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# Passive Resistance in Post-WWII African-American Literature in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952)

## المقاومة اللاعنافية في الأدب الأفريقي الأمريكي بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية في الرجل الخفي (1952) لـ رالف إليسون

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### Abstract

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This article examines the effectiveness of Passive Resistance during Post-WWII in creating black identity - A special reference to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Black Africans used power to obtain their rights; however, their method did not help them to achieve their goals. By the early fifties, they started using nonviolent methods which was the cornerstone of the Civil Rights Movement against social inequality. Through Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), I shall try to focus on the literary representation of passive resistance through fictional characters and real settings. The question I want to raise is: to what extent was passive resistance effective and how important was its role in identifying the identity of African Americans? My emphasis will be laid on the historical and socio-cultural background of African Americans during Post- WWII. In my analysis, I will dwell upon the theory of New-Historicism which tends to link each event to its historical context. The results of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* analysis indicate that the structure of the novel reflects how passive resistance functioned as a means of pressure against white's racism and discrimination.

### الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

تتناول هذه المقالة فعالية المقاومة السلمية خلال فترة ما بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية في إنشاء الهوية السوداء - إشارة خاصة إلى رالف إليسون الرجل الخفي (1952). في الماضي، استخدم الأفارقة السود القوة للحصول على حقوقهم؛ ومع ذلك، فإن طريقتهم لم تساعدهم في تحقيق أهدافهم. بحلول أوائل الخمسينيات، بدأوا في استخدام الأساليب السلمية التي كانت حجر الأساس لتكوين حركة الحقوق المدنية ضد عدم المساواة الاجتماعية. من خلال رواية الرجل الخفي (1952) لـ رالف إليسون، سأحاول التركيز على التمثيل الأدبي للمقاومة اللاعنافية من خلال الشخصيات الخيالية والأماكن الحقيقية. السؤال الذي أريد أن أطرحه هو: إلى أي مدى كانت المقاومة اللاعنافية فعالة وما مدى أهمية دورها في تحديد هوية الأمريكيين الأفارقة؟ سينصب تركيزي على الخلفية التاريخية والاجتماعية والثقافية للأميركيين الأفارقة خلال فترة ما بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. في تحليلي، سوف أتطرق إلى نظرية التاريخية الجديدة التي تميل إلى ربط كل حدث بسياقه التاريخي. تشير نتائج تحليل الرجل الخفي لـ رالف إليسون إلى أن بنية الرواية تعكس كيفية عمل المقاومة السلمية كوسيلة للضغط ضد عنصرية البيض وتمييزهم.

المقاومة السلمية  
منظمة حقوق  
الإنسان  
الرجل الخفي  
النظرية التاريخية  
ما بعد الحرب  
العالمية الثانية.

## 1. Introduction

Within the first decades of the 1600s, black Africans were brought to the American colonies as enslaved labor. Since then, racism and racial segregation have caused them to be banished in all domains of their life. Because they have been deprived of the most basics of human rights, they rebelled to get their freedom. Nevertheless, their method did not help them to achieve their goals even after the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery in 1865. Their failure to get their freedom was because of using violence and not passive resistance.

By the early fifties, significant shifts began to happen in the history of African struggle in which they start learning how to get their freedom without using violence. The leaders of post-WWII chose the tactic of passive resistance as an instrument to disassemble racial separation and social inequality. They followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s principles that urging African Americans to use passive resistance in their struggle to get their rights. The nonviolent method was the basis of the Civil Rights Movement against social inequality, racial discrimination, political exclusion, and helped the Movement achieve some of its major accomplishments.

Through Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), which was published during the Civil Rights movement, we shall try to concentrate on the literary representation of passive resistance through fictional characters and real settings. Our emphasis will be laid on the historical and socio-cultural background of African Americans during Post- WWII since it is very important to consider many events that are portrayed by the writer in which Ellison's *Invisible Man* may no longer be viewed as just a fictional work, but rather, as a piece of literature that is not exclusive to a single race or environment. The theory of New-Historicism helps us to understand that literature and history are not just intertwined but challenge and reshape each other.

