also the feeling of acceptance and understanding to the black minority. Ray Charles was one of “them” who was famous. An interesting thing is that the anthem of the state Georgia is one of the songs of this performer “Georgia On My Mind”.²

There were many famous black music groups like The El Dorados, The Dominoes, The Clovers, The Crows, The Penguins.

In mid 1950s the big career of Elvis Presley was also started.

The civil rights music is perfectly described in the book “Civil Rights Music: The Soundtracks of the Civil Rights Movement”. The author Reiland Rabaka describes the African American music and politics as a black music as an expression of black movement politics. On the table lie motives as gospel, freedom songs, rock and roll, blues. Reiland Rabaka is also known for his participation on the Hip Hop Generation and Rap Generation. He studied in the Department of Ethnic Studies.

Politics

Harry S. Truman was born in 1884 and was elected as the 33rd US president changing President Franklin Roosevelt in the office who just died. Truman should be known for his most crucial decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan. He also helped to rebuild the post war economic in the Europe.

Truman was followed in the office by Dwight D. Eisenhower who had served to the US since 1953 to 1961. He used to admire for his commanding generality during the WW2 and therefore He always spoke about the necessity of a military power for maintaining peace.

Next and therefore 35th President of the US was one of the most famous Presidents ever. John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1961 and had maintained in the office for hardly one thousand days. Kennedy was the youngest man elected to the office. He was assassinated in 1963 in Dallas and his death has been a mystery until these days. John F. Kennedy was known for his liberal statements and good relationships with minorities.

¹ Taylor Hackford, RAY, 2004

² <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/ray-charles/georgia-on-my-mind>

On the other hand this period has given to the world the most controversial President who has ever served to the people of the USA. Richard M. Nixon was elected to the office in 1969 and was the 37th president of the US. He had to resign because of the Watergate affair. ³

The Cold War as we know it was started in 1945 and ended in 1991⁴. The term “Cold War” was used first in 1945 by George Orwell, therefore this year is generally understood as a beginning.

Korean War began in 1950 and ended in 1953. The whole situation began as a civil war between North Korea and South Korea. There is no doubt that it was mainly war between The Soviet Union and The USA. There was the thing called Cold War and these two empires were trying to show their power to each other. ⁵

The biggest space organization NASA was established in 1958

Counterculture: The Beat Generation

The term Beat Generation was invented by Jack Kerouac around the year 1948. One of the most famous critics and also best known one became John Clellon Holmes. It is extremely important for every literature movement to have its own critic because it keeps them aware of their own snobbery and stepping out of the line. Jack Kerouac defined the term Beat Generation for the Random House Dictionary in following words: “members of the generation that came of age after World War II who, supposedly as a result of disillusionment stemming from the Cold War, espouse mystical detachment and relaxation of social and sexual tension.”

For Allen Ginsberg “Beatness” meant looking at society from the underside.

Ginsberg was on the FBI’s dangerous security list⁶

Beat movement, also known as The Beat generation is American social movement best known for its literature statements.⁷ The writers were trying to achieve something new and unknown till that time. They despised by the personal ownership and the stereotypes of those days. They ought to be free and without any dependence on the system.

The outstanding authors were Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, Gary Snyder.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the City Lights

Lawrence Ferlinghetti was born in 1919 in New York. He is an American poet and cofounder of the Beat Generation. His book store the City Lights, which is situated in San Francisco, had become to be a cultural basis for the Beat generation. It was used as a publish place where the writers could perform their work.

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/>

⁴ <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history>

⁵ <https://www.history.com/topics/korea/korean-war>

⁶ *Lectures On American Literature: Third Edition*. 3. Praha: Karolinum, 2011. ISBN 978-80-246-1996-5.

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/art/Beat-movement>

Sport

Jackie Robinson

This African American baseball player was the first black athlete who ruled Major League Baseball when he joined one of the most famous team the Brooklyn Dodgers.

As an African American he had to cope with many racial accidents not just from the fans' side but what is more from his own team mates who could not bear the feeling of a deep anxiety and fear of their own reputation.

However, most of the time when Robinson faced to the dangerous acts of injustice he always kept his head up and dealt with his own necessity of fighting back.

Despite all this violence which mostly led to unbelievable racial threats he ruled Major League and paved the way for Baseball as we know it from nowadays.

Jackie Robinson's wife Rachel Robinson started the Jackie Robinson Foundation in 1973. It provides students with scholarships to colleges.

Jackie Robinson was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962.⁸

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was the most famous heavyweight boxing champion and he was also known for his statements for the Vietnam War and civil rights movement.

Ali won an Olympic gold medal in heavyweight division in 1960 and then became a heavyweight champion in 1964.

He became known for his untypical boxing style which included especially speed.

Ali was born in Kentucky and his birth name was Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr.

He took his new name after joining the Black Muslim group Nation of Islam. He was highly involved by well-known activist Malcolm X and therefore Ali converted to orthodox Islam in 1970s.⁹

⁸ <https://www.biography.com/athlete/jackie-robinson>

⁹ <https://www.biography.com/athlete/muhammad-ali>

3. Racism, discrimination, human rights

Racism:

According to ADL (fighting hate for good) racism is a flow of thoughts or belief that one race is superior or inferior to another. It is mostly told as a form of hate to its culture, skin colour, behaviour, etc.

In the context of American studies, we can understand racism as a manifestation of hate against African American social minority. However, this is not an absolute truth at all times. As I mentioned previously, racism captures hatred towards another race and it is not specified to which one. In my geopolitical situation as in the Czech Republic, we frequently face hatred towards ethnic and religious minorities as well as xenophobia. So there is no definition that racism must be imposed against African American minority, it is a global issue related to the overall understanding and misunderstanding of and within various cultures.

Racism is basically a belief that one person is less than human. Therefore it still proclaims the superiority of the white majority as it was the habit and the heritage of colonialism. It can have numerous factors, the previously mentioned skin colour, place of birth, language among others.

It has influenced especially slavery.¹⁰

Discrimination:

According to the Cambridge dictionary, we can define discrimination as a treating a single person or a group of people differently than others. Mostly in a worse way than you would treat other people.

Discrimination roots from the same motivation as racism. Those who discriminate someone do it mostly because of hate towards skin colour, behaviour, culture, or sexual orientation.

Discrimination is not determined by the age of the act's participants. Discrimination can be used against anyone regardless of the age of the person who is discriminated and who discriminate them, i.e. the violator and the victim.

