Reclaiming Fatherhood through Economic Security in Black America: *The Pursuit of Happyness*, a film adaptation by Gabriele Muccino

KONATE Siendou
University of Cocody at Abidjan

Abstract

The Black family in America has almost always been deemed matriarchal because of absentee fathers. And yet, fatherhood in the US for Blacks has a long story that harks back to slavery and its contemporary ramifications that precludes opportunities for African American males. Chris Gardner, a father of one whose wife deserted him, attempts to reverse the table of beliefs about Black fathers. He sets out to achieve economic success as per the US constitution which enshrines the pursuit of happiness as an inalienable right.

Gardner's economic success in the economic jungle of capitalist America is rather a springboard for him to belie the belief that all African-American fathers are absentees. Ensuring economic security allows Gardner to be the father he would never have been able to be. How Gardner weaves through the ruts of capitalist hardship to reassert his manhood and earn respect is the subject of this study that builds on the real life story of Gardner as adapted to the Hollywood screen.

Keywords: Absentee father, Black family, economic security, inalienable right

> "Children raised without their dads are prone to be jailed, obese, lack self-esteem and have sub-standard education. […]Fatherlessness increases a girl's chances of becoming a teenage mother, suffering abuse and experiencing emotional neglect. Black boys raised without their dads lack the most important role models for how to be Black men and, more importantly, how to father their own children." (Samuels 74)

Introduction

It is a truism to state that the African-American family is ridden with the mother-figure, which fact validates the proposition that the family is a broken piece. In other words, the husband and the wife are the terms of the family. In the African American only one term of the family is around, the woman/mother. The fact that the man is not being around cannot be disassociated from the very capitalism that the United States epitomizes. The peculiar trade – the trade of human being – accounts for a good deal of U.S. capitalism. This trade did not allow for the making of an African family in the midst of the New World. The contrary would have disrupted the trade. The consequence of absentee fatherhood – that is, a demasculinized family – is hard to erase from Black America. At times, the family loses its now naturalized shape because its pillar collapses: the woman/mother may opt out, thereby leaving the family on the shoulder of the man who ultimately disproved the inability of the African American male to stay in a home.

Italian cineaste Gabriele Muccino's 2006 *The Pursuit of Happyness* is an embodiment of African American experience in the United States both as past history and history in the making against the backdrop of the economic system that props the country.

In 1981, Chris Gardner a smart and family man invests the money of his family in a bone scanner more efficient but cheaper than the x-ray currently in use in hospitals. His sale does not yield any result. Worst still, one of the machines is faulty, which adds to his anguish. As he sells nothing to retrieve his floating capital, he attempts to fix the machine. The attempt does not work, and as a result he loses his house, his credit cards, to make things even worse his wife leaves him. He sleeps on the street with his son. Committed as ever to his son, Gardner tries to find a job only to find a position of stockbroker for which he must train for six months before getting paid. Gardner eventually gets his chance upon his perseverance, his faith in the American creed of the pursuit of happiness; he becomes a millionaire. The film features Thandie Newton (as Linda), Jaden Smith (as Christopher), and Will Smith (as Chris Gardner).

The Black Family then and now

In 1963, and in a rather fiery and unabashed ton known to him, African-American revolutionary Malcolm X laid down a blueprint of what he deemed to be real fatherhood. As if to correct absentee fathers and men who do not own up to their responsibilities as a man of their households, Malcolm X said the following:

> That just you are a man, that just don't (sic) mean that you are a father. Anybody can make a baby, but anybody can't take care of them. Anybody can get a woman, but anybody can't take care of them. So husband means you are taking care of your wife.

> Father means you are taking care of your children, that you are accepting the responsibility of manhood.[1]

It does not suffice to impregnate a woman and get a child. To be a father means to take care of that child. Slavery in the United States never gave any other way to the African to assert his fatherhood than inoculating his female counterpart with semen and produce working hand or manpower for the master. Virility in this context is one that was capitalized in the sense that the man was not masculine per se; instead, all the system was interested in was his reproductiveness. Masculinity involves responsibilities like standing up for oneself in a rife among men, showing a sense of oneself as a free person – one that exercises freedom to its fullest –, which includes forming the smallest human unit, or the family. Melvin Hitchens writes,

> The matrix of personality refers to the family medium by which all patterns of behavior originate and develop. The family is the molding tool which shapes our understanding of life. Just as metal is shaped into a pipe, the family shapes us into the son we are today, be it good or bad. Everyone is affected by his or her family's teaching and practices. (Hitchens 3)

The notion of the family is one that has never been stable and solid among African Americans by reason of the enslavement of that portion of the American population. Slavery has made the family quasi inexistent among Americans of African extraction.

