

Poetics of Masking and Literary Cipher as Strategies for Survival in August Wilson's *Fences*

Adewale Ezekiel Adejumo & Ayoola Gabriel Oyekola

Department of English and Literary Studies, Ladoko Akintola University of Technology,
Ogbomoso.

Abstract

African American literary works have been known for writings on racism and hatred against the people of colour, but there have been a paucity of works using masking or passing and literary cipher on August Wilson's play, *Fences*. This paper uses masking and literary cipher as strategies for survival to African American characters. Four theories are used: Du Bois' (1903) and (2007) double consciousness, Walker's (1983) colourism, Samira's (1997) colour line, and Kimberle's (2003) intersectionism. All these theories argue in support of the struggles and liberation of coloured people in the Americas and anywhere they are around the globe. Characters such as Lyons uses masking differently as he decides to reject lifting of rubbish that is mainly reserved for black/coloured people. He intelligently masks his own skin and decides to go for success despite the fact that his skin and self-consciousness become text that every White writes hatred and segregation on (p.21). In addition, literary cipher is used as coloured people gather to use codes in their 'underground cave' for survival among themselves in the New World (p. 3). The paper concludes that passing and literary cipher are literary strategies that challenge white supremacist in the Americas and bad leadership in Africa. Therefore, doing well in vocations, careers, and businesses makes Africans and African Americans stand out as they are ready to use passing and literary ciphers as strategies of survival both at home and in the Diaspora.

Keywords: Passing, Masking, Literary cipher, *Fences*, Colour line, Double Consciousness

Introduction

In the Literature of the Black Diaspora especially African American and Caribbean Literature, passing and masking are used interchangeably. Passing refers to pretence of Blacks who move or lie to be Whites as a result of hatred and injustice against their skin, or race. According to Hobbs (2014), passing means being in exile and it is an anxious decision and at the same time, a risk strategy. He submits that passing is to take decision, turning one's back on a 'black racial identity and to claim and belong to a group that one is not legally assigned'. To Ginsberg (1996), passing is crossing identity that one does not belong and passing becomes unconscious journey to self-knowledge to make someone to discover his or her own journey which may result in serious implication and exposing system of oppression of others. According to Fanon in his work titled, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), masking is using pseudonym of any character or person in a foreign land with the aim not to be rejected, hated, bullied, and humiliated because of his or her skin colour. He further submits that 'black man's soul is a white man's artefact'. In other words, black men are perceived by the white men as toy or chattels that were used like animals during slavery in Americas and other parts of the world. Literary cipher, on the other hand, is a coded place or word used by the people of colour to overcome the hatred and racism against them by the Whites as a result of their skin colour. In most cases, literary cipher is an 'underground world'

where the Blacks hold meetings to discuss issues bothering them with the aim to proffering solutions to them. Therefore, it can be inferred that both masking and passing are appropriate techniques of not being able to secure a peaceful or rightful position, place, space or arena as a result of wrong ideology, wrong information and wrong belief towards one's colour, gender, race, and physical appearance.

Literature Review

In this section, relevant African American literary tropes such as masking, passing (white presenting or white passing or passing as white), racial passing, 'double consciousness' and passing as act of rebellion among others are reviewed. Fanon (1986) sarcastically as a result of his colour utters, 'O my body, make of me always a man who questions!' It is ironical to have one's body questioning but the above quote reveals true and absurd nature of any man who feels rejected, ashamed, and humiliated because of his or her skin colour. Furthermore, Fanon (1986) avers racist components that contribute to 'passing', and literary subterfuge of any character in a foreign land, strange environment, or new space. He points out:

Whenever questions of race and sexuality make their own organisational and theoretical demands on the primacy of 'class' 'state' and 'party' the language of traditional socialism is quite to describe...

All the above listed 'thinkings' contribute to idea of 'self' and other', 'we' and 'they' among others. In other words, all these indices prove the idea of race and passing in Literature as they are the components that define one from the other.

