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Conciliatory Approach to Afro-American National Question in Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the issue of national liberation of Afro-Americans portrayed in Ralph Ellison's novel Juneteenth through the Marxist concept of dialectics. This concept holds the view that the struggle between the contradictory forces of society is absolute while the conciliation between them is conditional and temporary. This concept keeps the struggle with the oppressor nationality and class at the key position for the liberation of the oppressed nationality and class. Reverend Hickman, who is one of the two major characters of the novel, belongs to the oppressed Afro-American nationality and class. Hickman wants to liberate the oppressed Afro-American nationality from the shackles of their oppression but he adopts the wrong path of conciliation with the ruling whites of the USA. For Hickman, there is no solution of the black national oppression through the struggles of Afro-Americans, instead, for the solution, he seeks some divine personality like Abraham Lincoln from white's nationality who will provide Afro-Americans their freedom, justice and equality. Hickman has raised Bliss in the hope to make him the person like Abraham Lincoln of America but Hickman is betrayed by Bliss who transformed himself into a race-baiting white senator Adam Sunraider. Even after the betrayal of Bliss, Hickman still keeps hope on Sunraider. Far from liberating the oppressed black nationality, this Hickman's message of absolute conciliationism with ruling whites makes the Afro-Americans vulnerable.

Keywords: National question, national oppression, conciliationism, struggle, emancipation, hero-worship

1. Introduction

Ralph Ellison is one of the leading Afro-American novelists and essayists. His first novel *Invisible Man* (1952) was almost instantly recognized as a classic in American society and it won several prizes including the National Book Award. His second novel *Juneteenth* was his most ambitious project, but it was only published after Ellison's death in 1999. As the title of the novel "Juneteenth" suggests, the novel is written on the subject of Afro-Americans; about their pain and sufferings, their hardships and struggles and their hope of liberation from every kinds of oppression in their own homeland America. The novel tells the story basically of two major characters Reverend Alonzo Hickman and Bliss/Senator Adam Sunraider representing the antagonistic nationalities and classes: the lower class black and the upper-class white respectively. Hickman is a foster father of Bliss as Hickman has raised Bliss in the hope that one day Bliss would erase the racial boundary between the black and the white. It is the wrong conception of Hickman erasing the racial boundary by bringing a white child up and keeping hope on that child alone as if that child would do trick on him and his whole suppressed Afro-American nationality. Hickman does not believe on him and on the strength of his black nationality, instead, he keeps hope on his enemy ruling whites and he believes only on their strength. Hickman does not have faith in the arduous struggles of Afro-Americans against their oppressor enemy ruling whites, instead, he hopes to achieve the freedom, justice and equality for him and for his oppressed black nationality through the conciliation with the ruling whites. This research article observes the pains and sufferings of Afro-Americans portrayed in the novel, analyzes the path chosen by the black protagonist Hickman for the liberation of Afro-Americans and evaluates the reasons behind the failures of Hickman in his ambitious project of liberating himself and his whole Afro-American nationality in America.

2. Portrayal of the Issue

The novel opens with Reverend Hickman and the members of his Parish attempting to see the racist senator Adam Sunraider. Although Bliss runs away from him and becomes the racist senator Adam Sunraider, Hickman does not lose hope towards Bliss. While waiting outside the Senator's private office with his men, Hickman asks the Senator's secretary with confidence: "... you just tell the Senator that Hickman has arrived. When he hears who's out here, he'll know that it's important and want to see us." This reveals Hickman's faith towards his beloved Bliss. This faith towards Bliss drives Hickman to keep up with the boy's career, especially when the boy becomes a politician and it takes Hickman to Washington when he learns that he is in danger. He wants to talk with Bliss/Adam Sunraider to learn what happened to Bliss that led to break and to negative acts towards Negroes after Bliss became powerful. He wants to know whether it is perversity or it is the structure of power demands that anyone acting out the role would do so in essentially the same way. But it is not easy to meet with such a powerful racist senator Adam Sunraider by the powerless religious black folks. They are denied entry to the senator's office and, eventually, they are thrown out of the lobby by Sunraider's security. "This

time, however, he was not to reach the secretary. One of the guards, the same who had picked up the fifty-dollar bill, recognized him and pushed him bodily from the building" (*Juneteenth* 3, 7). Hickman and the members of his parish, who are manhandled by Sunraider's securities, are forced to leave the senator's office without allowing them to meet with their beloved child Bliss.

