



Rhymes of Revolution: Haki R. Madhubuti's Trailblazing Legacy in Black Poetry

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Abstract: Race discrimination in America has always provided black poetry with a theme. This theme of discrimination is also a prominent theme of Haki R. Madhubuti's poetry. Haki Madhubuti was one of the pre-eminent cultural nationalists during the Black Power and Black Arts/Consciousness Movements. Through his poems, he reflects on the suffering felt by black people in America. He combines a strong commitment to racial identity and equality with a mastery of poetic techniques. He is known as a revolutionary poet who wrote to encourage African men, women, and children to armed revolution because, in his eyes, their history and current condition made struggle necessary. He was regarded by many of his contemporaries as a significant cultural minister and leader. This paper analyzes some of his poems and establishes him as a revolutionary poet.

Key Words: Race, discrimination, revolution

Black race always had been literally torn from its culture and historical backgrounds, subjected to an environment of unequal values, and expected to swallow the arsenious acid of racism. Their ancestors were plucked out from the continent of Africa and brought into America as slaves. African men and women were tortured, brutalized, oppressed, and exploited beyond imagination. Arriving in America, these African men, women and children were systematically and legally robbed of their humanity. Literature acted as a megaphone for authors to make their voices heard in a society riddled with oppression, prejudice, and unequal

opportunities. Black poetry has frequently addressed the issue of racial inequality in America over the years. Black people's struggles with racial injustice and discrimination have been examined and depicted by several poets. These poems vividly capture the struggles, tenacity, and aspirations of Black people in the face of racial injustice.

Black poets have used their poetry to address and resist racial injustice for decades, from the early days of slavery to the civil rights movement and beyond. They have not only praised the resilience and beauty of black identity and culture, but they have also called attention to the pain, wrath, and frustration caused by institutional racism. Numerous authors, poets, and writers took up their pen to put an end to this injustice and unfairness. Prominent poets like Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka, and many others have addressed racial discrimination directly in their works. Poems by these authors address issues like injustice, police brutality, racial segregation, and the continuous struggle for civil rights. These poets have amplified the voices and experiences of the marginalized by offering a compelling and intimate viewpoint on the effects of racism on Black life.

Black poets have questioned norms, expressed their experiences, and advocated for social change via their work. Their words have sparked debates, raised consciousness, and contributed to the never-ending struggle for racial justice. These poems demonstrate the black community's resilience and unwavering commitment to equality and independence. Haki R. Madhubuti is the most influential name among all of them. Such a prolific writer was born Donald Luther Lee in Little Rock, Arkansas, on February 23, 1942. He is an outstanding, well-educated, considerate, open-minded, outspoken personality, and because of his endless courage, he became the great voice of African American literature. He was a very passionate man about racial discrimination, hate-motivated violence, and gender issues and rebelled against current policies and prejudices whether political, racial, or social. He used his tremendous writing skill to fight against racial discrimination and for equal rights and opportunities. His mother's struggle to overcome poverty and other life difficulties greatly impacted his life, and he acknowledged his mother for his intellectual development.

Lee, a prolific writer, has enriched the literary world with a diverse collection of a number of published books. Among them, *Think Black* (1967), *Black Pride* (1968), *Don't Cry. Scream* (1969), and *We Walk The Way of The New World* (1971) are four books that serve as examples of his lyrical skill. Each of these books stands alone as a piece of art with a distinctive message and poetic beauty. These books delve into the depths of racial identity and the struggle for equality, inviting readers to contemplate the experiences and perspectives

of the Black community. Lee explores themes of self-empowerment, cultural heritage, and resilience. Black pride, black unity, and black power are the dominating themes of his poetry. Madhubuti's poetry portrays the spirit of revolution by addressing topics of Black emancipation, empowerment, and identity. Through his powerful and evocative lyrics, he intends to encourage and inspire readers to critically evaluate and improve their surroundings.

Madhubuti has contributed significantly to the Black Arts Movement during his long career and has long been an activist for social justice, education, and Black community empowerment. In 1967 Haki R. Madhubuti picked up Imamu Baraka's demands for a "Black poem and a Black World" and began to aid in the development of a revolutionary consciousness of black people (Jones 117).

A major theme in his poetry is black pride. It includes a strong sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-affirmation while simultaneously honoring the rich history, accomplishments, and contributions of the Black community.

Haki R. Madhubuti realized that he must raise the black man's concept of himself. "A Poem for Black Minds" speaks directly toward black pride:

first, the color black/naturally

beautiful canNot be mixed with whiteness must not. (Lee, *Black Pride* 29)

The poet suggests that black individuals need to recognize and embrace their own inherent value before they can effectively advocate for their rights and express themselves. By infusing his poetry with a sense of black pride, the poet aims to instill a stronger sense of self-worth and empowerment within black people. Through his poetry, he seeks to inspire a stronger sense of self-worth, empowerment, and unity among black people, ultimately working towards a better future for the community.

Another prevailing theme in his poetry can be seen in his poetry is the profound importance of unity among Black people. In his famous poem "A Message All Black People Can Dig (& a few negroes too)" the poet explores the idea of unity among the Black community. This powerful piece not only aims to resonate with Black people but also calls upon those who may have distanced themselves from their roots, urging them to embrace their heritage. The speaker begins his message with a forceful impulse:

US: black people, beautiful people; the sons and daughters of beautiful people.
 we'll move together
 hands on weapons & families
 blending into the sun,
 into each/other. (Lee, *Don't Cry, Scream* 63.)

The speaker's intense drive communicates a feeling of urgency and purpose. The use of the word "we" emphasises the speaker's intention to motivate and mobilise the Black community and suggests a team effort. The term "beautiful people" is used to highlight Black people's inherent value and dignity as well as to encourage self-acceptance.