Many literary figures plainly experienced passive resistance against the white discriminated society in order to identify their own identity. For instance: The critic LÓPEZ MIRALLES, Alejandro, in his

article *Invisibility and Blindness in Ellison's Invisible Man* (2013), offered the problem of racism and invisibility in Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Similarly, K Lamm's *Visuality and Black Masculinity in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man*, Romare Bearden's *Photomontages* (2003) and Franklin, Anderson and Nancy Boyd-Franklin's *Invisibility syndrome* (2000), presented the theme of racism in Ellison's book. Furthermore, A.T Spaulding in his book *Embracing Chaos in Narrative Form* (2004) described *Invisible Man* as jazz novel in which it provided facts about the emergence of jazz music during Post- WWII. All these reviewers alluded at least the theme of racism and passive resistance that dominated the novel.

Although, the previous works have been done about the theme of resistance and racism in African-American literary fifties from many perspectives. However, our study seeks to capture adequately the same theme by grasping apart another side of the issue in which we emphasized on the role of passive resistance in identifying African-American identity and culture in literary fifties, through the portrayal of fictional characters and real setting.

## 2. New-Historicism

New-Historicism, a term created by Stephen Greenblatt, came as a reaction against New-criticism, Post-colonialism, and Deconstruction (Hoover, 1990, p.356). The theory is advanced by critics such as Louis Montrose, Catherine Gallagher and Alan Liu in the United States. New historicism is affected by French philosopher Michel Foucault and Catherine Betsey Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield and Peter Stalybrass (Doğan, 2005, p.77). The latter is affected by the French philosopher Michel Foucault and the cultural materialist Raymond Williams. The prime variance between new historicism and cultural materialism focused on their starting point in which the first one began in America as a response opposed to literary formalism. In contrast, the second appeared as a traditional understanding of literary theory in England ((Doğan, 2005, p.78).

New historicism argues that we cannot separate literature from the historical context, "Literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other historical

forces” (Thomas, 1991, p. xv). Besides, it tries to depict an issue by reference to previous facts; it tries to “find explanation and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation” (Williams, 1996, p. 77). Hence, many social and historical conditions that led to the emergence of New Historicism have been debated by many scientists in their works such as Catherine Gallagher’s essay, “Marxism and the New Historicism”(Williams, 1996, p.116).

New- Historicism looks at literary works as historical drawings. It suggests that identity is molded by social establishment and considers literature another shape of social structure, which is constructed by the culture of that community. Literature is a cultural ingenuity erected by more than one consciousness, or as Evrim Dogan puts it, “social, political, religious, and economic factors of a given society determine the literature it produces” (Ojeda et al., 2009, p.11).

In addition to that, New- historicism argues that literary texts impact the socio -historical sphere that affects the literary texts. It points out the idea that “the textuality of history and the history of texts shape and reshape each other in continuous cycle” (Parker, 2008, p.219).A literary text is considered another shape of social prominence which is generated by society and reshaped by the culture of this sphere. New historicists consider that literary works are historical texts, in which literature is another shape of social structure that explains what happened during a particular period.

### 3. Passive resistance in American Post- WWII

#### 3.1 Passive resistance (definition)

The African American leaders led successful non-violent public protests that drove American public opinion to sympathize with African American demands, which pressured the federal government to become politically involved. The critic Joseph Fahey argued that the term non-violent action “refers to those methods of protest, non cooperation and intervention in which the actionists, without employing physical violence, refuse to do certain things which they are not expected”(Fahey&Armstrong,1992,p.255). Many African-American leaders

as Martin Luther King and Gandhi were always be mentioned in relation to nonviolence, as they led and inspired major non-violent movements and achieved considerable successes. The two leaders also had a tremendous influence on their respective people and played a major role in creating the roots of what is called the Civil Rights movement.

#### 3.2 The emergence of the Civil Rights movement

Although, in 1865, African Americans made a notable step – the abolishment of slavery, they were deprived of their most basic human rights and were considered second-class citizens. The eradication of slavery did not stop the white people’s hatred of blacks and did not even reduce racial discrimination of African Americans in the United States. The American historian Peter Robert Kolchin (born June 3, 1949) declared in his book *American Slavery: 1619-1877* that “The end of the war left the slaves freed but their status otherwise undetermined” (Kolchin,1995,p.209).Many black leaders decided to put an end to the unequal treatment that they had faced.

