

“Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?”

The most controversial line in *The Fire Next Time* is “People are not, for example, terribly anxious to be equal, but they love the idea of being superior.” Baldwin is saying that equality has not occurred faster because white people are unwilling to part with their superiority that they have been entitled to for so long. This is congruent with the theme of the black people not being free until the white people can deal with themselves. The words Baldwin uses in this statement enhance its meaning. He uses the word “terribly”, it gives the sentence a sarcastic feel, and since terrible is a negative word, it adds to the mood of the sentence. Then the use of the words love and superior next to each other, one associated with good, and one associated with evil and inequality. These increase the power of the statement.