“Black Men in A White Man’s World”

James Baldwin is an African American novelist whom writings have made him very well known. In the year of 1962, Baldwin published “A Letter to my Nephew” within the letter Baldwin spoke of the challenges African American people faced and the way they fought for their freedom they have today. Baldwin has written a letter to his nephew telling him how living in a world as a black human being is anything, but simple he goes on to recall on the things that have happened in his life and what is to come of his nephew life.

In “A Letter to my Nephew” James Baldwin writes a letter to his nephew sharing his views on America as an African American in the 1960s.To begin with, James opens the letter telling his nephew and the readers that he has written and torn up the letter numerous times. He goes on to reminisce the past and how his nephew not only has the same face as him but his father and uncle. James tells his nephew that “you gain a strange perspective on time and human pain and effort” I believe when he wrote that he meant that as time goes on you realize that most pain isn’t permanent and the effort you put into things that matter. The physical pain you felt years ago you may remember how it happened, but the feeling of it hurting you may not because the effort you put in you made sure no one else you cared about felt that pain or will ever feel it.

Further, into the letter he tells his nephew that when times get hard don't give up because the society you were born into is going to beat you down if not physically emotionally and you're not just surviving for the sake of yourself but your children and your children's children. Baldwin tells his nephew of how when you’re born into a society of when they tell you what to do, where to go, and how to do it you don’t have to listen because even what they expect you to do that’s not who you are. When you're surviving for not just the sake of yourself but your children and your children's children you're not only giving up, but you're accepting the fact that living in a world where you know who is doing the wrong and instead of correcting them you're succumbing to the situation.

Since, Baldwin went on to say many metaphoric words to his nephew but this one stood out, “…the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar, and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.” I took this in and I realize that not only did Baldwin compare black men to an immovable pillar saying we were basically just something people paid no attention to or cared nothing about he made you think that if we were to fight back (“heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations”) that the community of white men that felt threatened by us wouldn't only be upset but they will fall into chaos. That lead many blacks to believe that not only did the white people not care about what was happening around them they also refused or denied knowing any of it was going on. The country itself had been destroying the lives of African Americans by not only treating them inferior but by also placing them in an environment where they won’t only perish but will never be able to succeed.

As a final point, Baldwin doesn’t just talk about what African Americans can overcome when speaking to his nephew he also shares his views and thoughts on how his nephew shouldn’t have to just stand idly by and listen to the things the countrymen have said about black men or the things they do to them. The letter isn't just about Baldwin telling his nephew what he needs to hear, but since James is fifteen he believes that now is the time to tell him that society isn't on your side.