CHAPTER – IV

AUGUST WILSON’S PLAYS: 1960s – 1990s

TWO TRAINS RUNNING-1960S

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August Wilson’s *Two Trains Running* is the seventh play in his ten-play cycle, which explores the African American socio-economic and cultural milieu of the 1960s. The play was for the first time produced in 1990 at the Yale Repertory Theatre and published in 1991. Moreover, it own prime awards such as Pulitzer Prize for drama (1992), Tony Award Nomination for the best play (1992), Lucille Lortel Award for outstanding revival (2007) and Audelco Award for Dramatic production of the year (2007). The play is set in the hill district Pittsburgh’s African American ghetto in 1969. *Two Trains Running* explores various issues of the African American life of the 1960s and especially it emphasizes on the crisis between the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to this, it explores the injustice faced by the African American ethnic minority. It faces poverty, racism, rootless and self-destruction. Moreover, urban renewal of Pittsburgh and displacement of the African Americans are also pivotal issues of the play.

The action of the play begins as the play begins at Memphis’s restaurant in Pittsburgh, which is near from West’s (a funeral director) home, and Lutz’s (meat dealer) shop. As the play opens, West, (a Memphis’ customer) talks on the phone regarding Number Running Business. Thereafter, Memphis, the protagonist of the play comes and orders to stop the phone. Then, Risa (a waitress in restaurant) points out the drawbacks of the Number Running game and expresses her negative perspective towards such African Americans. Memphis the protagonist, shares his personal life with Holloway (Memphis’s regular customer) especially his wife’s departure from him. Moreover, through their discussion, it becomes clear that prophet Samuel died and many people gather at West’s (a funeral director) house in order to see Prophet Samuel to get blessing for their lives. West is an African American funeral
director who becomes wealthy by the corpses because before burying them he robs them. Hence, he is the only rich African American in \textit{Two Trains Running}. Hambone (a retard man of 60 years) comes there saying his regular phrase, “He gonna give my ham” which symbolizes past injustice made out to him by white meat dealer Lutz. Hambone is mentally slow. Hence; Risa always expresses sympathy for him. Sterling Johnson, a 30 years jobless African American, enters in the restaurant who recognizes Risa as his friend’s sister. After that, he tells his imprisonment for bank robbery and negative experiences he faced while gaining job in racist American society. All characters in Memphis’s restaurant discuss about Samuel prophet and the crowd of the people to rub his head in order to be a sinless. Holloway adds that it is better to see Aunt Ester who is 249 years old African American matriarch and advisor for community. Moreover, he also states the contribution of Aunt Ester and Samuel Prophet to the community. They also discuss about the exploitation of Hambone by the white meat dealer Mr. Lutz.

The second scene poses Hambone’s demand of ham to Lutz. Hambone paints Lutz’s fence because Lutz promises him to give ham as a part of payment. However, Lutz gives him chicken instead of ham. It is a kind of cheating and injustice by the white man. Hence, to get proper benefit of Hambone’s work, he always visits Lutz meat shop saying “He is gonna give my ham.” Memphis also exposes his harassment in Mississippi in the 1931. He tells that the whites have enforced him to move towards Pittsburgh. Risa, a waitress of Memphis damages her leg in order to keep away men from her beauty. Memphis gets confusion about the behavior of Risa. Memphis also supports the robbery of Sterling Johnson saying that the whites blocked all money in the U.S.
The Urban Renewal Authority of the Pittsburgh wants to seize the restaurant of Memphis. However, they offer fewer prices, which dissatisfy the expectations of Memphis. Memphis expectation was to sell his property at least $25,000.

Sterling Johnson, a gambler is interested in Risa. However, Risa’s attitude is different. She does not want to be seen her by men as a sex object. Sterling Johnson’s imprisonment for bank robbery and joblessness, which creates negative impression in Risa’s mind. Sterling Johnson, in order to get emancipation, turns towards the Prophet Samuel and Aunt Ester (cultural advisor).

Sterling Johnson also takes interest in the rally of Malcolm-X’s birthday celebration as the leader of Black Power Movement. Moreover, he also motivates the other members in the restaurant of Memphis. Memphis does not show any interest in the rally though he does not tell its reason. When, Sterling invites Risa to participate in the rally, she shows little bit of interest.

The character of Sterling Johnson is the most representative and suggestive for the respect of his culture. He teaches Hambone “black is beautiful.” He also supports Hambone to get his ham back from Lutz. At the end of the play, Sterling brings his ham to put it at his casket.

Before going to the court, in order to get proper money of his restaurant, he meets Aunt Ester (259 years old African American cultural advisor). Aunt Ester directs him to throw 20 dollars in the river. He does that and he gets $35,000 as a price of his restaurant. Meanwhile, Hambone disappears and nobody is able to see him before two days. After two days, it becomes clear that, he has died in sleep at his house.

The final scene of the play opens on the day of Hambone’s funeral. Memphis appears singing a song; although he got proper money of his
property. He is in sorrow because of the death of Hambone. Hambone does not get justice through the white dealer. Memphis realizes the plights of the black men. At the end of the play, Sterling brings a ham and tells West to keep it in the Hambone’s Casket.

The location of the play’s setting is restaurant in Pittsburgh at 1621, Wylie Avenue Hill District. The Hill district was most prosperous in the previous years. Hence, many African Americans have migrated in order to get a new lease of life, as they were harassed in the South by the white landowners. Their harassment in the South enforces them to migrate to Pittsburgh. As a result, the exodus of African Americans created various urban problems in the Pittsburgh city. They suffered in order to achieve their bread and butter, hence, the problems like violence, injustice, rootless-ness and victimization occurred in the African American neighborhoods.

The restaurant in the play is at 1621 Wylie Avenue, in Pittsburgh’s Hill District in the 1940 and 50s. The Hill District was one of the most prosperous, culturally active black neighborhoods in the United States. In 1960s, however, the neighborhood has suffered a sharp economic decline.¹

Wilson wants to explore the foolishness of migration of the African Americans from the South to the North. Migration is responsible for the exploitation of the African Americans. Prewencki Cliff explicates, “[G]reat migration of Southern blacks to the North was a mistake; the play explores a powerful economic theme: specifically a series of problem or unfulfilled contrasts with African Americans on the losing end.”² Two Trains Running exposes the directionless African Americans of the 1960s.
At the outset of 1960s, the African Americans strongly tried to establish their racial equality in the American Society. Hence, to achieve racial equality in social- economic and cultural grounds, they had to suffer and were exploited by the white Eurocentric Americans. “Two Trains Running doesn’t idealize the relationship between American whites and African Americans. It quite clearly shows the pain of the process of gaining racial equality in the 1960s America.”

The African American culture was attacked by economic disability of the 1960s African Americans. They were scattered and disordered from their cultural heritage due to their poverty and harassment. To survive their culture in such a crucial time was a challenge for them. “The overriding theme of Two Trains Running is the bitter economic reality of urban life and the need to preserve African American culture amidst such condition.” Wilsonian dramaturgy appeals to the black to survive and respect their unique culture and heritage although, they are the victims in the American society.

Most of the characters who visit the restaurant of Memphis are poor and displaced people who have migrated from the South to the North in hope of new life. West, is only one customer in the restaurant who made rich himself by burying dead bodies He says, “So many people was dying from that fast life I figured I could make me some money burying them and live a long life too” (TTR, 93). Holloway is one of the customers of Memphis who poor and believes in destiny in order to be a successful person. Hambone is a victim of white meat dealer and a poor painter. He is psychologically slow and suffers in order to get his payment from Lutz, a white meat dealer. Sterling Johnson is a jobless African American who robs bank and goes to prison. Wolf is also in Number Running business who represents the slavery of the African
Americans. Moreover, he is displaced from his family and suffers to be a successful human being. Risa is a poor waitress in Memphis’s restaurant and she also psychologically suffers to establish her identity as a independent woman. Tomas Kacer in his article, “Criticism of Apartheid in Blood Knot in Comparison with Two Trains Running and Philadelphia Here I Come, illustrated the poverty and financial conditions of Wilson’s characters. He illustrates:

*Two Trains Running*, on the other hand, some of the African American characters are rather rich. Although most of the victims of the restaurant where all the action takes place are relatively poor, there are a few wealthy characters such as Mr. West, the undertaker. As a youngster, he spotted his chance of making fortune by burying victims of illegal trades rather than participating in them. The play thus, shows that it is possible for courageous African American to start business and become rich in the 1960s.⁵

Although, African Americans were the victims of white capitalist system, they could have started their own business in order to compete with the whites. In the play *Two Trains Running* the character of West represents the courageous attitude and a ideal example for the African American of the 1960s in order to come out from their economic disabilities in capitalist American society.