Fanon (1986) argues that the Negroes are entangled in the enslavement of inferiority while the Whites are enslaved by their superiority in line with their neurotic orientation. To him, black man's soul is a white man's artefacts. In other words, white men toy and play with the skins of black people as 'they' perceive 'them' as strange and foreign beings from foreign world. His position further reveals three spaces of the Blacks—the depersonalised, dislocated, and literally difficult to place. From the above listing, the different spaces are inferred and noticed in the kinds of emotional and physical hardships the black people pass through. Language to a black man, according to him, is of, two phases, 'A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another negro'. Critically, he concludes that what matters to man is not only to know the world but also to change it.

According to Fanon (1965), identity of a person is known through his or her dressing. To him, it is a known fact. But he fails to consider that a man may change his cultural dressing code for another because of his purpose which may be to win, love, and survive a serious hurdle ahead. Ginsberg (1996) alludes to Fanon that some features called 'epidermal schema' of racial difference like facial structures, hair colour and texture, and skin colour contribute to passing as unavoidable term in the Literature of the Black Diaspora. To him, passing is applied discourse that involves disguises of other components such as identity, and deliberate alteration of physical appearance and cross-dressing. In his submission, passing is not permanent or fixed but it is on the exploration, experiences and events around that determine the term passing. He alludes to Nella Larsen's protagonists, James Weldon Johnson's 'ex-coloured man,' or women such as Loreta Velazquez,

the 'Woman in Battle', who crossed dressed to enter a profession denied of them as females. Another allusion of passing by Ginsberg, in Literature and History is Jazz musician Billy Tipton whose female sex was revealed after his death in 1989 at the age of seventy-four, who lived his professional life as a man probably his chosen career was not open to women to the extent of concealing the fact of his female sex to his three adopted sons. Two were journalists, John Howard Griffin and Grace Halsell who darkened their skin (passed for black) with the aim of writing to uncover racism.

According to Ginsberg (1996), passing is not peculiar to only the Blacks but also the Whites. He alludes to white anchor, Gayle Wald that:

Passing becomes also an unconscious journey to self-knowledge, a way of discovering the meanings of his own, white racial identity and his own implication in the system of oppression he sets out to expose.

From the above quote, passing affects white men too as most of them are exposed of their 'imagined hatred and self-created bullying' against the Blacks. As most do this, exposing the hatred against the Blacks, their own people (Whites) would hate them and 'pass them for Blacks' or perceive them in 'Black passing' instead of common 'White passing' or 'White presenting'. To him, a white man marrying a black woman who later fathers the children without or with the presence of their mother may cause their white father to experience passing because of the colour of the skin of their children. This can be termed 'Black passing' according to these researchers.

Ginsberg (1996) argues that the word 'passing' is a pun which simply connotes CROSSING—'Crossing the colour line undetected'. (Madigan, 524) He alludes to Mudinbe's work, *The Invention of Africa*, that marginality is a way of calling or speaking about Africa. In other words, Africa is pictured as a passing continent before some, that feel, she is inferior.

According to Caughie (1999), 'passing is an appropriate figure for the anxiety of having no secure position'. In other words, passing means anxiety for individual to find space and place for himself or herself. The position of Caughie is superb and intelligible. However, he fails to relate it to 'them' or 'we' which possibly reveals his intention as a racist, or afraid of being attacked by racists through their words or other means. Bluntly and realistically, Caughie (1999) concludes that passing happens and will continue to occur more often as humans try to make serious effort(s) to make it right.

Wald (2000) alludes to Anzaldua (1987) that borders are set to define the places that are both safe and unsafe and distinguish *us* from *them*. From the submission of Anzaldua as referenced by Wald, borders are boiling issues that separate '*they* from *them*, Blacks from Whites, or 'the imagined Haves, and 'Haves-Not'. According to him, passing depicts race and it is a fiction of identity and stories of those that have sources of enjoyment and gratification to African American readers with the aim of 'fooling our white folks.'