Examples of discrimination can be seen in school systems. It does not end by this of course. A lot of people are discriminated by their bosses at their work.

Discrimination of African American shall be mentioned in the first place. We can say that the USA has never actually gone over this. It is still the country where discrimination is issue number one, however, not only against the African American minority but also against the Hispanic and Mexican minority as well.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>

¹¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination>

Human rights:

Human rights are thing that all of us rely on. According to Universal Declaration of Human Rights we can define the first article of the preamble as “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”.¹² There are 30 articles generally.

In the USA the human rights were not less important than anything else. Black citizens were persecuted by the authorities with no chance to find a way out.

¹² <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

4. Rosa Parks

Rosa Louise McCauley was born on 4th of February 1913 and died on 24th of October in 2005¹³. She was a civil rights activist who became known for her refusal to relinquish her seat on a public bus to a white man.¹⁴

Rosa Parks rejected to give up her seat to a white passenger in a bus on 1st of December 1955.

There were buses specially adapted for white and black people in America. If you entered this bus and you were African American or any other race than white, you should have to go further to the back of the track where seats for “colored” were situated.

Rosa Parks was accused on December 1955. After a long day’s work Rosa Parks took a bus to get home and took a seat right on the border between a section for white only and colored only. As the bus was approaching the end of a way a several white people joined. As the way followed the bus had been filled and several white people had to stand in the aisle. The driver noticed and stood up to move the sight colored only further to the back. Than he had to ask four African Americans to give up their seats and move themselves to the back. Three of them agreed but the fourth one (Rosa Parks) refused. The bus driver called the police and Rosa Parks was arrested and charged with violation.

All of this tended to the event known as the Montgomery bus boycott.

5. Montgomery bus boycott

The Montgomery bus boycott¹⁵ was a civil right protest and was developed by arresting of Rosa Parks four days before.

9 months earlier before Rosa Parks was arrest a young lady Claudette Colvin who was 15-year-old those days was arrested for the same thing. There was prepared a protest by the black’s leaders until they discovered she was pregnant. The protest was called off because this lady would not be a proper symbol for their interest.

Almost 40 000 black bus drivers was a main majority of bus transportation. They boycotted their work on 5th of December in 1955 to protest segregated seating. It is known as the first large demonstration in the USA against segregation.

As the news of the boycott spread across Alabama many black leaders joined in by their support.

However, the Bus boycott met with violence. A pregnant woman who joined the demonstration was badly shot to her both legs by a sniper.

Martin Luther King Jr. was elected a president of the Montgomery Improvement Association on 5th of December 1955. It was formed by black ministers and community leaders in Montgomery, Alabama.

¹³ <https://www.biography.com/activist/rosa-parks>

¹⁴ <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/rosa-parks>

¹⁵ <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/montgomery-bus-boycott>

It became known by guiding the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Its main function was to organized black leaders and stand for the laws and rights of black minority.

6. Martin Luther King Jr.

Before I start with a comprehensive description of Martin Luther King Jr¹⁶., I would like to present some rare details of him that every one of us should know. It might help to understand the King's period and also might help to create a brief imagine that should come up to our mind automatically after spoken his name. Dr. King has started to be well known since the Montgomery bus boycott.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. Now he is known especially as a leader of the African American minority in the USA and a fighter for the civil rights. He was a Baptist minister and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. It was 4 years before his assassination in 1968.¹⁷

Early life:

He was born to a Baptist family as Michael King Jr. to Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. The period was not really lucky for black minority. Even though the slavery was forbidden and cancelled, discrimination still lived. Especially in the south were still thoughts of racism. The southern people were raised like that. The civil war ended but behaviour and lifestyle maintained.

His father took over the Ebenezer Baptist church including 13 members. The church was not really prospering until Michael King Sr. took after. It has become highly strong congregation.

M. L. King Jr. came from three children. The children grew up in a loving environment having good examples in their parents. Father tended to the discipline and a strong upbringing whereas mother took after the role of a loving island for her children. Beyond all their abilities they were not able to shield their children from racism completely. King's father believed that racism is not only against the USA laws but what is more, against the Lord.

As the time was flowing Martin attended public school, Booker T. Washington High school and then entered Morehouse College, Atlanta.

He was baptized in 1936.

All philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr. was to remain in protests in a very peaceful and non violent way.

Assassination:

¹⁶ Martin Luther King Jr. Why We Can't Wait, Penguin Random House UK, 2018

¹⁷ <https://www.biography.com/activist/martin-luther-king-jr>

There are many speculations about the death of the famous leader and one of the biggest persons in the 20th century. Generally is known that Martin Luther King Jr. was simply the biggest propagator of non violent protests for human rights and freedom. The facts about his death are these: he was assassinated on April 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee.

During his last speech he said following words: *"I have seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."*¹⁸ It is horrible tragic to know today that these were his almost last words in this world. It was such a prophecy. The next day, while he was standing on the balcony, a sniper's bullet hit his neck. A few hours later Martin Luther King Jr. exhaled for the last time.

7. March on Washington:¹⁹

March on the main city Washington was a massive protest for human rights and equality in jobs opportunities and freedom where were involved not only African Americans but also white citizens of the USA who felt the importance of walking the line of American liberty and constitution. It took place in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. on 28th of August in 1963 and the number of protesters was approximately 250,000 people, which is an extraordinary number of those who did not suffer from lack of self-reflection and humanity.

The main speaker was Martin Luther King Jr. who presented his now very popular speech presently known as "I have a dream" which is seen as the most beautiful and most iconic speech in the modern American history.

The march was previously planned by A. Philip Randolph in 1941 to show a disagreement on black's exclusion from WWII defence jobs. The massive protest was not fulfilled because A. Philip Randolph met President Franklin D. Roosevelt and together they made the situation suitable for both sides.

The protest in 1963 was also supported by numerous famous people and musicians like Marian Anderson, Bob Dylan or Mahalia Jackson.

¹⁸ <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/martin-luther-king-jr-assassination>

¹⁹ <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/march-washington-jobs-and-freedom>

8. "I have a dream" speech:

Before I am going to analyse the text of the speech, I would like to quote the text in its full length to confront the authentic material directly.

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's Capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his

citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?"

We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.

We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "for whites only."

We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

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.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, that one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that; let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"²⁰

²⁰ <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/i-have-a-dream-speech>

Judging from the authentic document video material, Martin Luther King was an incredibly charismatic speaker and it was fascinating to see the uncountable amount of people who came peacefully to watch their king and brother speaking.

