

Chapter 7

ANXIETY IN RACIAL POLITICS IN KWAME KWEI-ARMAH'S *SEIZE THE DAY*¹

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When Barack Obama was elected as the first African-American president of the United States of America, a new area has begun in the country. After the symbolical announcement of his candidacy at the Old State Capitol building, the exact spot where Abraham Lincoln also delivered his “House Divided” speech in 1858, an excitement surrounded especially the African Americans. His announcement began to be considered as another landmark in black history which is mainly dominated by the legacy of slavery. As Obama’s campaign slogan “Change we can believe in” suggested, first his candidacy and later on his presidency promised a change for the minority groups in the US. Thus, Barack Obama was begun to be perceived as a synonym of “hope”. His success stood as hope for Americans who come from different racial backgrounds regarding the possibility of recognition. He turned into hope that Americans have finally come into terms with their past, hope that finally ended the racial discrimination practiced on coloured people for decades. As opposed to hope felt by African Americans, and historically subordinated racial communities in the US, the name Barack Obama raised fear and anxiety for some others. Throughout his presidential campaign, Obama was criticised concerning his heritage. The campaigning period witnessed accusations regarding his birth certificate, his days in Indonesia and his passport. Moreover, his name also led to certain speculations as well. Based on Obama’s middle name “Hussein,” mainly his opponents aimed to draw public attention to a possible connection between Obama and Muslim terrorists. Not being able to attack his African American background, the so-called threat of Islam aimed to raise anxiety regarding the election of Obama as the president of the US. Hence, Obama’s campaigning process in 2008 turned into a controversial issue bearing hope and anxiety simultaneously. The tagline of his campaign was “change” as he himself aimed to introduce it to the country as the first African American presidential candidate; nevertheless, this change became the source of anxiety at

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the same time. Inspired by Obama's success, the name who has marked history as an African American, in his play *Seize the Day*, Kwei-Armah imagines a scenario in which London also gets ready to have its first black mayor. Yet, the tone of the play slightly changes in comparison to Obama's election since the play makes the audience and/or the readers to experience fear and anxiety of this situation rather than hope it should introduce for the condition of Black British citizens. In this regard, anxiety in the play does not arise from having a black name, on the other hand Kwei-Armah intends to warn us regarding choosing a black name for the sake of his or her racial background. Anxiety arouses for having a black name who does not comprehend the crucial stand of his blackness, his racial identity, especially related to the office he or she will represent. Kwei-Armah, in this play, underlines anxiety and fear that racial politics incorporate.

POLITICS AND BLACKNESS

Black British playwrights have contributed to the political theatre on British stage beginning from the 1980s. From Mustapha Matura to Winsome Pinnock, from Roy Williams to Bola Agbaje, Black British playwrights have carried issues related to black identity to British stage. Discussion of problems experienced by Black British immigrants, along with other minority groups, has contributed to the political theatre in the post-Thatcher era. In the plays written by black names, the search for a definition of blackness has been a major theme along with discriminations they suffer under. Nevertheless, *Seize the Day* exceeds the limitations of an individualistic journey for identity. More than the play's main characters, Jeremy's and Lavelle's, individual journeys taken to re-define their blackness, Howard's and other political names' treatment of black identity as a political tool draws attention to the play. Instead of reflecting individual struggles of black characters, anxiety that dominates the play forms a political message, almost a warning, referring to the whole society. In this regard, Ritter's interpretation of Freud sheds a light upon the play's political tone:

When the excitation was actually or potentially destructive or unacceptable, then it would be rejected from consciousness by the mechanism of repression. At this juncture it would become what Freud called 'frustrated excitation.' [...] This 'frustrated excitation' had real energy within the psychic dynamisms of the organism, and Freud came to call this frustrated excitation 'anxiety.' (1990)