According to Harrell (2010), the white Americans never see black people as contributors of anything in their society. To him, this is obvious in the work of Dunbar's use of metaphor that African Americans wearing mask to hide their 'torn and bleeding hearts'. In addition, he submits that 'We wear the Mask' depicts that the world never sees the Blacks and their contributions to/in the society.

According to Hobbs (2014), racial passing is an exile, which the person of ‘double consciousness’ may choose and may not depend of/on the choice or events around the person. To him, passing is making hasty or anxious decision as one decides to hide one’s identity as a black person thinks his or her identity is not legal.

To pass as white was to make an anxious decision to turn one’s back on a black racial identity and to claim to belong to a group to which one was not legally assigned. It was risky business. In today’s multiracial society, the decision to pass may seem foolish, frivolous, disloyal; it may be reminiscent of an unexpected plot twist in a novel or a film; or it may be understood as a desperate act compelled by the racial constraints of the bygone era of segregation and racial violence.

From the position of Hobbs, racial passing is a desperate act of remembering racial violence against one in the past which may make one to act as being white in all endeavours. This may be horror experiences of some people in the past that may serve as ways for one to learn to hide one’s real identity and decide to carry fake identity or living a double conscious life, or occupying ambiguous space.

Hobbs (2014) submits that passing during antebellum era, enslaved people lived in looming fear and threat of loss knowing they could be bought, sold and forever separated from their families if their master loses a card game or decides to present a slave as a wedding gift. To him, ‘to pass as white’ during the period of antebellum was not just to escape from one’s skin colour or blackness but from slavery, recovery and living under serious conditions of freedom.

According to Hobbs (2014), passing is the act when a slave or black person denies his or her race in the New World. He posits, passing is the border between the Blacks and the Whites. In addition, it is a kind of negotiation when someone changes his or her location, clothing, speech and life story or makes himself or herself white. Bitterly, Hobbs (2014) argues that passing in few cases was an act of rebelling against the racial regime as the African Americans struggle to shape and nurture their identities and communities. In addition, he reveals that a slave used PASS and ‘pretended that he belonged to a butcher in New York, and was going in to the country to fetch cattle for his master’. (p.38). From this point, it is obvious that lying is another form of passing that the Blacks or people of African descent used to survive brutality or being tagged slaves or being taken as chattels.

Gadsby (2007) posits that salt can either save or kill. As a new concept to safe Caribbean women and Literature, she writes that ‘sucking salt’ is a survival skill that serves as creative resistance to challenge system of oppression by those that migrate to Great Britain, Canada, and the New York.

Kim (2021) narrates survival of the Blacks in Americas. According to her, since 1976, the month of February has been unique to the Blacks which they tagged ‘Black History Month’ to celebrate themselves in the Diaspora. She quotes, Mei- ling Malone, Cal State Fullerton African American professor that:

Black Joy is an act of resistance. The whole idea of oppression is to keep people down. So when people continue to shine and and live fully, it is resistance in the context of our white supremacist world. (P. 1)

To her, the celebration tagged, 'Black Joy' is a symbol of reminiscence and celebration of past memory of their forbears in the Americas such as horror of slavery, hatred, lynching, and unlawfull killing by the white police. From the above quote, it is obvious that 'Black Joy' is beyond passing or masking but it is a form of literary cipher as the Blacks come together discussing their experiences and the way forward as emblem of survival in Americas.

Kim (2021), alludes to Professor Malone, a black, celebrating 'Black Joy' who appreciates that it is a beautiful life of black people and a way to reject racism. Malone, as quoted by Kim, 'Black Joy' is black self-love and pride and be the best of Blacks inspite of living in a racist world. Belluscio (2006) argues that passing is peculiar to African American Literature as it centres on binary oppositions which involves extreme example of crossing that separates the dominant and marginal cultural, racial and ethnic groups with the purpose of subduing the oppressed from getting access to social and economic opportunities. To him, literary passing is prevalent in the works of African American writers such as Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen and Pauline Hopkins among others. He further expresses that tenets like assimilation, ethnic differences, and identity are similar to literary passing in African American Literature.