In the first paragraph the author speaks to address the crowd and we can see how sure he is, how calm and courageous he is, speaking in front of those who spend a lot of time to get themselves there, to the Washington Monument. He mentions the event as it is the most important day in the American history. We cannot say that this was important just for the black minority because it involved the whole process of formation the view on discrimination and racism. This was the biggest demonstration for the human rights in the entire history of the Western culture.

He mentions the Emancipation Proclamation which was signed on the 1st of January in 1863. I personally understand it as a light of hope for the whole minority group of people who had a status of slaves. Actually by that time of Martin Luther King's speech slavery no longer existed. In the voice of the speaker we can hear the hint of irony because he knows that words on a piece of paper could not change the way of thinking of people in the USA or, what is more in the whole world.

He explains this in the following paragraph where he says that even though this official paper was signed, the "negro" is still not free not even after 100 years.

The abusive term "negro" was really offensive and impolite way of addressing someone whose skin was black. Even today this word is strictly forbidden to use in terms of political correctness. The usage of the term is merely very informal and can be heard from black to. It is still used as a slang word of the African American community, mostly from the hood. (Hood = according to Google, Hood is a slang term mostly used for a Home. It has been using mostly by African American gangsters and people who want to sound more informal and mysteriously.)

He talks about the chains of discrimination. There is nothing closer to the truth than this. African American people were persecuted day by day in their jobs and in their personal lives too. Even the toilettes were sectioned. Sometimes there were no toilettes for "colored" people.

The speaker uses the metaphorical language consistently. It is really obvious that Martin Luther King Jr. was a highly educated young man who knew what he was talking about and was able to use his abilities of using language for the most effective speed to reach the goal.

"The negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity" There cannot be anything closer to the truth than this thought. If we look at the social situation in the USA at the begin of the 50' and 60' it was more than obvious that black minority lived in the huge poverty compared to the white majority which lived in a fortunes. We cannot say that all of the black minority lived in a huge poverty and also we cannot say that all of the white majority lived a life full of parties, huge businesses or in the absolute fortune. There were surely the middle classes which the whole world is created from.

In the following paragraph Martin Luther King Jr. is successfully trying to deconstruct all the basis that entire America stands on and lives from. The Declaration of Independence, which is the most important document for all Americans and also for the whole Anglo-American world because it defines how the Americans live or better should live, is deconstructed in the speech. If we look at the declaration we can see that all Americans have the same rights for living, for freedom, for being

humans. None of this was accepted by numbers of Americans mostly by white majority. We must admit the discrimination of African Americans and try to figure out why it was like this. What forced the white majority or allowed it to behave like this. Martin Luther King Jr. was so brave by saying this in front of the thousands of people standing on the square; it was an important step towards democratization of American Western society as a whole. Maybe we cannot imagine how important the Declaration of Independence is for Americans that we just simply cannot understand. It is obvious that every American is proud of the country where he or she lives and is prepared to fight for it. Therefore I really appreciate the speaker for saying such a big truth to the eyes of not only black people but, what is more, to the eyes of those who are being theoretical over the living by the Declaration but do not accept all of it.

He says that the Declaration promises everything that is written in the speech to not only white men but also to the black men and that is the point we cannot just walk on by with closed eyes.

Then he strictly says that black majority will not refuse to believe that justice is for everyone not for the chosen ones. He compares the justice to a bank and it's bankrupt. He believes that the bank is not bankrupt and speaks about the opportunity of fair living the cash and check. He says that African Americans will stand still in reaching for justice for everybody and the life of fair behaviour.

The following words of NOW are of a particular significance. He, Martin Luther King Jr., is speaking about urgency of this word and that is very wise because nothing can be done without getting up and trying or realising. That is why the participants of the march all came to the "hollowed spot" in Washington to speak up and to show that black majority is not feared and will have the same rights as the others have.

He speaks about the importance of not cooling down. He is again mentioning the word now in context of making some promises of real democracy right now. I really like the metaphor he used about the time of lifting out our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice and putting it on the solid rock of brotherhood. In every word we can see power but also the light of non-violence. He used the term God's children because he believes and I share this belief either, that we all come from God and we all are equal.

He again uses the urgency of the moment. He compares summer and autumn. Nothing can live without the other. One cannot follow without the other. There cannot be summer of the Negro's justice without autumn of freedom and equality. His sense for the detail is a substantial strength of the next as well as the authentic speech.

Now it comes the most important moment which was mentioned by the speaker and I find it to be a base of the new process and new era which the black minority was trying to achieve together. They were instructed not to use violence. I do not need to say that Martin Luther King Jr. again packed this message into the beautiful paper of metaphor and it is so authentic that it almost makes you part of the community and brings you to the centre of the situation. *"Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred"*. He is trying to say that the path cannot be ruled by violence. All of the people who were standing in front of their new black messiah were absolutely ready to put their lives for him and he knew it. There was enormous responsibility in his hands. By his attitude and ideas he could involve affect the future for a long period of time. Due to his sense of humanity and belief in God he abounded by wisdom and deep faith. There was said that

all of the people who protest should not use violence; on the contrary, they should change their thinking and use the spiritual power instead of the physical power.

As we surely register, all paragraphs are full of thoughts and ideas and it is a deep spiritual experience to read it or better to hear it. Martin Luther King said something unbelievable for the Americans in those days. He was not a racist even though he was a target for numerous attacks by white racists. He mentioned the white community standing that day with the black community together, speaking like brothers about them. The African American destiny is tied with the white destiny. I highly appreciate this attitude and I also know that he had to be hated much more from that time.

It is said again that the black community cannot turn back. I would paraphrase Martin Luther King's words in the following way: "If we get here through the painful path we cannot stop now and must go further with our heads up".

There will be satisfaction of freedom and justice if the black minority does not give up and still fight non-violently day by day. That is the message.

"When will we be satisfied?" that was a question that Martin Luther King Jr. had an answer for.

Our community will never be satisfied as long as there still lives police brutality against African American citizens.

The black minority will never be satisfied as long as it cannot find an equal treating anywhere.

To put in it simply, Martin Luther King is trying to come up with as much issues that the black minority struggles with as possible. We cannot imagine how much they had to suffer and sometimes still suffer. We surely can count many more examples than the speaker used but it is not important right now. Let us move to another thought which was said in the speech.