The parish, then, moves onto Senate's Visitors' Gallery to watch Sunraider in action. While delivering his speech in front of his audiences seated behind "circular, history-stained desks", the senator Sunraider gazes at another circular object which calls to mind the nation's history and mission, "the Great Seal" containing the "national coat of arms" (*Juneteenth* 9). He is giving an incendiary speech about black Americans. It is a racist monologue, even containing the demeaning phrase for the blacks "Coon Cage Eight". In his speech, Senator Sunraider says: "We have reached a sad state of affairs, gentleman, wherein this fine product of American skill and initiative has become so common in Harlem that much of its initial value has been sorely compromised. Indeed, I am led to suggest, and quite seriously, that legislation be drawn up to rename it the 'coon cage eight'." He further elaborates this Negro-baiting invective in the following words: "... it has now become such a common sight to see eight or more of our darker brethren crowded together enjoying its power, its beauty, its neo-pagan comfort, while weaving recklessly through the streets of our great cities and along our superhighways" (*Juneteenth* 20).

As Senator Sunraider is delivering his speech before congress, the eagle on the nation's banner seems to glare at him threateningly and hungrily. Sunraider is described in a desperation to stay on his task while "two sphinx like eyes bore in upon the senator with piercing frontal gaze" and "held him savagely in mute interrogation" (*Juneteenth* 10). This image works on multiple levels. On the surface, we can easily read this as internal sign of the senator's guilt, while in the context of the novel, it also foreshadows the violent consequences he will soon receive for his action against those persons who he had once called his kin. He receives the consequences at last. While the Senator Sunraider is hammering the death blows more and more to the black Americans in his speech, suddenly, a young black assailant gun him down. At the moment when he is shot, Sunraider cries: "Lord, LAWD . . . WHY HAST THOU" in "the hysterical timbre of a Negro preacher" and feels "a profound sense of self-betrayal, as though he had stripped himself naked in the senate" (*Juneteenth* 23). Robert J. Butler connects the assassination of senator Adam Sunraider with American cultural conflicts of post-World War II. He writes: "... the assassination of senator Adam Sunraider on the floor of the United States senate in the mid-1950s, dramatizes the disastrous cultural conflicts and contradictions of post-World War II American culture" (17).

When the senator Adam Sunraider is shot, the Reverend Hickman screams at his beloved son: "Bliss! You were our last hope, Bliss; now Lord have mercy on this dying land!" (*Juneteenth* 33). Hickman has taken Bliss as his last hope for himself, for his race and for his nation because he has invested a lot on Bliss sacrificing his beloved family members, his former ideal and his precious youth. Bliss's mother, an unnamed white woman, accuses Hickman's brother, Robert, of rape. Because of Bliss's mother, although innocent, Robert becomes the victim of vicious American institution of lynching. The black Americans were segregated in different forms such as denial of civil rights, right to franchise, to hold public offices, to sit on juries etc. in America (Haywood 1). To support these vicious systems, the ruling whites depend on all forms of arbitrary violence including the most vicious one, lynching. In this regard, Harry Haywood says: "This vicious system is supported by all forms of arbitrary violence, the most vicious being the peculiar American institution of lynching. All of this finds its theoretical justification in the imperialist ruling class theory of the 'natural' inferiority of the Negro people" (1). The American ruling whites believe that the black Americans are naturally inferior to white Americans, so, they believe the blacks cannot be treated equally with whites.

