



**BLACK, BROWN OR WHITE?: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS
OF MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN
AMERICAN-PARENTED MULATTOS THROUGH HEIDI DURROW'S
*THE GIRL WHO FELL FROM THE SKY***

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Abstract:

This study aims at critically examining the process of mixed-raced identity construction with a claim of uniqueness among mulattoes with African ancestry in the American society. It focuses on this burgeoning scholarship that theorizes on the exclusivity of multiracial people's social condition, a social class that lots of Americans with a black parent/ancestry today embrace. Their claim, which transgresses the fundamentals of the traditional patterns of racial assignment in the American monoracially structured society, creates its own literary space in the mosaic of emerging identity assertions. This politics is spearheaded by scholars, writers, and activists such as Heidi Durrow whose novel, *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, is taken as case study. This essay reads, through a postcolonial grid, the experiential account of Durrow's auto-inflected protagonist which brings up issues related to black people's racial assignment and self-concept development in the so-called "mulatto millennium", within a society yesterday unequivocal about the one-drop rule.

Keywords: self-concept development, multiracial, black identity, racism, USA

Résumé :

Le présent travail de recherche vise à examiner de manière critique le processus de construction identitaire multiraciale, avec des revendications d'unicité, chez les métis.es d'ascendance noire dans la société américaine. Il se focalise sur ce champ de recherche naissant qui affirme l'exclusivité de la condition sociale des personnes d'ascendance mixte, cette classe sociale dont se réclament aujourd'hui bon nombre de métis.es de parents noirs. Leur revendication, qui transgresse les principes fondamentaux des modèles traditionnels de formation raciale dans la société américaine à structure monoraciale, crée son propre espace littéraire dans la mosaïque des revendications identitaires émergentes. Des universitaires, écrivains et militants tels que Heidi Durrow se font porte-voix de cette nouvelle politique identitaire. Le roman de cette

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dernière, *La fille tombée du ciel*, y est pris comme cas d'étude. La revendication expérientielle exceptionnelle incarnée par la protagoniste auto-infléchie de Durrow soulève quelques problèmes liés à l'assignation raciale et au développement du concept de soi parmi les sujets d'ascendance noire en ce début de millénaire baptisé «millénaire des métisses», au sein d'une société qui se voulait hier sans équivoque sur le one-drop rule. C'est le sujet sur lequel se penche le présent article. Le cadre théorique et méthodologique utilisé est l'approche postcolonialiste.

Mots clés : développement du concept de soi, multiracial, identité noire, racisme, Etats-Unis

1. Introduction

For a few decades now, an increasingly relayed contention of the USA evolving into a postracial, postfeminist, and postgender society has held sway among American political pundits. One direct implication of racism fading away is the disruption of the old patterns that have always underlain the American social organization. The pressure was made on public institutions which eventually allowed Americans, for the 2000 census, to check into more than one box to indicate their racial identity. This change seemingly paved the way for new patterns of identity construction among multiracials in general, and particularly among people who claim one parent of African ancestry [the one drop that would make anyone black].

When one studies American social history and reads extensively on issues of oppression and racism that black people were and are still confronted with in the USA, it comes as a stunning experience to fall on an elaborate and consistent corpus of literary publications and other pieces of scholarship produced by people with African ancestry who, compellingly, contend for singularity, claiming a distinct experience in an interstice chartered between white or ethnicity and black, but most disconcertingly, out of blackness. Identities, if anything, change as social circumstances evolve. Still, one observation that has remained constant and prevalent throughout American history is that however else people of African descent identify, by gender, religious persuasion, sexual orientation, social class, geographic location, or else, the predominant characteristics by which they have always been defined is their Africanness. This has been recalled and seared into the flesh and onto the mind of millions of Africans along centuries of servitude and ongoing stigmatization.

Across Europe, the Americas, Asia, North and South Africa, among people with African ancestry, those variously organized and differently justified experiences of oppression have generated what seems to be a racial identity politics of pride. It consists in an active awareness of black history and a celebration of nationhood, in an attempt to pre-empt the default definition from without. Accepting the oppressors' definition has come to be identified as the first building block for African people's stigmatization. Naming paves the way for various forms of marginalization and enslavement.