The African American communities in big cities used to live in ghettos which was a complex or area mainly occupied by a minority no matter which one it is.

The speaker is trying to say how important is for them not to live in isolation but show to the rest of the society how useful and skilled they are.

Now Martin Luther King is speaking about the most important social category we possible can imagine. The next point is children. It is generally said that the best way to good children's upbringing is to be a good example for them. We do not need to stand with our finger up all the time. One thing that matters is show them by our own behaviour how to face the life. Martin Luther King is asking how we possibly can do this if the children who can read see everywhere signs like for whites only and forbid things to the other minorities. What good can come from this?

In the following paragraph he is speaking about elections. At this point, 1963, not every citizen can still vote. Not every member of the African American of course. In the south they cannot vote anywhere and in the north they do not have anyone to vote for. The minorities are politically and socially ignored and no one cares about them.

No African American can be satisfied until justice will be for everyone not just for the chosen ones.

Next the speaker addresses directly to those who were persecuted, who were set free out of jails where they were put behind the bars because of the police brutality and for not respecting the law.

He works with the mass, perfectly knowing what to say, how and when to raise his voice in order to make the great atmosphere much greater. Despite of this all he strictly says that we can fight but without violence. He challenges all his listeners not to raise their hands or weapons but to go back to their homes, to their slums, to their ghettos and believe that the situation will be changed.

It is not easy to go back to the terror and police brutality knowing that the situation will not be better in one day and what is more it will not be better in a year or longer. This is a blind race at a long distance with no ending. Everyone knew it.

And now it comes, the sentence or word formation that everyone knows and everyone is familiar with. "I have a dream". I can read a lot in it, a big hope that everything will be better and the justice for the black minority will be same as for the whites, a big disappointment because none of this will come soon, and mainly a big paradox because we must dream about something that is absolutely normal in these days.

Following in the speech he is trying again to bring up some examples of human struggling and possibilities that could be changed.

A dream about the sons of former slavers and sons of forms slavers owner. Actually this is really heartbreaking. He is describing the existence of these two at a table of brotherhood.

Then Martin Luther King is pointing out the importance of teaching our children how to face the world. He again has a dream about the future where humans will not be judged by the colour of the skin but their skills, skilfulness and prowess.

He has a dream about tolerance. He is showing the way in the following paragraph where he is comparing the words of the governor of Alabama, where racism is as natural as breathing is, and the facts about the living down there where is no justice, no equality, no human rights for the black minority, where the black boy cannot freely play together with his white neighbour's friends without racial attacks. The little black boy has also the dream about holding hands with his white brothers and sisters, having no worries about people's anxiety and attacks.

One day the little black boy or girl will have the same rights as their age-equals have. One day there will be the same justice for them as for anyone else. Martin Luther King knows that it will not be soon but on the other hand he does not know when it is going to be. However, one thing that he believes in is that sooner or later the time of human tolerance and spiritual prosperity will come in its enormous parade.

One important thing that should not be ignored is the word "today". I have a dream TODAY. That means the importance of not skipping all of this to another time. The right time is not after a year, not after a month or not even after a day. The right time is today which means now. The black minority could not wait longer or there will be no satisfaction ever. African Americans must stay together also with their white brothers and sisters and face the reality without any pink glasses and stay strong till all of their prayers are fulfilled.

"...every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight..."

There the speaker shows not the imperfect appearance of the American nature of course but he is trying to put a hope in the listener's hearts. He has a dream that one day all barriers and fences between the society, especially the blacks and whites, will be tumbled down and the ways of freedom and amazing humans relationships and brotherhoods will be free and without any unevenness.

Now comes the ending and the most important message Martin Luther King was heading to. All of this comes in vain without faith. There will be no success if people do not feed their faith every day. All of the protesters will go to their homes now with nothing but big faith that they got from Martin Luther King Jr. They also got a promise of no velvet path to the redemption. With the hope and faith the black minority will be able to achieve anything it wants. Using the speaker's words it will be able to *"hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope"...*

With respect to the humans rights of the American minorities and, if we look back at the WW2 situation in the USA, I find as a big paradox the fact that African Americans joined the army to fight Nazis and even though they fought bravely and with honour, they sweated their blood in the battlefield for their homeland and beloved country, they did not get any respect and obeisance they truly and unarguably deserved.

In the spiritual context of his speech, in the end Martin Luther King Jr. said the truth which not everyone can agree on, not just because they were not free but most importantly they did not believe in God. The Truth was that everyone is free finally because we are all the God's children and in his almightiness we are free.

A lot of these ideas from the speech I also found in his book called "Why We Can't Wait" which was written in 1964.

In conclusion of this chapter I may state that is hardly any political or simply public speech more courageous and heartbreaking as the one from Martin Luther King Jr. He did not perk the people up to fight the system but in a very peaceful way he did something that simply cannot get in my mind. Would the world be the same without the brave man who inspired dozens? Would African Americans have the same right now if there were not a man who put his own life for their future? All of these are question that we cannot answer. We can just speculate but the truth is that Martin Luther King Jr. is an unforgettable person of the modern history who achieved so much by speaking out words about love, God, tolerance and freedom that is simply something hard to surpass.

9. Acts of injustice: Assassination of John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy was the 35th president of the United States and had bravely served to its people since 1961 to 1963. He was also the youngest man elected to this office and when he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas he also became the youngest president who was killed.

As a president he had to deal with many issues like Cold war or the Cuban crises. JFK used to be a big support for the civil right movements.

He was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1917, and his parents represented one of two most prominent political Catholic families and therefore JFK got highly quality education at private schools like Canterbury or Choate, Connecticut. He graduated from Harvard and studied at Stanford, both belonging to the most prestigious universities of the USA.

Today he is known as the youngest American president assassinated but everyone knows that it is a long and hard way leads to this office. After he left the NAVY in 1944 he came back to Boston, where he was preparing for the Congress election. He won this quite easily with no doubt that his father's reputation played a big role.

John F. Kennedy has been marked as a moderately conservative democrat.

In 1960s, the President's role was not easy during his service. Among other political actions, Kennedy was the one who got involved in the Cuban crisis. This conflict took a time period in 1962 and was called out by the Soviet Union and its missiles installation on Cuba Island. This was without question a massive provocation from the Soviet side. Cuba and its own crisis were represented by Fidel Castro and his regime. Yes, we cannot deny that Cuba was under American command till that time so therefore the Cuban partisans took the situation in their own hands. It escalated in Bay of Pigs invasion where American troops were defeated and Cuba has been under communist power till now.

