

AGEISM AND OPPRESSION IN TONI CADE BAMBARA'S "MY MAN BOVANNE"

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Abstract : Generally speaking, old age in Africa is a mark of wisdom, blessing, and inspires respect for the less young. In the West, and in the U.S. in particular, old age is in general very badly appreciated. If this old age is coupled with physical or mental disability and poverty, societal rejection and oppression increase dramatically. The young people of the American black community, having consciously or unconsciously assimilated the Western model, tend to oppress their old people living with disabilities. This is the case in "My Man Bovanne" by Toni Cade Bambara, where the protagonist decided to take care of a poor blind old black man despite the admonitions of her own children. Using Afrocentricity and Ubuntu as theoretical frameworks, this article, on the one hand, shows that rejection of the other based on race, class, disability, and age is anti-social attitude, and on the other hand, argues that the elderly are source of knowledge and blessing for all human communities.

Keywords: racism, social class, ableism, ageism, disabilities

Résumé : En général, la vieillesse en Afrique est une marque de sagesse, de bénédiction, et inspire le respect des moins jeunes. En occident et aux USA en particulier, la vieillesse est très mal appréciée en général. Si cette vieillesse est couplée avec un handicap physique ou mental et la pauvreté, le rejet et l'oppression de la société augmentent considérablement. Les jeunes de la communauté noire américaine ayant consciemment ou inconsciemment assimilé le modèle occidental, tendent à opprimer leurs vieillards vivant avec des handicaps. C'est le cas dans le récit « My Man Bovanne » de Toni Cade Bambara, où la protagoniste a décidé de prendre soin d'un pauvre vieillard noir et aveugle malgré les remontrances de ses propres enfants. En se servant des cadres théoriques de l'Afrocentricité et d'Ubuntu, cet article, d'une part, montre que le rejet de l'autre basé sur la race, la classe sociale, le handicap, et l'âge sont des attitudes anti-sociales, et d'autre part, soutient que les personnes âgées sont une source de connaissances et de bénédiction pour toutes les communautés humaines.

Mots-clés : racisme, classe sociale, capacitisme, âgisme, handicaps

Introduction

Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them. They must, they have no other models." (Baldwin, 1961)

Ageism, discrimination of people based on their age, is another form of tolerable misconduct. "Scholars have noted the underexplored phenomenon of double jeopardy facing Americans who are older and of minority descent" (Yang and Levkoff, 2005, p. 42). Yang and Levkoff expound that these people "... face greater disadvantages in socioeconomic status, health status, and life expectancy compared to those who are younger and white and compared to those people who are in the same age group but white" (p. 42). And while some note that "ageism is prevalent, dangerous, and limits individuals and our communities" (Robbins, 2015, p. 7), others wonder "Are we all to be discounted as we get older? We don't tolerate making fun of other population groups, why do we allow this kind of prejudice to go unchallenged?" (p. 6). Even national statistics explicate the race and old-age combination factors for Blacks. "National data reveal that for every birth cohort of 100,000 men, 17,000 fewer black men than white men survive to age 65." (Palmore, 2005, p. 43).

"My Man Bovanne" by Toni Cade Bambara (1972) presents multiple oppression in only one character, a poor old black blind man. Mrs. Hazel Peoples, the protagonist takes upon herself to care for that poor old black blind man admonished by her own children. The story depicts how elders are illtreated by the youth in the Black community while the latter, alienated to dominant white culture, try to woo the elder into the Black Power fight. As Farah Jasmine Griffin (1996, p. 230) notes "'My Man Bovanne' the first story of the first collection, *Gorilla, My Love*, warns there is no revolution without the support, respect and love of the elders as fully developed human beings and not as clichés."

As America is a land oppression where many Blacks may suffer from racism, sexism, class, ableism, and ageism, "How do we reconcile the dominant white cultural denigration of aging with the reverence that many African Americans have for their family and community elders" (Reynolds, 2017, para 2)? How would a poor old black

blind survive the dominant white culture disparagement and mockery within his own community? Such are the inquiries this paper takes in consideration. It seeks to show that the rejection of the other based on race, class, disability, and age are anti-social attitudes, and argues that the elderly is source of knowledge and blessing for all human communities. The point here is to highlight the fact that black disabled people suffer more oppressions than any other group in the U.S.