Bliss's mother admits with Hickman that Robert is innocent. Bliss has a different father who is far away. Bliss's mother says: "I do, only his father doesn't know about him; he's far away..." Bliss's mother might have known what would be the consequences to Robert of blaming him of rape but she simply confesses to Hickman that she does not have any special intention to harm Robert: "I never knew your brother and I meant him no special harm." But Robert has already been lynched cruelly by the white mob and the shock of Robert's death has already killed Hickman's mother too. This is the harsh reality of black Americans in the USA. Hickman has to fight against the murderer of his brother and his mother and more importantly, he has to fight against the inhuman system of lynching. Contrary to this, Hickman comes to the position to be the foster father of Bliss whose mother has accused Hickman's brother Robert of rape. Hickman confesses his guilt within himself: "Ha! Hickman, you had wanted a life for a life and the relief of drowning your humiliation and grief in blood, and now this flawed-hearted woman was offering you two lives – your own, and his young life to train. . . . So not only had the woman placed a child on my hands, she made me a bachelor" (*Juneteenth* 264, 263, 265-66). At first, Hickman had the feelings of revenge against the murderers of his brother but he sacrifices this feeling for Bliss. Hickman could marry with some girl and have his own children but he remains bachelor for Bliss. Hickman could help her giving birth of her child after she begs help and surrenders in front of him but he should not sacrifice so much for Bliss and should not keep so much hope on Bliss who would be a future emancipator of his whole suppressed black nationality.

To get Justice for himself and for his black nationality, Hickman has chosen the path of conciliation to his enemy white nationality. Hickman has decided to rear up and educate Bliss, a white child, in order to make him the future emancipator of his black nationality. "Bliss symbolizes for Hickman an American solution as well as a religious possibility" (*Juneteenth* 303). To justify his path of conciliation with whites, Hickman assumes himself as "a heroic person who will sacrifice the self in order to assume two important social roles- first, a father who names and raises Bliss and, later, a Christian minister dedicated to the" Christ-like" ideal of being a self for others" (Butler 22). Butler further says: "His story, therefore, dramatizes in a powerful way the Christian concepts of good coming out of evil, growth emerging from suffering, and life growing out of death. In an altogether mysterious way, the terrible violence inflicted upon his brother and the death of his mother has resulted not only in Bliss's birth but also Hickman's rebirth" (22). As Hickman decides to rear up

and educate Bliss to make him the black's emancipator, Hickman brings changes in his own life style. He begins a new life refocusing his life and passion on religion and preaching instead of Jazz music, drinking and women. J.T. Cobb writes: "The Reverend Alonzo Hickman is a former Jazz musician and gambler who turned to the ministry both for reasons of personal morality and necessity; he had a new son to care for, after all" (33).

Hickman raises Bliss as a child preacher and makes him a part of his revival routine. Hickman wants to make Bliss as a kind of messiah figure, one capable of bridging America's racial division and fixing the broken part. Hickman says: "Bliss, a preacher is a man who carries God's load. And that's the whole earth, Bliss boy. The whole earth and all the people." In the revival meeting, Bliss becomes a white preacher named Bliss Hickman who is raised by a parish of kind, religious black Americans. As a young boy, Bliss develops a remarkable skill for preaching. Sometimes his skill made him the envy for others. Hickman becomes hopeful towards Bliss and Hickman says: "I tell you, Bliss, you're going to make a fine preacher and you're starting at just the right age. You're just a little over six and Jesus Christ himself didn't start until he was twelve." At his young age, Bliss not only manages to become a good preacher, he also learns and follows all the norms and values of Afro-American culture and religion. Except his white skin, Bliss appears no different than any other members of Afro-Americans. Hickman becomes jubilant as he begins to see on Bliss the sign of the future emancipator: "Yes! And it is said that the child is father to the man. So why be surprised over the size, shape, color of the vessel? Why not listen to his small sweet voice and drink in the life-giving water of the word...?" (*Juneteenth* 36, 41, 50).