Kwei-Armah takes up the issue of having a black candidate for the mayor position and reflects anxiety in racial politics. Rather than evoking encouragement and awareness on blackness, the play aims to warn not only black, but also white

members of the society. While anxiety is always an apparent feeling in most of the plays written by Black British playwrights, in this play, it is reflected related to politics. As aimed to put forward, rather than the dominance of white names as power holders, as would be expected stereotypically, it is the possibility of a black name to hold a public position that creates the source of anxiety. Goddard in *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* draws attention to the dilemma Jeremy experiences regarding addressing 'black' issues and generalises this as follows: "This raises questions about choosing what to focus on as black people in power, whether black people in powerful positions should focus on foregrounding issues that are specific to race and black experience or on the bigger issues of concern to a wider general public" (2015). This question, which appears rather like a dilemma, can be applied to Black British playwrights, as Goddard touches upon. Just like the politicians, similar responsibility is assigned to black theatre practitioners who are generally considered as mainstream. This can be observed in the general themes of Black British names. In this regard, to what extent Kwei-Armah's *Seize the Day* can be considered focusing on middle-class black lives in British society and their responsibilities regarding the problems of the urban youth is a necessary question. Racial anxiety the play evokes, nonetheless, rather than referring to the problems of blacks in the society, refers to the tone of warning regarding politics addressing the society as a whole. Inspired by contemporary political events, written after an extensive process of research of British politics, Kwei-Armah does not necessarily reflect the dilemma of the middle-class Jeremy and the problems of the urban youth Lavelle. On the other hand, the play is about the political system and struggles of individuals against this problematic system. Kwei-Armah draws attention to the political system that discriminates and favours certain racial identities and certain groups for the well-being of the system. Such reading once again highlights the tone of anxiety and exemplifies play's categorisation as political theatre.

REPRESENTATION OF POLITICS ON THE STAGE

In the play, the political system is mainly represented by the character of Howard James who is the head of a major statutory organisation. Howard is first introduced in act one scene two as he offers Jeremy the candidacy for the mayor position. Apart from age provided in the stage directions, the scene suggests certain information on Howard depicting his characteristic as a politician. He is divorced with children and from upper-middle class as can be understood from his comment: "Terribly expensive children. My daughter thinks Gucci is her middle name" (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Nevertheless, Howard also suggests his own luxurious lifestyle as well: "Me, I'm afraid, can't resist a good claret, Havanan cigars

– and loose women [...]” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Played by black actor Karl Collins, Howard’s racial identity as black is hinted within the text as follows: “Gotta keep up with what’s happening in the world of reality TV, especially when our people’s involved, right?” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Hence, this quotation not only reveals an important detail regarding Howard, but also punches a significant criticism towards politics as aimed by Kwei-Armah. Howard is a character who aspires to be seen as white. His lifestyle granted to him through his political power enables upward social mobility for Howard. Losing his connections with his black roots, Howard is defined by cigars and loose women, luxury that money and power can buy. Related to his life style and wannabe black identity, his candidate does not come from influential black names for the black communities. On the other hand, it is popular culture which points out Jeremy as a possible candidate according to Howard since popularity is a crucial factor in politics. Thus, Howard does not hesitate to admit the fact that Jeremy is a suitable candidate for the position just because he is a popular name for voters: “The people liked you before – now they positively love you. You may wonder what that has to do with me. Well, I’m looking for someone that can chime with the general public . . .” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). He further backs up his decision by giving statistics regarding the demographic structure of London. In this regard, Jeremy is the appropriate choice for Howard since he embodies the preferable combination for success as a popular name and as black. Howard affirms this one more time: “[...] with what you have – with the correctly placed articles, right TV appearances behind you – we could harness your natural crossover appeal and have the white community eating out of our hands” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). This formulaic stand of Jeremy is underlined by Howard as he defends Jeremy towards Jennifer and Rav in act one scene four too: “[...] trust me on this, this guy is the one. His celebrity alone will take this out of the realms of colour and make him stand out” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). In other words, Jeremy can satisfy the majority of voters through his charm as a reality TV star and a black name. It can be suggested that Jeremy functions merely as a tool for Howard. Rather than focusing on the question of to what extent Jeremy will be able to qualify for this public office, Howard focuses on the importance of winning the election. Hence, it is Jeremy’s appearance and role, his blackness and popularity, that is shown as the reason for his candidacy for the mayor position. Complicating the issue, as appropriate for politics, the conversation between Jennifer and Rav, two other names who are involved in politics in the play, reveals the fact that Howard is involved in election and bringing a black candidate in order to save his own career. Significantly, he does this by rejecting another candidate from another minority group indicating that Howard places his own interests above

anything else. Rav declares that “I have heard some rumours of . . . I don’t know, an integral investigation. [...] the current administration want their own boy. So maybe becoming the Mayor’s daddy isn’t too bad an option. Which is why he doesn’t want Jatpul” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Hence, the play further exposes the real nature of politics and the choice of Jeremy as the candidate. This marks the source of anxiety related to racial politics that Kwei-Armah draws our attention to.