The civil rights movement was a combination of nonviolent protests, activities, and demonstrations directed at eradicating the hateful sentiment and the oppression toward African Americans. It is defined as “a mass protest movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the Southern United States that came to national prominence during the mid-1950s”(Falola & Njoku, p.189).The civil rights movement also was defined by the African American professor and the director of Martin Luther King Clayborne Carson (born June 15, 1944),he says :

What is usually called “the civil rights movement” was only one element—albeit a crucial, necessary element—of what many persons considered a larger, deeper, historically-grounded movement: the struggle—often led by black people—to transform America, its values, institutions, and people toward a more perfect union (Carson,1991,p.233).

Historically speaking, the civil rights movement began when Rosa Parks, a black dressmaker from Montgomery, refused to stand up and leave her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in

1955. Rosa was taken to prison and was fined ten dollars and costs for violating the city's apartheid law. Her challenge's story encouraged the black leaders to arrange the Montgomery Bus Boycott, "So did other blacks. News of her defiance, circulated by the telephone network of Montgomery's black elite, transmitted a surge of determination through the community, a resolve to do something" (Sitkoff & Foner, 1992, p.38). In 1956, many African-American organized peaceful protests in many states, New York, Los-Angeles and many other states (Phibbs, 2009, p. viii). Although the demonstrations started in Montgomery, its roots were based on the previous organization.

What was not available, in the previous organizations, are the large masses and the nonviolent methods that work as a new technique to get rid of racial discrimination and slavery. The Sociologist Aldon D. Morris realizes the distinctive form of black protest that appeared before the civil rights of the fifties. He explains the significant activity of African American civil rights protest. In addition to that, he points out how the civil rights protests were employed as a mass strategic framework. He discusses this point in his seminar *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. He says:

The modern civil rights movement broke from the protest tradition of the past in at least two crucial ways. One, it was the first time that large masses of blacks directly confronted [...] Two, this was the first time in American history that blacks adopted nonviolent tactics as a mass technique for bringing about social change (Morris, 1986, p. xi).

The previous organizations were influenced by the new civil-rights tactics and non-violent actions. For instance, in 1910, the committee of forty evolved to what is called 'NAACP,' which means, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The National Urban League (NUL), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE, 1942), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC, 1957) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, 1960). All these organizations worked together to form what

is called the big five of civil rights movement.

### 3.3 The 'Big Five' of the civil rights movement

#### 3.3.1 The national Urban League

The National Urban League is one of five civil rights organizations known as the "Big Five" organization. It founded in 1910 in New York City by Ruth Standish Baldwin and Dr. George Edmund Haynes. The main goals of the Urban League are to help African-Americans to secure economic self-reliance and to enter the economic and social mainstream (Armfield et al., 2017, p.29). In other words, NUL dedicated to economic empowerment in order to help African Americans, especially those moving to the North from the South to adjust to urban life. Between (1961-1971), and during the presidency of Whitney M. Young, Jr; the league emerged as one of the strongest forces in the American civil rights struggle.

#### 3.3.2 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

The NAACP, or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was one of the most important civil rights organizations of the fifties. It is composed of both black and white members, whose aim is to end racial segregation. The NAACP was formed in response to the continuing terrifying practice of murdering and the 1908 race riot of Springfield. Dr. Henry Moscowitz (1880 – 1936), a Civil Rights activist and one of the co-founders of NAACP, hold a meeting to discuss racism issues. The meeting included African Americans: W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and white members including Joel, Arthur Spingarn, Josephine Ruffin, Mary Talbert, Inez Milholland, Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Sophonisba Breckinridge and others. Both white and black leaders' stated goals were to eliminate racial prejudice.

The NAACP's fundamental goal is to achieve the educational, social and economic equality of African Americans and to eliminate all obstacles of racial discrimination (Levine, 1979, p.303). The organization was conducted on various fronts using different tactics; for instance, the writer Manfred

Berg in *The Ticket to Freedom, The NAACP and the Struggle for Black Political Integration*, NAACP's aim is to "assert their citizenship rights by trying to register as voters" (2005, p.5). Berg also argued that the NAACP had been concentrating on voting registration long before other organizations of civil rights movement (2005, p.167). Because the NAACP was composed of middle-class professional staff who avoided direct action and thus fought their battles in court chambers, many protest organizations criticized it for neither opposing nor backing direct action (Fairclough, 1987, p.22).