The revival scenes depicted in the novel are at once funny and satirical. They provide a penetrating view of the African-American community's take on an American evangelical tradition. While teaching the correct language, Hickman tells Bliss not to talk like he talks: "Yessuh", that he means that Bliss ought not use the southern Afro-American vernacular. In other words, Hickman privileges one way of speaking over another. The way of speaking Hickman privileges is the "white" speech. Moreover, by telling Bliss that "words are everything" (*Juneteenth* 38), Hickman conveys to Bliss that language has power and ultimately, Hickman conveys the message that "White" language is the key to power. Hickman not only recommends Bliss about the "white English" but he also further recommends the white canonical literature. Hickman urges Bliss to follow Shakespeare and Emerson as his role model: "That's right, Bliss; in Good Book English. I guess it's 'bout time I started reading you some Shakespeare and Emerson.... Who's Emerson? He was a preacher too, Bliss. Just like you. He wrote a heap of stuff and he was what is called a *philosopher*" (*Juneteenth* 39). Hickman wants to make Bliss as the future emancipator of black Americans but instead of leading to the world of black Americans, Hickman leads Bliss to the world of whites. Hickman does not suggest Bliss to read the Afro-American literature in which Bliss can read the sufferings of black Americans and he can find out some ways to liberate the black Americans from their sufferings and miseries. Contrary to this, Hickman is not teaching Bliss to be the emancipator of blacks, instead, he is teaching Bliss to be one of the powerful persons like Senator Adam Sunraider, a man in power not for others to help but only for himself to go up. Angela F. Ridinger writes: "Taken together with Hickman's directives to Bliss to speak using 'good' English, his planning to read Shakespeare to Bliss hints at the belief that mastering the 'traditional white canon' will empower Bliss to move beyond his station in life" (40).

Bliss has already developed an incredible understanding of black culture and religion, but Hickman is directing Bliss, towards the powerful whites' world arousing curiosity in Bliss's mind about the white language and literature. This may be one and initial reason for Bliss in turning away from Afro-American community which helps Bliss a lot in his childhood days to rear him up with care and love. But, his journey away from the African-American community, really, begins when a crazed white woman, Miss Lorelli, disrupts the resurrection play and sermon which he and Hickman were conducting. In the resurrection play, Bliss is placed in a coffin and at a precise moment in the homily, Hickman calls out "suffer the little children to come onto me," whereupon Bliss would rise from the coffin and say, "Lord why has thou forsaken me?" But inside the coffin Bliss feels a traumatic experience and fearing suffocation he mentally begs: "Please, let me rise up. Let me come up and out into the light and air..." (*Juneteenth* 125, 127, 123), until he comes out of the coffin to preach with Hickman.

In the midst of the resurrection play, Miss Lorelli claims herself to be the mother of Bliss and names him as Cudworth. After listening this, Bliss reacts: "She means me, he thought, as something strange and painful stirred within him. Then he could no longer breathe" (*Juneteenth* 133). From this moment on, symbolized by the gradual fall of his little Bible from his hands, Bliss starts to become Sunraider. Rising from a coffin, being called a new name and dropping his Bible from his hands symbolize as a turning point in Bliss's life. Cobb writes: "His time in the coffin for the miracle play is not only a childhood trauma, but is symbolic of the point at which Bliss dies and the man who would become Sunraider is born" (22).

Miss Lorelli, who claims herself Bliss's mother, does not only belong to the whites but she also belongs to the upper-class family. Hickman explains Bliss about Miss Lorelli: "But because she's from a rich family she can go around acting out any notion that comes into her mind." The encounter of Miss Lorelli with the black parish does not only symbolize the encounter between the black and the white but it also symbolizes the encounter between the poor and the rich because Miss Lorelli belongs to the rich and all the members of the black parish belong to the poor families. Hickman admits Miss Lorelli is danger for them not only because she is white but she is also danger for them because she is rich. The member belonging to the rich family can do anything they like to harm the poor ones. One of the members of black parish exposes the reality of the rich people: "... they can't be happy unless they know we're having a hard time." She reveals that the happiness of the rich whites lies in the miseries of the poor blacks. She knows that the world of the rich whites is very much different than the world of the poor blacks. She further says: "You know these rich folks have a different set of clothes for everything they do. They have tea gowns for drinking tea, cocktail dresses for drinking their gin and whiskey, *ball* gowns for doing what they call dancing" (*Juneteenth* 173, 182, 184-85). She knows the poor blacks should

struggle hard throughout their life for their minimum requirements of food, shelter and clothes but the rich whites enjoy tea, gin and whiskey and dancing wearing the different clothes in different occasions.