The slaveocratic environment, instead, endowed the woman with the masculine responsibility in such a way that she can reasonably be said to have fathered her children. She is therefore the beginning and the end of the family cycle. Most literatures on the African American family almost unanimously hold slavery and its attending wrongs responsible for family breakups in the U.S. South. Men, women and children were sold whenever the master was relocating and sales triggered the disruption of families in such a way that once they were separated the chance for husband and wife to reunite was extremely thin. In fact, Wilma Dunaway believes that "for the whole South, slave trader records have been used to estimate that one of every three or four sales triggered the separation of spouses. […] Appalachian slaves reported marriage breakups more often than the national average" (Dunaway 55).

One might think that these breakups were only economically driven. Parts of the reason are unquestionably economic insofar as the system rested on the sale of human commodity. Other reasons were purely of a rational or commonsensical order. Letting slaves develop bonds such as in a normal family was detrimental to the slave-owning business. As Dunaway sustains, "one of every three Appalachian slave marriages was destroyed by the masters' structural interference to maximize profits from slave migration. […] Slaveholders carefully planned marriage breakups. Masters kept control by effecting removals without the knowledge of their kins" (Ibid. 56). Clearly, separating members of the same family did wreak havoc on the African American family. This even created a pattern that tended to be the norm: family is headed by the woman.

The "fathering mother"[2] made its way through reconstruction to the 20th century. That century was a new beginning for the Black persons in many regards. Doors were

[1] Transcription is mine. See "Malcolm X: Prince of Islam" on Islamicvideos.net.

[2] This oxymoron is very expressive of African-American matriarchy. The mother-figure was unquestionably the central pillar of the black family because the woman is both a mother and a father. She plays the role of the male.

propped, about to open for them into the American Dream written on their backs. Emancipation was meant to provide more opportunities for African Americans. It is no secret that they were afforded minimal opportunity to even become self-employed. In other words, their services where not needed, as employing them would redeem them in the eye of the racialist society. The system was structured such that any opportunity for them was foreclosed. Nobody rightly summarizes this more than Kareem Abdul-Jabbar who says: "The idea was simple: Marginalize black people so they don't count. Repress them so they can't achieve political or economic power. Confine them to permanent underclass status as servants and slaves to keep them from rising equal to or above the white ruling class"(Abdul-Jabbar xxiii).

The 1930's of the Great Depression made things a lot more than unbearable for Americans of any stripe. It is needless to say that dispossessed and disdained Americans of African descent could not survive a day when Whites suffered from hunger. As narratives and movies about the Great Depression show, African-Americans suffered the most from this extremely dire depression that has come to pass as the landmark of all-time economic hardship in the United States.

Whether it is during the era of reconstruction or after the so-called slave emancipation, or in recent U.S. history, one can reasonably claim that nothing has changed in African-American family life. What is the connection between economics and family matters? It is needless to say that these two sets are inextricably linked. The dismembering of the African American family was possible due to the slaveocratic and /or plantation economy of the South. For such an economy to stand there had to be the perpetual denial of the capability of the slave to assume himself or herself, both as an individual and an agent of a given socially acceptable community. Besides, for a family to stand on its feet, it has to have the wherewithal, which is mostly economic: childrearing, family material up-keeping, among others, are only possible with economic stability. Thus, one cannot but agree with Jewel when she states that "Due to their economically depressed status and inextricably related to their systematic exclusion from traditional institutions, African American families have been especially vulnerable to policy changes, as well as to fluctuations in other social, economic, and political events" (Jewel 4).

Also, it is clear from prison statistics that the African-American male is an endangered species[3] because when he is not imprisoned for drug (ab)use, rape, and crimes – which is not usually the case – he is unemployed, and therefore unfit to take care of a family. According to Demico Boothe, the imprisonment of young lacks contributes to the hidden goal of disempowering Blacks. Thus, he recommends that Black people