One novelist and social activist that singles out the social experience of the mulatto is Heidi Durrow. Her novel *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* (referred to as *The Girl*) is the narrative through which this study analyzes the multiracial self-concept building within people of black ancestry. The novel stages a young multiracial protagonist who travels the path of identity

formation that deconstructs the traditional black-or-white hierarchical binary of the USA. The critical analysis of identity construction among multiracials with black ancestry is what this essay focuses on. By investigating the psychosocial drives that inform this paradigm shift in racial formation in the USA, the factors which enable the protagonist's peculiar biracial identity formation away from her parents' condition, this research work means to broach some of the new complexities arising in the African identity in the USA, and to make assumptions on self-identification, on the future of the African race, and on the stigmatization of black people.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The concept of race has so profoundly defined identity, built and destroyed societies, and oriented human history that current scientific discoveries that have proven its artificiality are all ineffective in arguing against advocates of separatist identity politics and debunking race from social practices (Appiah 30-105). Its understanding varies through time and space. One prevailing belief about race, however, is that there is an *"underlying essence or cluster of intrinsic properties, inherited through reproduction, that all members of a putative race share and that differentiate a race from all others"* (Shelby 2). The commonest phenotypes within some groups, especially skin color, hair texture, and nose and lip shapes, even when these individuals are not of inbred lineage, have served in classifying humans in various races among which the black "race" and the white "race". Although many people focus on the physical appearance for racial assignment, most scholars extend the factors accounting for racial belonging to considerations beyond the visible. In this regard, Sanders Thompson identifies four distinct characteristics in racial belonging: physical, cultural, psychological, and sociopolitical (Walker 4). The fact that a person may fulfil one or several of these criteria and fail the others introduces further complications in the concept of identity.

Most definitions made up to conceptualize blackness and, more generally, notions associated to racial taxonomy, are arbitrary, community-specific, and often fraught with inconsistencies. A black person, in the American political context, is usually seen as any person claiming ascendancy from Africa (USCB). The epithet black is usually awarded to people whose complexion ranges from mid to dark brown although some people with Caucasian traits may classify as black, with albinos. However, as some scholars argue, blackness cannot be used to encompass the high diversity of the ethnic groups found in Africa (Shahadah). A lot of scholars argue that in the Western context, Black cannot be seen as a moniker that stands on its own, but only in negation of whiteness. As for White Americans, they are defined by the 2000 Census document as Americans of European Ancestry or Euro-Americans (USCB).

These definitions of whiteness and blackness are sociologically loaded with biases that indicate power relations. Sociologically, black and white work as mutually exclusive categories essential to the enunciation of the American politics of identity and power. A monolithic African identity is conceived as the spillway for whiteness, the Derridean difference: anything that is not white – or does not pertain to the other minorities – is necessarily black: *"American racial categories are interdependent, and [...] there is no positive definition of blackness"* (Zack 11).

It is this mutually exclusive conception of race in the USA that, traditionally, left people of partially black ancestry no space for multiracial identification. Once the “sullying” black blood comes into play in the American “*mythology of muleology*” (George 20), mixed race individuals or *mulatto.as*, in relation to their progenitors, will not occupy the intermediary position that the *mule* occupies between the donkey and the horse. The black-parented *mulatto.a* would be entitled to only one identity: black. Critically examining these practices of blatant exclusion on which white hegemony is premised is the goal of the literary and cultural theory of postcolonialism.

The postcolonial theory was developed by some scholars of the dominated cultures basically intent on “*challenging the authority, provenance, and institutions of the science that represented them to Europe, [people who] were also understanding themselves as something more than what this science said they were*” (Said 93). This counter-discourse of political and cultural resistance that responds to Western hegemonic rhetoric, builds on a variety of sources which are not without contradictions as pointed out by Moore-Gilbert (xii-18). In spite of their diverging contents and approaches, they concur nonetheless, in their intention, as a set of theories and practices focused on exploring and confronting the destroying legacies of Western colonialism still at work in the present political structures of Western imperialism.