The Cold War was culminating, so there was a massive blockade on Cuban goods.

Finally, the presence of the Soviet missiles was highly unacceptable for the USA safety and interests. The two conflicting sides reached an agreement which was represented by removing the soviet missiles from Cuba followed hand in hand by removing the Americans missiles from Turkey.

This decade was the time when the whole world was facing the real threat of a nuclear war. It is kind of interesting that when the crisis like this appears, people start to hoard everything. As the people in the Czech Republic start to hoard pasta or flour because of the corona virus, so the Americans started to hoard food and gas those days, because of the potential nuclear war.

The assassination itself happened in Dallas, Texas, on 22nd of November in 1963, where the President was on the occasion of visiting places during his campaign. Even though that the President of the United States is generally the most guarded person in the world John F. Kennedy was riding in his open space Lincoln limousine through the city because of hot weather.

In the limousine were the President, his wife Jacqueline Kennedy and the governor of Texas with his wife. They were passing the massive crowd of people and then it happened. The witnesses describe

over than 6 loud shots, one of which hit the president in his neck. He also suffered from severe head injuries. He died in 1:30 pm local time. Doctors said there was nothing they could do.²¹

The question is who committed this terrible crime. Almost immediately Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested and he murdered a police officer when he tried to escape. He did not make any confession and then was murdered by an owner of one Dallas night club during on live TV programme.

The commission which was established a few months later came with a verdict that Oswald operated on his own. A new commission which was founded 15 years later brought the opposite opinion. It was practically impossible to shoot 3 good shots from the deadly rifle so quickly and therefore there is a statement which every American believes that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was teamwork and it is highly possible that we will never know the truth.²²

10. Malcolm X

The personality of Malcolm X has been connected with controversy evoking mixed feelings and reaction in general. He was thought to be a radical who was hated for his statements and influence on the black minority. The life of Malcolm X has been subject to various interpretation and the film version biographies offer even more controversial opinions. Nevertheless, reading of his book "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" or watching movies I tend to think the personality of Malcolm X has an enormous charisma and searching the information to understand his life is a source of excitement.

For further details there find it productive to compare Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X was a radical; besides he was a member of the Nation of Islam which was a radical organization where the precedence of the black race was believed as a one and only statement. Opposite to this there was a teaching of Martin Luther King Jr., who hoped in peace and love and believed that all races are equal no matter of what colour it has or where it is from.

The book was written by Alex Haley and the whole title is "The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley".

Malcolm X was born in Nebraska on May 19, 1925. His true name was Malcolm Little. He grew up with his mother Louise Norton Little, father Earl Little, and his 7 siblings. In chapter one Malcolm X describes his father really precisely.

...My father was a big, six-foot-four, very black man. He had only one eye. How he had lost the other one I have never known. ... He believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin. ...²³

Regarding the previous paragraph it is more than obvious where Malcolm had got the inspiration from. His Father had a big influence on him.

²¹ <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/jfk-assassination>

²² <https://www.televizeznam.cz/video/slavnedny/den-kdy-zavrazdili-kennedyho-22-listopad-150752>

²³ The Autobiography of Malcolm X As Told To Alex Haley pg.2

Marcus Garvey²⁴ was an African American activist and big propagator of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements. It had begun as an inspiration for the Nation of Islam and the Rastafarian movement.

*... he had seen four of his six brothers die by violence, three of them killed by white man, including one by lynching. ... It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence. I have done all that I can to be prepared. ...*²⁵

It is quite scary that even if Malcolm was just a young boy he had expressed the similar statements. He and his brothers and sisters and I mean also African Americans brothers and sisters had to face the brutality and violence from the whites. That is apparently the reason that partially justifies Malcolm's radicalism and militant views and actions. I imagine the life in that period, of the Negro, like a fight for survival. There was no justice for those who needed it and therefore I now understand the philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr. that if they, and it's been meant whites, use the violence we, African Americans, use tolerance and the second cheek.

*... I was the lightest child in our family. ...*²⁶

Malcolm had a complex from not being completely black and completely white. He was a mixed-race person. The reason was that his mother had a white father. Therefore the genetics worked like this. He thought he does not belong to any community.

*... But, still later, I learned to hate every drop of that white rapist's blood that is in me. ...*²⁷

Apparently, there was hatred in Malcolm X in connection with his heritage and ethnic background of his father

Then Malcolm describes his relationship with his mother and father. His mother was educated, which is interesting, because not every woman was educated, nor the black ones.

*... My father was also belligerent toward all of the children, except me. The older ones he would beat almost savagely if they broke any of his rules – and he had so many rules it was hard to know them all. Nearly all my whippings came from my mother. I have thought a lot about why. I actually believe that as anti-white as my father was, he was subconsciously so afflicted with the white man's brainwashing of Negroes that he inclined to favor the light ones, and I was the lightest children. ...*²⁸

It is visible that his father was a commander in the family house, as the sense of patriarchy is quite common in African American communities; members of the family obey all those rules and respect the father as the biggest authority. The father was trying to bring his children up well and by the Christianity because he was a Baptist preacher.

²⁴ <https://www.biography.com/activist/marcus-garvey>

²⁵ The Autobiography of Malcolm X As Told To Alex Haley pg.2

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

... Most Negro parents in those days would almost instinctively treat any lighter children better than they did the darker ones. It came directly from the slavery tradition that the "mulatto" because he was visibly nearer to the white, was therefore "better."²⁹

The culture stereotype of the position of a mulatto in the family is a social prejudice but more or less it seems to reflect the reality of the situation. First of all slavery was an awful crime and we even cannot imagine how terrible it was. Therefore I cannot strictly agree or disagree with this thought. It is possible that the generations that have been through slavery should have hold and care some marks of the bad treatment they used to experience. But all of this is a matter of psychology of human thinking.

... I learned early that crying out in protest could accomplish things. My older brothers and sisters had started to school when, sometimes, they would come in and ask for a buttered biscuit or something and my mother, impatiently, would tell them no. But I would cry out and make a fuss until I got what I wanted. I remember well how my mother asked me why I couldn't be a nice boy like Wilfred; but I would think to myself that Wilfred, for being so nice and quiet, often stayed hungry. So early in life I had learned that if you want something, you had better make some noise.³⁰...

