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THE LONELY LONDONNERS



What are the challenges of Caribbean immigration and settlement in the Motherland?

- Racism
- Homesickness
Invisibility

Loneliness

- creating a sense of community in an alienating world
—> in community but still lonely/they all have a personal experience about London. Some of the characters seem to be more successful than others at navigating the new world. They are lonely in their experiences.

—> London streets and all of these rooms, as he says, kind of pushed up against one another, where people don't even know what they're doing next door. This is different than the Caribbean Islands where the sense of community and supporting each other is really present.

Quote:

- But standing outside the Tube station, Galahad discovers that he's absolutely terrified that the sun in the sky doesn't look anything like any sun he's ever seen before and he's alone. He's alone in this huge metropolis and he hasn't got any money, and he hasn't really got anywhere to live.

1. Homesickness

"Galahad laugh...p123...upon the city." "Bof if I was you.... back to Trinidad."

p.125(Moses)

p.125 Moses talks about "Paradise"; "a Lonely miserable city" P.126

Galahad : "I had a feeling to go back too, but I forgot about it . I ain't have no Prospects back home boy"

- London and Britain are different from the home places of the immigrants, with the differences seen in people, pubs, shops, architecture, climate, and culture. Nothing looks familiar in the new city. At home, the immigrants knew everything, the climate was hot, and the atmosphere friendly, while London turned out to be a completely opposite place with its fogs, rains, and coldness.

- All these aspects increased the homesick feeling that almost all immigrants experience. Moses, who has lived in London for almost ten years, still feels homesick. For instance, at the Waterloo station where all the immigrants come, “he had a feeling of homesickness that he never felt in the nine-years he is in this country” (Selvon 4). Moses experiences this feeling because part of him desires to leave the country that he does not like and where his life is not happy.
- London streets and all of these rooms, as he says, kind of pushed up against one another, where people don’t even know what they’re doing next door. This is different than the Caribbean Islands where the sense of community and supporting each other is really present.
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2. Racism

“Boy, you black like midnight.” ... “No, you more like Five Past Twelve p.102 p.126 “Nobody does really accept you. They tolerate you” “darkie”.

- the characters in the novel are lonely first and foremost because they were colonial migrants. They had imagined the mother country was going to embrace them and welcome them. But in fact, what happened was they became alienated.

But there’s also this broader sense of them seeing their own blackness through the eyes of others, of facing racism and recognising that as a kind of ethical loneliness.

3. Invisibility

- Because of racism
- by their working conditions
- Ironically, they are visible (ref. part with the reporter)
- “Nobody ever doing anything for him” p.2

Intro:

The Lonely Londoners by Sam SELVON

“Perhaps he was thinking it's time to go back to the tropics, that's why he feels sort of lonely and miserable”.p.5

At this moment of the story Moses has a feeling of loneliness.

Loneliness is a feeling of sadness caused by being alone. It can also happen even though you are surrounded by people that you love. Loneliness is a universal human emotion, often characterized by a sense of isolation, disconnection, and a profound longing for meaningful social interaction. It's a complex and deeply personal feeling that transcends age, gender, and cultural boundaries, affecting people from all walks of life.

In *The Lonely Londoners*, loneliness is the first theme you think about when you read the title because the term “Lonely” is present, but this is not the most obvious theme when you get through the story.

So, we may ask how is the idea of loneliness tackled in “*The Lonely Londoners*”?

This essay has been divided into 3 parts. The first one deals with homesickness, then we will discuss on racism and finally focus on invisibility.

Homesickness is the feeling of being unhappy because of being away from home for a long period. This feeling affects the West Indian population in the novel. The main characters are from the West Indies and live in London. They move to London for a better life despite the fact that they have to struggle to adapt, find a job, and a shelter. By feeling homesick, Moses slowly moved to loneliness.

Through the name “Moses”, the main character can be seen as a chosen one, like Moses in the Bible with the people of Israel. Similar to the bible's story, Moses finds himself helping people to join the “Promised land” that is Great Britain for West Indians. The one helping everyone arriving in London because he is a member of the Caribbean community, he lives in London for about ten years and can guide them, he is a reference for all Caribbean people. When Moses expresses about his position as a guide, it seems to be a burden for him, as if he forces himself to be kind, gentle, meet and have unknown people as a guest.