[3] This extensive quote is very enlightening in this regard: "According to 2005 Census Bureau statistics, the male African-American population of the United States aged between 18 and 24 numbered 1,896,000. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 106,000 African-Americans in this age group were in federal or state prisons at the end of 2005. See table 10 of this report. If you add the numbers in local jail (measured in mid-2006), you arrive at a grand total of 193,000 incarcerated young Black males, or slightly over 10 percent." See "Young Black Males Headed for Extinction?" The Fact Checker, *Washington Post*, 10/03/2007. Available at http://voices.washingtonpost.com/factchecker/2007/10/young_black_males_headed_for_e_1.html

have "to always be vigilant and acute in our watch for subversive applications of white supremacy and camouflaged efforts to continue the subjugation of our people. The Industrial Prison Complex is another outgrowth of white authority's ever adapting mission to keep blacks powerless, poverty-stricken, and effectively disenfranchised" (Boothe 12). Still, when the African American male is available, he is either taken by "other," as in white, women, or simply he is on the other side of the deemed sexual normalcy; i.e., he is gay, which precludes any reproductive potentiality.

In addition to the aforementioned non-traditional sexual orientation that makes dents into familihood in "African America," there is the diversity that marks nowadays the notion of family. In the chapter titled "Race, Ethnicity, and Families," David M. Newman and Elizabeth Grauerholz aptly state that "The pervasive image of black family collapse ignores the diversity of African-American family life. The 'African-American community' consists of families with widely different histories and experiences. Not all of them have ancestors who entered the country enslaved. Some came to the Americas as freemen; others came as indentured servants who worked off their indebtedness and went on to live free lives. Today, African-American families come from different classes, different religions, and different geographic areas" (*Sociology of Families*, 153). In other words, the African-American family is so diversified and variegated that one should refrain from sweeping generalizations.

Today, the notion of family is riding on stable waters such that even miscegenation which was once a threat at the height of the affirmation of white purity has come to pass as a normal thing. The beginning of such relationships was hard to imagine and to accept as Spike Lee's 1991 *Jungle Fever*, like most African American films, attempted to bring to public attention. More than ever, interracial cohabitation and/or marriage is arguably accepted.

The Black woman and the African-American Family

Muccino's film, if not the life story of Chris Gardner, like Alex Pate's *Finding Makeba*, attempts to reverse the tables of law. Instead of a man breaking the family, a woman stars as the main bulldozer of the family, thereby positing her as the devilish figure of the community. The life story of Chris Gardner contradicts the claims that it is only the black male who disrupts the cohesiveness of family. Even though Gardner's mother was the main pillar of the family, his family life proved that a woman could be a disruptive force. Gardner's wife left him and his young boy; however, such a disruption never quelled his determination to be a man and, more importantly, a father.

The Pursuit of Happyness is a rebuttal to prohibitive and inhibitive forces against the African American man. Gardner intends to dream like any other American who believes in the "dream-words" of the Founding Fathers. He knows, more than any other American by reason of his history in the United States, that if he must be a man, he has to work twice as much as anybody else, that he has to endure a passion-like suffering to see the results that others get when they set out to work.

Selling white X-ray boxes not only shows the performance of the product Gardner trades, since these products are believed to be more efficient than the ones in use, but also this Black man embarks on a journey whereby he places himself on the same footing as any White person in America. The boxes represent American capitalism, at least as far as Gardner is concerned. Admittedly, by selling them, he ruins the family savings, thereby

setting up his already economically feeble family for harsher times. Gardner's choice is understandable. He seeks to be the type of man that Americans of African descent have never truly seen; he wants to add to what his wife's earning, and possibly supersede the social condition that his the lot of the people of his kind. In other words, Gardner intends to validate the most and oft-quoted lines of the Fundamental Law of the United States – or the words of the Founding Fathers –, which read as follows:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and *the pursuit of happiness*.

Gardner's is an appropriation of those lines. The title of his autobiography bears a "y" where an "i" suffices to write the word "happiness", which denotes the man's determination against winds and tides to exercise his inalienable right to be happy, thereby realizing his American Dream. This dream has mostly been a nightmare for people of African extraction. Gardner does not want the nightmare to drag on; all he sees is a dream to be fulfilled.

His commitment to making the new black man even goes beyond the mere redefinition of what it is to be a man, but it embraces the tenets of American capitalism. Faring on Wall Street is a sign of reversing the tables of economic and identity laws: the presence of African American women in the work place and the absence of their male counterparts.

On the female presence in the work place, Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins, in *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity*, believe that "The visible presence of African women in the marketplace economy has also encouraged foreign scholars to exaggerate female power, or dominance, in African societies. If African women seemed to exercise a significant degree of autonomy working as traders, it is because women in the culture are expected to take on the major responsibility for their family's immediate needs" (Hines and Jenkins, 5).