To this end, Afrocentricity and Ubuntu will serve as theoretical frameworks within which the scrutiny of “My Man Bovanne” will be conducted. According to Molefi Kete Asante (1991, p. 171) who is its theoretician, “Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person.” It is an approach that uses African view of the world to assess all materials. Asante expounds that “It is a paradigm in that sense, and it reorients the thinking of African people from any perspective, any intellectual perspective, any social perspective” (Asante and Turner, 2002, p. 718).

As for the Ubuntu philosophy, “a worldview that tries to capture the essence of what it means to be human” (Hailey, 2008, p. 3), “can best be described as an African philosophy that places emphasis on ‘being self through others’” (Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013, p. 82). In addition, Adrian D. Van Breda (2019, p. 439) points out that “Contemporary research shows that *ubuntu* continues to play an important role in African society.” Simply put, Ubuntu is an Afrocentric view of the world to gauge all phenomena strictly from an African prolife and pro-humane perspective.

1. Ageism and Oppression

For African American the mother of the multiple oppression is racism. It has been the deep hate of the Africans that had prompted their kidnapping and their enslavement by Europeans. From their rich and the comfortable freedom they had been enjoying in Africa, these deportees were maintained in absolute poverty which directly derives from racism. On their arrival in the New World their economic value

depended mostly on their physical appearance or disabilities. The stronger and the healthier they looked, the higher their price. After being dehumanized, when they grow very old, they become useless in strict economic terms. This is exactly how the dominant white culture has viewed Africans since their encounter with the continent of Africa.

Though a very brief short story, "My Man Bovanne" has depicted all these four aspects of the multiple oppression against African Americans.

1.1. *Racism*

The party in "My Man Bovanne" is a fund raising and awareness raising for a local section Black Power movement. Since the Black youth of the neighborhood set this meeting, they are plainly conscious of the racial oppression their community has been facing for centuries. The setting is a Black New York City neighborhood which reveals that they are from the working class, and most the characters are poor. The racism and poverty imposed on the characters ~~is~~/are the results of centuries consecutive oppression. None of the characters is spare by this racial nor class (poverty) and economic oppression. This is in fact the rationale behind the Black Power movement party that is to fight against the racial and economic oppression they all live in. This is noble cause but the strategies the Black youth uses is wrong since they bear the very trademarks of their oppressors, the white dominant culture.

The Black youth is miseducated. Commenting Carter G. Woodson's miseducation of the Negro, Molefi Kete Asante (2002, p. 170) asserts that "African Americans have been educated away from their own culture and traditions and attached to the fringes of European culture; thus, dislocated from themselves, Woodson asserts that African Americans often valorize European culture to the detriment of their own heritage." Because the Black youth in the short story is alienated to/from the oppressive European culture, they tend to replicate the same oppression on their own people through rudeness, mockery, and meanness to their elders.

When Mrs. Hazel Peoples, the narrator, dances with Bovanne, the poor old blind black man, her own children were very unhappy with her.

"Look here Mama," says Task, the gentle one. "We just tryin to pull your coat. You were makin a spectacle of yourself out there dancing like that."

"Dancin like what?"

"Like a bitch in heat," says Elo (Bambara, 1972, p. 5).

This is a strange way of talking to one's mother. The children move on by denigrating the old blind man as they are admonishing their mother. "Pullin me out the party and hustlin me into some stranger's kitchen in the back of a bar just like the damn police" (pp. 5-6). They rebuke her for

"Dancin with that tom," say Elo to Joe Lee, who leanin on the folks' freezer. "His feet can smell a cracker a mile away and go into their shuffle number post haste. And them eyes. He could be a little considerate and put on some shades. Who wants to look into them blown-out fuses that-" (Bambara, 1972, p. 6).

This way of denigrating a black blind old man was learned from the white dominant culture. Ironically, the Black youth wants to combat the oppression of the white dominant culture with the same oppressing tools. Most Blacks are disconnected from their original culture and tend to copy white culture. Asante observes "Enslavement was truly a living death. While the ontological onslaught caused some Africans to opt for suicide, the most widespread results were dislocation, disorientation, and misorientation-all of which are the consequences of the African person being actively de-centered" (Turner and Asante, 2002, pp.176-177). The African Americans are de-centered from their cardinal human and humane values that they used to put at the center of any of their action. Denigrating people on the basis of their disabilities and age in America and in the Black community in particular has its roots in slavery.