- " Vex with himself that his heart is so soft" p.2
- “He don't know the man from Adam” p.1

This situation makes Moses feel bad enough to become nostalgic and think about his native country. The setting at the beginning of the novel with “a fog

sleeping” (p. 1), reinforces the homesick atmosphere. Moreover, the narrator mentions that Moses "had a feeling of homesickness” when he went into the station.

Indeed, there is a big difference when Moses quotes Trinidad and when he quotes London. From Moses's point of view, Trinidad is a "Paradise" p. 125 and London is “a lonely miserable city. (p.126)

Several times, the deep desire to go back home is clearly stated.

- “I want to go back in Trinidad” p.125
- “Every year he vowing to go back to Trinidad” (p. 126)

Finally, Sam SELVON depicts homesickness through the character of Moses. What is more, is that Moses and the other Caribbean people have to deal with other circumstances that keep them apart.

One of the most persistent challenges faced by Caribbean immigrants in the UK is racism. The characters in the novel are lonely first and foremost because they were colonial migrants. They had imagined the mother country was going to embrace them and welcome them. But in fact, what happened was they became alienated. Racism exists in various forms, affecting Caribbean immigrants in their daily lives. They often experience racial bias in employment, housing, and social interactions. which further exacerbates their sense of isolation and loneliness.

Indeed, Caribbean immigrants in the novel face significant employment discrimination. Many are limited to low-paying, unskilled jobs that offer little opportunity for advancement. They encounter hiring discrimination and racial stereotypes that limit their career prospects. We can take an example:

- « Well, as far as I could figure, they frighten that we get job in front of them, though that does never happen. The other thing is that they just don't like black people, and don't ask me why, »

Then, they are also facing housing discrimination. The characters often struggle to find suitable housing due to landlords who refuse to rent to black tenants. They are met with outright discrimination and are forced to accept substandard living conditions. This housing discrimination reflects the structural racism prevalent in post-war London.

We can take as example when Galahad was looking for a room.

- “I went to look at that room that Ram tell me about in the Gate, and as soon as the landlady see you she say the room let already. She ain't even

give me a chance to say good morning. Why the hell you can't change colour?"

And finally, they are facing racism in their social interactions. Indeed, the characters in the novel frequently encounter everyday acts of racism, such as racial slurs, derogatory comments, and micro aggressions. These acts of discrimination are a constant presence in their lives, highlighting the racial discrimination and hostility they face. We can take the example when Galahad was pointed at in the tube station by a little White girl:

- " Mummy, look at that black man!' A little child, holding on to the mother hand, look up at Sir Galahad. You mustn't say that, dear!' The mother chide the child."

So, they are often marginalized and treated as outsiders in the British society. The feeling of not belonging and being rejected by the host society intensifies their loneliness.

Now we will move on to the last point: Invisibility.

Invisibility can be the inability to be seen or the state of being ignored or not taken into consideration. The idea of invisibility is a prominent and recurring theme portrayed throughout the novel. The term "invisibility" refers to the feeling of being unnoticed and often disregarded by the broader British society. The Caribbean immigrants in the novel grapple with this sense of invisibility, and Selvon explores this concept through racial discrimination (has we had seen before); lack of representation and social isolation.

First the racial discrimination. Has we've seen before the characters in the novel frequently experience racial discrimination and prejudice in London. They face hostility from the British population, which makes them feel invisible in a society that treats them as outsiders and second-class citizens.

Then the lack of representation. The Caribbean immigrants in the novel find themselves underrepresented in British media and cultural narratives. Their stories, experiences, and perspectives are notably absent or negative. We can take the example of when Tanty is being interviewed by a British reporter.(p.12)

- " the Echo appear it had a picture, and under the picture write: Now, Jamaican Families Come to Britain."

This title leaves them feeling marginalized. Their invisibility or misrepresentation in media reinforces the idea that their presence in the UK is not considered significant.

And finally social isolation. The characters often feel socially isolated in London. They form relationships within their own community, but their interactions with the British population are limited and characterized by misunderstanding and prejudice. Their social isolation is exacerbated by their inability to develop meaningful bonds in a hostile environment. This social isolation deepens their sense of invisibility.

To conclude, in "The Lonely Londoners," Sam Selvon captures the loneliness and emotional struggles faced by Caribbean immigrants in London. The idea of loneliness is represented by different feelings and conditions. It emphasised with homesickness, racism and invisibility that the Caribbean experienced.

We will able to reflect on the impact of invisibility on identity

How does the sense of invisibility has an impact on their identity ?

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