In the late fifties, the NAACP became progressively more active in protest actions. The movement encouraged African-Americans to prepare plans to desegregate schools. The NAACP also participated in the sit-ins and protests to integrate public libraries and buses. Wilkins's aide John Morsel argued that the sit-ins had detected "alarming weaknesses in the areas of alertness, initiative and imagination and...disclosed many of our members and units to be ridden by inertia and the struggle for community prestige" (Weisbort, 1990, p.38). In spite of the fact that the NAACP never embraced the protests of the students, it provided them by financial aid.

In the early sixties, in 1962, the leaders of the NAACP led many direct actions in many states of USA. For instance, Wilkin, who, was against protests and direct actions, he himself led a picket line led to his arrest (Sitkoff & Foner, 1992, p.146). Furthermore, in Mississippi, the president of NAACP also led a direct protest. The same thing happened in South Carolina and Philadelphia. In South Carolina, NAACP organized protests in spite of the refusal of some branches. In Philadelphia, the leader of NAACP authorized self-defense (Newman, 2018, p.164).

To sum up, in the next year, NAACP marked a clear change in its policy in which the leaders led many protests. However, their failure to organize the Danville campaign argued to the world that the organizational base was weak and inefficient (Fairclough, 1987, p.145). This event points out the need for other organizations, as Core, to help African

American to achieve their goals.

### 3.3.4 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) is an African American Civil Rights organization established in 1942 by James Farmer and many pacifist graduates from the University of Chicago. In the first years of its existence, CORE was dominated by white intellectuals who clearly outnumbered African-Americans. James Farmers, the founder of the CORE, was interested in encouraging African Americans to use nonviolent direct action. Farmer was deeply influenced by Gandhi's method of nonviolent direct action. Farmer and his colleagues were influenced by the book of the Indian journalist and the poet Krishnalal Shridharini' *War without Violence* (1939), an analysis of Gandhian's philosophy and tactics of nonviolence, which was studied by Martin Luther King Jr., during the Montgomery bus boycott (Farmer,1998,p.93).

CORE's explicit emphasis on being an interracial organization had a significant impact on their organizational goals and methods. Even though the CORE's members included African Americans and whites, its main goal was focal to their vision of racial equality. The civil rights activist and union organizer Bernice Fisher (1916-1966), argued that "there should be a thoroughly interracial organization... not another Negro group with token membership of whites" (Hochman, 1979, p.70). CORE replaced the phrase "Negro problem," with "'human problem" which could be avoided just through the solidarity of all human beings. Eventually, the CORE stabilized on the Committee of Racial Equality as Farmer elucidated that, "the organization, in its structure, its methods, and its very being, would reflect the objective it sought" (Farmer,1998,p.105).

Although the CORE dedicated interracial emphasis, their obvious refusal of Black centered expressions of freedom also put them at disputes with those who might otherwise be their major allies. For instance, interracialism faced rejection from some civil rights activist as Philip Randolph (1889-1979). Randolph is considered "the most feared and the greatest black leader of the thirties"(Boulware,1969,p.20). James Farmer, the major founder of the CORE, also

remembered his father's viewpoint from the white establishment: "They viewed the black brother as the junior partner in the alliance, not quite of age. So, thus they viewed themselves as senior partners, obviously" (Morris,1986,p.131).In the late fifties, many black members inside the CORE started claiming that black influence in the organization needed to increase.

After the election of the black James Farmer to be the leader of the Core, he continued following the organization's nonviolent direct action. Farmer's most famous project during his leadership was the Freedom Rides on May 4, 1961, a series of protests by Blacks and whites who rode buses together through the American South. In 1961, two black civil rights activists would ride two buses from the upper South to the Deep South. After entering the state of Carolina, the Freedom Riders encountered violence. The same thing happened in Alababa, upon stopping to change a slashed tire, one bus was attacked. This forced the CORE leaders to get off the buses on the one hand, but on the upside, this event helped to produce a huge publicity for the CORE (Morris, 1986, pp.231, 236). In the next years, to keep the interracial nonviolent position, Farmer participated with the other civil rights organizations as SCLC.

### 3.3.5 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is a Civil Rights organization established in 1957 to organize protest groups throughout the South. SCLC was founded as a response to events which had happened in Montgomery. In other words, on November 13, 1956, after the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation for buses was unacceptable, buses were no more segregated and black Americans could seat themselves anywhere they wanted.