Exploration of the African American culture and heritage are most eminent traits of Wilsonian dramatic art. In order to create cultural consciousness amongst the blacks, Wilson has created his special character Aunt Ester (a 249 years old African American matriarch). Aunt
Ester is Wilson’s special character that carries the African American culture throughout his many plays in his ten-play cycle. Aunt Ester directs many characters in Two Trains Running towards proper direction of their life. Aunt Ester consults Memphis, Wolf, Holloway and Sterling in the present play in search their identity as human being. Prewencki Cliff observes:

Though Aunt Ester never appears on stage, her role as the unseen prophet is central to Wilson’s explorations of economic reality and of African American culture. As Holloway notes, Aunt Ester gives him clients something more valuable than money tradition. She is the spiritual antidote to the economic enslavement of the community.

Wilson also creates the unseen characters of Samuel Prophet whom people consider their emancipator. Many people go to rub their head after his death at West funeral housing.

Urban renewal is leading thematic concern of the present play. In order to do urban renewal many building were destroyed to establish civil housing society. Many African Americans were displaced and scattered because the urban renewal authorities destroyed their houses in the ghettoes. “Pittsburgh’s urban redevelopment authority seized land in the area throughout the 1960s, as part of the movement known generally as urban renewal.”

Although, Memphis wants to sell his property, he expects more Urban Renewal Authority offered price for his restaurant than that. To get proper price for his restaurant is his deepest expectation. However, they do not care Memphis’s expectation. Memphis considers the authority as greedy people. They try to exploit Memphis. He puts, “I
ain’t greedy. But if they wanna tear it down they gonna have to meet my price.” (TTR, 10)

“In the play, Memphis’s building is to be seized by the city (Presumably by the URA), and he is nervous about the price he will receive for it.”8 Memphis represents many African Americans of the 1960s whose buildings were seized by the Urban Renewal Authority of the Pittsburgh. This is a kind of injustice deliberately done to the African American minority in the Pittsburgh.

The leadership of the African American of the 1960 distributed in two ideologies, one is Black Power Movement and another is Civil Rights Movement. Many African Americans of the 1960s turned towards a radical ideology of the Black Power Movement in order to achieve their constitutional and political rights more speedily than Civil Right Movement. However, old generation of the African American remain unchanged. They accepted the ideology of the Civil Rights Movement. Wilson’s Two Trains Running explores the dilemma of two generation in order to accept the ideology or leadership. Charles Patrick Tyndall notes:

The demonstration of black rage by two of these characters (Hambone and Sterling) shows the different ways African American men in the 1960s fought racial injustice. Sterling and Hambone are different characters from distinct eras that produce opposite results from their exhibition of black rage. Hambone’s manifestation of rage led to a demand for justice, while Sterling’s presentation of rage motivated him to take what was due. There two tracks parallel the shift from the Civil Rights
Movement to the Black Power Movement in the 1960s. Hambone represents the old generation and Civil Rights Movement, which emphasizes on the constitutional way to achieve the rights. On the other hand, Sterling represents the Black Power Movement, which believes in the radical ideology to achieve the rights of African Americans of the 1960s. The character of Memphis who leads to old generation is not interested in rally of Malcolm-x birthday ceremony. On the other hand, Risa, a waitress in Memphis restaurant alienated from a rally. She says, “I don’t want to go down there with them niggers. There might be a riot or something.”(TTR, 47) Many people of the 1960s were alienated from both the ideologies of the time. They were in turmoil to accept the leadership of their community. “When Sterling invites Risa to the rally, she shows surprisingly little interest. Though she does not say so explicitly, it appears she feels alienated from the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement.” The alienation of the people from the two ideologies creates dilemma for their cultural identity. They were alienated from their ideologies because they did not want more suffering and violence.

To understand the significance of the rally, one must consider the history of riots in Pittsburgh in the late 1960s. After the assassination of Martin Luther king Jr. on April 4 1968, a wave of riots struck Urban, black areas of the United States.... [T]he riots in Pittsburgh damages black areas economically and escalated tensions with the city police.

Thus, the turmoil of 1960s leadership is most significant issue of the play.
Risa is only female characters in August Wilson’s *Two Trains Running* who appears on the stage. She is the victim of patriarchal social order of the African Americans. She is working as waitress in Memphis’s restaurant, however, it is difficult for her to be a only female because all other characters who daily visit the restaurant are male. In order to keep men away from her beauty, she damages her leg, which indicates to show her to be ugly to divert the attention of men. She says, “I don’t want to be tied up with nobody I got to be worrying is they gonna rob another bank of something (TTR, 100). Risa wants her original female identity in African American society. She does not want to be a sex object in order to fulfill the desire of men. She also hates the bad manners and life style of the African Americans. Sterling tries to catch her however, she rejects him. “The irresponsible attitude to money and gambling is an obstacle in Sterling’s love for Risa.”  

Although, Risa is away from men, she wants express her identity by serving food to the people. She tries to establish her identity as a woman through offering food to the people “Risa, the only female character in *Two Trains Running*, uses food to self- express in the male dominance of Memphis’s Diner.” Risa represents the African American women of the 1960s America who plays vital role to guard her community, though the men were marginalized.

Wilson’s inclusion of the quotidian act of eating and food preparation is significant for what it suggests about the critical ways in which African American women act as consumers, cultural workers and even players with or involving food. Risa has largely been talked about in the context of the self-sacrification inflicted upon her legs. Refusing to be objectified as a site of a male desire,
Risa shifts the attention from her physical body to the food that she serves.\textsuperscript{14} 

*Two Trains Running* is a psychological drama largely because the temperament of Risa is to divert men’s attention from her body to food which suggests the psychological journey in order to search her identity as only a female and not a sex object.

Wilson explores the “Black is Beautiful” movement of the 1960s through his *Two Trains Running*. The consciousness of the blacks was awakening by the movement in the African Americans. The European Americans created various prejudices against the black skin of the African Americans, however, they realized the dignity and rich heritage of their race. Memphis says, “I know I look nice. Got good manners and everything” (TTR, 43) Memphis’ impression about his self-perception suggests the consciousness of the African Americans towards their black race.

Memphis is not satisfied with his personal life though his wife has left him. He represents the African Americans of the 1960s whose wives have gone away from them. He illustrates, “Some people don’t have nobody to cook for them. Men whose wives done died and left them. Cook for them thirty years and lay down and die. Who’s gonna cook for them now?” (TTR, 10) Although Memphis has his own restaurant and property, he is not psychologically stable because of the absence of a woman from his life. Marry Ellen Snodgrass notes, “Lee (Memphis) insists on careful management of goods, especially sugar, a representation of the absence of sweet contentment in his life.”\textsuperscript{15}

The character of Holloway represents the protest of the African Americans of the 1960s. He believes to compete with the whites; the black should follow the amoral path. “To Holloway, blacks are in
constant competition with whites for money. The best way for blacks to rise from poverty to wealth is through gambling.”

According to Holloway blacks are, “The most hard working people in the world” (TTR, 34). However, the whites would not accept their genius and intelligence, hence, they follow the immoral ways for success.

The character of Hambone represents the sorrow and pain of the African Americans in established American European society. The white meat dealer harasses him in order to get his own payment for a long time. When he dies at the end of the play, “West’s finding that the handyman’s body was badly scarred, a symbol of the undisclosed hurt that black carry from the past.”

Wilson wants to state that the African American never got the justice in racist American society of 1960s.