Hine and Jenkins also explain the lack of male figure in the black family by the very thing that the slave owner seeks to destroy: the family. According to these scholars, "Slave owners in the southeast generally sold men away from their kin more often than women, who were more likely to remain behind with members of the family who had not been sold. As a result, most of the enslaved men in the region ran away in order to re-establish family ties. Others, however, ended up in the same situation as black women, having to choose family over freedom"(Hines and Jenkins 9). In other words, the presence of women in the African family as well as the absence of men is history specific.

The absence of the male figure in the African family plays into a bigger picture of the demographic hegemony and identity politics among the American white population. History reveals that the black male has been literally castrated, thereby effeminized, by the slave holder and trader who is mostly a white male. As two captains cannot command one vessel, two male identity figures could not coexist in antebellum and post-bellum America. What stands to reason is the existence of African manhood next to a White manhood when it is clear that the former was obliterated by latter. The realization of the goal of white masculine self-affirmation commands that no other masculinity stands.

Hine and Jenkins put this in clearer terms. According to these authors

> […] white men's sense of themselves as men depended upon the exclusion of others. America as a political entity has been a multicultural society from its very

> beginning, but authentic membership in the dominant group was increasingly limited to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant males. The 'Self Made Man' model excluded non-white males and certain ethnic whites by denying equal opportunities for employment, education, and political empowerment. Such discriminatory practices were meant to control 'other' males' access to freedom and equal rights. (Hines and Jenkins 14)

Still according to the two authors, the white masculine self-affirmation has a specific site of realization. It is the work place, which is a platform for any male to show his worth. The authors write that "[T]he public sphere was the central proving ground for the Self Made Man, with the workplace being the most important site for masculine competition. Every individual white male was pressure to prove his manhood by achieving maximum success in procuring his part of the 'American Dream.' The ability to secure enough worldly goods for the survival of himself, his family, and his community would translate into economic independence, social morality, and political power" (Ibid.).

The argument that connects the condition of the African-American male to rights is a plausible one. In a society designed along gender lines, self-appropriation can only be completed through the disruption of the terms of superseding alterities. The African male in the United States of America can only affirm his identity by casting it against other American masculinities and their attending symbolic props. Evidently, in so doing one entangles in a web of accusations that include sexism and patriarchy. In other words, to speak about the black community in America with the male's condition as its barometer is sexist and feeds into patriarchy, which is the accusation that lesbian and feminist critic, bell hooks, levels against traditional readings of the African male in the United States. According to this critic, "historically the language used to describe the way black men are victimized within racist society has been sexualized. When words like castration, emasculation, impotency are the commonly used terms to describe the nature of black male suffering, a discursive practice is established that links black male liberation with gaining the right to fully participate within patriarchy […] Masculinity as it is conceived within patriarchy is life-threatening to black men. Careful interrogation of the way in which sexist notions of masculinity legitimize the use of violence to maintain control, male domination of women, children, and even other men, will reveal the connection between such thinking and black-on-black homicide, domestic violence, and rape" (hooks 77-8). [4]

Without doubt the affirmation of African-American manhood and/or masculinity plays into sexism and patriarchy and their attending disruption in the modern family. Gardner's mother was his father figure; she was his breadwinner and sole provider. Also, the men that passed through his mother's life have all been representatives of the black male being violent and irresponsible. Worst still, a few of them were child abusers.

In spite of the above, however, one cannot underestimate the connection of inalienable rights with manhood, nor can one accuse holders of views that have it that a jobless male

[4] Abounding in the same sense, Hine and Jenkins write that "Black manhood in America has always been inextricably connected to freedom" (Hine and Jenkins 58). In other words, African-Americans ascend to freedom when they reach the peak of their manhood, which implies their recognition as men with the attendant entitlements by other males.

in an increasingly economy-driven society is castrated. To have a job bestows respect, responsibility and visibility for the Black male in a context where he is ceaselessly spoliated, obliterated and forgotten. The life of Gardner proves the point more than any other argument in "Black America".

Benefits and ambivalence of capitalism

Unquestionably, this screen adaptation celebrates a commodifying culture. It is true that the film casts a message of courage, perseverance and iron-like determination to those who also met with the dry grin of luck. Be that as it may seem, *The Pursuit of Happyness* gives the viewer an entry into the real world of capitalism where pity, altruism and honesty are vices. The American Dream is doubtlessly one that breeds on the motto "everyone for themselves, and God's helping hand will follow." In other words, God helps those who help themselves and happiness is to chase because it does not come around the way of the idle. Chris Gardner knows that philosophy of (capitalist) life, no wonder why he started selling goods that he thought would yield profits only to realize that he needed to exhibit more courage and release more energy than usual. After all, he is a person of African descent in the U.S, which doubly sets the task harder for him.

