

The Warmth of Other Suns

The warmth of other suns is a book discussing about the great migration. The book explains what migrants had to go through to survive the harshest conditions and adapt to a new lifestyle in a foreign land. How they accomplished and succeeded is one of the issues addressed. The book explains how different cultures and social life comes into existence. It is an inspiration book to those struggling to succeed in life

'The author describes how people get to different destinations; for instance,

“people from Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi boarded the Illinois Central to Midwestern cities like Cleveland, Chicago and Detroit, those from Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia rode the Seaboard Air Line up the East Coast to Washington, Philadelphia and New York, those in Louisiana and Texas took the Union Pacific to Los Angeles, Oakland and other parts of the West Coast’ pg.450.

The author is an expert at minding the bends and detours along the way. She took note that some of the migrants who were unfamiliar with the conductor's Northern accent would mistakenly get off at the cry of ‘Penn Station, Newark, the stop just before Penn Station, New York. Thus many decided to stay put, resulting to Newark – a good portion of its black population. She uses the

migrant lack of know how to describe how black community of Newark was formed. She also indirectly expressed the illiteracy of the migrants since they could not understand the conductor's northern accent.

The Author expresses the three main characteristics, indicating her favorites one being Ida Mae Brandon Gladney, a sharecropper's wife from Mississippi. She was married at sixteen, a mother of three, and she lived to serve her husband George, whose dire aim reflected the Southern feudal agriculture that replaced slavery after the civil war. The book states,

“Each December George would meet with Mr. Edd, the white landowner, to learn how he has done. Mr. Edd would open his records to prove that the annual debt for creditors is almost exactly matched the value of George’s annual inventory. He was not good in arithmetic, but he did know the danger of challenging a white man’s figures. Thus he would ‘thank Mr. Edd and return to his shack with a few dollars to show for a year’s worth of backbreaking toil’¹.

By the Author stating that Ida Mae was married at sixteen, it is clear she is the level of poverty in the society where instead the young people concentrating on school, they opt to get married. She clearly expressed the only source of employment after slavery, was agriculture. 'George would meet with Mr. Edd, the white landowner'. The author is racist; she could have stated that Mr., Edd, the landowner. 'Mr. Edd would open his ledger book' This shows that the landowner was a good bookkeeper where he retains the records of his farm. George’s annual debt for supplies bought on credit was almost the same value as that of his annual crop. The author was expressing the poor performance by George. With the author stating that George was not good in

¹ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010), xx.

arithmetic, she is expressing the low level of education George had. George could not have questioned the boss calculation, and this shows the relationship of the white bosses and employees. They were treated as slaves.

'In 1937, a cousin down the road was beaten to almost death by a white posse that wrongly suspected him of stealing a few of Mr.Edd's Turkey'. Fearing his life, George told his wife, Ida Mae, to pack up the family. A few day later, they boarded the Jim Crow Car of an Illinois Central train heading north. Eventually, they settled in Chicago, where George found work in Campbell, a soup factory, and Ida Mae in a hospital. They were no longer 'colored' and 'white' signs to degrade them. With George cousin being beaten to almost death is an exploitation of race by whites. Instead of George trying to sit down and solve the existing issues, he decided to run away with family. In Chicago, the two got a job and settled there. In Chicago, the problem of racism was over. The next characters were George Swanson Starling and Robert Joseph Pershing Forster, and they also had enough reason to leave the South. Starling dropped out of college due to lack of funds and started to work by picking citrus in the fields, the local growers, and the sheriff began to threaten him and in 1945 he boarded the silver meteor bound for New York. He got a job as a porter in Silver Meteor, and his life changed completely. The author represents Sterling as a young migrant from a poor background with barriers in his early stages in life to the extent of dropping out of college but over and above all these obstacles, a determined and focused young man. He overcomes all these challenges to become one of the richest young men. The author gives hope to individuals from a poor background that there still better live ahead.

Foster as a character is presented as one of a privileged kid Unlike Sterling, he was brought up in a rich family, attended a prestigious black college and later graduated as a surgeon. The author still shows how racism is still in our society, and he attended a most prestigious black college'. Foster is represented as a sociable and open person. He migrated to California and later built a medical practice servicing Los Angeles community of black working people. "Built a medical practice serving Los Angeles community of black working people," Since Foster had experienced racism in college life, one could have expected change in future from him. But he built a medical practice institution for black people. The mention of, "Community of black working people" means that Foster is presented here as an individual with class, not just a medical practice for blacks but medical practice serving Los Angeles community of black working community.

With more than five million five hundred thousand migrants looking for a better future, they were faced with a lot of challenges. They encountered with blacks from the north with better education. The author portrays a generation from a poor background, poverty, no medical care, and no schools among others who were ready to succeed no matter what. The author uses her perfect storytelling skills in order to put up a story that is not only lively but also one that reveals one of the most uncovered stories in history.