Two Trains Running is most penetrative and colorful play of August Wilson because it explores the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the 1960s of the African Americans. The play exposes the injustice, poverty, racism, rootless and victimization of the 1960s African Americans in Pittsburgh in particular and in the U.S. in general. Moreover, Black Power vrs. Civil Right Movement is also leading issue of the play, wherein the African Americans were in turmoil in order to decide their ideology and leadership. In addition to this, Wilson explores the problem of the Urban Renewal of the 1960s and the place of African American women in the patriarchal social order in artistic way.
JITNEY – 1970S

August Wilson’s *Jitney* is foremost play in his ten-play cycle, which explores the African Americans experiences of the 1970s. *Jitney* is eight play in his ten-play cycle. It is set at gypsy cab station in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in early autumn 1977. It was first produced in 1982 at the Allegheny Repertory Theatre. *Jitney* was also credited Outer Critics Circle Award for outstanding off Broadway play (2001) and Laurence Oliver Award for Best New Play (2002). Moreover, *Jitney* propagates various fundamental issues regarding the life of African Americans of the 1970s. The impact of urban renewal on the lives of the people, the crises of father-son relationship, man-woman relationship, love, honor, duty betrayal and violence are central issues of *Jitney*. Wilson tries to present thereby using his dramatic talents. Moreover, 1970s Vietnam War is also reflected throughout the play.

The first scene of the first act opens at the building of *Jitney* station when Youngblood (a 23 years old Vietnam War Veteran and *Jitney* driver) and Turnbo (an old *Jitney* driver) play a game of checkers. Thereafter, Fielding (a *Jitney* driver) enters with drinking, asks money to Youngblood and Fielding. However, they neglected him. Thereupon, Doub (another *Jitney* driver) comes there whom Fielding asks money. He agrees on the promise that money should be returned as early as possible. Thereafter, Shealy (a number taker at *Jitney* station) comes there and tells about his lottery business to the drivers. Moreover, he also tells about his curse by Rosie who was his girl friend and has told him that whenever he would go to another woman he would see her face. However, he informs that this curse was a false imagination. He also discloses the news of Booster who is likely to be released from prison within few a days. Philmore (a doorman) comes there and asks Shealy to take him to home.
However, Shealy tells him that he doesn’t have a car. Then, Youngblood takes him to home. Thereafter, Turnbo (a Jitney driver) comes there and tells the story of a boy who has stolen his own grandmother’s television box. Becker (a boss of Jitney station) helps to get the job of Sheleay’s nephew. Turnbo takes interest in Youngblood’s personal life and he tells Doub about the affair between Youngblood and his lover’s sister Peaches. Doub suggests Turnbo not to interfere between their personal lives. Youngblood tries to buy a new house; however, are some obstacles there in his path.

The second scene opens at Jitney station when Youngblood asks Trunbo about his money. However, Trunbo is not ready to return his money back. Hence, the station boss interferes between them and warns Turnbo to return Youngblood’s money. Thereafter, Turnbo returns money to Youngblood against his wish. Thereupon, they argue on the number of trips of station. Becker’s rules allow Youngblood to move with Passengers. Becker orders Turnbo in order to follow the rules of the station such as to clean the taxi. Moreover, Rena (a 21 year girlfriend of Youngblood) enters in order to search Youngblood at station. Turnbo sees with her and informs that Youngblood had just departed with passengers. He also advises her that she should look for old and sensuous man in order to take care of her and her son. In addition, he informs her about the affair between Youngblood and her sister Peaches. However, Rena does not believe in Turnbo what he has told her. When Youngblood comes back from the trip, she scolds him about the disappearance of the money from their house. Youngblood tells her that he has taken money because he is indebted of others. He also tells her that everything would be right. Thereupon, Rena reminds him about the household responsibilities of them and their son. Moreover, she also asks him about
the affair between he and her sister Peaches. Then, Backer informs to
Doub about the plan of Urban Renewal council to destroy the *Jitney* cab
station. They both feel insecure for their future and decide to call a
meeting in order to get way from disaster. The scene ends with the news
of Booster’s (a son of Decker) emancipation from prison.

The third scene of the play opens at early morning. Youngblood
and Turnbo appear on the stage. Turnbo enquire Youngblood about
Backer and tells him the story of Becker’s son who had imprisoned under
the crime of rape and murder of a white girl. In fact, the girl lies in the
court blaming Booster as a rapist. Hence, after bail Booster shots her. He
again arrested and punished for the death by electric chair. When his
mother listens his punishment of electric chair, she dies. Thereafter,
Turnbo tells Youngblood that Booster should not have to kill the girl. On
the other hand, Turnbo tells that Youngblood’s lover has right to kill him
because he tells to her and has developed an affairs with her sister
Peaches. Youngblood gets crazy and warns Turnbo not to interfere in his
personal life. There are strong arguments between them and it result to
put gun against Youngblood by Turnbo. Backer consoles Turnbo and
Youngblood moves to a trip. Thereafter, Fielding enters and Becker tells
him stations rules.

The scene four of the first act initiates when the son of Becker
enters at the station -in search of his father. At the outset of his arrival, he
meets Fielding and Turnbo. Fielding expresses his own personal story
about his wife and her love to him, until today though he does not see her
since last 22 years. Then the father of Booster comes and orders to
Fielding to leave the station because he should not violate the rules. At
Fielding’s request, Becker agrees with him to work at station without
breaking the rules. Becker and Booster encounter with each other and
Becker asks him about the future plan of his blamed life. Booster tells him that he owes many things to society and will prefer to work for it. Moreover, Becker considers Booster responsible for his wife death, on the other hand, Booster tells him that he is equally responsible for his mother’s death because he did not accompany her during the days of his trial. As a result, she has died.

The scene first of the second act begins when Turnbo and Doub argue about who is the prettiest woman Sarah Vaughn or Lena Horne across the world. Doub expresses that money and woman lead men towards death. Turnbo supplements his attitude towards the money and woman. Thereafter, Youngblood comes and they discuss about the destruction of Jitney by Urban Renewal Council. Youngblood argues that the whites always marginalize blacks when they stand for towards development and proper directions. Doub advises Youngblood that he should not care for future since he has pension of railroad. Moreover, he advises him to go to school in order to be respectful and prosperous in life. Youngblood informs Rena his plan to buy a house. However, Rena scolds him for not informing him earlier about such valuable decision. Youngblood says he wants to surprise her. Hence, he did not inform her about the decision. Then, all drivers gather at Jitney station in order to discuss their future because the Jitney station in likely to be destroyed by Urban Renewal Council of Pittsburgh. After the discussion, Booster confronts his fathers about their unsatisfied past life. Becker leaves and Fielding enters with bottle and tells Booster that drinking is against Becker’s rules. On that, Booster says that his father rules lead him to such difficult condition. Then Philmore comes there and his wife throws him out of her house.
The scene second starts at evening when all *Jittery* drivers are discussing in connection with the city’s threat to destroy the station for Urban Renewal. The boss of the station, Becker, concludes that they should hire a lawyer in order to file a writ petition against illegal practice of Urban Renewal Council. Then, Becker tells the rules of *Jitney* station to his drivers.

The third sorrowful scene begins when all *Jitney* drivers sit silently because unfortunate accidental death of their boss, Becker at mill. Fielding breaks the silence and expresses his impression about the goodness of Mr. Becker as a human being. They take flowers to pay tribute at his funeral. However, they worry about Booster, the son of Backer, who does not know until about his father’s death. Finally, he comes to the station in happy mood because he won the money in Number Running Game. Doub tells him about his father’s death, Booster gets confused and he punches Doub. However, other drivers console him.

The final scene of the play discloses after three days when all men come back from the funeral function of Becker. They discuss about their future in the transportation business. Everybody expresses their views about their future plan. Then they express their positive views with Becker as a good man of respect and honor. Booster also expresses his proudness as a son of Becker. At the end of the play *Jitney* station’s phone rings and it is received by Booster, a son of *Jitney* station’s boss. It symbolizes the acceptance of his father’s occupation to guard the future of *Jitney* drivers and continues his father’s heritage.