Being an offspring of a white, Bliss is passing his days in the world of the poor blacks. Living with the poor blacks in their world, Bliss has got the rare chances to be familiar with the world of the rich whites. This is the first time Bliss gets familiar with the rich white woman who also claims to be his mother and he gets a chance to listen something about the rich whites' world. Although the parish repels Miss Lorelli, this incident begins the fascination with the rich whites' world that ultimately leads Bliss away from his African-American community. "Rich and white though she be, the po' thing's nuts. . . *No, no, no, she's my mother*, my mind said and I lay rigid, listening" (*Juneteenth*183). Bliss is fascinated listening about the rich and white woman, his would-be mother Miss Lorelli. Bliss almost accepts the white woman, Miss Lorelli's claims, transfers to her both his questions about his unknown mother and his awakening sexuality, begins to devalue the African-American women who surround and care for him, and begins to glimpse the possibility of becoming white.

As Bliss is fascinated by the rich white men's world after the encounter with Miss Lorelli, he begins to abandon the path of righteousness that had been previously prescribed for him as a great force for good. On that day when Miss Lorelli disrupts the congregation, in the absence of Hickman, sister Georgia takes Bliss back to her home for the night. The twoshare melon and conversation. Bliss should have the feelings of respect towards sister Georgia who kindly gives him the food and shelter at her home, but he is physically attracted to Georgia. After a nightmare, Georgia allows Bliss to sleep in her bed, where he sneaks a peak under her nightgown. Georgia castigates him harshly for his indiscretion: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, peeping at my nakedness and me asleep. Sneaking up on me like a thief in the night, trying to steal me in my sleep! You, who's supposed to be Revern' Bliss, the young preacher!" Bliss catches a glimpse of her womanhood and is ashamed of his immorality. He admits his indiscretion to Georgia, and she condemns his act and throws him out of her bed. Likewise, Bliss enjoys flirting with an Afro-American girl named Laly as Bliss calls her. The two enjoys the picnic of varieties of foods. The two are in love and eventually have sex underneath the tree. "And we came through the parklike space, into shade and out again, her cool skin touching mine. Touching and leaving and coming again unself-consciously, skin-teasing skin in gentle friction" (*Juneteenth* 167, 59). Bliss, who is the respected preacher of the Afro-American parish, begins to demoralize himself involving in such immoral activities.

The traumatic experience, that he felt encountering his would-be mother Miss Lorelli, creates an obsession to young Bliss for his mother. Hickman takes Bliss to the movies and to the circus to entertain him. But Bliss is terrified because he believes that the woman in the picture is his mother, Miss Lorelli. When Hickman clarifies him that they are watching only a moving picture, Bliss even begins to distrust Daddy Hickman. Bliss thinks: "...it's her. He doesn't want me to know, but just the same, it's her... And I tried to understand the play of light upon the dark whiteness, the rectangle of cloth that would round out the mystery of my mother's going and her coming." His trauma relating to his mother and fascination with the rich whites' world lead Bliss to the point from where he decides to revolt against Daddy Hickman and the whole Afro-American community. For this, Bliss has chosen the movies as a most effective form of rebellion against them, because Daddy Hickman told his son that "if they look at those shows too often, they'll get all mixed up with so many of these shadows that they'll lose their way. They won't know who they areis what I mean" (*Juneteenth*209, 190). Hickman's lesson proved true. Hickman decides to leave the parish, the word and his culture to wander the Midwest unsuccessfully attempting to make movies. Charles Pete Banner Haley writes: ". . . in *Juneteenth*, we see Bliss leave the Black world for the world of movies in which he becomes (and I am inferring here from Ellison's notes and Callahan's introduction) white. The movies then lead him to the world of politics and his subsequent transformation and career as a racist race-baiting US senator" (374). The attraction of the rich whites' world draws Bliss to the world of movies where he gets mixed up with the community of rich whites. Then, he gets chances to involve into the politics and possibly, through foul means, he becomes multimillionaire which, ultimately, helps him to become the senator of New England State. After this, Bliss, who is one of the important members of Afro-American community, does not remain Bliss any longer. Bliss has completely morphed himself into the race baiting white senator Adam Sunraider.