1.2. *Ableism*

Discrimination on the basis physical appearance and visible disabilities are is a fundamental element of slavery. On slave market, slaves were examined to find out any slightest disability. Disability of any kind is not tolerated. David M. Turner (2014, p. 1506) notes that "In some cases, becoming disabled from work could lead to removal from the community of slaves, with elderly or disabled slaves being sent to live alone in the woods and fend for themselves." This clearly shows that for capitalist profits disability and old age were not accepted in the American consciousness. Turner explains that "Evaluating the 'soundness' of slaves was a crucial aspect of the slave economy as many historians have noted, but constructions of the 'unsound' body and the experiences of slaves with disabilities have received much less attention (p. 1505). Commenting on Boster, he says that "Boster provides some powerful evidence to suggest also that some African American slaves with disabilities were sold or hired out for medical research" (p. 1506). In the same line, Angel Love Miles (2020, para. 8) notices that,

... ableism is a culturally specific, historically contextual phenomenon. African Americans' disability is largely constructed in relationship to the history of slavery, Jim Crow, and the racist violence associated with them. This history includes medical, scientific, and labor exploitation as well as the overall othering of Black bodies."

This is how the white dominant culture views and disposes of Black disable bodies. And Isabella Kres-Nash (2016, para. 1) considers that "Racism and ableism are often thought of as parallel systems of oppression that work separately to perpetuate social hierarchy." So, a person may be discriminated based on disability but not race. This is particularly accurate in "My Man Bovanne" where the young Peoples and the other youth belittle the old blind man though they all belong to the same African race. Hazel complains about the heartbreaking attitude of the Black youth at the party toward Bovanne. "So everybody passin sayin My Man Bovanne. Big deal, keep steppin and don't even stop a minute to get the man a drink or one of them cute sandwiches or tell him what's goin on" (Bambara, p.4). This behavior is a reflection of American culture vis-à-vis its disabled people.

1.3. *Ageism*

Life expectancy in the 21st century has increased a lot due to the advancement of medical science. Yet, old age is mocked at in the American culture. Nick M. Wisdom (2010, p. 4) notes that “Given the overwhelming evidence of the prevalence of age discrimination, it is rather surprising that most people perceive ageism as less serious than other forms of discrimination including race or gender.” And Palmore (2005, p. 89) adds that “... as I learned what a pervasive and insidious disease ageism is in our society, I decided to devote the rest of my life to overcoming ageism in every way I could think of.” In the same vein Robbins remarks that “As the study shows, the public’s perception of elders is negative and out-of-date” (p. 7). This explains the repulsive attitude of Black young fellows in “My Man Bovanne.”

As in the American “consumer culture the body has become central in the framing of age-resisting practices” (Whitesel, 2017, p. 1005), old age becomes a curse. Audre Lorde calls this situation a mythical norm arguing that “In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power [and privilege] reside within society” (Lorde quoted by Holmes, 2007, p. 70). Moreover, Whitesel further explains that “Because youthful appearance has become the coin of the realm in Western societies it is not surprising that growing old in our society is increasingly viewed negatively” (2017, p. 1005). And it is on behalf of this youthful appearance that the Black young look down upon their elders.

What is surprising though is the ease with which the Black youth keeps perpetrating ageism on their elders while combating racism in America. “It comes as no surprise to anyone who is even casually observant that America is an ageist society that loves the Young and hates the Old” (Holmes, 2007, p. 69). And “It is no longer socially acceptable to espouse racist beliefs in a public forum; however, ageism infiltrates all sectors of society, and it is tolerated” (Wisdom, 2010, pp. 4-5). One aspect that worsens the multiple oppression on Bovanne is poverty. According to National Center of Elder Abuse, “The poverty rate in 2018 for African Americans aged 65 and older was 18.9%, nearly double the rate of 9.7% for all older Americans” (2010, p. 1). If Bovanne were a blind old Black man but rich, the attitude of the Black youth in the

story would be totally different and their consideration of him would be positive as well. Bovanne's poverty has actively contributed to his oppression by the youth of his own race and community.

What the Black youth needs for any of their fight is a shift of paradigm from the Eurocentric to an Afrocentric one. Asante asserts that this Afrocentric paradigm "questions the imposition of the White supremacist view as universal and/or classical (Asante, 1991, p. 173).