One seminal essay that questions the legitimacy on the production of discourse on the *dominated other* or *subaltern*, and this is a major point on the postcolonialist agenda, is Morris and Spivak’s “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” (295). Among others, the essay raises the issue of the “*representation*” [the ability to speak for] and “*re-representation*” [as in artistic reproduction or philosophical elaboration on] of the subaltern which essentially objectivize the subject on which the discourse is made. Is the non-white condemned to be only represented in a metropolitan discourse? Are the non-Caucasian only to be spoken for, on, and to, in a necessarily interested slant, for their consumption and control? Among marginalized communities, the situation of people of African descent seems by far the worst, so much so that the United Nations has declared 2015-2024 the Decade of People of African Descent (United Nations Human Rights Office). Arguably, these communities are also the most entrapped in the discourse produced by the West.

The chains of oppression keep on binding the subjectivity of people of African descent in the US today. The definition of the black minority is still mainly made from without. It is well known, as Richard B. Moore puts it, that “*Slaves and dogs are named by their masters [and that] free men name themselves*” (Moore). The claims of difference present in the literature of the black-parented multiracial confront a black collective tradition of commitment and resistance. These claims seem to ignore the implication of the ideology of white supremacy in the production of the discourse of difference that they so joyfully tout. Human agency is usually influenced by a normative social context that deprives the individual of his/her autonomy of reflection. We may be manipulated by power to embrace courses of action which are against our own interests, and this so true for vulnerable minorities. The postulate of these black multiracials, obviously, collides with the corpus of postcolonial African American literature fighting for one voice and the various symbols this literature carries in terms of black *plural* identity (Sollors 150).

Rachel, in the tragic but hopeful story of *The Girl*, estranges herself from the African identity. She defiantly brushes away her black grandmother, Miss Doris, from her life. Miss Doris

is Rachel's only relative still alive, the darker side of her bloodline. Rachel is the daughter of a black GI and a white Danish mother, Nella Fløe. Roger meets and marries Nella while working on an American military base in Germany. After she divorces Roger, Nella travels to the USA with her three children. Nella, as the narrative shows, is ill-equipped to face the challenges of being the white mother of dark-skinned children in the USA. Very soon devastated by life hardships and racist attitudes in America, she decides to put an end to the lives of her three children and to kill herself. She pushes them and jumps off the rooftop of a building. Only Rachel survives. As the only survivor, she has to live with her grandmother and aunt. She is forced onto the path of maturation, but her stay with her black family also means her transition from her color unconsciousness to the American racialism that obliges her to readjust her self-perception, to redefine her identity. After her aunt's death, she elopes, leaving behind her grandmother and the latter's black world. She opts out of the black-or-white binary and puts it bluntly: "*I am Nella Fløe's daughter [a biracial]. That's what makes me special — me*" (Durrow 237). That "special me" is left to be understood as multiracial rather than black.

3. The Special Black-Parented Multiracial's Identity Construction in *The Girl*

Among the arguments Durrow's text puts forward to construct for its protagonist a trail-trekking biracial identity, one recognizes the hyper-exposition of Rachel's body, in its interstitial materiality and "uncommon" features, as an object of curiosity for her classmates, teachers, and home visitors. The indefinability of her mixed traits, heightened by her striking beauty, creates in her an acute realization of being constantly watched, scrutinized, and judged. She seems struck by the very inflections of her fetishization within the black community: "*light-skinned*". This seemingly obliges the young girl, caught unaware into the American racialized society, to locate herself outside of the traditional groups whose gaze forces her into isolation. The probing and ostracizing gaze from both sides is identified by many scholars and writers as a basic factor of identity construction among multiracials (Root 21; Larsen 67; Bradshaw).

It is worth pointing out however that Rachel spontaneously sets herself apart in her integrated but divided classroom and further disapproves of her female multiracial classmate who identifies as a black person: "*There are fifteen black people in the class and seven white people. And there's me [emphasis mine]. There's another girl who sits in the back... She has hair like mine, my same color skin, and she counts as black. I don't understand how, but she seems to know*" (Durrow 4).