It is quite inspiring to see how Malcolm X was thinking about things he wanted to achieve but on the other hand it is quite terrifying to see that all of these methods he had to been through and lived them. Looking into this from the teacher's perspective he early understood what he should have to do to achieve anything he wanted even if it should have been by noise and crying. As it is generally known and respected "the world belongs to the courageous ones"

Next important milestone is Malcolm X's religion. As we all know he was a Muslim, but not from the beginning. As I previously mentioned his father used to be a preacher man. That means that he spoke Gods words through the Bible and all of his children with Malcolm included were grown up by this faith. If we carefully look in his autobiography we could see his feelings about the faith in God.

... Even at that young age, I just couldn't believe in the Christian concept of Jesus as someone divine. And no religious person, until I was a man in my twenties – and then in prison – could tell me anything. I had very little respect for most people who represented religion. ...³¹

Another very interesting point in Malcolm's life was his arrest and then his time in prison, where he was sent in 1946. In his book he describes the arrest on page 151. He tried to get his watch repaired in a jewellery store. He had always worn a gun on him and this could be fatal, if there was no Allah as he said later. As he got his watch, which was apparently stolen but he had no idea about it, another man came from the darkness and Malcolm immediately knew he was a police officer. Detective Slack as he later realized. Suddenly another black man stepped into the shop. It immediately took the officer's attention and while he was dealing with the African American man, Malcolm pulled his gun out and gave it to the officer who was more than surprised by this. Nevertheless Malcolm ended up in the prison, where he started to read books, mostly historical and religious. He was an atheist and

²⁹ The Autobiography of Malcolm X As Told To Alex Haley pg.5

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

his prison-mates called him the Satan. Most of his siblings joined the organization called The Nation of Islam. After he was released from the prison he joined the organization to and in the beginning of 1960s he became a speaker for this organization.³²

He also undertook a way to Mecca where he accepted a new name and it was EL-HAJJ MALIK EL-SHABAZZ.

Malcolm X inspired many famous people but for me the most important was Muhammad Ali whose real name used to be Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr., therefore he changed his name because he hated his real one. He once said it was a name for whites.

Malcolm X was assassinated on 21st of February in 1965 during his speech. The murderers were members of the Nation of Islam. They killed him because they said he betrayed the organization.

Malcolm X is a very controversial public figure for me. Without questions he did a lot for the black minority in matter of justice and mostly self-esteem. It would be probably better to use the way of Martin Luther King Jr. which is more peaceful and less dangerous.

Nevertheless this man should be known by everyone for his actions.

11. The Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam is a radical organization which was founded in 1930. It combines the teaching of traditional Islam with black, nationalist thoughts and ideas.

It is the American organization.

The current leader is Louis Farrakhan so therefore we can see that the organization is still working and still exists. Its website can be visited by anyone and it can be also donated by anyone.³³

12. The Black Panthers

The Black Panthers was a political organization founded in 1966. The first impulse to get this group of revolutionaries together came with the lack of human rights for the African Americans and increasing police brutality. They were quite recognisable by their black berets and black leather jackets.

It was founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The foundation of this political group escalated when Malcolm X was assassinated. It must be said that politics and the way of doing things of this organization was really different from the Martin Luther King's teaching. They organized armed patrols. In the end of 1968 the amount of members of this organization was over 2,000.

³² The Autobiography of Malcolm X As Told To Alex Haley pg.151, 152

³³ <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power/nation-of-islam>

The source of the two founders was Marxist ideology which they used to manipulate with people and get to their business. They organize their point of view to a program called the Ten-Point Program.

The program was more than understandable because all main and important things that would help to the Black minority were included like an immediate end of the police brutality, equal opportunities for African Americans to get a job or own a piece of land.

Huey Newton was sentenced to prison for killing the police officer John Frey in Oakland.³⁴

13. Ku Klux Klan

Ku Klux Klan also known as KKK is an organization, which it's most significant goal is to hate and persecute the black minority.

This nongovernmental organization was surprisingly founded in 1865 or 1866 when a group of the civil war veterans created a secret society which had grown up to a paramilitary and violent organization with many followers and members.³⁵

It could be described as a racist and volente group with no boundaries.

The first leader was Nathan Bedford Forrest

Nathan Bedford Forrest was born in 1821 and died in 1877 and he used to be a general during the civil war and with no surprise he served under the command of the Confederation.³⁶

The clan was engaged in terrorist attacks against African Americans in terms of destruction of properties and murders very often committed by lynching.

Most of these attacks happened in the south of the USA. From its historical context the reason is more obvious. The main result of the civil war was the abolishment of slavery. Therefore the confederation which was for the slavery was collected from the states of the south, where slavery was absolutely normal and accepted. After the loss of the civil war there is no surprise that the rest of those who were assured by their own truth let grow such an unlawful organization as the KKK was.

It would be logical to say that KKK and racism is nowadays on its way to damnation and oblivion, but the opposite is right.

There are cases like Charleston Church Shooting where 9 African American people were savagely murdered by a white supremacist. It happened on June 17, 2015.

³⁴ <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/black-panthers>

³⁵ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/kkk-founded>

³⁶ <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/nathan-bedford-forrest>

14. Johnny Cash

This incredible musician was born in 1932 in Arkansas, where he also grew up with his family. He was enormously involved by his brother Jack, who accidentally died when Johnny was very young. As he said in a documentary³⁷, Jack used to be a big inspiration to him. All his life, Johnny carried a big feeling of guilt for his brother's death.

Johnny came from a family where mother used to be very nice person and the loving shelter for him and for his brothers and sisters. His father was drunk most of the time and significantly showing to Johnny that he hated him and was worth nothing.

Cash met his first wife Vivian at a skating rink. She was a good wife to him but Johnny could not handle the combination of a family life and a life of musician which was full of drugs, ladies and alcohol.

After he divorced, Johnny met his second wife June Carter Cash, who Johnny had loved for a long time before.

One thing that comes on my mind when I think about Johnny Cash is a word "salvation" and "damnation". Most of his life he spent thinking about God and about things he could have done better.

