

**Humanities Outcomes**

Name

Department name, Institution name

Course number: Course name

Instructor's name

Due date

## **Humanities Outcomes**

### **1. Enduring works of human imagination**

The most enduring works of human imagination are often those which have caused a spark or altered the cause of history. Among the most notable ones is: “I have a Dream” speech by Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963, “The Feminine Mystique” by Betty Friedan in 1963, “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee in 1960, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” by Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852 and “Howl” by Allen Ginsberg in 1956 (Zinn, 2003). The most significant aspect of these works is how they were able to spark action or idealism during the times of their publication or delivery. To start with, the “I Have a Dream” speech by Martin Luther King Jr. is considered the most enduring political speech as it addressed one of the most fundamental issues during the civil rights era – racism and the quest for civil rights (Zinn, 2003). It is in the wake of its delivery that the nation’s ideals from the declaration of independence to the civil war age was most refined (Zinn, 2003). In retrospect, all the happenings of the past were geared toward the promise of freedom and a free society. The speech was a challenge posed to the political leadership to examine how it had acted against the backdrop of its promises of freedom. The evils of Jim Crow system, and the distant dream of the American society are represented in the same speech (Zinn, 2003).

The same case is true for “The Feminine Mystique” by Betty Friedan that challenged the traditional gender roles, and laid bare the aspirations of empowered women. This work is credited for sparking the flames of the second wave of feminism, and hence helped to address issues such as gender representation in the work place (Zinn, 2003). Other significant issues such as fair wages for women are also advocated in the work. The same can be said of cultural ideological setting pieces such as “Howl” which served to explain the counter-cultural movement

of the beat generation in the 1960s (Zinn, 2003). The counter-culture generation was a revolt against capitalism and existing religious order in preference for socialism and free thought.

Similarly, “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee helped to unravel the generational traumatic experiences of racial injustice. Particularly, Harper Lee portrayed the state of racism and injustice that was exercised in the Deep South as a result of the Jim Crow era (Zinn, 2003). This work exists due to the quintessential work by Harriet Beecher Stowe on racial experience as portrayed in the novel, “Uncle Tom's Cabin.” In this work, Harriet in 1852 laid ideological groundwork for the civil war that would happen in 1860s (Zinn, 2003).

## **2. Significant questions about human condition that emerge from multicultural and or multicultural perspective**

The most common questions about human conditions that emerge from multicultural and multicultural perspective is (i) what is justice? (ii) What is the ideal society? (iii) What is the utmost type of governance? (Zinn, 2003). The concept of justice is perpetuated in the quests to understand oppression and how to eliminate it. The various forms of multicultural issues that are covered include issues such as slavery and labor exploitation. It is from these issues that the economic and political questions arise.

On the other hand, the question on the tenets of an ideal society form a foundational question. People grapple with the understanding of gender roles, gender relations, social relations such as labor, and hierarchy in society (Zinn, 2003). These questions have led to the development of feminism, and labor theories such as capitalism, socialism and communism. They have also influenced the various government policies (Zinn, 2003).

Lastly, the question on the ideal government has been the cause of many wars (Zinn, 2003). Ranging from the declaration of independence to human suffrage, the core questions on

governance have shaped the multicultural experience. This is often expressed in the elective cycles with governments alternating between Republican and Democrat principles of governance. This explains the cycle from Reagan to Carter, to Bill Clinton, and then to Bush (Zinn, 2003). The cycle is based on the mixed results of the democratic experience as well as global issues that shape the various time periods. At one time, Americans being united for the War in Vietnam, and the next being against the war; at another time Americans being disillusioned with the cold war, and the next rising in solidarity against War on Terror (Zinn, 2003). At the domestic front, the voting patterns shifting between radical capitalism and social capitalism.

### **3. How power affects a society's cultural expressions**

The ideals of power have shaped the cultural expression in both film, play and the expressions of nationhood. The War on Terror, for instance, became a collective theme of the American patriotic expression against all foreign enemies and became a rallying call for patriotic acts (Zinn, 2003). But this is not new, the pioneers of the current civilization were driven by the same quest for power and glory. For instance, the Spanish colonization of the Americas, and the British colonization are all indicators of quest to conquer and subdue (Zinn, 2003). In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, power became more individualized with the call for democratic government demonstrating the quest for individual freedoms and a role in politics (Zinn, 2003).