In 1957, King met about 60 persons from 10 different states at Ebenezer church, in Atlanta, to declare the founding of the Southern Negro Leaders. The meeting announced that "segregation must end and that all Black people should reject segregation absolutely and nonviolently" (Asante & Mazama, 2004, p.438).

The second meeting would take place in Louisiana on February 14.The main goals of the second meeting

was to ensure a departure to Washington if President Eisenhower continued his carelessness towards desegregation in the South. After the second meeting, King made his first voyage to Africa. In it, he discovered that "there is no basic difference between colonialism and racial segregation - both were based on the notion of white supremacy". The main interested point after king's arrival from Africa is the pilgrimage to the North. In spite of the fact that, Roy Wilkins, the executive director of NAACP, was not agreeing with the idea of pilgrimage, he agreed to organize another meeting on April 5, 1957, in Washington, to discuss the pilgrimage. The main goals of the meeting are: to protest violence in the south, to give northerners the opportunity to demonstrate, to support NAACP legally, to urge the implementation of civil rights laws and to format black unity (Garrow,1987,pp.91-92).

After one month, the King offered a speech which includes a criticism to Eisenhower's policy, to the Congress, and to the political parties. As a reaction to King's speech, in late May, the Vice-president of Eisenhower had invited Marten Luther King to a meeting on June 13.In it, the crucial points should have been discussed were : Eisenhower and Nixon should amend their position toward civil rights, and the white southerners should acclimatize with the racial change (Garrow,1987,pp. 94-95).

The third meeting of SLC was on August, 9 and10, 1957, in Montgomery. The first item of the meeting was changing the name of the organization to Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The meeting had several objectives, preparing equipped voting centers for blacks. In addition to that, King travelled throughout the United States to collect voters from all states (97-98).In June 1958, King finally arranged the first meeting with President Eisenhower which ended with giving few notes about voting. After the meeting, King decided to leave Montgomery to Atlanta where he tried to develop SCLC program (Garrow, 1987, p.122).

### 3.3.6 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

In North Carolina, some black students went to a store and sat at a Whites-only lunch counter to drink a coffee. In spite of the fact that the responsible of

the restaurant rejected to give them coffee, students challenged the responsible of the store and waited until the store closing. Despite the arrival of the police, they did not take any action due to the peaceful position chosen by the students. Twenty-five men and four women returned to the store the next day and hold a sit-in in front of the store. After four days of the sit-ins, more than One-thousand men and women occupied the counter. The idea of the nonviolent sit-ins had spread in all over the nations. The leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Ella Baker, asked the representatives of the protest to organize a conference in order to share their goals for future. The day of the conference in 1960 at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., was the birthday of SNCC (**Carson, 1991, p. 9**).

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) clarifies the ways in which Black humanity became not stationed just in the civil rights movement. SNCC movement was formed in April 1960 by the young students James M. Lanson, Jr., and Bayard Rustin who devoted to follow Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent method of fighting. The young students analyzed Gandhi's nonviolence strategy of the aim of creating sympathy for the independence of India. Even though the former of the Civil Rights movements had hoped that SNCC movement be under the wing of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which was established in 1957, the students preferred strongly to be independent from SCLC movement. In spite of the fact that SNCC movement was independent from SCLC, the two movements worked to gather throughout the years of the Civil Rights movement (**Murphree1, 2013, pp.15-16**).

The leaders of SNCC began using nonviolent approach as a political strategy. They started asking for their voting rights, integration, opened schools to teach the farmers, and established health centers for blacks. They also used religion as a political tactic to win the sympathy of the public opinion. In other words, religion and church permitted SNCC to transform the issue of discrimination to a moral issue; they stated some of their goals:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of

non-violence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action.... By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities (**Carson, 1991, p.22-23**).

After three years, in 1963, John Lewis was chosen to lead the organization instead of the previous chairman Marion Barry (1936-2014). Now, the SNCC's main work became voter registration campaigns in Southern states such as Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi, and of course the peaceful sit-ins. SNCC leaders criticized strongly the federal government for their stance toward the civil rights movements. For instance, John Lewis, in a speech at the Lincoln Memorial, was planned to criticize harshly John F. Kennedy's proposed civil rights bill; however, he decided to soften his tone at the persistence of more permissive activists (**Carson, 1991, pp.93-94**). So, the relationship between John Lewis and his partner inside the organization became more complicated because of their tolerance to deal with whites racism.