The Urban Renewal movement in the Northern cities like Pittsburgh, dominates the 1970s decade in order to settle the administration. Since the emancipation from the slavery, many African
Americans have migrated to the Northern cities in order to settle and lead prosperous life. However, the exodus of the people created city slums ghettos which is responsible for creating various urban problems. In order to settle city life in proper order, The Urban Renewal Council was established to shift and destroy the various locations and buildings of black ghettos and neighborhoods.

This Urban Renewal Movement strongly affected the lives of the African Americans of the 1970s. *Jitney* dramatically presents the lives of cab drivers who are the victims of Urban Renewal Movement. All drivers life is dependent on *Jitney* station. However, the Urban Renewal Council gives notice to them to shift or tear the building of *Jitney* station:

DOUB : Turnbo, they boarding up the station the first of the month. Becker talking about quitting, so we ought to start thinking about moving somewhere or getting on with somebody else.

TURNB : Who’s boarding the station?

DOUB : The city. They fixing to tear down the whole block Clifford and everybody done got their notices. The man was by here two week ago (JIT, 38)

Throughout the play, the main tension of the characters is the insecurity of their future and question of their daily bread and butter. At last, they conclude that they should file petition against the illegal practice of city’s renewal and destruction of their lives. “Becker and his cabbies in *Jitney* (2000) determine that they will hire a lawyer and will resist the city ordinance to move out of their *Jitney* cab station.”18 The African American drivers decide to protest against the Urban Renewal Council
and its illegal practice of city’s destruction. However, their leader or the boss of Jitney station dies in mill accident. Hence, they have lost their confidence to stand against the city. Although, Becker dies, his son continues the heritage of his father. “In the text, hard time in the era call for the city’s razing of Pope’s restaurant to comply with Urban renewal, the abstract villain of the play.”¹⁹ Urban Renewal Council plays a abstract role of the villain though the play dominates the lives of poor and helpless African Americans.

The complex African American man woman relationship is overriding theme of Jitney. The sexual and emotional relationship between Youngblood and Rena does not have maturity because they are only lovers and they have a son of two years without marriage. It seems that there is the loss of marriage institution in the African American community of the 1970s. The lack of marriage in their lives may be a cause of their immaturity in daily life. Youngblood represents the patriarchal social order because he always dominates and deceives his wife Rena. On the other hand, “Rena is a classy woman who deserves the respect and love of a steady man. She quarrels with her lover because she wants an honest relationship.”²² Youngblood always plays tricks with her because he always tells her about new house but in reality he does not buy it. Hence, she points out “Darhell you aint bought no house without me. How many times in your life do you get to pick out a house?” (JIT, 74). Although, Rena understands the fault and senseless life of her lover, she does not leave him. Youngblood always shows different temptation and false promises to control her. “Youngblood’s planned surprise of a new house represents not love and understanding, but rather a way to control and limit Rena’s involvement.”²¹ The behavior pattern of
Youngblood with his woman reveals the culture of male dominant society.

Rena is careful about her family duties as a mother of a son and woman of Youngblood. She scolds Youngblood for expending the money, which was saved to fulfill the daily needs of the house. On the other hand, Youngblood creates tension and depression in her, “the playwright depict her frustration from assuming two many responsibilities, a nod to females that he reacts in the portrayal of Rose in *Fences.*”

22 Wilson’s women always take the responsibilities of the household rather than men as Wilson has depicted Rose in *Fences* and Rena in *Jitney.* Although, Rose knows her husband affair with Alberta in the play *Fences,* she does not leave him, on the other hand tolerates the burden of her husband’s illegal and immoral deeds. The same fashion reflected in *Jitney* too. Although, Rena knows her man’s affair with Peaches, she bears him. She says, “I just want you to know I ain’t fool, Darnell. I know you been running around with Peaches and her crowd all hours of the night. (JIT, 35) Wilson presents the mature African American women who have the sense of their duty towards their family and men. These women are constant and do not change their promises, though their men break their trust with them. Turnbo in *Jitney* says to Rena, “Oh, I see him ... running around with other woman. I see him with your sister all the time... Day and night (JIT, 31) Turnbo convinces her that she should see some mature and responsible man to take care of her and her son. However, she does not hesitate or lose her confidence and continues her relationship with her man. It indicates the greatness and maturity of the African American women in *Jitney.*

Father-son relationship is central conflict of the play, which represents the African American fathers and sons of 1970s America.
Becker, a boss of *Jitney* station is respected person in his community; however, his son who is arrested for blaming rape and murder of a white girl ruins his respect. Booster develops his relationship with a white girl because:

Booster believes that his association with this white girl bring his status and power through her whiteness. However, this is not a actually an achievement of bigness but a Phantasm, as Booster’s relationship with the white girl is always and already tenuous due to their unequal access to wealth and to the historic tension of this interracial association.”

The relationship with the white girl leads Booster towards the destruction of his and her life. In fact, he does not rape the girl, she lies and Booster is arrested. When he is released on bail, he takes his gun and shoots the girl. Hence, he is arrested again punished for a death in electric chair. Although, he has shot the girl, in fact his black rage is responsible for his uncontrolled behavior. Marry Ellen Snodgrass observes:

Booster tries to explain why he vented out on his own and refused to be belittled as a rapist of a white girl the traditional crime which blacks, weather guilty or innocent, often gave their lives. Wilson suggests that American racist practice is responsible for raising the black rage of Booster and it leads him towards the death of a white girl.

This ruin and blam background of Booster is responsible for spoiling the relationship between him and his father. The discussion
between father and son reveals their difference of opinion regarding the unfortunate incident in the life of Booster.

BECKER : That gal lying didn’t make you wrong in the world. A lie don’t make you make you wrong in the world.

BOOSTER : I don’t make you right either. Right is right and right don’t wrong nobody.
You thought me that.

BECKER : Yean pop, you taught me a lot of things. And a lot of things I had to learn on my own.... (JIT, 56)

Booster believes himself to be a warrior because what he has done with a white girl is a kind of victory for him though it is crime for others. On the other hand, Becker’s view is different. He does not want to kill anybody for any reason.

BECKER : Proud of you for killing somebody!

BOOSTER : No, Pop, For being a warrior. For dealing with the world in ways that you didn’t or couldn’t or wouldn’t (JIT, 57).

Wilson indicates the changed generation of the African Americans who are absolutely different from their father’s trusts and beliefs. Booster, “Hay pop, you took your road... you made your choices you done what was right for you. I made my choice. I took my road and I did what was right for me (JIT, 58). Booster directly explicates their different ways of living. Although, Becker’s son has disrespected and humiliated him, Becker is constant and respectful African American who maintained his family as a cultured. “Placating the white Patriarchy, Becker maintains, has made it possible for him to perform the masculine role of
breadwinner and to fulfill his obligations as father to his family.”

He played his role as a father of a son as per the established rules of the contemporary society. Hence, at the end of the play when he dies, his son expresses his pride being his son. He says, “I am proud of my old man (JIT, 96).

Wilson also presents the noble African Americans of the 1970s America. The character of Doub represents the soberness and human dignity. He always keeps himself asides from the temptation. He says, “That’s why I don’t talk about women. I don’t talk about money either... Them is the too things that get most people killed.” (JIT, 64). His vision of life is greedless and helpful. He always helps other and tries to contribute something for the community. He is “One of the worthy common man whom the playwright honors. Because Doub is single and free with money and advice.”

He guides the others drivers to take proper decision towards their lives. He advises Youngblood to go to school in order to live a respected life.

Turnbo, 57 years old African American cab driver in Jitney station plays very significant role in Jitney in order to supply the background information about various incidents and characters. “Turnbo is the playwright’s mouth piece and source of background information as well as the play’s pandora.”

Moreover, he represents the violent and disordered nature of the 1970s African Americans. As a result, he takes interest in other’s personal life and creates trouble for himself and others.

Fielding is an African American driver who represents the drunken and moneyless people of the 1970s. He always spoils the rules of the Jitney station and asks for money. “Wilson uses Fielding as a model of self – reclamation.” He does not listen to anybody and always try to be free from all burdens of life.
FIELDING: This is a free country! I’m a free man! You can’t tell me what to do! This is the United States of America (JIT, 50).