2. The Alienated Attitude of Black Youth

The fact that the Black youth is de-centered and dislocated is a mere result of the miseducation of the Negro people in a Western culture. This miseducation of the Negro is Afro-de-centered by Eurocentrism which teaches and praises the hate of the Negro and other non-white people and take Eurocentric values as universal. According to Asante and Smith (2020, p. 215) Afrocentricity "is a useful paradigm for a people who have been dislocated." Molefi Kete Asante (1991, p. 172) explains that "Unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity does not condone ethnocentric valorization at the expense of degrading other groups' perspectives. Moreover, Eurocentricity presents the particular historical reality of Europeans as the sum total of the human experience."

Hazel's children Elo, Lee and Task, who are Eurocentric-oriented, have misconducted toward their mother. Her dancing with Bovanne, the blind old man only triggers the conflict in the story. From an Afrocentric perspective this attitude is unacceptable. Children should talk to their parents in a polite way, even if the parents seem to be wrong.

The narrator laments over the fact these young fellows, including her own children, "...got no use for this blind man who mostly fixed skates and skooters for all these folks when they was just kids" (Bambara, p. 5). And she adds "Cause he blind and old and don't nobody there need him since they grown up and don't need they skates fixed no more" (p. 9). Here the Black youth develops the mentality of white dominant culture of exploiting people like asset and drop them once they become

“useless”. Bovanne is of no use to them now. Miles (2020, para. 4) says that “The implications of this tendency can be even worse for Black people with disabilities because we are marginalized within a marginalized group and hence tend to be more isolated than white folks with disabilities.” She explains that “Experiencing ableism in the Black community is painful, jolting, and confusing” (para. 1).

While dancing with Bovanne, the three children came to dissuade their mother and drag her into the kitchen for admonishment. Hazel says, “And here come my daughter cutting her eye at me like she do when she tell me about my “apolitical” self like I got hoof and mouf disease and there ain’t no hope at all” (Bambara, p. 5). And “here comes my youngest, Task, with a tap on my elbow like he the third-grade monitor and I’m cutting up on the line to assembly” (p. 5). Though they might be right, they only see the situation from their perspective. All the three kids league together against their mother. One can imagine how Hazel feels. “I don’t answer cause I’ll cry. Terrible thing when your own children talk to you like that” (Bambara, p.5).

They accuse her of being drunk. ““She had too much to drink,” say Elo to Task cause she don't hardly say nuthin to me direct no more since that ugly argument about my wigs” (Bambara, p.5). This quote not only reveals the wrong accusation of their mother for they think a “normal” person would dance with that filthy and stinking old blind man, but also exposes Elo’s refusal to talk to her mother on a dispute over her wigs. When their mother complains about their being hard on her, their answer is surprising. ““Yeh, well never mind,” says Joe Lee. “The point is Mama ... well, it's pride. You embarrass yourself and us too dancin like that”” (Bambara, p.6).

Besides that, they move on Hazel’s dress.” “Now that dress is too short, Mama, and too low-cut for a woman your age. And Tamu's going to make a speech tonight to kick off the campaign and will be introduc in you and expecting you to organize the council of elders-”” (Bambara, p.6). And they keep on nailing their mother. ““And you going to be standing there with your boobs out and that wig on your head and that hem up to your ass. And people’ll say, 'Ain't that the horny bitch that was grindin with the blind dude' ”” (Bambara, pp. 6-7)? Their language is so crude,

rude, harsh and abusive that one can barely believe they are talking to their own mother, a Black woman in her sixties. This language is symptomatic of the way white America talks to Blacks.

The three Black young make a plan in which their mother is a mere pawn they would move at their own convenience. This explains why nobody deems it necessary to inform her ahead of time of the great responsibilities she will take in the local branch of the Black Power movement.

The Afrocentric reading allows the reader to grasp the full perverse nature of the white dominant culture through denigration and oppression based on race, class, disability, and old age. The alienated Black youth in "My Man Bovanne" tends to replicate this oppression against their own disable and old folks.

3. The African View of the World: Hazel, the Ubuntu Woman

The degree of civilization of a race or nation resides in the way it treats its vulnerable people who are children, women, the elders, and the disable. In this line, the Western world is no example to copy for the consequences of this multiple oppression are multiple as well. Just looking at ageism, it is said that "Research has found a strong link between ageism, in the form of negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination toward older people, and risks to their physical and mental health" (Burnes & et al., 2019, p. 1). And it is precisely what Hazel, the narrator understands. "Cause you gots to take care of the older folks" (Bambara, p. 9). Hazel has become the spokesperson of Black elders.