Mustafa (2024) posits the power of storytelling as a component of survival for the Afro American characters using techniques such as call-and-response, improvisation and communal participation as tools for cultural resilience and identity formation. From the view of these researchers, call-and- response and communal participation are literary ciphers as they are techniques for survival in the Diaspora. In addition, literary ciphers are like hidden meetings holding by the Blacks in their communities in both Diaspora and in their home countries as underground meetings for their survival in the face of struggles, horrors, racism, hatred, unlawful killings and bullying against them.

According to Fleishman (2025), passing is a trope of fakery and it is an act of violating the laws of identity and sameness. To him, it is a counterfeit narrative and literary self-invention as characters carry identities that are not theirs.

Theoretical Framework

The theories used in this paper are W.E.B Du Bois (1903) and (2007), Double consciousness, Alice Walker's (1983) Colourism, Kawash Samira (1997) Colour line, and Crenshaw Kimberle's (2003), intersectionism. These four African American theorists argue in support of black colour and write to liberate the Blacks and their Blackness from racism, hatred, and segregation. Du Bois (1903) coins double consciousness to describe the dual identity many of the African Americans MUST experience and navigate in the New World. He stresses that most of the African Americans view themselves as 'Americans' but the Whites treat them as second class citizens because of their skin/race. To him, the constant tension and fear create psychological burdens and inner threats for them to bear.

According to Du Bois (2007), slave masters always have the opportunity of discrediting the people held in captive. To him, slavers compare their slaves to mules that work on the fields

for them. To corroborate this submission, he alludes to Frederick Douglass (1881) that ‘The office of colour in the colour line is a very plain and subordinate one’. This is obvious as the above argument is synonymous to ‘double consciousness’ discussed earlier as the colour of the Blacks makes them inferior and subordinates before the Whites. However, he encourages the Blacks through the lens of Frederick Douglass that solutions to minimise colour line are for the Blacks to work hard and overcome undesirable conditions such as slavery, stupidity, servility, poverty, and dependence.

Walker (1983) appreciates the struggle of black women during the Jim Crow laws in America that segregates the Blacks from the Whites as a result of their colour. To her, ‘gardens’ in the title depicts black women, their artistic expressions and courage to navigate in spite of the ‘struggles’ in America against their colour and gender. According to Walker, colourism is preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on skin colour. In other words, favouring and having a bias mind towards darker people and giving a little preference a lighter skin person is colourism.

Kawash (1997) expounds colour line that it is beyond biological and cultural difference but it is a principle of division, classification, and order. To him, colour line marks the inseparability of knowledge and power in racially demarcated society. From the above, colour line is a thin line that is technically and systematically ‘harsh’, a space that is beyond single meaning but multilayered meanings depending on the experiences of the ‘experiencers’.

Crenshaw (2003) argues for the black women as some writings segregate them. According to her, one of the most popular books in Black Women Studies is entitled, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*. To her, black women are erased in the conceptualisation, identification and remediation of race and sex. In addition, she narrates that black women were not hired in the court but General Motors prior 1964 and those that were hired after 1970 lost their jobs during subsequent recession.

Historically, Crenshaw (2003) alludes to Anna Julia Cooper, a 19th century Black Feminist, who coined a phrase to counter Martin Delaney’s public claims that anywhere he entered, the race entered with him. Cooper, according to Crenshaw challenged: ‘Only the Black Woman can say, when and where I enter... then and there the whole Negro race enters with me’. The experiences of the black women in America according to the above excerpt prove intersectionality as a theory that brings sex, race, gender, and segregation to the centre for black women gain their freedom.

Poetics of Masking and Literary Cipher as Techniques for Survival in Wilson’s *Fences*

Passing or masking as a technique of survival comes to play when Lyons rejects to work in the rubbish truck. (P. 21) This is a strand of passing that can be termed ‘determined passing for success or determined passing for good job’.