The other conversation between Howard and Jeremy reflected in act two scene six exemplifies Howard’s real intentions more clearly. Howard’s perception of Jeremy representing blackness is underlined as he makes corrections in Jeremy’s article. In this regard, rather than allowing Jeremy to express himself, Howard indicates that it is more important to raise his voice representing his race: “I *think* what you’re really saying is it’s time to speak the truth: ‘We have a problem and we need to deal with it’” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Once Jeremy could not understand for who ‘we’ stands for, Howard explains by revealing his perception of Jeremy as well: “There it is. As ‘black men’ we have a problem and we have to deal with it. Write that down” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Hence, Howard forces Jeremy to accept the role of black identity that he does not belong to. Following this, Howard wants him to underline the acts that made him popular with the public once again since, for Howard, it is more important to create a candidate that the public will support. He underlines this for Jeremy as well: “My job, *our* job, is to make you acceptable to the general public” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Yet, another problem regarding Howard’s campaign, which creates another level of anxiety regarding racial politics at the same time, is that the public he targets is not blacks. With almost a racist comment Howard explains his strategy as follows:

[...] Fuck black people, my friend. They do what the man tells them to do. In the old days massa would just line you up outside the big house, tell you what to think and off you’d go and think it. Now, they just put it in some glossy women’s magazine, *EastEnders* or some tube throwaway and off you black masses go and do it. No, my friend, we got to get the white masses to trust you by any means necessary. The black man will follow. (Kwei-Armah, 2009)

Howard portrays an image for Jeremy, so that he can trust and depend on Howard for the election. Nevertheless, Howard aims to make him win the election by representing Jeremy as a different person and making him interested in issues he never thought about before. In this regard, Howard tries to persuade Jeremy to write the following statements regarding violence in black communities and blames black people for this: “Write, ‘From cradle to jail, the children of the black underclass seem to be lacking the discipline other communities take for granted’”

(Kwei-Armah, 2009). Howard re-creates a black identity for Jeremy to look appealing for the white voters. Goddard argues that “[g]iven that there are so few black people in highly influential positions in Britain, those who make it are often perceived to have a responsibility to highlight black issues” (2011). Nonetheless, the responsibility Goddard draws attention turns into a source of anxiety since Howard is depicted as a character who abuses his power. Moreover, as a way of success, Howard also misleads Jeremy regarding acting a blackness that would satisfy the white voters. At this point, Jeremy is not quite sure regarding how he feels about his black identity as well. As aimed to be argued, this perspective turns into a warning regarding the political question of choosing a candidate for the sake of his or her race or a candidate who truly believes in his position in society. Goddard further states that “[a] key motif of Kwei-Armah’s plays is the way that secrets, lies and the revelation of past indiscretions threaten to undermine the stability of characters who are dealing with unfinished business from the past” (2011). Howard, in his attempt to re-create Jeremy’s black identity, exactly forces Jeremy to suffer under the unfinished business related to racial relations. While Jeremy’s position will be discussed extensively, Kwei-Armah gives one more chance to Howard to exemplify his position as a black position underlining the tone of anxiety before Jeremy announces his candidacy.

In the play, act two scene six is also significant in terms of confirming Rav’s statement regarding how Howard is involved in this election in order to save his position. In this regard, it is revealed that Howard is under investigation and can no longer assist Jeremy in his campaign. As Jeremy is nervous about his speech, Howard appeals to him regarding the investigation:

Do you know how many years of my life I have given to public service? Do you know how much of my soul I have given to them just so that they could, I could . . . and then come after me for this one tiny thing? I allow payments to go through to a few organisations that they have already said we are going to fund, just hadn’t rubber-stamped – organisations that would have gone down if they didn’t get the money pronto, and they wanna get me for that? [...] (Kwei-Armah, 2009)