What she first senses when she gets into her new classroom environment is the color division and seclusion of each block of students organized in adversity with the other. Most importantly, she *proactively* spots her own difference. She declines choosing side and blending with either group since doing so would be positioning herself as an enemy to the other group. This might additionally earn her nicknames. She reads some envy in the eyes of her black classmates and their resentment at her refusal to join their group. She only resents Carmen LaGuardia's rejection. Carmen looks like her but identifies as a Black.

One more experience Rachel makes while staying with her grandmother, Miss Doris, is her feeling that Miss Doris attempts to efface the memory of Rachel's mother. Obviously, Miss Doris will not forgive her daughter-in-law for being so weak as to kill her children and herself.

Her feeling is that Nella was not able to endure for her children a condition that she Doris thinks she has endured all her life: suffering racist abuses and contending with poverty. In this, the grudge Miss Doris bears against Rachel's mother is about the latter killing Miss Doris's beloved grandchildren. It has nothing to do with Nella being white but her being weak and thoughtless. The very rare mentions Miss Doris makes of Nella are derogatory: "*Don't be like your mama — sniffin around life like the only nose you've got is the one between your legs*" (Durrow 93). Rachel unfortunately resents this total avoidance except for Miss Doris's caustic comments as an attempt to denigrate and erase a part of what she, Rachel, is. The superposition of adolescent maturation crises, ties severance, death trauma, and slight differences in physical appearance, works at ostracizing Rachel in her environment and conveying of her the traditional image of the tragic mulatta.

As a matter of fact, Rachel's personal story seems precisely to fit in the frame Daniel McNeil makes for the modern tragic mulatto narrative:

Contemporary tragic mulatto stories are subtle cautionary tales against interracial relationships. The message is clear: if you're a white woman who gets involved with a man of color, there are three things you can count on. 1) He will abandon you. 2) You will be left to raise this yellow or brown child on your own. 3) Your child will have major identity issues. (McNeil 13)

What one perceives through Rachel's trajectory is that the definition and determination of the subjective concept of racial identity, based on one's personal history, may look simpler for people who belong to a more or less homogeneous ethnic/racial background but a matter of further complexity for multiracials. It illustrates the pun expressed in Werner Sollors's conundrum: "*Neither Black nor White yet Both*" (1997). There are however a few contentions that go against this grain of interpretation and identity construction.

It seems to be a mistake to inform the novel's protagonist identity formation exclusively, or even mainly, by her interstitial social position. A lot of other circumstances unrelated to what Durrow herself calls the young multiracial's experiences of "*stereotypes and stigma*" (Solors 143), in her new environment, orient Rachel Morse's path of identity construction. Those circumstances can, in no way, be generalized to other American multiracials with black ancestry, as the author, Heidi Durrow, seems to infer from her own reading of her protagonist's life and from her lifelong awareness struggle.

First of all, the girl falls within the category of children that Ruth Useem calls "*Third Culture Kids*" (Schulz). These persons whose developmental years are spent traveling across various countries and cultures are often children of business executives, missionaries, diplomats, and military personnel, which Rachel is. Third Culture Kids, Schulz argues, never feel entirely part of either their parents' culture or their host culture. They often "*struggle with common challenges such as identity dilemmas, unresolved grief, 'restlessness' and 'rootlessness'*" (Schulz). The third culture kid getting caught unprepared in a new, strangely racialized society, is one of the factors that explain Rachel's mental instability and multiple displacement. She awakes to racialism once she has come to live with her grandmother. Never before has it dawned on her that such a thing as race and its corollaries of discrimination, social expectations, and conformity

existed. Furthermore, what Rachel experiences cannot exactly be called a thwarting feeling of humiliation. She even nurtures a certain complex of superiority toward her classmates and her new home community. She has benefitted an elite education which enables her to rank top in most of her academic disciplines, ahead of her white and black classmates. She confesses this: *"The kids in school ... I know they're not as smart as me"* (Durrow 9). She wins a medal in sport. And she has traveled widely. Rachel does not fall within the category of subalternity where individuals feel profoundly humiliated by social divides.