Philmore, a door attendant in restaurant represents disturbed family life of African Americans. “[H]e stays out all night listening to music at the working men’s club, his wife rejects him from their home above the Frankstown Bar.”

Shealy, a number taker at Jitney always considers Jitney on his level base. His relationship with Rosie, his jealous girlfriend represents the mistruths and betrayal of the 1970s African American man–woman relationship.

Many of the characters in Jitney has serve as veterans in Vietnam War and share their experiences with each other throughout the play. Karen C. Blissfield illustrates,” The play also demarcates its historical framework through allusion to the Vietnam war,”

Socio-economic and cultural life of the Pittsburgh’s African Americans of the 1970s is well staged by August Wilson followed by various micro observations of their lives. He explodes the depression of the 1970s’ Jitney cab drivers and their exploitation in the racist American society under the name of Urban Renewal. Moreover, Wilson explores the family values such as love, trusts and duty as the universal themes in Jitney.
KING HEADLEY II 1980s

*King Headley II* is ninth play in August Wilson’s ten-play cycle, which is set in 1985 at the backyard of three houses in the Hill District, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The play was first produced in Pittsburgh Public Theatre in 1999. Moreover, it own Tony Award Nomination for the best play in the 2001. The play is sequel to August Wilson’s play *Seven Guitars* which is set in 1940s. The characters in *Seven Guitars* are repeated with their names in *King Hedley II* and each character has its relationship with the characters in *Seven Guitars*.

*King Hedley II* explores the 1980s panoramic picture of oppressive and ruined life of African American criminals. In addition to this, it also propagates the issues like man-woman relationship, mother son relationship, criminality, problems of abortion spiritual and mythical beliefs and faiths of the African Americans.

The first scene of the play begins when king Hedley II (a thirty-five year African American man) enters at the yard in order to plant some seeds there. King’s mother (a sixty-one year old African American singer) asks him about the phone service of their home. King tells her that he would get money soon then he would be back it at home. Moreover, he tells her that he won’t not transfer phone’s connection on the name of his mother (Ruby).

Thereafter, Ruby informs king that the seeds he is going to plant in the poor soil would not grow properly. King’s reply to her is most momentous. He says, “This is the dirt I got. This is me right here (KH - II, 10). Through their discussion, it also clears that King is facing financial problems because the boss does not give contract to him. Moreover, there are arguments between King and his mother on the issue of king’s childhood life. After King’s birth, Ruby hands him to her sister Louise.
and goes away. Therefore, King considers Louise as his mother who has just died by leukemia.

Mister, thirty-six years old African American is close friend of king. Both used to sell stolen refrigerators in order to earn money. King tells Tonya (a wife of king) that he dreamed a holo (ring of light) around his head. King waits for Tonya in order to move to collect his anniversary pictures from the store. Mister informs king that Pernell’s cousin is in town in order to kill king because king killed Pernell. Hence, King keeps pistol with him in case of emergency attack. Ruby informs that her lover Elmore is likely to come to visit her. The scene ends when Stool Pigeon (a 85 years mystic man) brings the sad news of Aunt Esters death who was 265 years old African American spiritual and history teller.

The second scene of the play starts when King is watering his seeds. Stool Pigeon comes with two jugs of water and tells king that all niggers are in trouble because God was riding through the land and he has planned to create trouble for niggers. To supplement his argument he quotes the holly Bible. Moreover, Stool Pigeon tells King that the death of Aunt Ester is great loss of the community because she knows all the secrets of the lives of the African Americans. Thereafter, King shows a key ring to Stool Pigeon, which was given to him by Aunt Ester. Mister, a friend of King suggests him that they should open the video store in order to strengthen their financial condition.

It also clearly discloses that King, Mister and Elmore are criminals because they have murdered men and now sell stolen refrigerators. Most significant aspect of the scene is that King’s wife Tonya is pregnant. However, she wants to go for abortion because she believes that this is violent and ruthless world, which will harass her baby. On the other hand, King wants child to continue his heritage and establish his identity in the
world. Ruby consoles Tonya that when she was pregnant with, Aunt Ester advises her that God has given one hand to preserve child and second to other works.

The third scene begins at Ruby’s house when Elmore, her lover, sitting on the steps, cleaning pistol. Therefore, Ruby comes and tells that she fears gun. Hence, he must keep it up. Thereafter, there is long discussion about their previous life regarding various good and bad things of their life. Kings enters and informs that storekeeper loses his anniversary pictures and now, he does not accept receipt of it.

The first scene of the second act initiates when Stool Pigeon enters with a dead black cat of Aunt Ester in order to bury it in King’s plot of seeds. Tonya opposes him to bury it there. However, Stool Pigeon bury it there. He also tells her that the cat needs blood in order to alive be the spirit of Aunt Ester for community. Then he offers a machete to King, which is owned by King’s father, and he kills Floyd Burton. Then, Mister comes there and discuss as with King about the plan to rob Jewelry shop in day light in order to open video store.

The second scene opens when king and Mister come into the yard of King. They have robbed the Jewelry shop and now they try to safe them in the house of King. They have stolen $ 3,160 and a ring in order to offer it to Tonya. Mister and King share their money and Mister goes to expend it. Stool Pigeon gives the news of Jewelry shop robbery in the city. Thereafter, Elmore comes and buys a refrigerator for Ruby. Then they discuss about their prison days. King tells Pernell whom king has killed and went to prison marks his scar on the face. Tonya refuses to take a stolen ring.

The third scene starts when Ruby and Tonya discuss about King. Thereafter, King’s friend Mister comes in order to see King but he does
not find him. Mister gives his pistol to Ruby and goes to his house. King comes with good news that his boss has given him a contract. Thereby, he can join his work again. Thereafter, Tonya and King discuss about their lives. Tonya insists no aborting her child, however, King requests her not to abort because his bad situation would be changed as flowers in his plot.

Scene four begins when King cleans his machete which was given to him by Stool Pigeon as a heritage of his father. Elmore and Ruby disclose their intention to marry. Ruby and Elmore start to dance. However, Elmore does not shows interest in waltz. Thereupon, Ruby tries to teach waltz to her son King-saying Leroy (her previous husband) was good in Waltz dance. After listening, the appreciation of Leroy by Ruby, Elmore becomes furious. He exposes that King’s father is not Hedley but Leroy whom Elmore murdered for fifty dollars.

The last scene of the play begins when all family members talk to King to take revenge of his father’s death. When Elmore enters, King gives him fifty dollars, which his father has taken from Elmore. Thereafter, King asks Elmore for craps game, however after a while they start fighting. King throws Elmore on the ground and put his father’s machete on his neck. Then Elmore puts his gun on king. Ruby comes with her pistol to save her son from Elmore; she shoots but unfortunately, instead of Elmore king dies. Thereafter, all characters gather around King and Ruby sing a song believing that her son would be safe and the play ends.

Wilson’s momentous play King Hedley II dramatizes the criminal and worthless life of African Americans of the 1980s. At the outset King Hedley II, the title character of the play is just released from the prison under the crime of murder of Pernell. King is most violent and destructive character in the play who represents the African American youths of
1980s. In this connection, Harry J. Elam’s observation is most considerable. He observes:

Wilson creates an ironic portrait of royalty and a kingdom steeped in the depressed circumstances of the 1980s urban milieu, where black poverty, despair, and cultural devastation are the norm. Sadly, king represents a generation of black children unable to thrive in their kingdom in the self-destructive 1980s.\(^{31}\)

Harry J. Elam rightly points out the dilemma of African Americans of the 1980s who were alienated from their self-reliance. This was their socio-economic and cultural situation in African racist society.