Hence, Howard reveals the true nature of politics since the rest of their dialogue turns into a cry for help. He wants Jeremy to acknowledge Howard’s help and to praise him: “Well, well, I do need you to do something for me. I need you to go out there and big me up . . . [...] say nice things about me. Well, actually, more than nice, I need you to be damn right celebratory” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). It becomes apparent that Howard personally takes advantage of choosing and training Jeremy as the candidate. Nevertheless, Howard’s next words once again reveals the tone of anxiety regarding racial politics. While, at once, he ignores and undermines the

black voters, he empowers the white voters. This time, Howard uses race card for his own benefits: “So all you need to say is, I don’t know, that I was your role-model from afar, showed you that it was all possible, talk about the things I’ve done for this country, for the black community specifically – that’s really important. What taking someone like me down would mean to the black community. We got to play that card and we’ve got to play it hard . . .” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). More than having a black mayor and making history similar to the story of Obama, Howard looks out for his own benefits. Once he realises that his passion for his privileged white lifestyle can no longer save him, he turns into his blackness as his last hope. He admits how he needs black people to support him this time: “[...] because if I don’t get the support of those black people out there in the audience, I am fucked. If we don’t mobilise those people around supporting their leaders in times of crisis we will for ever have our leaders chosen for us, every time” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). He adopts the role of a victim whose fall is related to racial discriminations applied in the society. Hence, his insincerity regarding his blackness leads to the tone of anxiety in the play.

JEREMY’S JOURNEY FROM ANXIETY TO HOPE

Apart from Howard’s political intentions, the play can be considered as Jeremy’s self-discovery of his racial identity. Throughout the play, he learns to accept and interpret his blackness and his position in the society. When the play opens up Jeremy, a black reality TV star who is married a white woman, has a position that is quite open for racial criticism. Jeremy’s white wife Alice is depicted quite stereotypically drawing attention to her whiteness. From her reaction when she sees Lavelle, a young black boy who attacked Jeremy at the shopping mall, in act one scene five to act one scene seven when she argues with Jeremy regarding his candidacy, Alison is not reflected as a favourable character. Moreover, the lack of communication between them is underlined with particular emphasis on their racial difference. Especially Alison’s following reaction, “[h]e couldn’t handle a black woman’ – that’s what I heard Marianne say . . .” (Kwei-Armah, 2009) reveals the racial tension between the couple. Thus, this leads to the questioning of Jeremy’s position. Similar to Howard, Jeremy appears to be enjoying his TV star position and his white wife as a way of social mobility (Goddard, 2011). Having a black lover also contributes to Jeremy’s position in terms of racial identities. Nevertheless, rather than the tension between his wife and his friends, his candidacy for the mayor position or his extramarital relationship with Susan, it is mentoring Lavelle that leads Jeremy to question his blackness. Moreover, more than redefining himself and his blackness, his relation with Lavelle influences him to develop an

awareness regarding the social problems of blacks in the society. Hence, before bearing the responsibility of representing Black British citizens as a mayor, he feels the urge to discover the meaning of blackness experienced in British society. In this regard, just like a mask for which Jeremy can be criticised for wearing in order to aspire a stereotypical white middle-class life style, Jeremy realises that Lavelle also wears a mask representing a certain definition of blackness as well: “You put on black warpaint on the street, play the nigger, so that we fear you but most of we all laugh at you. Yep, you’re a little minstrel” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Just as Jeremy is not sure about his blackness, Lavelle is overconfident about his black roots making him act and speak in a particular way. Moreover, by using the pronoun “we”, Jeremy also estranges himself from the black community and the idea of blackness that Lavelle chooses to perform. His choice of pronoun supports the criticism that can be directed at his position in the society. As opposed to the pronoun ‘we’ used by Jeremy, Lavelle replies him using the pronoun ‘you’:

Lavelle: To tell you the truth, I don’t feel comfortable here. I ain’t comfortable with you people.

Jeremy: You people?

Lavelle: Middle-class white folk. (Kwei-Armah, 2009)

Jeremy ignores his racial roots and enjoys the attention he gets from the public and his upper middle class life in a house with a big garden with his white wife. This is once again explained through a statement by Lavelle: “My mum said you look like the kinda black man that ain’t been near anything black for a lifetime” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Because of his social position, Jeremy could not approach black problems and write an article internalizing a black voice. He appears as if enjoying the white role he assigns to himself. This is once again underlined by Lavelle: “My mom told me that the only kinda black people that are successful are the wannabes. They may be black to most people, but to those that can really see those tainted ones, those stained beyond redemption . . . the mask is all apparent” (Kwei-Armah, 2009).