#### **4. African American literature of 1950's**

African-American literature is all literary works that are written by African Americans living in the United States. It is generally referred to a comprehensive, complex and creative literature of Afro-American citizens. Different critics have provided varying interpretations about African literature. The critic Kenneth W. Warren defines African-American literature as "a prolonged engagement with the problem of slavery, a system of labor exploitation that was central to the development of not only the United States but the whole of the Western World" (**2011, p.02**). Afro-American literature portrays the lived experiences of Afro-Americans from the colonial period to the recent days.

Black writers could no longer ignore the rising of Black power movements during American Post-WWII. More specifically, many Negro novelists dealt with passive resistance during American Post-WWII and the most important are: Ann Petry, Willard Motley, Richard Wright, Dorothy West (1907-1998)

and Amiri Baraka, (1934 –2014) the founder of Black Arts Movement, and Ralph Ellison who is considered one of the most significant writers who produced unique literary works that talk about passive resistance that helped them to gain their civil rights.

#### 4.1 Passive resistance in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

The Civil Rights Movement came to upturn Jim Crow laws, laws that enforced racial segregation in the South, which were still prevalent during the 1950s and 1960s. African American writers decided to express their feelings of discomfort with inequality and the conflicts of the Civil Rights Movement in their writing. Despite the suppression of civil rights demonstrations, African American writers defied all odds and continued to write about the need for equality and justice among all races. Some notable writers of this period are James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On The Mountain* (1953). In his novel, the writer discusses the theme of racism, segregation and the search for black identity. James Baldwin discussed his battle for black civil rights when a television interviewer asked him to describe the difficulties he faced in his war against racism. He replied, "I thought I'd hit the jackpot" (Halkitis, 2019, p. 14). Another prominent civil rights writer is Richard Wright and his literary works: *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son*, and *Black Boy*. In addition to the most significant writer during that period Ralph Ellison. In his masterpiece *Invisible Man* (1953).

#### 4.2 Blues and Jazz as resistance

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born on March 1st, 1914, in Oklahoma and died in 1994. He studied music at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama before moving to New-York and working as a writer. He published many stories between 1939 and 1945. In 1942, he became the managing editor of *The Negro Quarterly*. In 1943, he joined the Merchant Marines to contribute to the war. In 1945, when he was in the service, Ellison decided to start writing his first novel, *Invisible Man*. Ellison spent seven years writing his novel that was published in 1952. Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which gained the National Book Award for Fiction in 1953, focused on the life of African American civil rights characters, who faced during the journey from the South to

New York, segregation, racism and discrimination. However, Ellison's aim in writing his novel was not to portray the black American as a spirit-broken product of racism and segregation. In his opinion, the role of the black writer was to "create the consciousness of his oppressed nation" (O' Meally, 2013, p. 40). To create awareness of his persecuted nation, he used nonviolent actions as Blues and Jazz.

In Ellison's novel, the young protagonist uses Blues and Jazz as adopted by the artist Louis Armstrong to identify his personality in the world of whites. The writer used Louis Armstrong's song to personify the narrator's suffering because of his color. He says, "What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue" Ellison reports through Armstrong's song the disillusionment and depression of the narrator because of the segregation shown by the white people who refused to see him and to recognise that he holds an identity, or, as he says "they refused to see me" Ellison, 1995, pp120, 364). Ellison's novel uses real musicians from his musical background when he was eight. For example, the character Peter Wheat straw is a reference to blues guitarist William Bunch and Rinehart is an indication to the guitarist Django Reinhardt. The author of *Jazz Country* Horace A. Porter explains the relationship between *Invisible Man's* characters and the Jazz musicians: "Musicians like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Lester Young—who played in Oklahoma during the 1920s and 1930s—inspired Ellison and his boyhood friends"(Ellison qtd. in Porter, 2005, p. 4).