Quite controversial became his support of the President candidate Richard Nixon in 1972. Richard Nixon was up to a re-election to the office of the President of the United States. Johnny Cash once performed in the White House and it is kind of amusing to watch how he performs two songs, which were satiric and the President did not realised that. Nevertheless, Johnny Cash can be understood like true American in matter of being proud of the USA and being on the right side of the system. His children described their father as someone who was not a member of any party and would argue for both republicans and democrats. Once in his show J.C. said how proud he was of his country where "we have the rights to burn the flag and I am proud of this rights but let me tell you something we have also rights to bear our weapons and if you burn my flag I will shoot you. But I will shoot you with a lot of love like a good American"³⁸. His statement of being a true American is quite amazing and I am also little bit jealous that we do not behave like this in our country. I am glad that we are not fanatics, but being proud of our country and love our nation is a basement of a good state.

Nevertheless, Johnny Cash had something that Richard Nixon horribly needed. It was one of the biggest voting powers which the USA has and it is the votes from the prisoners. A lot of these people adored Johnny Cash for his texts and music and also for his background in case that he was himself once arrested because of drugs. He also did not look down to these men and made the most successful show ever the concert in the Folsom Prison.³⁹

And once it all happened. Johnny Cash was standing in front of his audience with TV cameras watching him and said something that no one had ever expected. "My family here and I stand behind the President of the United States in his quest for a just and lasting peace". Then, after receiving a

³⁷ CASH The Autobiography of Johnny Cash (2006 edition)

³⁸ Netflix original movie: Tricky Dick and the Man in Black

³⁹ Ibid.

letter from the President he was invited to the white house. No one believed that this musician could do something like this. It was in time of the Vietnam War when the half of population wanted the end of this.

One year later Richard Nixon abdicated after the Watergate affair.

*"A hundred years have come and gone. It's good to point out the mistakes that we've made, what we did to these minorities. The anti-Semitism that's still going on in this country. Anti black, the anti immigrants, anti women and the near genocide of the aboriginals of America."*⁴⁰

Johnny Cash had a big sense for God and justice I would say. Most of his texts were about sin and salvation. Saturday night, Sunday morning. Sunday Morning was about repenting and repenting for the fun you had on Saturday night. ⁴¹ As the time went by, Johnny Cash became really strong voice for human rights and rights of minorities. Sometimes they did not want him to play in radio because of his statements and opinions about the human rights.

*"His capacity to represent the underdog and engage with the other goes partly to the ballad tradition, but it falls in with the Christian world picture, too. He was ahead of his time. The tragedy of Native America and its obliteration by white people is not particularly welcome in this country. Nobody wants to hear about it."*⁴²

It was not easy to speak up against public especially public like Americans. If we are born in something, in some manners, in some country with its own heritage we must be really powerful or well respected to gain our goals. On the other hand this is not an issue of far away past but we can find this way of doing things today either. Besides it is much more harder today thanks to all kinds of social media and other communicators.

Johnny knew much better than the others how you feel if you fall into sins and how to desire for salvation. He used a lot of pills and medicaments in those day when and it was almost his ending line of life not really of the professional as much as personal.

*"I took a lot of pain medication during that time. It got to the point where I was taking sleeping pills in the daytime as well to calm my nerves and then doubling up at night to go to sleep. I had been hallucinating every day from the morphine. I was weak, I was wasted. In comes my mother, my daughter Rosanne, June, John Carter, Cindy, Tara and every one of them had written something that made them realize I was in really serious trouble. And they cared for me, and they were all individually and collectively asking me to get myself some help."*⁴³

Even though he was addicted to drugs and had his life almost ruined, people trusted him and I think he did a lot for the racial situation to get better. He asked God for help and that is what people want to see especially in America.

⁴⁰ The Gift: The Journey of Johnny Cash (Official Documentary 2019)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

15. James Baldwin

James Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924 and died in 1987. He was a novelist, essayist, poet, playwright and a critic of the social situations in the USA and in the world. He is an author of more than twenty books, 3 from which I was doing my research from. Due to his essays collection *The Fire Next Time* he became known as an activist in the civil rights movement. James Baldwin spent a lot of time in France where he escaped from the USA from the homophobia and racism and the lack of justice for the African Americans.⁴⁴

After reading his books *Nobody Knows My Name* and *The Fire Next Time* I find him to be also a philosopher.

I find his sense for writing quite different than others. He was trying to find the solutions about the time he was suffering in, he is trying to find the solutions about why he must be so different just because he has a different kind of pigment and why the racist behave like they are higher class than the others.

*... You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a nigger. ...*⁴⁵

This is interesting and I find it more like a thought of Martin Luther King Jr. who would say something like this. There is no place for self-pity or sadness. One thing that everyone can do is to not become what the other side believes you are. If they call you “a nigger” they have something in their minds, that this term is defined by and the only way to fight it clearly and properly and effectively is to do the opposite as long as their prejudices are tumbled down.

*... White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this – which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never – the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed. ...*⁴⁶

In this essential note, James Baldwin admits the endless power of white people and also denies that the situation is fault of the African Americans, which is absolutely right. I also stand for the interpretation that you cannot love someone else if you do not love or accept yourself. I truly believe in his second thought about when the white people will learn all of this. There will never be such a place where everyone will be equal and no one will look down on someone else. The white race simply cannot love someone else, because it does not know how.

*... Negroes in this country – ... – are thought really to despise themselves from the moment their eyes open on this world. This world is white and they are black. ...*⁴⁷

This is quite hard to believe but there is nothing closer to the truth than this, specifically in the context of 1960s. A lot of racists were raised in believes that “Negroes” are less, they are “something” with no rights and what is more they are here to be ashamed for what they are and

⁴⁴ James Baldwin: *The Fire Next Time* (Penguin Modern Classics 2017)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

they are supposed to be looked down on. This is something that will never disappear. It is simply in us. Try to imagine that a child is raised in a family with the republican background. Hardly ever will this child convert to the Democratic Party, just because it lives in environment day by day.

... White people hold the power, which means that they are superior to blacks (intrinsically, that is: God decreed it so), and the world has innumerable ways of making this difference known and felt and feared. Long before the Negro child perceives this difference, and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it, he has begun to be controlled by it. ...⁴⁸

If we ask ourselves if it is true or start having doubts about the honesty of these words we must look back and ask the history for facts. Never before had the African American had as equal rights as anybody else like these days but it would not be so if there were not people who had passion to change it. It is absolutely true that white people used to hold the power, and what is more they hold it even now. It would be unthinkable to have an African American President of the USA and the dream came true, many years later when Barack Obama took the office of the President of the United States in 2009. White people were superior to blacks indeed. There are still cases even these days when the black minority simply cannot call for its rights because of some white person sitting in some important office.