Lavelle also prefers to hide behind his black identity that he constructs based on a stereotypical understanding of blackness bounded by history and popular culture rather than revealing his true self. A name who grew up with stereotypical black images, he forces himself to act as another stereotypical black character. Just as Lavelle criticises Jeremy’s wannabe position, Jeremy is also aware of the mask Lavelle wears as he replies to him: “Then we have something in common, don’t we?” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Since Lavelle’s good grades juxtaposes with his violent nature that Jeremy comes to this conclusion. Pearce suggests that “Kwei-Armah’s

works reveal the complex lines of influence and exchange that have developed over time between global black communities” (2015). The relation between Jeremy and Lavelle also exemplifies the exchange between black communities. Lavelle involuntarily accepts Jeremy’s mentoring position. Yet, their relation is shattered as a burglar breaks into Jeremy’s house since Lavelle turns into his primary suspect based on their previous incidents. Finally, they manage to establish a mutual trust as Lavelle somehow retrieves Jeremy’s stolen belongings and asks for help regarding his uncle. Their communication eventually enables them to understand each other beyond the social mask they wear.

The feeling of anxiety, which is originated from reflection of racial identity, that dominates the play shifts with possible hope at the end of the play. The last scene suggests that Jeremy has changed his mind regarding his candidacy and separated from his wife. As Jeremy meets Lavelle for the last time in act two scene seven, he enables Lavelle to realise his potential as a black teenager. Once Lavelle states that he does not feel comfortable at the park where they meet, named as Hampstead Heath, arguing that it is a white zone, Jeremy gives him a history lesson: “This is your ends, Lavelle. Look over there, well, you can’t quite see it all, but in the seventeenth century a young black girl lived in that huge house. Had an allowance, servants. But as soon as she stepped out every one would look down on her, associate her with what the lowest of the low” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Jeremy shares his experience as he stood up to give a speech in a hall full of black people:

Yesterday I went onto a stage, a hall was filled with two thousand black people. Lavelle, up until the other day when I saw more than three black people together I crossed the street. But I stood in front of those people and there were two roads before me. The wrong road and the wrong road. [...] I realised that I didn’t want to travel down either of them. What’s wrong with turning round and going right back? (Kwei-Armah, 2009)

In other words, Jeremy shares his moment of realisation regarding his identity. Later, Jeremy hands him a gift, “[a] replica of the Ishango bone” (180), whose significance he explains as follows: “It’s the first ever human chart of mathematical prime numbers! The earliest lunar calendar known to man kind. 6500 BC. They found it in Central Africa . . .” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). The gift turns into a symbol of the potential and importance that black people have in general and the potential Lavelle has in particular. Moreover, this detail exemplifies Pearce’s suggestion as well: “Kwei-Armah’s authorial voice is clearly of the opinion that black improvement lies in knowing one’s racial history” (2015). Quoting his mother, Jeremy states that “[i]t’s time to stop messing about. The old guard are dying and if we don’t seize this moment, it will pass us by and we will die without

anyone ever remembering that we were here” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). For someone who rejected the opportunity of becoming the first black mayor of London, these words might sound contradictory. Nevertheless, they point out the main message and the tone of anxiety and hope Kwei-Armah aims with this play. Jeremy warns Lavelle regarding the importance of taking action; yet, it is underlined that it is equally important to take an action bearing the responsibility of blackness they represent. So, the tone of anxiety is finally replaced with hope at the end of the play. Jeremy might have rejected a once in a life time opportunity, but his experience enabled him to discover his blackness: “In that moment, that precise moment, I found what I’d been looking for my whole life. The strength to show the real me to the world” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). He realises the importance of defining his own identity. Moreover, he comes to terms with his black identity that needs to be expressed without wearing a mask or performing anything based on the society’s expectations. Half joking half serious, Jeremy announces his next goal as he leaves the stage: “[...] I’m running for leader of the Labour Party tomorrow . . .” (Kwei-Armah, 2009). Hence, the end of the play creates a real opportunity for a black name to re-write history similar to Obama’s success in the US.