King always keeps gun with him for security, robbery and violence. Another criminal figure in the play is King’s friend Mister who helps King to sell stolen refrigerators in order to strengthen their financial condition. They plan to rob Jewelry shop in order to open their own video store. King and Mister attracted towards robbery and violence because of the lack of opportunities and problems of unemployment of African Americans of the 1980s. “His (king’s) train of thought illustrates the playwright’s belief that lack of opportunity is the cause of black discontent and crime.”\(^{32}\) Wilson explores the tactics of the white to eliminate the blacks from jobs and opportunities of the 1980s. King and Mister are victims of racist practice in the U.S. in various academic, industrial, corporate and professional sectors. “[T]he act of killing Pernell bring scar meaning it exposes king’s in securities and object status that run much deeper than the surface.”\(^{33}\) The reasons of insecurities and instability in their lives connected with the unemployment and alienation from the opportunities. Many Ellen Snodgrass explicates:
The era recalls the drug-related drive-by shooting, broken families, theft, homelessness and vainglorious Reganomics that promised trickle-down profits as the nation’s wealth accumulated in the hand of the rich while inner cities crumbled.\(^{34}\)

The idea of President Regan to trickle down profits created various problems in the African American community, which led them towards the crime and destruction.

Another, criminal character in the play is Elmore who is lover of Ruby, the mother of King. Elmore has already killed King’s father Leroy, for fifty dollars and imprisoned himself for long time. He participates in the business of King and Mister to sell stolen refrigerators. At the end of the play, he fights with King to kill him like his father but unfortunately, Ruby, his own mother kills King when she tries to save him from Elmore’s pistol. Hence, *King Hedley II* is tragedy of King’s dream. Christopher Rawson states: “it is a tragedy of throttled honor and dreams set against a long history of killing - a tale that is dark, bitter and uncomfortable true.”\(^{35}\)

Although, King, the central character of the play has criminal background, he has hoped to come out from his predicament to lead prosperous and happy life. He plants seeds in his yard but his mother says that if he wants to grow plants he should need some good dirt. However, King insists this is only dirt which he got to grow seeds. Wilson uses the plantation of the seeds as a symbol of hope and optimistic view of King towards his life.
KING: These some seeds. I’m gonna grow
Tonya some flowers.

ROBY: You need some good dirt. Them seeds
ain’t gonna grow in that dirt.

KING: This only dirt I got. This is me right here.

(KG II, 10)

August Wilson uses very meaningful discussion between the mother and son, infertile dirt in the plot of King symbolizes his criminal, pessimistic and hopeless background. However, he wants to grow seeds in infertile dirt symbolizes his hope and struggle for leading prosperous life.

Although, law in the U.S. abolishes the racism, it is present in various disguised forms. King Hedley II presents the practice of racism against the African Americans by various established institutes of the White Americans. The racism was practiced in the sectors of academics, industry, corporate professions, sports and music. King is in the business of contractor ship; however, his boss harasses him financially. Ruby, King’s mother, wants to extend his career but never gets chance to advance her career because of her black race. Elmore and Mister are victims of unemployment because of discrimination. The socio-economic and cultural harassment of the 1980s African Americans can be understood when Mister bears his name as Mister in order to establish his status in white the society. “Mister born in May 1948 bears a name intended to make white people respect him.”36 The names such as King, and Mister symbolize the protest of African American against their prejudiced images created by racist practice in the U.S.

The pivotal example of racism in King Hedley II is observed when King goes to a Photoshop in order to collect his anniversary photos. King
believes that he has receipt. However, storekeeper would give him photos but in fact, he tells him that he has lost them.

ELMORE: I understand. The motherfuckers got your pictures and can’t find them.

KING: Now, that ain’t what the problem is. Ask Mister. The problem is they tell me my receipt don’t count.

MISTER: They got different rules of different people (KH II, 53).

All characters can understand the harassment of King by white photo keeper. The rage of Elmore and remark of Mister suggest the ruthless brutal view of the White Americans towards the African Americans. The whites always use the documents as the tools to dominate the African Americans. Elam observes in connection of King’s beliefs. He explains:

Written text such as legal documents often functions as tool of white hegemony that black survival skill must confront or even circumvent...

King Hedley II, believes that he should be able to redeem his roll of pictures from sears after he has produced the receipt. Wilson explores and exposes the harsh reality of the exploitation of the African Americans through his dramatic art. His dramaturgy follows the anti racist ideology in order to strengthen the confidence of the African American community.

The oppressed voices of the African American women are most significant characteristic of Wilson’s dramaturgy. In King Hedley II, he implies Tonya, a wife of King, as a voice against patriarchal social order because she wants to abort her child against her husband’s will. King
wants a child to establish his identity as a father and to continue his heritage. However, Tonya opposes his Patriarchal mentality. Harry J. Elam Jr. explicated:

Unlike Rose, Tonya, in the 1980s is not beholden in the same ways to the patriarchal will of her husband, King. She plays a preliminary visit to the abortion clinic solely of her own volition. Her desire not to bring another child into this world, to exercise control over her body, stands in direct opposition to the wishes of King.\(^{38}\)

Wilson’s presentation of the protest of the women against their oppression is more radical than earlier decades. Rose, the wife of Troy Maxon in *Fences*, which is set in 1950, is not as radical as Tonya in *King Hedley II* of 1980s. She says, “I ain’t having this boy. That’s all there is to it.” (KH II, 37). Rose, in *Fences* does not appose to her husband when he develops relation with another women largely. On the other hand, Tonya argues with King against his wish and explicates that the child would not be safe in this violent world. “Tonya refuses to perpetrate the cycle of poverty and despair or to bring into the world yet another black youth who will be gunned down.”\(^{39}\) The problems of pregnancy and abortion were most serious problems of the 1980s’ African American community.

Wilson in *King Hedley II* crucially highlights the crisis between mother and son. King is a son of 61 years old Ruby who loves Elmore a 61 years African American criminal. King does not think as his mother. However, she is biologically his mother. When King was born, Ruby hands over him to her sister Louise and goes away.
RUBY : You watch yourself. I’m still your mama.

KING : My mama dead. Louise my mama. That’s the only mama I know. (KH II, 12)

King never accepts her as his mother, although she loves him. There are various issues among them, which create turmoil and crisis between their relationship as a mother and son.

Wilson also explores the disturbed man-woman relationship between Ruby and Elmore. Although, they are lovers, there are various crises between their relationships. Elmore has murdered Ruby’s earlier lover, Leroy only for fifty dollars. In addition, Elmore and Ruby want to marry at their old age. She says, “Me and Elmore gonna get married! We went down and got the license” (KH II, 86). Their immature relationship presents the African American men and women of 1980s.

Wilson also explores the poverty and financial dilemma of the African Americans of the 1980s. President Regan’s economic policy marginalized the black community. However, it strengthens the economy of already wealthy white community. The harsh reality of poverty and financial dilemma underline when Tonya refuses to grow her child in violent, despaired and financially poor society.

Wilson uses music as a strong tool to propagate depression and oppression of the African Americans in King Hedley II. Therefore, the implication of African American music for dramatic art is an innovative use of dramatist. In the present play Elam observes:

King Hedley II embodies the feelings of a Jazz opera in which the characters arises reveal their loves and losses in way that reconstitute the past in
the present. These jazzy monologues are particularly generated. While the women speak of love and maternity, the men discuss issues of honor, duty and pride. The characters use Jazz music to express their dilemma throughout the play. This specific technique of August Wilson makes his dramaturgy more effective and penetrative. “In King Hedley II Wilson uses music as personal memory, theatrical device, and force of history that promotes action and change.”

Symbolic implication of Wilson throughout his ten-play cycle strengthens the effectiveness of his dramatic art. In King Hedley II contains various symbols in order to communicate ritual and cultural codes. Planting seeds in infertile dirt symbolizes his unsatisfied life; however, planting seeds symbolizes hope for future life. The machete that is given to King by Stool Pigeon symbolizes king’s African American heritage because his father has murdered Floyd Burton with this machete. The gold ring which was offered to king by Aunt Ester is “Symbol of promise.”

