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Final Exam Paper

Question #6: **Passover**- Discuss the symbiotic interactions with the play's white characters and the meanings in 2023.

Throughout the history of America, minorities have been restricted to a box of stereotypes and expectations of failure and poverty. Especially in the black community, the white men have put chains on their feet to stop them from advancing and seeing the potential of the world and the success that is accessible for all. From slavery to Jim Crow Laws to police brutality, African Americans have been through an abundance of discrimination. In the play *Passover* by Antoinette Nwandu, two black men named Moses and Kitch are stuck on a street block of the most dangerous block in Chicago and cannot move. Every time they try to move off the block, something or someone comes and stops them from advancing. Throughout the play, the black characters face a plantation owner and a police officer stopping them from leaving the block, and these white characters play a crucial role in the mistreatment and restriction of the black community.

The first white character to enter the block with Kitch and Moses is Master, the plantation owner. He explains that he is on the block because he got lost trying to go to his mother's house for a picnic. He then begins to talk to the men and ask them questions about their lives to get information out of them so that he can learn their strengths and weaknesses, figure out who the leader is, and create tension between the two men. At first, he comes in innocent and friendly so

that he does not seem threatening to Kitch and Moses. However, as time passes, he starts to unravel and show his true self and demeanor. He believes that everything belongs to him and that it is not fair for blacks to be able to use the N-word and not him. He continues showing some white superiority and feelings but quickly calms himself so that the men do not see his true purpose and why he is there.

The pains of slavery and plantation life continue to follow African Americans today. Though slavery ended in 1865, it still affects African Americans today in 2023. *Passover* shows that impact and how the plantation owners have more than one mindset for enslaving people. For example, Master exemplified the Coon stereotype towards Kitch. Kitch has a very childlike personality, and plantation owners believed they needed to be dominant or enslave blacks because they were childish and cannot do anything themselves. Also, Master really tries to bring tension between Kitch and Moses because he knows that Moses is the leader and Kitch follows him, and if he takes the head away, then no one would try to advance and get off the block.

The stereotypes that came from slavery continue to be stereotyped for blacks today. My grandfather told my mother once that when he was younger, he would work at plantations in Charleston to get money for his family, and the sons of the plantation owner were also outside with them working. However, the sons would finish their work outside and go inside to read, write, and do schoolwork. My grandfather then asked them why they read so much and did not stay outside more to help out, and the young white boys said they needed to get as much education as possible so they could be the boss at their jobs and tell blacks what to do. After that, my grandfather ensured all his kids were well-educated and went to college or the military. My grandfather was born in 1925, and he was a young teen during the time of the story, and the mindset that white boys need to be educated to boss around African Americans is appalling and

still a mindset today. Many whites try so hard to be educated and successful that minorities cannot advance and be as successful or more successful than them.

Next, Moses and Kitch have multiple run-ins with the police officer, Ossifer. The officer arrives at the block when Kitch and Moses finally get the courage to leave the block and harass them. At one point, Kitch and Moses decided to commit suicide together because anything was better than living the hard life as an African American and never leaving the block. When they tried to do it, Ossifer came and stopped them and said it was up to him when blacks die. Then, Moses told him just to kill him right there, and the officer said no because he likes the chase and likes to be the hunter of the prey, represented as a black man. However, he does not mind beating Moses with his bat and causing physical, but not life-threatening, pain. The officer also comes in at other times and says it is his job to keep the two men on the block to keep the status quo and that they cannot leave because it will disrupt the way of society. During that, he continues to remind the men of who they are. He describes them as lazy, uneducated, poor, and losers to enforce this mindset that blacks are nothing and cannot do anything without a white person, continuing to keep them in a box and remind them that they are useless.

Since slavery, cops have had a lousy representation of minorities, especially blacks, for discrimination, unnecessary brutality, and wrongful arrest or imprisonment. After slavery was abolished and during Jim Crow Laws, police officers would arrest blacks for hanging outside for not working because, back then, it was a law for blacks to work. Though the person arrested could have had a job and was off work, they would still arrest them for no reason. After being arrested, white men would pay for their bail and make them work on their plantations or jobs to pay for their bail. Then, during the Civil Rights movement in the 60s, police officers would turn a peaceful march and protest into a bloody and violent event. Many were imprisoned for peaceful

protests, injured, killed, and attacked for utilizing their constitutional rights. However, those rights were not recognized by police officers or the law if you were African American then and even now.

Though many African Americans have been killed by police brutality, with this new age where technology and social media revolve around everyone, we can now see and discover many of the police brutalities happening today. So many people like Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, and many more have been killed by police brutality and treated differently for their skin color. Due to so many problems and lives taken by biased judgments of police officers, many people cannot trust police officers. As a little kid, I never dealt with police issues due to where I live, but it was a known fact in the black community that police officers tend to judge people based on their skin color and treat people differently. This fact has been amplified thousands of times due to recent tragedies. Many people are afraid of the cops and do not trust the cops due to the acts of other cops. Cops are not known as being protectors of the community and being the ones to call for help. They are known as being the ones who bring problems and death to the community. The play shows that because every time a gunshot would fire, the two men would freak out and be scared, and whenever Ossifer came, he would cause more issues than there were.

There have been too many issues with police officers in the black community to believe that they are all for us. Being black is scary and even more if you are a black man. For some reason being black causes officers to act differently and treat blacks like animals that do not deserve to breathe or even have a chance to example their situation. Though not all officers are the same, the ones that decided to overuse their power to hurt another have ruined the name and responsibility of the job for others. It is a sad situation, and I hope it will change one day. However, for that to happen, the police force needs to recognize and take accountability for the

problem and find a way to train their officers better so they do not have racial biases against minorities. Police officers are not loved in this country by minorities, and interactions with them can lead to fatal consequences.

Passover takes the struggles and restrictions forced on blacks, especially men, that have affected us for thousands of years. The author emphasizes the history of slavery, the plantation mindset, and the role of police officers in the lives of blacks. Overall, the past of slavery is still enriched in the foundation of the American system, and the racial injustices led by police officers continue to be a problem even after the Civil Rights Movement. All these problems were and are built to restrict the black community and show that blacks cannot advance without the white man allowing it and that when we try to advance, there will be someone trying to stop that advancement. As an African American, it is essential not to allow these stereotypes and boxes to control our lives and that the past and present pains should fuel our fires to want to make a better future for ourselves and our black community.