This does not lead Hickman, a conciliator, to give up his hope on Adam Sunraider. Sitting beside senator Sunraider in the hospital bed, Hickman tries to re-educate his lost son Bliss about the history of black Americans. Hickman talks about how his forefathers were brought to America from Africa making them slaves. They were kidnapped, kept in slave ships and brought in chains. Hickman says: "Mother and babies, men and women, the living and the dead and the dying all chained together." Hickman says the process of bringing slaves in America was inhuman. Those African slaves were, in fact, treated as animals having no names and identity. Hickman says: "They left us without names. Without choice. Without the right to do or not to do, to be or not to be. . . ." When the African slaves were forcefully brought in the southern plantations for the first time, they are left "eyeless, earless, noseless, throatless, teethless, tongueless, handless, footless, armless, wrongless, rightless, harmless, drumless, danceless, songless...motherless, fatherless, sisterless, brotherless, plowless, muleless, foodless. . ." (*Juneteenth*104, 105, 107). They do not have any form, identity, power and possessions. They were separated from their families and homeland; their freedom and cultures were robbed and they belonged to the men of nowhere. But as the time passes, they gradually changed from Africans to Africans in America or Afro-Americans and they began to form their unique national identity. Amilcar Cabral and Paul Robeson write: Separated from their families and homeland, robbed of their freedom and cultures, their control of their labor power denied them, the African people began the transition from Africans to Africans in America or Afro-Americans. From the moment the Africans were captured and placed in slave ships, but especially when they arrived on plantations, the unplanned but objective process of national formation began. (16)

As the black slaves have watered the soil of America with their blood and sweat for years, they can claim America is their own land. Hickman rightly says: "And as we moldered underground, we were mixed with this land. We liked it. It

fitted us fine. It was in us and we were in it." After getting "new teeth, new tongue, new word, new song, a new name and a new blood", the Afro-Americans have fused with American soil maintaining their separate identity. Hickman claims: "This land is ours because we come out of it, we bled in it, our tears watered it, we fertilized it with our dead... We know where we are by the way we walk. We know where we are by the way we talk. We know where we are by the way we sing. We know where we are by the way we dance" (*Juneteenth* 108, 110, 112). Hickman has a strong claim that now the land of America is an inseparable part of their life though they are distinct culturally from the white Americans. But Hickman knows the black Americans are not considered the real citizens of America by the white Americans. Hickman suggests black Americans to believe on themselves though they are not accepted by the white Americans.

Hickman, then, connects the history of black Americans with the Afro-American's Juneteenth holiday. The novel's title *Juneteenth* itself comes from the Afro-American's Juneteenth holiday because Juneteenth holiday is historically connected with the emancipation of Afro-American slaves in USA. The Juneteenth holiday commemorates the landing of Union troops in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865- two and half years after the emancipation proclamation-with the news that the enslaved in Texas and more generally the enslaved Afro-Americans throughout the former confederacy of the southern United States are now free. The Juneteenth holiday is originally celebrated in Texas and later in other southern and southwestern states through the early twentieth century and revived in recent decades. Hickman takes Juneteenth holiday as a great occasion for Afro-Americans because he knows the southern black slaves could become free from the chains of slavery for the first time on that day. The black Americans from all over the country appear in the happy mood on the day for the celebration of Juneteenth holiday though they remain unhappy throughout the whole year because of the poverty and the different kinds of social injustice and discriminations. Hickman says: "And it was a great occasion. There had been a good cotton crop and a little money was circulating among us. Folks from all over were in the mood for prayer and celebration" (*Juneteenth* 113).

Hickman has a strong realization about the black national oppression in America but he has a wrong conception on the question of the national liberation of blacks. Hickman talks more about Juneteenth and connects it with the emancipation of African-Americans but he does not know that thousands of black slaves have sacrificed their precious life in the Civil War to bring Juneteenth holiday. Cabral and Robeson write: "Around 186,000 Afro-American troops served in Northern armies. They came from working class and petty bourgeois circles in the North and from free and fugitive slave elements in the South. Others took up arms against their masters and confederate troops as the Union armies approached" (17). The Southern Afro-American slaves got freedom not because they were favored by the Union troops but they became free because Afro-American slaves themselves involved in the Union armies and fought against the slave masters and confederate troops. Thus, the struggle is essential for the oppressed black Americans to bring change in their life and get freedom, justice and equality in the USA. But Hickman speaks against struggle and violence and he believes in gradual change: "They make life a business of struggle and fret, fret and struggle... But you just keep on inching along like an old inchworm. If you put one and one and one together soon, they'll make a million too. There's been a heap of Juneteenths before this one and I tell you there'll be a heap more before we're truly free!" (*Juneteenth* 113). Hickman talks about peace but he forgets numbers of innocent black Americans, including his brother Robert, "are frequently and arbitrarily arrested, beaten up and murdered by US authorities at various levels and members of the Ku Klux Klan and other racists" (Tsetung 1). Hickman's theory of gradual change will work if the innocent black Americans are not victimized and murdered daily by the white's racial violence in the USA.