Mythical and ritualistic implication of August Wilson in King Hedley II is indicator of his consciousness to understand the culture of his community. Wilson uses Stool Pigeon, as a mystic figure in the play who always quotes is the Bible and provides the divine information to the character. At the end of the first scene of the first act, he brings the news of Aunt Ester’s death as a disaster on community. Stool Pigeon, “Lock your door! Close your window! Turn your lamp down! we in trouble now. Aunt Ester died! she died ! she died ! she died ! (KH II, 19). Aunt Ester is 266 years old African American woman who guided many people of her community towards the proper path of their culture and religion.
She was the strong religious and cultural supporter of the community. Hence, Stool Pigeon believes that the death of Aunt Ester brings trouble for them because “Aunt Ester knew all the secrets of life but that’s all gone now. She took all that with her. I don’t know what we gonna do. We in trouble now. (KH II, 20). Stool Pigeon believes that the death of Aunt Ester is a God’s plan and because of the misbehavior of the niggers, God plans to create trouble for them. He says, “Aunt Ester died. She died and all the light went out. God got a plan. (KH II, 21). Mary Ellen Snodgrass states, “Her (Aunt Ester’s) subsequent demise symbolizes the loss of connection between American blacks and their African ancestry.”

Stool Pigeon buries Aunt Ester’s dead cat in King’s plot and believes that to make alive the spirit of Aunt Ester some blood should be thrown on its grave. The beliefs and activity of Stool Pigeon symbolizes the African American ritual. He says, “You sprinkle some blood on there and she coming back in seven days.” (KH II, 60). “To restore her (Aunt Ester) divine presence to the black community he feels obliged to make a blood sacrifice, bury her black cat in Hedley’s flower garden, and sprinkle ashes on top.” The blood sacrifice appears on the grave of black cat when mistakenly Ruby shoots King, her son, instead of Elmore. Stool Pigeon laughs because his ritualistic beliefs are fulfilled with the blood of King Hedley II. The act of killing King instead of Elmore by his mother based on the African American folklore.

Wilson’s King Hedley II is the greatest achievement in the Black Theatrical tradition because it explores the panoramic picture of the 1980s wounded African American life. Moreover, it propagates various issues of the 1980s such as criminals, problems of abortion, pregnancy, poverty, man-woman relationship, racism, ritual and culture.
August Wilson’s final play in his ten-play cycle is *Radio Golf*, which is set in the Bedford Hill Redevelopment office of the Hill district of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1997. An African American businessperson Harmond Wilks owns the office. *Radio Golf* was first produced at Yale Repertory Theatre in 2005 and directed by famous director Timothy Douglas in the same year. Moreover, the play was for credited Tony Award Nomination (2007) and Drama Critic Circle Award for the best play. *Radio Golf* explores the chaos of the African American life of the 1990s. In addition to this, it highlights the themes of American Dream, Urban Redevelopment, what is right or wrong, importance of identity and integrity, contrast between traditional African American values, new generation, and complex nature of 1990s racism etc.

The opening scene of the *Radio Golf* begins at Bedford Hill redevelopment office owned by Harmond Wilks (a lawyer and real estate developer). Harmond and his wife Mame (public relation representative) come with boxes at office. Their office is scattered which indicates its transformation. Mame argues with Harmond for disordered office because Harmond is a candidates for City Mayor election. Hence, the office should be attractive and impressive.

Thereafter, Roosevelt (a business partner of Harmond) comes with the planes for city redevelopment in the Hill district. Harmond and Roosevelt want to earn money through the business of city redevelopment. Harmond tells that Saraha Degree was the first African American registered nurse in the city. Mame and Harmond discuss about his speech to be given in the newspaper in order to expose his policy for mayoral election. Thereafter, there is a long discussion between Harmond and Roosevelt regarding the game of golf. Roosevelt tells about his
unique feelings when he first hits the golf. They also talk about their plan for redevelopment. Sterling, a contractor, enters in the Bedford Hill office in search of job. Harmond and Sterling were schoolmate at Saint Richard’s High school. They discuss their high school days.

The second scene of the first act starts when Harmond displays the revised rendering of the redevelopment project. Edgar Joseph Barlow or old Joe, a owner of 1839 Wylie Avenue, enters and asks Harmond to be a lawyer in order safe his house from redevelopment project. Harmond advises him to go down to hire a lawyer for him. Old Joe remarks that Harmond cannot be a candidate for Mayoral election because of his black race. Harmond tells him that it is 1997 and every American is free. Thereafter, Old Joe claims his ownership over 1839 Wylie Avenue which Harmond and Roosevelt are going to demolish under the scheme of Urban Redevelopment Project. Old Joe opposes them to demolish his house as it is a great heritage of African Americans.

The third scene begins when Harmond and Mame argue over the issue of Mayor’s election in the Hill District. Mame suggests various things to Harmond about the idealness of Mayor. Thereafter, Old Joe comes there to hire a lawyer to save his house. However Mame tells him to come after some time since, Harmond is not around. Harmond asks old Joe why he pays the tax of his house. Joe informs him Barlow family does not pay tax at all. Roosevelt enters and informs Harmond that Bernie Smith (white man) wants to collaborate with him to buy WBTZ radio.

The scene fourth initiates when Harmond talks on phone about the house of 1839 Wylie Avenue’s auction and its notice in the newspaper. Thereafter, Harmond and Mame talk about the city politics and Harmond’s Mayor Ship. Sterling states that the city is in needs of the black mayor to solve the problems of a blacks. Harmond tells to Old Joe
that he is not the enemy of his house, but there are some rules of the city
and why does he pay the tax of the house.

The first scene of the second act opens when Harmond’s Bedford Redevelopment office exposes his poster created for election. Harmond and Roosevelt discuss over the issue of election and politics of the whites. Thereafter, they turn towards the demolition of 1839 Wylie Avenue. Harmond states that demolition of the house is illegal because it was auctioned without notice, on the other hand, Roosevelt insists to demolish the house to promote their business. Sterling Johnson also opposes them to demolish the house.

The second scene opens when Harmond hears Roosevelt’s voice on Radio. Sterling enters and informs Harmond about the party at 1839 Avenue. Thereafter, Harmond and Sterling discuss about the Golf clubs. Moreover, Harmond tells Sterling that he would be the Mayor of the city if the city people will elect him. Sterling tells him various responsibilities of the Mayor. Harmond tells Old Joe that they are going to demolish his house; hence, he should take $ 12 thousand dollars from him. However, Old Joe tells Hurmond that this house is his legacy and legacy must not be sold.

The third scene initiates when Roosevelt practices his golf swing in the office of Harmond. Harmond and Roosevelt discuss the oldness and double bar foundation of 1839 Wylie Avenue. Roosevelt advises Harmond that if Barlow does not accept money, he is crazy so put all money in your pocket. Harmond insists that Roosevelt should demolish the house as it is against the law and it caries the memory and heritage of the African American. Therefore, they should only modify the house. Roosevelt states weather they own the house or not, it will be torn down on Thursday.
The scene four starts when Roosevelt and Mame discuss about their growth and backwardness. Mame insists to Harmond to move towards Neworlence for tourism. However, Harmond tells her that he cannot take vacation because he does not think it is good time for them. Thereafter, Harmond and Roosevelt discuss about their city redevelopment plan. Mame tells Harmond that Harmond is losing his money and business reputation by disturbing their business plan.

The final scene of the play starts when Harmond speaks on the phone. Harmond and Mame discuss about Harmond’s interview on the newspaper. Thereafter, Harmond tells Sterling that he has granted a temporary injection to stop the demolition of the 1839 Wylie Avenue. When Sterling advises him that Harmond should hire a lawyer, he tells him that he himself is a lawyer. Then Roosevelt and Harmond argue over the problem of demolition of the 1839 Wylie Avenue. Roosevelt tells Harmond that he misdirected the Bedford Redevelopment Company. Therefore; he is going to put him out of business. Harmond blames Roosevelt that Bernie, a white man is using Roosevelt against black minority. Finally, Harmond tells Roosevelt Bedford Hill office may not own 1839 Wylie Avenue. Hence, they may be tearing it down, However, Wilk’s in reality owns this office. Thereafter, when Harmond establishes his ownership on his office, Roosevelt leaves him and his office and the play ends.