The first hardship on Gardner's way toward his "happ*y*ness" is when his bone scanner is stolen by some White men. This is an indicator of Gardner's encounter with the rat race that lies ahead of him. He must arm himself with courage, perseverance and devotion to his aims, for no one is out there to help. Worst, his encounter with vicissitudes of capitalist America is with thieves. The latter are the embodiment of savage capitalism, leech-like environment where anybody is fit for being sucked. No matter what their color is, thieves do not care if their victim is white or black, poor or rich; everyone is a fair game. Like anyone else, he falls prey to the thieves and crooks of the system. Therefore, he fails to carry on with the x-ray machines, which fires him with more strength one could imagine. Gardner aims high; he wants to become a millionaire, not through the classical path as is the case among African Americans.

As Gardner writes in his autobiography, "In 1970 the only way a kid from the ghetto like me had a chance to go make a million dollars was if he could *sing, dance, run, jump, catch balls, or deal drugs*" (TPH 10)[Emphasis is mine]. As if defying the odds or reversing the tables, Gardner enshrines his mother's prophetic words that "if you want to, one day you could make a million dollars" (Ibid) [Emphasis in original]. He wants to make his millions of dollars, not like Michael Jordan or Shaquille O'Neal, not like Jimmy Hendrix, James Brown or Michael Jackson, but like other Americans, those of Anglo-Saxon descent in the corporate world. The lights of corporate America absolutely dazzled Gardner. The stockbrokers' flashy life (sport car, hundreds of thousands of dollars a day, costumes) does not leave him indifferent. He approaches a stockbroker to whom he asks to know how to become as successful as he is. The circumstantial friend provides him with a flat indication:

> I come to work. I've done my research and I'm going to sit here and talk to people on the phone all day and tell them stories about companies that we believe are undervalued and why they might appreciate in value. And I'm not leaving my office until I've made $1000. (Meeks 112)

Clearly, even though the recipe is unbelievably appealing, it worked for the stockbroker, and in the name of the Declaration of Independence of the United States, which elevates the "Pursuit of Happiness" to the rank of an inalienable right, Gardner took his chances. However, this filmic adaptation of Gardner's life is more than the fictionalization of one of the most quoted lines of the Declaration of Independence of the United States. It shows that capitalism is tantamount to individualism. Everyone has to fend for themselves.

Besides, the urge to fight for one's rights, to contribute to the realization of one's American Dream lets out to other elements of African-American life. Gardner shifts more than economic paradigms by inscribing himself in the midst of a system that is hard to penetrate by a Black American. He reverses, as well, the image of the African-American male who abandons his family. Unlike that typical African American, Gardner manages to piece his family together. Even though his wife quits on him, he intends to show to the world that the African male can redeem himself by sustain a family. He remasculinizes himself twice. First, despite the odds he is liable to suffer, Gardner manages to keep his son with himself. About this victory over the absentee father in Black American family Gardner has the following to say:

> Normal for us was *we were together every day.* We may not have known where we were going to eat or where the next step was leading us, *but we were together*. [Emphasis is mine] (Ibid.).

Even in the midst of misery, destitution, and hopelessness, Gardner's triumph is apparent: "We were together." To be together is important to him because closeness to his boy child not only aims to defy the expectation of his wife who thought he would not be able to take care of their only child, but also being together serves the bigger purpose of disproving the claims of the African American male's inability to educate, groom a child, in short to father a child. Gardner's attachment to his child also serves the purpose of instilling into him new values that are unlike the ones that black males usually are remembered by. When the little boy grows, he will have an experience of hardship such as "real men" know it, will take on the role that his father played before his own eyes in his very own interests, and more importantly, he will be the torch-bearer of the new breed of African American man. That's why it is fair to state that Gardner's life story is an example to show around in order for it to impact the behavior of the community on the one hand, and on the other hand to show the community at large, and more specifically the male portion, under a new light. Second, Gardner remakes the African manhood economically by showing up in a restricted space. The work sphere is closed for men, and slightly open for women who do menial jobs, thereby making women the sole breadwinner of the family, when there is any. The life story of Gardner is a success. From scratch, he rises to a millionaire as his mother has advised him in his childhood, thereby becoming the man an African American male cannot be that easily.