Speaking to the group as "US: blackpeople, beautiful people; the sons and daughters of beautiful people," the speaker highlights a feeling of kinship and common identity. This inclusive language strengthens and unites the black community..Leading critic and author, Stephen Henderson, cites Haki R. Madhubuti as "foremost among the young talented revolutionary poets," and according to Henderson, Haki R. Madhubuti is "more widely imitated than any other black poet." (Stephen 185)

The phrase "art for the people's sake" was first used in Haki Madhubuti's ground-breaking poem "The Wall of Respect," which captured the essence of artistic expression's significant social influence) .Madhubuti promotes "art for the people's sake," a holistic artistic movement that dismantles oppressive systems, breaks down boundaries, and reclaims narratives. It advocates the democratisation of production and exhorts artists to reject aristocracy and embrace their role as change-agents.The poem states:

A black creation
 Black art, of the people,
 For the people,
 Art for people's sake
 Black people
 The mighty black wall. (Prigoff and Dunitz 24)

This poignant poem honours the importance and impact of black art on society. It draws attention to the reality that black art is created by and for black people and has a purpose more than simple self-expression—it is art for the people's benefit. Haki R. Madhubuti rejected the white American system and white poetic models and turned his total attention to a black audience.

The expression "black art, of the people" refers to how black people's lives, cultures, and histories have affected black art. It represents the unique perspectives and experiences of Black people and originates from a genuine location. "For the people" emphasises that black art is not intended to satisfy the creator's needs or aspirations alone. Rather, the goal is to unite and motivate the greater African American community. It provides a voice for and validation of the struggles, triumphs, and experiences of Black people everywhere.

"Art for the People's sake" emphasises the importance of black art in society. It seeks to empower, educate, and raise others above and beyond personal objectives. It may be applied to challenge accepted norms, address social injustices, and bring about positive change both inside and outside of the African American community. "Black people" acknowledges and celebrates black identity. It highlights the importance of black people's experiences, opinions, and viewpoints being important to creative expression. It acknowledges the necessity of restoring Black people's place in the arts following centuries of exclusion. The symbolic structure referred to as "the mighty black wall" represents the resilience and fortitude of black artists and black art in general. It is proof of the enduring power of black creativity and provides a platform for harmony, representation, and celebration of black culture. Haki R. Madhubuti's poetic audience is in all cases black. Haki R. Madhubuti speaks directly to the "brothers and sisters" and places himself in the position as a leader or spokesman for the revolutionary movement. The fourteen-word poem speaks directly to black people:

Black People Think

People Black People

Think People Think

Black People Think

Think Black. (Lee, *Think Black* 24)

Haki R. Madhubuti instructs his black audience to accept the revolutionary movement as the base from which black people can deal with their problems in American society. Haki R. Madhubuti explains very clearly that the shade of skin color does not determine "blackness." Blackness is the development of the mind toward those values and behaviors that fit the exclusive needs of black people as a separate culture. Through his writings, he wants to motivate black people not to feel guilty about their color but to feel proud to be black. As a revolutionary black poet Haki R. Madhubuti's foremost intention is to create a message that will bring an end to white racist ideas that affect black people. He was a staunch advocate of his race This literary statement might be seen as a call to recognise the diversity of ideas and intellectual strength found within the African American community. It dispels stereotypes and assumptions by stating that black people are capable of critical thinking, self-reflection, and unique viewpoints.

The song "Black People Think" is played repeatedly to highlight the need to appreciate and respect the ideas and viewpoints held by people of color. It opposes the idea that black people should be reduced to stereotypical or unified thought processes.

The theme of the poem is the negative effects of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Its message is very clear that we must take action against an unjust society, deal with prejudice, and rise above it. We can only rely on ourselves to do this.

Motivated by Malcolm X and recalling the teachings of Marcus Garvey, Hundreds of African Americans used more aggressive strategies to promote black pride, black consciousness, and black power. The poet discusses the relevance of the phrase "Black Power" and its underlying message in his thought-provoking poem "Stereo." Stokely Carmichael, a well-known civil rights activist and leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), coined the phrase "Black Power" at the Meredith March Against Fear in June 1966, and it quickly received widespread recognition. African Americans in Mississippi were encouraged to march in order to encourage voter registration. "Black Power" became a national slogan for the black protest movement, sparking important discussions and debates about the goals and strategies of the struggle for racial equality. The poet discusses the relevance of the phrase "Black Power" and its underlying message in his thought-provoking poem "Stereo." The speaker in the poem says sarcastically:

I can clear a beach or swimming pool without

touching water.

I can make a lunch counter become deserted

in less than an hour.

I ALONE can make the word of God have little

or no meaning to many

in Sunday morning's prayer hour.

I have Power,

BLACK POWER. (Lee, *Think Black* 8)

The poet's focus on "Black Power" acts as a call to action, inspiring black people to embrace their innate power, foster self-esteem, and actively participate in the continuous battle for equality and liberation. Black Power does not seek to promote racial superiority or exclusion. Instead, it aims to address historical injustices, combat racism, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their race.

Miss Brooks classified him as a "pioneer and a positive prophet, a prophet not afraid to be positive even though, aware of a daily evolving, of his own sober churning" (Lee, *Don't Cry, Scream* 13).

Haki R. Madhubuti's contribution to African American Literature is unquestionable. He is a massive name that has worked for the welfare of his race facing all the problems in the white-dominated American society. His Poetry of revolution has a lasting effect on the mindset of every reader even today. His poetry has a message of struggle against the socioeconomic inequality created by the rulers and their henchmen. His verse represented the oppressed classes, and he became the voice of revolt against the establishment. His poetry was for ending all human suffering and establishing social justice.

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