Rashad Price To Feel Share my Father's Bitterness

As I read James Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son," I could not help but underline and highlight his quotes that held immeasurable truth that continues into today's society; all I could think was "Damn!!!" Baldwin's autobiography contained several themes such as "love and hate;" however, I find it most notable to write on the parallelism he creates when describing him and his father's relationship through the term bitterness.

Baldwin describes that his father is black and beautiful, but that his father does not know he himself is beautiful (221). This is a result of the "bitterness" that Baldwin's father has. This bitterness is hatred that is the accumulation of years of suffering as an oppressed black person in White America during the early 1900s. Baldwin writes that this bitterness is what made it difficult for his father to have meaningful relations with others, including his family and especially white people who he truly despised (222). Because of this reason, that his father was not "sociable" and "amicable," Baldwin hated him; their relationship was bitter itself.

It is when Baldwin's writes, "I saw…that the bitterness which had killed my father could also kill me," that he foreshadows he will have an experience that makes him like that of his father (222). This experience is when Baldwin has a realization that he is black in New Jersey and because of his blackness; the whites do not serve him at restaurants. In this moment Baldwin goes into a rage and nearly murders a white woman (224-225). It is this bitterness that Baldwin has that illustrates how in that moment he was exactly like his father; having hatred for the white people, and thus, unable to connect with others. Baldwin realizes that he has the capacity to kill out of this "bitterness; this anger" (225).

It is this theme of relationship between parent and child that is seen in today's society as some people have parents that once abused them, whether that was verbally or physically. Such abuse damages a child's mentally and creates a negative relationship between the child and the parent, making the child more susceptible to behaving in the same way as his or her parents. I have experienced this very same relationship with one of my parents, and I sympathize with Baldwin.

Overall, Baldwin's theme points to a key problem that minorities face. Because of race, minorities have bitterness that tends to be passed on to following generations. Therefore, it is important to a take step back to eliminate the traditional "bitter" perspective and ideology and move towards love, peace, forgiveness and tolerance.