As the reader is exposed to bad attitude toward Hazel and Bovanne, it clearly shows that Blacks in America lead a life of resistance or total alienation. Reynolds (2017, para. 2) wonders "So, what does it mean to age as a black person in America? When incarceration and murder steal the lives of thousands of black men and boys under the age of 30 each year, how do we make sense of life at later ages?" Elaborating on the Black suffering, she says that "We have seen death take our babies, our youth, our middle-aged folks and our elders. Death by police firearms, death due to lack of health care, death from drinking polluted water" (para. 2). And she gladly

explains that “The story of Africans in America is a story of continuous systematic efforts to bring about our subjugation and demise, but magically we thrive” (para. 1).

Despite their forced removal from Africa, many African Americans find it very difficult to associate themselves with white dominant culture. Reynolds (2017, para. 1) proudly observes that “While old age and death are linked in the dominant American consciousness, too often for African Americans, age does not predict when death will come knocking.” This African American attitude is a survived lode of African values or philosophy. One of such African philosophies is Ubuntu. Robbins (2015) also noted that “Other groups facing prejudices have risen up and challenged the status quo. They have champions who speak out when they see discrimination. Unfortunately, this is not the case with ageism, which sees a dearth of champions” (pp. 6-7). In “My Man Bovanne” the narrator volunteers herself as a spokesperson of the old people, the “grass roots” (Bambara, p. 4). What motivates her self-assigned mission is her African heritage, or her looking at life experience from an Afrocentric perspective. She clearly understands that “As freedom fighters, we must work together because there is no black future without black youth and black elders working together in solidarity” (Reynolds, 2017, para. 5).

The reason why African Americans dissociate old age and death is death is not the end but a mere passage to the other world. Old age, as well as childhood, youth are stages of human experience in the physical world. The ultimate place, or home is the world of ancestors, and everyone is heading there. The juniors of African ancestors are the African elders. We cannot honor one and dishonor the other, at least from an Afrocentric perspective. Hazel, the narrator seems to possess this sacred ancestral knowledge.

According to Desmond Tutu, Ubuntu is “the essence of being human, and that it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world” (Hailey, 2008, p. 2). Simply put, Ubuntu means “I am because you are”. The other defines and confirms my belonging to the human race, be she or he a child, a young person, an adult, an elder, the ancestors, a woman, a man, a poor, a rich, an African, a European, an American or an

Asian. To give more precision Van Breda argues that "Most literature on *ubuntu* speaks about people in the here-and-now, with no or only passing mention of the ancestors. In African spirituality, the ancestors (our forebears who have died) are regarded as part of the living community" (2019, p. 444). And he asserts that "The respect African spirituality shows for the ancestors enables the present generation to be mindful of their historical roots, of where they came from and of what was sacrificed to get them where they are" (p. 444). This is particularly relevant for African Americans who have experienced a non-stop stream of oppression since their arrival in the New World.

The respect of the ancestors, most African Americans who are raised with the consciousness of the sufferings of slavery, Jim Crow, and things like know about the price their race has paid. Hazel is one of such people. When her children drag her into inquisition in the kitchen, she asks them "Is this what they call the generation gap?" (Bambara, p. 6). She notices the drastic change in their behavior. Talking about the old blind man and her children, she says "He ain't my man mind you, just a nice ole gent from the block that we all know cause he fixes things and the kids like him" (p. 3). She appreciates the positive and the usefulness of the man despite his disability and old age. And she regretfully adds that "Or used to fore Black Power got hold of their mind and mess em around till they can't be civil to ole folks" (p. 3). This disregard to elders the Black youth has copied it from white dominant culture. The narrator has fully demonstrated her Ubuntu understanding of life when she says that,

Cause you gots to take care of the older folks. And let them know they still needed to run the mimeo machine and keep the spark plugs clean and fix the mailboxes for folks who might help us get the breakfast program goin, and the school for the little kids and the campaign and all. Cause old folks is the nation. That what Nisi was sayin and I mean to do my part (pp. 9-10).

The above quote displays the narrator's humanness. Van Breda (2019, p. 440) asserts that "... *ubuntu* refers to the moral qualities of a person, particularly features like generosity, empathy, forgiveness, and considerateness. Some refer to *ubuntu* as the presence of the divine, directing a person away from bad behaviour towards good." This presence of the divine is what makes the difference between the narrator and the

other characters in the story. It is only through the Afrocentric Ubuntu view of the world that Blacks can brilliantly overcome racism, poverty, ableism, ageism, and sexism. Miss Hazel has decided to play her part and by doing so is schooling the whole Black community and her children on the path to follow. This path brings all generations of the Black community together. Griffin (1996, p. 230) states that “This sense of connection between generations, of the wisdom of the eldest and youngest members of the community, this is the sensibility which seems to have informed Toni Cade Bambara's teaching mission as well.”