LYONS: Aw, Pop, you know I can’t find no decent job.
Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can’t
get no job. (p. 21)

TROY: I told you I know some people down here. I can get
you on the rubbish if you want to work. I told you

that the last time you came by here asking me for something. (p. 21)

LYONS: Naw, Pop... thanks. That ain'y for me. I don't wanna be carrying nobody's rubbish. I don't wanna be punching nobody's time clock. (P. 21)

TROY: What's the matter, you too good to carry peple's rubbish? Where you think ten dollars you talking about come from? I'm just supposed to haul people's rubbish and give my money to you cause you too lazy to work. You too lazy to work and wanna know why you ain't got what I got. (P. 21)

Passing as a technique for survival in the above first three extracts reveals the determination of Lyons as a coloured person who is poised to pass white and their rubbish (odd job of lifting rubbish) that is only reserved for the coloured people. Rejecting odd job as a coloured man depicts staying away from the Whites and their hatred. In other words, Lyons double consciousness assists him as he quickly chooses to live a better life instead of following his father's choice of carrying rubbish for the white people.

To reduce the tension of passing, the confidence and boldness exhibited by Troy reveals struggle of the Blacks as they have to perform extraordinarily in whatever they do so as to make it in the New World. Troy encourages his son, Lyons, to do his best in playing to make it and be at the top of the ladder even more than Jackie Robinson.

TROY: I done seen a hundred niggers play baseball better than Jackie Robinson. Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make! What you talking about Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson wasn't nobody. I'm talking about if you could play ball then they ought to have let you play. Don't care what colour you were. Come telling me I come along too early. If you could play... then they ought to have let you play. (P.12)

To overcome passing is to be the best as Troy encourages his son not to mind his colour but to focus on his career is the solution to survival in the face of struggles before the white extremists. Troy talks about **death** from pages 12 to 18 as a 'passing metaphor' to pretend leaving the world of the Whites but living in the separate world of the Blacks. Discussing death as 'passing strategy', Troy uses it to make himself and his family live a happy life despite being hated and segregated by the Whites.

TROY: I 'll be damned! I'll die and go to hell and play blackjack with the devil before I give you ten dollars. (P. 18)

In the above extract, talking death while discussing with his intimate, Bono, is a kind of passing because as he talks he possibly imagines white people being around that he feels he has to die first before giving Bono ten dollars. In addition, it can be concluded that he perceives running away from the white extremists is like running to hell before one can survive as black person as Troy and Bono are seen and depicted as men among other men (the Whites).

This play explores passing from another perspective as complaining and worry are elements of passing instead of usual fear and lying the people of colour experience before the white extremists.

TROY: A Negro go in there and can't get no kind of service.

I seen a white fellow come in there and order bowl

of stew. Pope picked all the meat out the pot for him.

Negro come behind and ain't got nothing but potatoes

and carrots. (P.28)

From this excerpt, it is obvious that Troy as the coloured character is not happy with his condition and other black people around him. Rejection is the best language for passing in the above lament of Troy. But passing or masking is also a blessing to the Blacks as the Whites offer them potatoes and carrots that remind them of their resourcefulness, strength, and resilience during and after slavery. To these researchers, potatoes and carrots are even good for the health of the Blacks than bowl of meat pack for the Whites that would be detrimental to their health condition if consumed without caution. Intelligently, this reveals the ignorance of slave masters that strengthened the Blacks more as they were offered potatoes and carrots.

Literary Cipher as a Technique of Survival in August Wilson's *Fences*

Literary Cipher as a technique of survival in August Wilson's *Fences* occurs in many instances in the play. As a technique or literary code for survival, the black hero named Troy challenges white people especially their leader called Brownie in their company.