The narrator mixed Jazz and Bebop within American music to integrate the African personality within the American one. The attempt to integrate two different kinds of music is considered a protest act against the white American authority. Critic Mario Dunkel argues that many scholars and writers "have tended to describe Bebop as a form of aesthetic protest and rebellion". In other words, Bebop music at that period was regarded as a way of representing the rebellious soul of Afro-American citizens. Many Afro-American writers such as Amiri Baraka, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison expressed their anger that leads to their disillusionment and depression in Bebop music (Dunkel, 2012, p.37-38). Therefore, the writer used



music to express the refusal to be in any way a part of the culture based on racism and discrimination. In this way, Bebop and other types of music became part of the American counterculture which was embodied in many literary works such as Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The angry Jazz musician, Charles Mingus shared the same idea of African American writers. He argues that "his music is basically African American in nature and that is, among other things expresses the permanent struggle of blacks under white supremacy that Mingus experienced himself throughout his life"(qtd. in Dunkel,2012,p. 3).

In his work, Ellison uses Afro-American music to show the individuality and the counterculture of the characters who stand against the old traditional music and integrates his African culture within the American society. They create a new type of music based on their sense of life to express their tragicomic tendency and freedom through the rhythm of the music. Critic Neimneh Shadi argues that the Invisible Man used the music to "give him some freedom of choice and compel him to search for his lost identity" (Neimneh et al., 2012, p.64).

Similarly, Blues is part of Bebop music as depicted in Amiri Braka's novel *Blues People* (1963) (Joseph, 2009, p.753). This sort also comes as a rebellious type of music against the traditional one (Case, 2009, p.10). The African citizens used it to show their attitude towards life, the same as what Ralph Ellison did in his book; *Invisible Man* (1952). Here the writer depicts the resistance and counterculture of the protagonist through the use of Blues music. Ellison's intention by the use of Blues is not to separate the blacks from the American society, but to integrate them into that community, or, as Ralph Ellison maintains in the novel, "Blues give us an orientation in time, reminding us of what we were and of what toward we aspired"( Frankenberg,2003,p. 8).

Ralph Ellison also "uses language here for a musical effect"(Kellstedt, 2003, p.7).For instance, when the black boy drives Mr. Norton, he says "Waves of heat danced above the engine hood. The tires sang above the highway" (Thornton & Mills, 2006, p.1474). In this quotation, the writer used many words that have

a relationship with music, such as the words "dance" and "sang." Therefore, the invisible man embraces jazz music of swing, and solo to oppose the form that the American society promotes. The type of swing that the invisible man used is not the swing of Jazz, but it is the swing of resistance as pointed out by the critic Christopher Meeder (2008) who argues that "this sense of swing to be indescribable...In jazz, this sense of swing is accomplished by allowing performers to toy with a steady beat" (Meeder, 2012, p.14).

### 4.3 Integration as Resistance

Ralph Ellison believes that integration means that the black American people would be able to live harmoniously with the white ones. Ellison's aim through his protagonist is to connect whites with blacks in order to make one community based on equality and freedom. The invisible man says, "Our fate is to become one, and yet many—this is not prophecy, but description"(Allen, 2004, p.117).Here, Ellison interestingly uses the pronoun "our" referring to his tendency to universalize his aim and message through his novel because the world includes many races, and the race will make one invisible and melt within the dominant group; that is the reason that makes him choose integration as a way to make his race visible, one race means one group based on equality. The critic Timothy Parish (2012) argues that, "the defining event of Ellison's career was not *Invisible Man* but the 1954 Supreme Court decision that set his country on the road to racial integration" (Parrish,2012,p.255).

The narrator's attempt for integration is depicted through his speech delivery at school graduation day ceremony. The young protagonist was very eager to read his speech in front of the prominent white audience, as mentioned before. However, during his speech delivery, he was confused and utter the wrong word 'equality' instead of 'responsibility.' The white men neglect his intelligence in his presentation of the speech and asks him just to repeat one word "equality." After that, he hears "the laughter hung smoke lines in the stillness" (Ellison, 1995, p.25). The audience's laughter is a symbol of their refusal to

accept him as equal as the whites.

Psychologically speaking, the narrator wants to utter the word 'equality' because this word exists in his unconscious but he is not aware of it until it is brought to the conscious. The psychologist, Finkelstein elucidate the meaning of unconscious in his book *On the distinction between conscious and unconscious states of mind*, he says, "The corresponding of "unconscious" means unaware"(1999,p.80);it means that the conscious in this case is considered a waiting room as depicted by Freud in Sandis Constantine's book *Hitchcock's Conscious Use of Freud's Unconscious*(2009) that the preconscious contains many acts we are not aware of them " but which we can easily be triggered or otherwise brought to our attention without the need for psychoanalysis" (Sandis,2009,p. 62). When we apply Freud's ideas on Ellison's book, we realize how the word "equality" exists in the unconscious, but it is recognised by the conscious because the narrator himself is not aware of it. However, he eventually changes the word to the original one in order not to end his future at this point because the room includes a very famous businessman who couldn't neglect what he has said.