The attitude of the Black youth in “My Man Bovanne” is laudable. Their mistake is the paradigm and the ideology they hang onto for the fight. They should not use the same tools and strategies as their oppressors. Building a strong Afrocentric community based on Ubuntu values demands great sacrifices which are alien to Eurocentrism. “In an African society, community is paramount, and society is founded on the Ubuntu philosophy, which is community-based and socialist in nature” (“The African Ubuntu Philosophy”, n. d., p. 162). Ubuntu “... has a critical role in building communities that are marked by equity, justice, mutual support and care. In this regard ubuntu is therefore part of the process of promoting a community culture that emphasises commonality and interdependence” (Hailey, 2008, p. 10).

The Black Power movement the black young characters belong to in “My Man Bovanne” should be Afrocentric oriented and Ubuntu centered. By taking care of a poor blind old black man, the narrator is teaching her children a life lesson, so that when she becomes very old, they too must take care of her. This is an alternative to white dominant culture. Holmes (2007, p. 71) claims that “Yes, we have the potential to live longer, healthier lives, but teachers have the responsibility to teach these life-changing lessons to their students.” Teachers are very crucial in the implementation of this alternative. Moreover, “There is a general agreement among writers on ubuntu that it represents an alternative voice to the European and North American philosophical and theological discourses that dominate so much of our thinking” (Hailey, 2008, p. 4). This Afrocentric alternative is older than Eurocentrism and has allowed mankind who was African at its origins to survive, hold together and thrive

across time and space. Molefi Kete Asante (1991, p. 172) asserts that "Unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity does not condone ethnocentric valorization at the expense of degrading other groups' perspectives. Moreover, Eurocentricity presents the particular historical reality of Europeans as the sum total of the human experience."

This old African paradigm that Asante coins Afrocentricity in America has its roots in similar African philosophy, be it Ubuntu or others, demonstrate the unity and whole of African from the cradle of origin. Their spoken languages may differ, but their world view is one and the same. According to Ramose (1999, as cited in Hailey, 2008, p. 4) "African philosophy has long been established in and through ubuntu ... there is a family atmosphere, that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa". John Hailey (2008, p. 4) explains that Ramose "notes that the philosophy is not merely restricted to Bantu speakers but is found throughout sub-Saharan Africa including West Africa. For example, in Senegal the concept of "Teranga" reflects a similar spirit of collective hospitality and responsibility."

And like Desmond Tutu, Hazel has understood that,

"A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human" (Tutu, 2004, as cited in "The African Ubuntu Philosophy", n. d., p. 12).

And this is what Hazel has demonstrated in "My Man Bovanne". What she has received as schooling from her parents is the behavior she deploys in the story. Steeve Biko supported this attitude by asserting that "The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa - giving the world a more human face" (Coetzee & Roux, 1998, p. 30). It is only at this point that we can one day say that race, class, disability, sex, and old age "are a part of the spectrum of human difference" (Miles, 2020, para. 9). This is the model the African American community must create for their youth to grow stronger, healthier, and more humane.

Conclusion

This study has dealt with the implications of multiple oppression in the African American community. It has elaborated on racism, class, ableism, and ageism within the Black community. It has shown that the rejection of the other based on race, class, disability, and age is anti-social (Eurocentric) attitudes, and has argued that the elderly are a source of knowledge and blessing for all human communities. The analysis has been conducted within the theoretical framework of Afrocentricity and Ubuntu philosophy.

Afrocentricity is about the conscious understanding of the role Africans play now and have played in history. It reorients the thinking paradigm from the oppressing white dominant culture to a more humane and Afrocentric culture which puts the African world view at the center of the interpretation of phenomena. Afrocentricity helps to critique Eurocentric attitudes the Black youth demonstrate in “My Man Bovanne”. The Ubuntu theory has helped to analyze how human and caring the narrator, Hazel, is toward the poor blind old man, Bovanne.

This paper has found that all forms of oppression are culture-based and when the cultural paradigm changes from white dominant to Afrocentric and Ubuntu one, oppression fades away and equity, justice, care, sharing, mutual understanding and attitudes like take place. Society then bears a more human face which has disappeared from the earth for centuries now.

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