
Othello: The Theme Of Racism In The Play

Racism is prejudice discriminative antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. In William Shakespeare's play Othello, racism is evident throughout the play. The primary beliefs of the Elizabethan era concerning race and culture are essential to Othello's tragic death. The enlightening theme of racial discrimination William Shakespear expresses in Othello exposes the differing values between two worlds, corrupts relationships, and reveals self-hatred and insecurity.

Throughout the play, there are many references that bring the issue of racism to light. Othello was an African prince that was born into royalty. Before Othello moved to Europe he knew not of racism. Racism began in the nineteenth hundreds which was after the play was written, but those who lived in the Elizabethan times had very similar views on blacks and racism as those today. At this time, Christianity was very big amongst the people of Venice. Christians did not believe in interracial marriages, so Othello, being black and marrying a white damsel that he adored really angered, Iago. Iago and Roderigo's jealousy towards Othello was so apparent in the play. In their attempts to overthrow Othello, Iago and Roderigo make many discriminatory statements about Othello which eventually leads to the ruin of relationships.

Othello was the odd one out because of his skin colour and the fact that he was a Moor. He was often talked down upon behind his back, "At this very minute an old black ram is having sex with your little white lamb"(Act 1 Scene 4), stated Iago, his right-hand man. It was times like this when the hatred and racism showed how some of his men felt. Iago and Roderigo explained to Desdemona's father that his "grandsons will night to [him] like horses" (Act 1 Scene 1 p.4). Here they indicate that Desdemona and Othello will have "half-breeds" as children who will become ridicule to society. This causes Barbanito, Othello's father in law, to act out of rage and accuse Othello of kidnapping his daughter, but before they were really close. Once that plan fails, Iago goes as far as to destroy Othello's relationship with his own wife. Iago states, "Watch your wife. Watch how she is with Cassio. Just watch—don't be completely suspicious or completely trustful" (Act 3 Scene3 p. 9). He implies that Desdemonda is sleeping with other white Ventian men and is regretting marrying outside of her race. Othello is filled with rage and begins to believe that his race matters to others, including his wife. Othello's insecurity and hate for himself and his wife begins to unfold, driving him to kill her and lose his integrity.

Othello became blinded by all of Iago's lies. He became overwhelmed by the negativity and started to feel insecure about himself. He also started showing signs of self hatred which led him to become very angry all the time as he seeks to find the truth in the lies. Even with Desdemona he started to lash out and become aggressive towards her in hope that she was not really cheating on him. The more he talked to Iago the more he was mentally poisoned and in result, to his actions he ended up committing suicide. His actions caused those who looked up to him, to blame his race as an explanation for his actions. If he would not have been persuaded into his own self-hatred then he would have still been deemed as noble throughout society.

To some all up, racism was very prevalent in the Elizabethan era. William Shakespear manifested this matter throughout his play by showing the different beliefs two races obtained

and causing conflict between his characters. In his society, people viewed him as noble and upright, his race was the least of their worries. Others such as Iago and Roderigo envied and despised him especially because of his dark colour. Their jealousy fueled the plan to use his race as a means to ruin his character. Because Othello became insecure he murdered his wife. This crime did not cause people to judge his character, but instead, they judged his race, because he had conformed to the racial slurs and images that were painted of him.