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The Hypocrisy of Racist Ideals as Shown by Satirical and Critical Pieces

In the past year, racism has been at the forefront of social justice movements and is widely recognized in America as a deeply-rooted problem. Two authors, a modern-day CNN writer and a 1920s female satirist, express frustrations regarding racism- specifically its hypocritical nature. Dorothy Parker, the female satirist, offers a unique perspective. She was born in New Jersey and faced a traumatic childhood. Her father, mother, and stepfather all died very early in her life. Dorothy entered the world of journalism as a young adult and had a successful career as a writer, satirist, and screenwriter. She travelled to Europe and California, befriendng many socialites. Unfortunately, she dealt with personal struggles as well, turning to alcoholism and self-harm later in life. The CNN writer, John Blake, is from Baltimore, Maryland. He writes primarily about race, religion, and politics. In his article, “How ‘good White people’ derail racial progress,” he outlines the deeply internalized nature of systemic racism, with the intent to bring awareness to his audience, the ‘good White people’ who are being written about. Dorothy Parker also wrote about these similar issues in her piece, “Arrangement in Black and White,” aimed to expose the upper class and the environment in which they addressed African Americans. Dorothy Parker's satirical piece is more effective at showing the hypocrisy of racism than that of John Blake's critical news article because it offers a unique and intriguing perspective that is made more digestible through passionate motivation, notable context, and an indirect gentle tone.

The passionate motivation and persona created by Dorothy Parker is more shocking than the potentially biased opinion of CNN writer John Blake. She takes the persona of an upper-class

wife, attending a black-tie event. The ignorant bliss of this wealthy New Yorker regarding race becomes apparent early on in the story when she speaks about her husband. When speaking to her host she proudly remarks that her husband is “awfully fond of colored people.” Following this, she admittedly explains that he would “never” have a white servant. In these two sentences, the woman directly contradicts herself. This is a surprising take by Dorothy Parker, who is essentially on the same social status as this woman. The ability of Dorothy Parker to call out someone so similar to herself is both shocking and impressive. On the contrary, John Blake’s article provides an expected and potentially biased view on the hypocritical nature of racism. According to AllSides, CNN has historically been a more Democratic platform. John Blake is most likely speaking to people with similar views as himself, who know exactly what to expect when reading the article. Additionally, Blake utilizes a quote from a black citizen speaking about the terrible racism he faced “in the South.” By including this, Blake alienates the South as being inherently bad, in terms of race. This adds an air of two opposing sides, unlike Dorothy Parker’s persona, who shows how racism is evident in all regions and social classes.

The nature in which the pieces were written also differs greatly. Dorothy Parker's more effective, gentle take on the issue was written during a time of extreme segregation and actively developing racist ideals, as opposed to the climate in which John Blake's article was written. In the 1920s, when “Arrangement in Black and White” was written, internalized racism was taking shape in America. Black people faced discrimination in all areas of life and laws were designed to make their lives more difficult. Some white people, like Dorothy Parker, recognised the problem, but most of them did not know where to begin to help. By bringing awareness to the issue she is encouraging more people to be aware of racism. In his piece, John Blake also calls white bystanders to action, however he speaks in an accusatory way. John Blake wrote his article

in August 2020, during the Black Lives Matter movement. Too many of the laws instituted during Dorothy Parker's time are part of the issue that modern movements like BLM are trying to solve. He says that white support for the BLM movement is at an "all-time high," showing an improving trend. In Dorothy Parker's piece, her character claims that black people are "just like children... always singing and laughing." Her character represents a time period in which black people were taken advantage of and fetishized. This pattern continued to worsen over time. These contrasting climates contribute to the difference in effectiveness between the two pieces, with Dorothy Parker's being more effective because of the foreshadowing it presents. Both of these eras offer interesting perspectives into how racism developed in our society and how it can be dismantled.

The accusatory tone and scientific diction outlined by John Blake are less effective than the methodical repetition and intriguing mood used by Dorothy Parker, because of the important moments of introspection that her words provide. In her satirical piece, Parker addresses a key cause of racism—reluctance to learn. Throughout her piece, Dorothy Parker repeats variations of the same phrase at least a half dozen times. Her character claims to "haven't any feelings at all," referring to black people. She even inquires to her host at one point asking if she was "right" in saying that. As a whole, Dorothy Parker's character represents the miscommunication and lack of conversation in the realm of racism. This woman has many prejudices and unfair assumptions, however, she is claiming to have no opinion toward the subject because she believes it is the right thing to say. The repetition is notable to the reader and results in the reader questioning if they too may have fallen victim to not asking questions. John Blake's article has a strong opinion presented. He claims that change will not happen until those in a place of privilege are willing to surrender some "power and resources." This choice by the author does not result in the same

introspection from the reader, making it less effective overall. In addition, Dorothy Parker is more gentle in her accusations. She implies the hidden racism instilled in the woman, without having to even say the word “racism.” John Blake’s approach is much more forthcoming, and appeals to logos, including statistics to support his forceful opinion. The more personal connection provided by Parker helps a reader, even a century later, understand the severity and hypocrisy of racism.

Racism is an internalized problem in our society which has affected millions of people over hundreds of years. Racism has exponentially grown over time and modern movements are on their way to bettering the lives of the oppressed. Although their works vary in efficacy, it is important that writers like Parker and Blake continue to write about racism and keep the conversation moving forward.