However, during times of global catastrophes that threaten the existence of nationhood, there is a rallying call for unity and patriotism. This sets aside the internal political issues or expressions of power such as civil liberties or equality quests. In retrospect, both parties, both Democrat and the Republican support—in a bipartisan manner, the expansion of the defense budget or any act that seeks to prolong America's global dominance (Zinn, 2003). As such, the

concept of power is defined in the political world by the enduring need to win and to assert greater control.

As such, the ideals of great speeches and cultural references, with calls onto renown figures, has served as a totem of the ideological aspiration of the nation to rise above its current operations or problems. These tools serve to advance a given ideological agenda whose end is to consolidate a political constituency or to promote individual freedoms or rights.

#### **4. Emotional and personal responses to cultural works**

The development of the American cultural understanding, through speech, historical writings, events and works of art is mixed up. There are both good stories and bad stories. Some of the cultural works misrepresent the events, while others point out to the experiences in their complexity. The cultural works are emblems of America's collective experience – whether political or social (Zinn, 2003). For instance, the works of Martin Luther King Jr. show the political idealism that is founded on the understanding that things can be better if all humans are accorded dignity (Zinn, 2003). On the other hand, the works of Toni Morrison show the pangs of racial repression and how people process generational experiences (Zinn, 2003). This serves to explain the concept of racial privilege and racial inequality. Besides, the select speeches of persons who have defined our society – those who have been at the cross-roads of reconciling the world during changing political periods and landscapes such as Regan's Berlin Speech which called for the end of cold war, or Bill Clinton's quest to reawaken a numbed down economy after the 1996 elections (Zinn, 2003).

There is great deal of authentic quests or even aspirational sense in these cultural works as they seek to draw on the hearts of the people on certain causes. Arguably, despite the shortcomings of the leaders or historians, there is an understanding of the quests for ideal

society. For example, when studying Christopher Columbus, one cannot help but be buoyed by his courage to explore new lands, yet be repulsed by the human carnage that followed his conquests (Zinn, 2003). This is certainly the two contrasting forces that shape our history and culture. In some sense, the historical preservation of the memories is based on seeking to showcase the human quests that led to our current civilization while ignoring the evils. For history, as the context of the cultural works, is a continuous strive of humanity against itself.

### **5. Multiple disciplinary approach to the study of human experiences**

I believe that the cultural experience of the American people has been a quest to interpret their human conditions alongside social, political and economic contexts. Thus, the development of both contemporary works and historical events are shaped either by a strife for the pursuit of freedom or democratic ideals, the quest for social acknowledgement of their rights or representation in mainstream society with topics such as feminism and cultural impressions being representative of this, and the questions of equality and labor rights seeking to advance the quest for human dignity. Therefore, whether it is in the times of Christopher Columbus seeking out new lands for riches and also for personal expression of his ideal of reinvention, or JF Kennedy's speech for humans to go to the moon, the quest is the same – expansion, glory and expanding oneself beyond their current limitations (Zinn, 2003).

These quests have thus been aimed at providing the semblance of the ideal society even though history shows that this is far from true. The society is beleaguered by human rights abuses, racial inequalities, labor exploitation and genocidal wars. These evils are rooted in the human pursuit for power, propelled by greed, and avarice. That notwithstanding, the collective history shows the pining of human society to attain ideals such as equality through mass action, and to raise their aspirations to the betterment of human society. It is based on these issues that

progress has been made. The universal suffrage being a result of the clamor for better representation and idealism in the power of the vote to yield significant political power. Then came the civil rights, a movement whose pioneers believed in an equal society and the promise of the Declaration of Independence that all men are born equal (Zinn, 2003). The present times have been besieged with challenges arising from the human divisions on issues such as nuclear weapons which led to the cold war, and in the modern day a multipolar world system is threatening the US hegemony (Zinn, 2003). Nevertheless, humans everywhere are bound by the ideals of freedom of thought, and they strive to experiment new ideals and quests to further expand their fulfilment.

### Reference

Zinn, H. (2003). *A people's history of the United States: 1492-present*. Pearson Education.