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## Native Son: Bigger Thomas

The first book being named "Fear" makes the readers wonder if Bigger's fear will overpower logic. Bigger Thomas has two choices in life. He can either follow the path of a criminal or he can take the opportunity of menial labor as a servant but in the end his fate is decided for him. Bigger's lack of opportunities leaves him with the frustration that he lacks any control over his direction in life. At the beginning of the novel his mother states, "You'll regret how you living some day," she went on. 'If you don't stop running with that gang of yours and do right, you'll end up where you never thought you would. You think I don't know what you boys is doing, but I do. And the gallows is at the end of the road you traveling, boy. Just remember that' (Wright 1.117). Mrs. Thomas is demonstrating the fact that Bigger is evolving into the stereotypical African-American male. In addition, his mother is foreshadowing what Bigger's future entails for later in the novel. Furthermore, Bigger and his friends "play white," giving them the opportunity to be something they wish to be. In other words, to obtain control, bark orders and give out punishment instead of being the dog on the leash. After playing the game Bigger says to Gus, "Goddamnit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like livin' in jail" (Wright 20). Bigger compares the way the boys are living to "livin' in jail" because without money and not being white there is no point in dreaming big. The boys come to the realization that no matter how hard they try to stay on the right path or how hard they work; young black men will never have a successful future.

Throughout the novel, Wright shows the isolation surrounding Bigger. Bigger holds a constant feeling of isolation however he is continuously surrounded by people in the novel. Wright showcases how Bigger deals with the feeling of being trapped within himself. In addition, how majority of Bigger's life is an act of isolation caused by both races. After the night that Bigger kills Mary he goes back home to sleep in his bed but that morning he has breakfast with the family; reminiscing the prior nights events,

"Bigger sat at the table and waited for food. Maybe this would be the last time he would eat here. He felt it keenly and it helped him to have patience. Maybe some day he would be eating in jail. Here he was sitting with them and they did not know that he had murdered a white girl and cut her head off and burnt her body. The thought of what he had done, the awful horror of it, the daring associated with such actions, formed for him for the first time in his fear-ridden life a barrier of protection between himself and a world he feared. He had murdered and created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in his life he had had anything that others could not take from him. Yes; he could sit here calmly and eat and not be concerned about what his family thought or did. He had a natural wall from behind which he could look at them... He was outside of his family now, over and beyond them" ... (Wright 105)

Bigger creates this wall of isolation between him and his family by committing murder and keeping this secret to himself. Bigger is isolating himself from his own race because he loathes his own people for the fact that violence is the only way to stop whites from controlling every aspect of their lives. He feels that the only recourse in life is to choose to murder out of fear of living life and risking the consequences. On the other hand, Bigger and the black community are isolated from whites by the way they are treated as well as that statuses whites hold. For

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example, Bigger states to Max, "Well, they own everything. They choke you off the face of the earth. They like God..." he swallowed, closed his eyes and sighed. 'They don't even let you feel what you want to feel. They after you so hot and hard you can only feel what they doing to you. They kill you before you die' (Wright 353). Bigger never had a chance. His fate was determined before he was born. Regardless of whether he followed the path of righteousness thus being good or the road of evil thus being bad: the result would have been the same. Continuing his conversation with Max, Bigger expresses, 'I don't know. Maybe this sounds crazy. Maybe they going to burn me in the electric chair for feeling this way. But I ain't worried none about them women I killed For a little while I was free. I was doing something. It was wrong, but I was feeling all right. Maybe God'll get me for it. If He do, all right. But I ain't worried. I killed 'em 'cause I was scared and mad. But I been scared and mad all my life and after I killed that first woman, I wasn't scared no more for a little while' (Wright 354). For a split second Bigger did not feel that he was living a life of isolation. He was free of control and feeling powerless even if it was for a moment. He was free of fear.

Bigger's alienation gives him the opportunity to see the world in a different perspective. He sees the reality of society for what it truly is. Max and Bigger have multiple conversations but they have a serious one after they both realize there is nothing more that can be done. Bigger did not understand how after the fact that Max knew Bigger was a murderer two times over that Max still treats him like a man. Max explains the reason why, "Bigger," Max said, "in the work I'm doing, I look at the world in a way that shows no whites or no blacks, no civilized and no savages... When men are trying to change human life on earth, those little things don't matter. You don't notice 'em" (Wright 424). Bigger realizes that he no longer must fear all whites. That there are whites in society who want to make change not only in a human's life but a black human's life. As a result of Max's ability to see society this way, it helps Bigger dissect the complexities of its nature,

"Mr Max, I sort of saw myself after that night. And I sort of saw other people too." ... "Well, it's sort of funny, Mr. Max. I ain't trying to dodge what's coming to me." Bigger was growing hysterical. "I know I'm going to get it. I'm going to die... But really I never wanted to hurt nobody. That's the truth, Mr. Max. I hurt folks' cause I felt I had to; that's all... Bigger's eyes were wide and unseeing; his voice rushed on: "Mr. Max, I didn't mean to do what I did. I was trying to do something else. But it seems like I never could. I was always wanting something and I was feeling that nobody would let me have it. So I fought'em. I thought they was hard and I acted hard... I'll be feeling and thinking that they didn't see me and I didn't see them" (Wright 425).

Bigger gives Max and himself closure, giving Max the opportunity to walk away at peace and for himself to come to terms with the consequences. Bigger's misfortunes leave him at the end of the road with nothing but new view-points on society and whites.

In the end, Richard Wright uses his novel *Native Son* to demonstrate that Bigger is a native to America. That he is a result of society, societies pressure makes him the man he becomes in the novel; a man of fear. Bigger becomes the face for the black communities who suffer the same emotions he does towards society despite his outcome. Furthermore, also showing how someone's life can be alienated based off societies expectations and perspectives. Wright wants readers to see that American society leads to many individuals feeling isolated, alienated, having lack of control of their creation and more. In addition, coming to the realization that the result of alienation is the act of human violence on human violence whether it is physically or

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verbally.