Hickman believes in hero-worship and heroism to bring the social change in History. Hickman has taken Juneteenth as a "God-given day" in the sense that the Afro-American slaves became free in the USA not because of the struggles of the black American slaves but they got their freedom because of some superpower or God. Hickman has seen the incarnation of God in human form in "Father Abraham". Hickman has taken Abraham Lincoln as a man having god's qualities. Hickman praises Lincoln: "That kind of man loves the truth even more than he loves his life, or his wife, or his children, because he's been designated and set aside to do the hard tasks that have to be done. That kind of man will do what he sees as justice even if the earth yawns and swallows him down, and even then, his deeds will survive and persist in the land forever" (*Juneteenth* 101, 239, 241). But Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan 1, 1863 "...not because of the subjective desires of Lincoln, the Union leadership and industrial capitalists, but because the objective development of history demanded it" (Cabral 17). To defeat the confederate forces in the civil war, Abraham Lincoln had to enlist the black slaves into the Union Army. For this reason alone, Abraham Lincoln had decided to free the black slaves not all over America but only within the rebellious southern states. Lincoln's signed document "nevertheless left slavery in place in the loyal border states. It also exempted those parts of the confederacy that had come under federal control" (Glass 1). The motto of Lincoln was to maintain the Union and that it was immaterial to him whether or not slavery continued to exist. Andrew Glass writes: "In an August 1862 letter to New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley, Lincoln wrote that 'my paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or to destroy slavery'" (1).

Based on his theory of gradual change and hero-worship, Hickman has kept so much hope on Bliss who "would do something to overcome the viciousness of racial division." Hickman has hoped to make Bliss the person like Abraham Lincoln of America. Hickman has a sacred hope that "...bringing up the child in love and dedication in the hope that properly raised and trained the child's color and features, his inner substance and his appearance would make it possible for him to enter into the wider affairs of the nation and work toward the betterment of his people and the moral health of the nation" (*Juneteenth* 300, 302-03). Hickman has kept hope not to the struggles of Afro-Americans, not to Bliss like child born from the womb of an Afro-American but he has kept hope on that child born from the womb of the white woman who blamed his innocent brother Robert of rape and caused him to death by the white lynch mob. Hickman does not believe in

the strength of the Afro-Americans to get their freedom, Justice, equality, and progress, on the contrary, he believes only in the strength of the people of his enemy nationality. Hickman seems to be frightened looking at the powerful world of ruling whites, so he tries to seek some Abraham and Bliss like persons from white's community who will provide freedom, justice and equality for his whole Afro-American nationality. This is a conciliationism.

3. Conclusion

Hickman's theory of Conciliationism fails at last when Hickman is betrayed by Bliss who transformed himself into the race-baiting white senator Adam Sunraider. But, his theory of conciliationism does not allow him to stop there. It even makes Hickman to keep hope not only in Bliss but also in changed Bliss i.e. the race-baiting white senator Adam Sunraider. Hickman does not give the message to his black nationality to revolt against the enemies like senator Adam Sunraider, instead, the novel's ending suggests Hickman forgives senator Adam Sunraider for his betrayal to the Afro-American community. The novel ends with the clause "*he seemed to hear the sound of Hickman's consoling voice, calling from somewhere above*" (*Juneteenth* 298), which suggests, at the last moment of his death, senator Adam Sunraider feels as if he is pardoned by Hickman for his betrayal to the whole Afro-American community. This Hickman's absolute conciliationism with ruling whites does not lead the struggles of Afro-Americans to success that enables them to achieve their freedom, Justice and equality in the USA. Contrary to this, Hickman's theory of absolute conciliationism helps the ruling whites of the USA to strengthen their political power against the oppressed nationalities including the Afro-Americans.

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