Another factor to be considered in Rachel's identity formation is that the young girl is forced to abruptly sever her relations with all her close family, father and mother, and siblings after a most distressing experience: she witnesses the death of her two siblings and her mother, and she herself closely escapes death. On top of this tragedy, she is totally estranged from her father whose news she never has again. She represses her grief into her *"blue bottle"* (Durrow 34) and displaces her anger towards her grandmother who is now the substitute for those parents she has lost forever. She is forthright prejudiced against her grandmother and what she stands for. She mocks her love and care. At their first meeting, Rachel scoffs at Miss Doris's *"hand wrapped around mine like a leash"* (Durrow 1). This, in the proper sense and figuratively, foretells her reticence towards Miss Doris. The hate she directs to her grandmother wraps up the core value the latter stands for: blackness. Did things turn out otherwise, she might not adopt such an attitude of defiance against blackness. Of course, no two people are the same, but lots of black people are found with her melanin tone who have no issue living and asserting their blackness. Besides, *"every black person has something "not black" about them"* (K. Young 64). So, people alternately taking Rachel for white and black cannot be the only factor that affects her identity development, alienating her from the traditional social molds of the American society.

Langston Hughes experienced the same disbelief when he traveled to Africa and claimed he was a black man: *"The Africans looked at me and would not believe I was a Negro. / I am a negro, too! / But they only laughed at me and shook their heads and said: 'You, white man! You, white man!'"* (R.J.C. Young 21). He did not get the feeling that he did not belong in the black community for such. Rachel's strong personality does not leave much room for the argument of her being influenced by what people think of her. Most paths she chooses are paths she chooses on her own. This does not mean that people's opinion does not matter at all, but it is of little importance to her.

The contrast between what we usually think of our origins and the reality is stark. The affordable cost of genetic testing in the USA made it possible for lots of Americans to discover their genetic makeup. The discovery, in most cases, shattered the ideas lots of black people have constructed about their identities. Jesmyn Ward shares her own experience:

[...] it was discomfiting to find that my ancestry was 40 percent European —a mixture of British, Irish, French, German, Scandinavian, Iberian, Italian, and Ashkenazi—32 percent sub-Saharan African, a quarter Native American, and less than 1 percent North African. For a few days after I received my results, I looked into the mirror and didn't know how to understand myself. I tried to understand my heritage through my features, to assign each one a place, but I couldn't. [...] I remembered that people of color from my region of the United States can choose to embrace all aspects of their ancestry, in the food they eat, in the music they listen to, in the stories they tell,

while also choosing to wear in one armor, that of black Americans, when they fight for racial equality. I remembered that in choosing to identify as black, to write about black characters in my fiction and to assert the humanity of black people in my nonfiction, I've remained true to my personal history, to my family history, to my political and moral choices, and to my essential self: a self that understands the world through the prism of being a black American, and stands in solidarity with the people of the African diaspora.

This doesn't mean that I don't honor and claim the myriad other aspects of my heritage. I do, in ways serious and silly. (Ward 58)

The prevailing reasons that sustain racial identity constructions in human societies are political. To confront these false political constructs, the most effective weapons seem to be political too.

4. The African American Politics of Fight

James Baldwin puts this in blunt terms in *The Fire Next Time*: “You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a nigger” (16). Widespread racism is shown to harm self-esteem development in many young African Americans, their own perception of their worth, sense of power, competence and morality (Wilson-Brown 6). Low self-esteem due to the perception Black have of their own racial and cultural identity can generate high rates of self-hatred and cultural denial among black people, especially in their formative years. The Clark and Clark experiment (1940) is a well-known classic test that has demonstrated varying attitudes of racial pride among black children, depending on their skin tones. When the experiment divided the children into light, medium, and dark skin tones, the group of light-skinned children involved in the test – this involves the shade of skin of African-descended people trying to identify as multiracials in the “mulatto Millennium” – showed higher rates (20%) than darker children in favoring white characters they were shown in pictures (Wilson-Brown 12). Low self-esteem certainly is one of the parameters that account for the rising rates of lighter-skinned black people taking the bandwagon of multiraciality. They seem to be scared out of blackness. The US census reports on its website: “while the Black or African American alone population grew 5.6 % [in ten years] since 2010, the Black or African American in combination population grew 88.7%” (Jones et al.). This reported soaring, presumably, did not result only from skyrocketing increases in the rates of *Loving's* children [multiracials], but certainly from a change in the pattern of self-identification too.