TROY: I ain't worried about them firing me. They gonna fire me cause I asked a question? That's all I did. I went to Mr. Rand and asked him, "Why?" Why you got the white mens driving and the coloured lifting?" told him, "what's the matter, don't I count? You think only white Fellows got sense enough to drive a truck. How come you got all whites driving and the coloured lifting? He told me "take it to the union." Well, hell, that's what I done! Now they wanna come up with this pack of lies. (p.3)

TROY: Brownie don't understand nothing. All I want them to do is change the job description. Give everybody a chance to drive the truck. Brownie can't see that. He ain't got that much sense. (p.3)

From the above excerpt, literary cipher comes to play as Troy uses his gathering with other coloured people like Bono and Rose to challenge and mock the authority of the Whites. The extract reveals Troy to be a man with the spirit of community changer and transformer apart from being a coloured personality alone without proving his worth, and confidence. He proves his confidence and love for his colour despite atmosphere of hatred to his colour.

Troy employs pessimism that death is the great end of all. Loudly, he does that to caution the white extremists that death judges and takes away everyone. Ironically, both the Blacks and the Whites are equal as death makes all equal at the end. It is sarcastic that 'death puts on white robe' (p.15) This is done as literary cipher or spoken soul (hidden point) to mock and calm white extremists in Americas as they behave like death anytime they come in contact with people of colour.

In the play, *Fences*, determination in the words of Troy when discussing with his wife, Rose, who is also a person of colour points to literary cipher as it is a code of survival as well as for the Whites around them to know what they are up to. Troy decides not to go shopping in A&P because of their weird nature towards him and other black people.

TROY: Ain't nothing wrong with shopping at Bella's. She got fresh food. (P. 9)

ROSE: I ain't said nothing about if she got fresh food. I'm talking about what she charge. She charge ten cents more than the A&P. (P.9)

TROY: The A&P ain't never done nothing for me. I spends my money where I'm treated right. I go down to Bella, say, "I need a loaf of bread, I'll pay you Friday." She give it to me. What sense that make when I got money to go and spend it somewhere else and ignore the person who done right by me? That ain't in the Bible. (p.9)

Literary cipher as a technique of survival is conspicuous in the conversation of Troy and Rose as both determine to use English that is best known to their space to discuss issues bothering them. Apart from that, Troy determines to avoid a white man's shop who hates and is not ready to accommodate him. In addition, Troy uses the Bible to corroborate his code of living well and making himself and his family happy that Bible does not support hatred especially because of skin colour, or lack of substance.

Another instance of literary cipher is obvious in the ironical words of Rose who challenges Troy that he must not call anything he does not understand 'devil'. (P.18) Invariably, she directs her point to white extremists not to call anything black 'devil' and need to learn and re-learn from some stories of black people before segregating, lynching, choking, bullying, and spitting on them. The text reveals that Troy and Bono usually have a particular day for literary cipher (or underground or hidden discussion for their survival in the company of the white leader, and master, Mr. Rand. This is explicit in the interlude of the play.

Of the two men, Bono is obviously the follower. His commitment

to their friendship of thirty-odd years is rooted in his admiration of Troy's honesty, capacity for emulate. It is Friday night, payday, and the one night of the week two men engage in a ritual of talk and drink. (P. 1)

The above excerpt reveals two events as 'literary underground or ritual talk for the survival of the people of colour', Troy and Bono. The first event is at their working place and the second place is every Friday night of the payday, they usually have long time discussing their past, the past of their forbears from Africa as slaves, and their future as well as their reference to **watermelon** in their discussion on page two. This depicts sankofication of their slavery era as the watermelon symbolises the hardwork, resilience and survival of the people of African descent during slavery. As a tenet of literary cipher, African philosophical way of nurturing children about life is unique for Africans in their homes in the Diaspora. This is conspicuous in the admonition of Troy to Lyons, his son.