There is another side to this bright and edifying story. While the film and life story of Gardner invigorates and motivates people of African descent, as well as people of minority groups, in the United States, it no less brings to attention the fact that money (capitalism) is the heart and soul of the United States, and in passing, the Western world. Human values per se do not matter in the face of the power of money. There is a great deal of Gardner-the-poor-and-houseless in the United States who will never rise to our hero's final stage. They have been confined to their class and will hardly move up the

class ladder because Gardner's is an exception to the rule. Like a grain of sand that seethed through a net, Gardner is one out of millions that seek to better their lives in a society that breeds on their labour, sweat and even their death.

If Gardner's life story is a success and worth of celebration to the point of being adapted to the big screen, the reality is that the fictionalization of this exceptional life is a celebration of a system that does not promote equality, justice and care for one and all. The high pay that stockbrokers earn literally for doing absolutely nothing brings to light the injustice done to those who perform essential duties and yet get below the so-called minimum wage. These lower wage earners are mostly immigrants (whether legal or illegal) who believe in the American Dream that drew the founders of the New World.

Mucino's *The Pursuit of Happyness*, the screen adaptation of Gardner's life is a celebration of facile money-making over and against the celebration of the success story of an ordinary Black person. If Gardner is an example for American minority groups that are left behind, his example is hard to emulate. Chief executive officers issuing from minority groups are cases that cannot belie the impossibility to do like Gardner. They have been given the opportunity through the so-called Affirmative Action to be competitive. Even so, these CEOs can be counted on the tip of the fingers. In other words, Gardner's success is not synonymous with quick repetition. For, not much has changed since Martin Luther King went to the capital of the nation to dramatize the condition of African-Americans. According to King, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence all made a "promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (and yet King realizes that) America has defaulted this promissory note as far as citizens if color are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked 'insufficient funds'" (Foster 69-70). One understands why King decided to shun the "luxury of cooling off or to take tranquilizing drug of graduation"(Ibid).

When there is no will, not even the most efficient anti-poverty and anti-injustice policies can eradicate the large gap between classes in the US. While history makes its way into American life and politics with the election of the first African-American president, there are still remnants of racist and/or supremacist, individualist and anti-progress attitudes fostered by US Republicans whose political ancestors had a lot to do with the ending of slavery in the country. The Health Care plan of President Barack Obama has been torpedoed from the beginning to its passing by conservatives of the Republican party as well as by the Democrats on the right wing of the ideological continuum. The passing of the "Obamacare" (219 yeas against 211 nays – the narrowest margin ever) is a landmark.[5] Oppositions to it result from the legendary American capitalism. The implementation of the plan will cost 940 billions over the period of ten years, thereby securing health care coverage for an additional thirty-two millions of Americans without it. It ought to be added that the beneficiaries of this historical bill are the poor in general and destitute African Americans and immigrants in particular. It is therefore necessary to wonder if capitalism, which is very prone to foreclose opportunities to all, thereby creating a large number of have-nots, will allow for such an exception. Such is one of the most opportune interrogations to consider.

[5] The bill was passed on March 21, 2010. It still constitutes a battlefront for Republicans who intend to take back America from what they dub "left wing fraud" – Democrats and their allies.

Conclusion

It ought to be underlined that Gardner's life such as fictionalized is an exercise into re-representing the Black American male, thereby the African American family in the midst of the chaos that characterizes it for ages. Although it is a generalization that the African American family is in limbo, history and experience never cease to show that when it comes to family in "Black America", the notion suffers a great deal of blows.

Statistics still show that the largest number of jobless is to be found among African-American males who continue to be discriminated against by reason of their skin complexion and their lack of qualification. Due to racism, education which is purported to be the key, is still a locked-up quarter for African Americans in general, and males in particular. A male who is incapable of catering to the need of his family members is undoubtedly one that cannot pretend to be a man. Impregnating a woman alone does not grant the status of a father, as Malcolm X once said. A man has to be able to prove that when he procreates, he is willing and able to feed his progeny.

Gardner proves all of this: he is the father because he impregnated; more importantly, he is the father because he does not want that label of deserting father to stick to his skin. He remakes the family by asserting his fatherhood to the point where the mother/woman who deserted the home passes off as the worst seed of the community. He reverses the trend by his effort. Is this a small-scale paradigm shift or trend reversal applicable to an entire race? This remains the question to grapple with.

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