As mentioned, the narrator's speech is not the only way to integration, the Brotherhood movement (Core) is considered another attempt by the narrator to integrate himself within American society, and is regarded as a closer way to find his destiny. However, the organisation eventually turns against him because of the betrayers inside it. The brotherhood is the organisation that helps the narrator to speak officially to a gathering out of his school for the first time. The invisible man tells the reader that the brotherhood movement makes him feel that he is a human being; not as what the whites consider him. He says, "I feel, I feel suddenly that I have become more human". Moreover, in the brotherhood movement, the invisible man plays a great role as a political figure, and he thinks that he will realise his dream of integration by his movement. He says, "here in the Brotherhood was the one place in the country where we were free and given the greatest encouragement to use our abilities, and he was trying

to destroy it" (Ellison,1995,pp.268,303).When we read the invisible man's speeches, we feel that he states them from the deepest of his heart in a way which is observed in the speeches of Martin Luther King in defending the blacks' rights, particularly his famous one 'I have a dream,' on August 28, 1963 (king,1986,p.1), though some differences between the two occur. The former wanted one country for the whole, while the latter favored one country separated into two groups; whites and blacks, and aiming for equality. Historically speaking, in a scientific conference which focused on "The Negro American" and held in 1965, Ellison found himself in a conflict with the black leader Martin Luther King who suggested the idea that we have to divide America into two nations, separate and equal. The black American leader felt that the integration of blacks and whites in one society is very impossible; however; Ralph Ellison showed resistance towards "the idea of two societies, two Americas-or two worlds of race" (Sundquist, 2011, p.108). So, Ellison wants the integration of blacks; not the separation. In fact, all his ideas are conveyed through the invisible man's speeches and conduct (Ellison, 1995, p.474).

In general, the invisible man is an individual who searches for a place in his society and who ignores his blackness and wishes to be a part of the new America which is based on the principles of the American Dream. In other words, he has black skin; nevertheless, he forgets that and lives his life as a part of the white American society. He believes that black people will achieve their desire in the future, the case of Dr. Bledsoe who became a headmaster to the narrator's college. Brother Jack also pushes him to think that equality will be achieved in the future, though the invisible man thinks that equality is not available in the American society; rather, "It also seems to be saying that integration exists at all sorts of cultural levels, but American is not ready yet to acknowledge it"(Saber,2010,p.90). That is the reason that makes him thinks of another power to resist the white people's stereotype as thinking to exploit his black skin and make it as a power to fight the white people's segregation.

## 5. Conclusion

This article discussed how African-American passive resistance achieved political change during the civil rights movement. African-American non-violent leaders, as Ruth Standish Baldwin the leader of NUL, James Farmer (CORE) and others, led successful non-violent protests that caused American public opinion to support civil rights gains for African Americans. This article mentioned that Passive resistance had not been a new tactic to African-American leaders; however, Gandhi was the first leader to introduce non-violence method when mobilized the Indian citizens against British employment.

Through the analysis of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), which was published during the Civil Rights movement, I shall try to concentrate on the literary representation of passive resistance through fictional characters and real settings. We concentrated on the theme of nonviolent actions, such as integration, Blues and Jazz, to highlight African American Identity.

the surface meaning of Ellison's novel is on the underground, the invisibility, the overlooked; however, the deep meaning of Ellison's novel was to present racial conflicts, political and social ideas that precede by decades, in addition to the effectiveness of passive resistance such as, the civil rights movement, the Black Power movement, and the New Breed writers connected with the Black Power movement. In other words, Ellison's novel represented a kind of political action because so much of it portrayed the vital element of social critiques as Lawrence Jackson pointedly notes, "Ellison had moved from being an embattled social critic, a position he had occupied during most of the years he wrote *Invisible Man*, to being a symbol of America's willingness to accept talented blacks" (2007, p.xiii).

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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