LYONS: I ain't asked you to give me nothing. I asked you loan to loan me ten dollars. I know you got ten dollars. I know you got ten dollars. (p. 22)

TROY: Yeah, I got it. You know why I got it? Cause I don't throw my money away out there in the streets. You living the fast life. ...wanna be a musician....running around in them clubs and things...then, you learn to take care of yourself. You ain't gonna find me going and asking nobody for nothing. I done spent too many years without. (p.22)

LYONS: You and me is two different people, pop. (p. 22)

TROY: I done learned my mistake and learned to do what's right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don't owe it to yourself. Ask Bono. He'll tell you I'm right. (p. 22)

From the conversation of Troy and Lyons, adult space to nurture, guide and correct is obvious as Troy speaks with Lyons. This is literary cipher in African American Literature as their house serves as underground or hidden arena to nurture and discuss germane issues bothering them as people of colour. Troy challenges Lyons to stop running around the clubs with white people as it could cause him his life 'running around in them clubs and things then, you learn to take care of yourself'. As a tenet of literary cipher, Troy teaches Lyons that Africans anywhere in the world are not selfish but they always assist one another unlike Lyons who always 'learn to take care of himself' as spoken by Troy. In addition, another tenet of literary cipher is the teaching of 'hardwork pays in all' among African Americans as they learnt from their motherland. Troy tells Lyons that as his father, he does not go around begging people for things but he works hard to sustain himself and the family.

As one of the tenets of literary cipher among the African Americans is protection. Troy builds fences around his family as symbols of protection and discussion of important issues that are meant for them only.

BONO: Some people build fences to keep people out... and other people build fences to keep people in. Rose wants to hold on to you all. She loves you. (p. 76)

At the resolution, after the death of Troy, Rose brings all her family members together and prepares breakfast for them to strengthen them, **ROSE:** You all come on into the house and let me fix you some breakfast. Keep up your strength'. (p. 113) This proves literary cipher as the coloured people in African American Literature and in Americas as the lives of the Blacks are important than a mere object or building of fence(s) as usual stand for covering or protecting a house or occupants in a house. The building of fences in the text reminds the Blacks in America of **BLACK WALL STREET** in 1921 where black people and their properties were destroyed by White Supremacists terrorists that took them two days. In addition, it symbolises building of the communities of the Blacks around the globe that every black person should remember to have a kind of thought to build, rebuild, mend, and remend their destroyed properties.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that passing and literary cipher are techniques of survival in African American Literature. Passing is known to be lying or exhibiting fear, or double consciousness when meeting the Whites or people of different races or colours. In August Wilson's *Fences*, 'determined passing for success or determined passing for good job' is explored as the hero, Troy, determines to 'pass white people' and encourages his son, Lyons, to struggle for success among the Whites without fear or intimidation. (P. 21) Passing as a technique of survival, Troy, African American character demonstrates this to reduce tension. This is obvious in the words of Troy to his son, Lyons not to mind his colour when playing ball but concentrating on his ability and creativity in the midst of white players as key for survival. (P. 12) Troy as the main voice in August Wilson's text, recounts the Blacks slavery experiences, eating of potatoes and carrots as food for survival. Therefore, recounting this, strengthens the Blacks and coloured people in Americas as a trajectory for survival for every black man reading this will be more confident and resilient in their struggles in Americas or Diaspora. In the case of literary cipher, the gathering of the Blacks without any 'intruder' makes them survive as they discuss their challenges, aspirations, and successes. The struggle and bravery of Troy on what to do when discussing with Bono reveals literary code as he (Troy) eventually challenges Mr. Rand that black men also have right to drive truck like white people (P. 3). At last, white leaders allow them to drive truck not only lifting rubbish they only known for. Another instance of literary cipher, Troy and Bono always meet every Friday night before payday to have a *ritual talk* on their progress. From all these instances of passing and literary cipher in the text, it is concluded that the two concepts are germane in building society, individual home, and institutions both in Africa and Americas as we live in postmodern era (like curbing the absurd steps a Nigerian content creator in person of Mandy Kiss planning to have sex with hundred boys or men in twenty four hours to break Guinness World

Record, slated for October 30, 2025). This paper, therefore, is written to encourage Africans and African Americans on the global scenes using passing and literary cipher creatively and morally as well as to challenge (dis)order of white supremacists. In sum, as concepts of survival both Africans and African Americans need to learn holding ‘underground meeting(s)’ to discuss their struggles and imbalances so as to have a better present and future as demonstrated by Troy to Lyons, his son, in the text, *Fences*.

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