These people give up on their agency of self-definition, yielding to the underlying new strategies of white hegemony. Do we define ourselves or does our society define us? Jonathan Culler puts it that “struggles about identity are struggles within the individual and between individual and group...[as they] struggle against or comply with social norms and expectations” (111). The compliance with the 21st century myth that gathers people with no common genetic or cultural background under the umbrella term of “multiracial” seems to be in, making many victims. Which one is more blatant a fallacy between gathering various people with nothing in common under an umbrella term of multiracial and arguing today that anti-black racism has disappeared

from the American society? Blackness can only disappear when our society ceases to discriminate and exploit people of African descent. But this era when these people will move around unstigmatized has not dawned yet.

We must do well to remember that there is no such a thing as color-blindness today in America which can justify the increasing attitudinal shift towards a post racial ideology of cross-sectional, multiracial politics. If this is done, it must be without people of African ancestry. A post-racial society, with the clearest evidence, is a society in which neither difference in wealth, nor other defining cleavages, fall along racial lines (Bonnette et al. 2012). But the widest differences in wealth in the USA today are across the color line. The discrepancies are staggering. McIntosh et al., in 2020, report that African American families' net worth was almost ten times lower than that of white families in 1996. Rachel is vaguely aware of her grandmother's poverty. She scoffs at her buying only day-old bread at the factory and owning worthless possessions. She ultimately confesses about the pathetic economic condition of Miss Doris: "*I don't like what's Grandma's*" (Durrow 12).

Multiracials who anchor their existence into blackness do not do so because they are unaware of the inescapability of their dual, multiple genetic heritage. They do it because they have acquired an acute awareness of the fallacy of the construction and the horrible politics that sustains racial assignment against all odds in the American society. They usually opt into blackness because they will not put up with any debasement of that part of their lineage that has always been vilified. There is not and will never be any pure breed. Those who call themselves of mixed ascendancy indulge in a new replication of the arbitrary structures sustained by white power and hegemony. Their genetic heritage confers them more visible miscellaneous physical traits of which they take advantage to garner a position that indirectly validates white domination and offers it grounds to prosper: the closer to whiteness, the better. One of the results of this policy of absorbing parts of the margins into the mainstream aims at further fragmenting and isolating other black people. Moreover, this fragmentation subtly legitimizes different subjectivities, different experiences, and therefore different treatments.

Racial identity, we know today, is not ontological but performative. So, whether a metis embrace a "*hybrid or dualistic identity or choose to identify as a Black, they know that both choices are scientifically ungrounded, thus vain and arbitrary*". Ortega y Gasset says this clearly: "*...it is by no means indifferent how we formulate things. The law of life perspective is not only subjective but rooted in the nature of things...itself...The mistake is to assume that it is up to our arbitrariness to assign things to their proper rank.*" (8). Each choice does however have political implications. The conscious side of negritude confers a political advantage necessary to lift the American society from a rigid hierarchical set into a free moving set of colors without hierarchy.

In 1998, the US census policy changed, allowing for the first time multiracials to check in more than one racial box. Danzy Senna ironically responds to this 21-century fetishization of mulatto.as in the USA, dubbing the year 2000 the onset of the "*mulatto millennium*" (Senna). The popular validation and overexposition of multiraciality may be perceived as a manoeuvre to make believe that the American society has today evolved toward a raceless society open to identity reinvention, a society in which everyone can become what they want, embrace the part of their ancestry they wish to. With subtlety, this nonetheless further isolates a certain phenotype

of black people with darker skin tones. Whether people traditionally lumped together under the appellation of African Americans feel free today to choose the other of their ancestry or register in a totally distinct identity box, by itself, will not alter social perceptions. It will not prevent racists from calling them names. Fighting racism is a collective responsibility that no African should defer or decline.