The thing that James Baldwin is trying to say is that the system is ruled by the powerful majority and has no mercy with those who are weak and frightened. There is an unwritten rule that the black minority must be somehow understood by. As James Baldwin further describes even if you are “the Negro” child you are controlled by this system of prejudices and hatred. And you must start to react to it. I do want to bring only facts but I cannot help myself but to express my hypotheses. There is generally known the criminality of the black minority could not be it so just because of the reaction to the system all around those who act like this? I still believe there is a possible explanation of this. We have some prejudices and we are not keen to give them away from us. Is it going to be different some day? I still believe it will, but it will take a lot of focus and commitment.

The next very interesting issue that Baldwin speaks about is an unspoken problem of self-reflection and self-knowledge. It must be very difficult to get on with our own personality when we are still kept in a position of being bad and wrong and miserable or anything else that the Black minority used to be told repeatedly. If you are not permitted to dine somewhere even though there others of different skin colour are, it must be highly difficult to stay still in understanding the truth. The truth that they are wrong and bad and you have same rights like everyone else.

James Baldwin said that if you are African American you cannot accept yourself as they call you and that means a “Negro”. Martin Luther King Jr. taught the peaceful reactions become provoking when staying well-mannered and using no violence to challenge it. We are just humans and how God had created us.

The relationship between James Baldwin and God is also worth discussing. He joined the church according to his own words:

⁴⁸ James Baldwin: The Fire Next Time (Penguin Modern Classics 2017) pg. 30

... Anyway, very shortly after I joined the church, I became a preacher – a young Minister – and I remained in the pulpit for more than three years. ...⁴⁹

Even though he joined the church and God knows it requires a lot of patience and faith, he still asked questions which were completely understandable but with no answer because there is no answer in this world.

... And if his love was so great, and if He loved all His children, why were we, the blacks, cast down so far? Why? ...

Despite the fact that he was so faithful and in love with God lately he used to feel a great doubtfulness of God's existence and humanity.

... And if one despairs – as who has not? – of human love, God's love is left. But God – and I felt this even then, so long ago, on that tremendous floor, unwillingly – is white.⁵⁰

I find this more than courageous to say something like this besides if someone lives in a shadow of white people so long that you even do not remember the sunshine on your life and future. If someone hates white people so much for things they have done and you call the GOD white, there must be something wrong and I think that James Baldwin must have been really upset of the whole situation in here and all around the world.

It was not like this so long, because he said this before he joined the church, therefore he had to bring peace in the relationship with God though.

... I rushed home from the school, to the church, to the altar, to be alone there, to commune with Jesus, my dearest friend, who would never fail me, who knew all the secrets of my heart. ...⁵¹

This is a proof that he understood the church like a place where he could escape and beg for advice and mercy.

His work seemed to have some connections to organizations like the Nation of Islam or public persons like Malcolm X or Elijah Muhammad.

... No one seems to know where the Nation of Islam gets its money. A vast amount, of course, is contributed by Negroes, but...⁵²

Whether it was true or not, it opened many ways to questions which could be highly unpleasant for many "big" people. This is why I so appreciate the work of people like JB.

As I said, his theses touch the names like Malcolm X. I have read the autobiography of this man but unless I read the book from JB, I did not really understand the personality of Malcolm X.

... George Lincoln Rockwell, the chief of the American Nazi party, made a point of contributing about twenty dollars to the cause, and he and Malcolm X decided that, racially speaking, anyway, they were

⁴⁹ James Baldwin: The Fire Next Time (Penguin Modern Classics 2017) pg. 35

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

in complete agreement. The glorification of one race and the consequent debasement of another – or others – always has been and always will be a recipe for murder. ...

It was and still is true, that the way which includes violence and racial segregation will be bad for not only the actors but what is more, for the whole nation.

He also finds an agreement with Martin Luther King Jr. in the position of attacked people and their reactions. It goes hand to hand with the whole philosophy of the peaceful and non-violent way of escaping from the racial fanaticism.

... I am very much concerned that American Negroes achieve their freedom here in the United States. But I am also concerned for their dignity, for the health of their souls, and must oppose any attempt that Negroes may make to do to others what has been done to them. ...⁵³

This answers to the violation we are to be found through the whole people's history. Let us take the transfer of Germans after the WW2 as an example. Germans had been doing bad things for many years and the answer of the Czech citizens was really destructive. The point was and still is that this violence included many casualties.

... Now it is extremely unlikely that Negroes will ever rise to power in the United States, because they are only approximately a ninth of this nation. ...

As for the more positive view of the 21st century, Barack Obama became the president of the USA in 2009 and it was more than a satisfaction not only for the African American minority who, at that time formed more than one ninth of the nation, it was about 39 million, i.e. 13%. Obama can be seen as a democratic president who guaranteed general respect for human rights for the nation and the peacekeeping process with respect to the world politics.

James Baldwin also speaks about the names of African Americans. How they have got them. As he said, the fact that every American Negro bears the name which originally belonged to some white man, who was his master as a slave, is quite undeniable.

... I am called Baldwin because I was either sold by my African tribe or kidnapped out of it into the hands of a white Christian named Baldwin, who forced me to kneel at the foot of the cross. ...

It is unbelievable that every African American was dragged in to the States in chains and now every one of them is under the enormous hatred by racists all around the world for being black. It brings a thought on my mind that those, whose ancestors stole and kidnapped these people from their homes, are now called racists and accuse African American of every criminal act. This is not normal world where we can live happily and James Baldwin knew it and wrote numerous books about it. The suffering of his was as visible through the letters as the sun on the sky.

All this considered James Baldwin was enormously talented writer who had definitely skipped his period.

⁵³ James Baldwin: The Fire Next Time (Penguin Modern Classics 2017) pg. 73

16. Conclusion

The whole process of working on the sources and making my theses completed was highly inspiring and really enjoyable. Many things were new to me and I had to read a lot to understand the flow of thoughts of the writers and their experiences.

On the other hand it was not always easy to find a trustworthy source especially on the internet and therefore I had to do a lot of verifications to get myself sure about the truth.

I find the 60's as an amazing time period and one of the most important not only in African American history but also in the history generally.

However, I realized how important the freedom is and also that it is not a certainty. The determination of those who fought or sometimes also put their lives for their freedom is more than we can ever admire.

Above all, the whole situation which had appeared in this time period is very interesting and should have our attention just for not repeating it.

I would say that during this period, people started to know each other.

A lot of people became known for their statements and many of them were executed for it.

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