KWEI-ARMAH’S SCENARIO IN REALITY: SADIQ KHAN

Only five and a half years after the scenario created by Kwei-Armah, London welcomed its first minority mayor on 9 May 2016. Sadiq Khan, mostly defined as “the son of immigrant parents, whose father was a bus driver and mother a seamstress” (Helm, 2016), became “the first directly elected Muslim mayor of a western capital city” (Fishwick, 2016). His immigrant status and his religious belief as Islam have been fiercely attacked throughout his campaign. Nevertheless, as a reply to anxiety evoked in Kwei-Armah’s play, Khan pursued his aim to become the mayor of Londoners by demonstrating an awareness regarding his racial and religious background, but not foregrounding them. As promoted during his campaign and as declared in his speeches after his election, Khan has aimed to act as the mayor of all Londoners. In her article in support of Khan, Alibhai-Brown argues that “[h]e is a real Londoner, and that is why he is the best choice for mayor. It matters more than his race, religion or class” (2016). Sarah Marsh’s article, written with the testimonies of Muslim Londoners, also points out how, on the one hand, it is an important step to elect a Muslim, yet, on the other hand, how Khan represents hope for possible improvements in public services and community relations in London for all residents. Moreover, as a proof of his promise to become the mayor of all Londoners, the signing ceremony, symbolically, was held in Southwalk Cathedral and he was introduced by Doreen

Lawrence, mother of Stephen Lawrence whose murder resurfaced institutional racism practiced towards black citizens in the 1990s. It is then that Khan made the following speech reassuring his position: “We’re here in Southwark Cathedral because I want to start my mayoralty as I intend to go on. I’m determined to lead the most transparent, engaged and accessible administration London has ever seen. And to represent every single community and every single part of our city as mayor for all Londoners” (qtd. in Helm, 2016).

The years Khan has spent in the office have satisfied some of the Londoners while some of them still complain about the lack of solutions offered in the housing crisis in London. Thus, it is debatable, more importantly not the main aim of this article, to what extent Khan succeeds as the mayor of London. Yet, it is obvious that he still cares about acting as the mayor of all Londoners, not just of a particular group as a Muslim immigrant. This makes Kwei-Armah’s play a relevant play regarding today’s politics. Just as the play reflects the feeling of anxiety regarding selecting a black name for the sake of his/her racial identity, Khan also exemplifies this in real life. He becomes an example as a member of a minority group who succeeds not because of his racial status, but with the help of his experience as a Muslim immigrant. Apart from being a Muslim, most articles and comments on him underline his profession as a human rights lawyer too. As well as being an immigrant, Khan’s background as a working class man is pointed out in order to draw attention to his success. Unlike the black identity forced upon Jeremy by Howard in the play, in his interview Khan defines himself as follows: “I’m a Londoner, I’m European, I’m British, I’m English, I’m of Islamic faith, of Asian origin, of Pakistani heritage, a dad, a husband” (Castle, 2016). Thus, he represents more than race and religion. Justifying anxiety reflected in *Seize the Day*, Khan’s election and his time in the office has established a relevance regarding the importance of the play even almost a decade after it was staged. From such perspective, although being a topical play, Kwei-Armah’s play *Seize the Day* can be considered as a relevant play regarding the racial issues in politics since having a black mayor and more significantly a black prime minister after the election of a Muslim name is a possibility that is still in question. When anxiety is approached from a psychological perspective, Ritter’s approach becomes a dominant issue regarding anxiety. According to Ritter, “[a]nxiety is like an alarm to the person. The person may heed the alarm and respond in adaptation to it. If the person responds adequately in this way, then the purpose of the alarm is fulfilled and the normative function of anxiety is performed” (1990). The play, then, aims to reflect the tone of anxiety as an alarm for racial politics. As anxiety can be divided as constructive and destructive anxiety (Ritter, 1990), the tone of anxiety in the play

regarding racial politics can be taken for constructive anxiety when the subject of the play is associated with the election of a Muslim immigrant as the mayor of London.

CONCLUSION

Pearce touches upon the need for a reference point for Black British names to shape their unique cultural and political identities: "For a number of black people growing up in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, the paucity of black role models, lack of a mainstream Black British cultural presence, no precedent of a critical mass of British-born blacks and a racist environment meant that youths had to look elsewhere for their cultural and political reference points" (2015). Kwei-Armah aims to become a role model not for youth, but for all Black British citizens as exemplified in this play. Inspired by Obama, he applies the possibility of having a black name holding the public position as the mayor of London which is, politically speaking, probably one of the most crucial political positions after that of the prime minister. Similar to anxiety and hope evoked by Obama's candidacy and Khan's election as the first Muslim mayor of London, the play discusses the possibility of anxiety and hope resulting from having a black candidate. Consequently, Kwei-Armah's *Seize the Day* exemplifies anxiety in racial politics while contributing to political theatre by focusing on the contemporary British society and its relation with politics while preserving its feasibility within the contemporary political atmosphere of the UK.

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