Wilson’s final installment, Radio Golf, in his ten-play cycle is most significant, completing the one hundred years of socio-economic and cultural history of the African Americans. After the completion of Radio Golf within few months Wilson has died. As a result, the play is farewell to the playwright.
The title of the play is most innovative and significant use of Wilson. Golf is traditional symbol of aristocratic whites and their prosperous and wealthy life. Wilson’s characters in *Radio Golf*, Roosevelt and Harmond represent the growth of middle class African Americans in the field of business and contracts. Harmond is the owner of Bedford Redevelopment office and Roosevelt is his partner.

Golf has traditionally been viewed as a game for rich white men. The golf course has even been called “The white man’s outdoor office.” Because so many business deals are made there. In *Radio Golf*, Harmond and Roosevelt’s enthusiasm for golf symbolizes that they’ve “made it” despite the racial and economic barriers they face as African American.45

Roosevelt is very ambitious man and his ambition leads him towards prosperous and wealthy life. His interest in Golf symbolizes the passion and “American Dream”. The American Dream is most propagated ideology among the African Americans of the 1990s. They believe that if anybody can fulfill the American Dream, he can live the higher life among the other human beings on the earth. Roosevelt’s passion in game of Golf also symbolizes the 1990s African American passion.

ROOSEVELT : ….I hit my first golf ball, I asked myself where have I been ? How’d I miss this? I couldn’t believe it. I felt free. Truly free. For the first time I watched the ball soar down the driving range. I didn’t think it could go so high. It just kept going higher and higher. I felt something lift off me. Some weight I
was carrying around and didn’t know it. I felt like the world was open to me everything and everybody (RG, 90)

The explanation of Roosevelt seems the intensity and dilemma to achieve his American Dream. In order to earn more money and wealth, he goes far away from his cultural roots and legacy with his race. Because the whites use him, as a black face of African American minority for business deals and wasted interests. “Roosevelt’s interest in Golf leads to a business relationship with a wealthy but underhanded white executive who wants to buy a radio station.”46 Through, this example we can understand the complex nature of racism in the 1990s. The whites implemented the complex tactics to dominate the blacks. Although, constitutionally racism is banned, whites implement it in disguise form followed by business and contracts. In order to implement their tactics they trapped ambitious African Americans as representatives of their minority to dominate them. “In Radio Golf, ambitioned to financial success for Roosevelt Hicks, who is happy to let the white man use him if there is money to be made.”47

The important issue throughout the play is the candidature of Harmond for the Mayoral election. Before Harmond no African American has dared to stand for election. Harmond is owner of Bedford Redevelopment office and has good community relations. He believes that if he will become the mayor, he would not discriminate people based on their race.

HARMOND : If I win I’m going to be mayor of the city of Pittsburgh – I’m going to be mayor of all people.

STERLING : The white mayor would be
mayor of white folks. Black folks can’t get the streets cleaned. The schools don’t have no text book. Don’t have no footballs don’t and uniform. The mayor be the mayor of for white folk. (RG, 102).

Sterling rightly pointed out the racism of the white administrators in the various cities. The white administrator takes care of white culture and people only. On the other hand, Harmond’s perspective is liberal and humanistic as an African American.

We will never really know what role race would have played in Harmond’s campaign—the play concludes before the election takes place. However, more than a decade after Radio Golf is set, Pittsburgh still hasn’t elected a black mayor, which many or may not be indicative of the city’s race-consciousness. 48

Wilson’s has kept the question of Harmond’s Mayor-ship is unsolved because he knows the radical politics of the whites race in Pittsburgh. Therefore, he suggests there should be a black Mayor in Pittsburgh. Race relations of the 1990s were not open as earliest decades. There are some changes in the radicalism of racism. “Saraha Degree was the first black registered nurse in the city.” 49 The change was initiated in the minor positions of the administration and services.

Harmond is very positive in order to stand for the election of racist society.

OLD JOE : Is you really running for mayor?
They ain’t gonna let you be mayor.
HARMOND: This is 1997. Things have changed. This is America. This is the land of opportunity. I can be a mayor. I can be anything I want.

OLD JOE: But you got to have the right quarter America is a giant slot Machine (RG, 93).

Though, America is modern liberal and forwarded country so for the issue of African Americans are concerned they are prejudiced and radical. Old Joe rightly points out the key aspects of race relation of the 1990s.

The important conflict of the play is centralized towards 1839 Wylie Avenue that is the house of Old Joe. He has inherited the house, it was genuinely owned by Aunt Ester who was African American woman of 266 years. Aunt Ester was cultural and religious advisor of many African Americans; hence, her house is cultural heritage of the African Americans. Harmonds and sterling’s Bedford Redevelopment office intends to demolish the 1839 Wylie Avenue, which is the legacy of the community. Old Joe strongly argues with the businessperson of Bedford Redevelopment office.

OLD JOE: They still tearing down. They trying to tear down my house.

STERLING: The house with the red door? You talking about Aunt Ester’s house?

HARMOND: We have harmony. Mr. Barlow.

I’m not enemy. But there are laws to make sure everything is done right.

OLD JOE: You trying to tear down my house is chaos. I aint Harmony if we had harmony you’ be helping me paint it (RG, 99).
Old Joe convinces Harmond, the owner of Bedford Redevelopment office. Old Joe tells him the importance of cultural heritage and its need to the community. Harmond opposes his wife and business partner in order to stop the demolition of 1839 Wylie Avenue. Harmond insists that, “[H]is house isn’t for sale. We have to choice but to build around it we don’t own house.” (RG, 104) Harmond, despite thinking over this commercial benefit, supports for perseverance of the house. Hence his wife, Mame, argues with him.

MAME: Harmond if you do that you’re throwing everything away. All your hard work. Your career your reputation....

Harmond supports to save the house, hence his friend and business partner separates from him at the end of the play. However, he does not lose his relationship with Old Joe who symbolizes the cultural heritage of the blacks. “Old Joe always strikes out tangent that leads straight to important truths. The reunion between him and Harmond is the emotional heart of the play.”

Harmond’s decision to support Old Joe in order to save his house symbolizes his cultural consciousness as an African American. Wilson does not present weather Aunt Ester’s house would be saved or not. “As Radio Golf ends, we don’t know weather Aunt Ester’s house will be saved. It is the juggernaut of commerce unstoppable.” Wilson exposes that the Urban Renewal of 1970s and 1980s has transformed into new name that is urban redevelopment. Wilson suggests that after the failure of Urban Renewal, the white government initiated Urban Redevelopment to exploit the African Americans.

The issue of identity is central theme of Radio Golf. Every character struggles in order to establish identity in the discriminatory society.
STERLING: I know the truth of it, I’m a Niger. Negroes are the worst thing in God’s creation Niger got style. Negroes got blind – eyetist. A dog know it’s a dog. A cat knows it’s a cat. But a Negro don’t know he’s a Negro. He thinks he’s a white (RG, 107).

Sterling rightly points out the predicaments and plights of the African Americans in relation to their cultural identity. He explicates that dog and cat have their identity as per their existence. However, the blacks are totally dependent on the whites to decide their identity.

Wilson’s final installment in his ten-play cycle is innovative contribution in the African American theatre. The play explores the social, economic and cultural injustice made out to the African American ethnic minority. Moreover, it also explores the complex nature of 1990s racism, politics of Pittsburgh city, personal identity legacy and the tactics of Urban Redevelopment project to hegemonies the African Americans.

These four play of August Wilson presents the African American experience of the 1960s-1990s in connection with society, politics, culture and their heritage as African Americans. Wilson tries to record their hard and troublous life by using dramatic art as a weapon against their exploitation.

*Two Trains Running* explores the injustice is made by White in order to hegemonize the Blacks of 1960s. Moreover it also explores the poverty, racism rootless life.

Socio-economic and cultural milieu of 1970s African American life is panoramically presented by Wilson in *Jitney*. The play explores the depression of the cab drivers of *Jitney* station by racism.
Wilson’s King Hedley II is the outstanding achievement of 1980s. The play exposes the panoramic picture of wonder African American life of the decade. Moreover, it explores the problems such as criminality, abortion and poverty of the Black people.

The last play of Wilson’s ten-play cycle is *Radio Golf* presents the complex nature of the 1990s racism, politics, and problems of poverty and identity of the Blacks. The tactics of the white to dominate the Black is rightly projected in the play.
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