In the 21st century when multiracial organizations, like the MAVIN Foundation, the largest mixed race organization of the US, are thriving, it disrupts and confounds people's comfort levels to reject the concept of exceptionalism for people of African descent and defend the idea of a plural but shared African identity. "*Being African or being of African heritage are different paradigms, which often, but not always mean the same thing*" (Shahadath).

Of course, the Western society is challenged today by claims of new gender identities, sexual orientations, all of which open large horizons of possibilities for each human being. Nonetheless, the attitudes of most people on issues of race, power and white hegemony have not evolved much, more than fifty years after *Loving v Virginia* (1967). Black people are still wantonly killed by law enforcement officers. African Americans are still the poorest community in America. Africa is still under the heels of the West. In such circumstances, hiding one's head in the sand is making the world safer for exploitation and white hegemony to thrive. That Rachel refuses to be identified as a black person will not prevent her from being abused. She is referred to as a "Nigger" at the public fountain. Her colorism will not prevent her heart from throbbing when police car sirens wail. It is in this vein that no self-identification is politically neutral. Our choices always have an impact on oppression and power. "*To conquer a people you conquer their ability to identify as a group being oppressed and articulate their unique reality*" (African Holocaust Society).

The African American political fight for social justice started since times of slavery and went on after emancipation with some figures as Prince Hall, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, William DuBois, Langston Hughes, and contemporaries as Barack Obama. All of those people are of visible mixed heritage. But they do understand that the fight for equality and justice is theirs and involves a strong commitment to a bold identification as Blacks.

5. Conclusion

In critically reading the narrative of *The Girl*, one identifies the fallacy of claiming an experiential difference in the protagonist's journey. The arguments the writer puts forward meant to buttress her claims of difference for the mixed-raced identity construction cannot be generalized to all black-parented multiracials. Consequently, the narrative of *The Girl* does not convincingly drive home the arguments for a different identity construction process for this section of the African American community. Moreover, embracing this politics proves detrimental to these people whose larger black community is held back and checked by various forms of social barriers.

History constitutes the bedrock on which viable political strategies are constructed. Discarding memory entraps both individuals and communities in an unending cycle of past mistakes. In order to truly take on the concerns that black people are confronted with worldwide, real politics of unity and an agenda of struggle need to be adopted. One of these consists in

redefining blackness out of external influence and deconstructing all other strategies designed to perpetuate the enthrallment of people of African descent. Those measures can be consistent and productive if black people understand that change starts from within. Inner transformation is needed. Black multiracials, however else they mean to identify, will not escape the abuses which other African Americans are subjected to. The new politics of racial identification among black multiracials in the USA, which is nothing but colorism, obviously caters to the underlying values of white hegemony. It really serves no interest in confronting the common challenges.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

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Appendix: List of Names

Heidi Durrow
Anthony Appiah
Tommie Shelby
Sanders Thompson
Natasha Nicole Walker
Shahadah
Jeaques Derrida
Naomi Zack
Erin George
Edward said
Bart Moore-Gilbert
Rosalind Morris
Gayatri C. Spivak
Richard B. Moore
Werner Sollors
Maria P. P Root
Nella Larsen
Carla K Bradshaw
Daniel McNeil
Ruth Useem
Jessica Sanfilippo Schulz
Kevin Young
Robert J.C. Young
James Baldwin
Carrie Wilson-Brown
Nicholas Jones
Jonathan Culler
Lakeyta M. Bonnette
José Ortega y Gasset
Danzy Senna

Sènakpon Adelphe Fortuné Azon

BLACK, BROWN OR WHITE?: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS OF MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN
AFRICAN AMERICAN-PARENTED MULATTOS THROUGH HEIDI DURROW'S *THE GIRL WHO FELL FROM THE SKY*

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