

**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN MAYA ANGELOU'S
*I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS: A MARXIST APPROACH***



RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is a famous novel. It is written by Maya Angelou in 1969. In 1970, it was published by Random House. This novel is the first Angelou's works of autobiographies. It consists of 239 pages and thirty-six chapters. Angelou uses a woman as major character, named Marguerite or Rita or Maya. Marguerite has kinky hair, black skin, small and squinty eyes. However she has perfectless body, she always tries to be brave, strong, clever, care with anybody and society was she has living.

The story begun with the condition of Rita when she was three years old. Marguerite Johnson, nicknamed Rita, is a product of broken home and as a child is sent to live with her grandmother in depression era, Arkansas. Her grandmother owns a large grocery and it is a solace for Maya to be a part of it. When she is seven, Maya and Bailey, her brother, are sent to St. Louis to live, with their mother. There, she is raped by mother's boyfriend, and after this trial he is lynched. Her brooding to much for the family to bear, and the two children are sent back to the grandmother in Arkansas, where Maya begins to realize how inferior blacks are considered to be.

After Bailey witness the brutal treatment of black corpse, their mother takes them to live in California. For a time Maya lives with her father in South, then she joins her mother and Bailey in San Francisco. One summer

during their teen years, she vacations with her father in South and has a tight relationship with her father's girlfriend. She runs away and lives briefly in an abandoned Junkyard with homeless children. Then returns she gets a job as the first black conductor on the city Street-cars. During her first voluntary sexual experience she become pregnant and gives birth to a son. Maya, always tall and feeling awkward, gains, a sense of who she is and learns to make her way would instead of opposing it.

In other hands, the public response is important to know how popular the work is. Many people say that all of Maya Angelou's work including poems, dramas, and screenplays and novels, especially *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* are great. Maya Angelou is something of a living legend in the recent history of Black Americans. Barry Taylor and Sharon Taylor do not accept most of the people belief.

They believe that the book is vulgar, poor literature and inappropriate for use in the public schools for young people of any ages. They argue that it discussed rape, violence, and racism, some times in graphic terms, makes it inappropriate (www.craftononline.com). *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* are included an autobiographical novel in which deals with racism.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is a famous autobiographical novel. Autobiographical novel is a novel within which use the facts or based on true story. After published, it was nominated for a *National Book Award* and Maya Angelou called "Magnum Opus" because of this. In 1975, Angelou received the *Ladies Home Journal* Woman of the Year Award in Communications. She

was appointed by President Carter to *the Commission of International Women's year* and is on the Board of Trustees of American Film Institute. One of the few women members of Directors Guild, Maya Angelou is author of the television screenplay *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Angelou's *I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings* is an interesting novel. It can be seen from the way Angelou combining the structural elements becomes a whole as a novel in order to help the reader to understand through those structural elements. The structural element includes the character and characterization, theme, plot, setting and style. This novel consists of four major characters and twenty-two minor characters.

The minor characters support major characters so that the novel looks alive. This novel also uses progressive plot (straight plot). Each event causes the next event, so that it arranges orderly. The theme is clearly a political and social criticism in America. *It* relates with the two settings that complete the theme; settings of place are Arkansas, St. Louis, Missouri, California and setting of time is 1930s.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is an autobiography of Maya Angelou's life. This is the first from six autobiographies. The reader can follow how the life of Maya Angelou seeing from her autobiography's novels. The reader also introduced the history of society of United States in 1930s.

On the other hand, Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is the controversial novel. Maya gathers two different worlds, Black and White. Angelou is including a woman black novelist deals with racism. Racial

discrimination is the major case happened in this novel. Racism influences all element of black's life. It is institutionalized and seems overwhelming to black so that one of major character tries to against it with her own way. This novel inspired her to produce the other works including poems, drama, screen play that deals with racism.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, we can see social mobility condition which happens to the main character. Based on the fact, the writer tries to break down the problem in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by using Marxist approach. In this study, the writer encourages herself to give a title **“RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN MAYA ANGELOU’S I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS: A MARXIST APPROACH”**

B. Literature Review

The novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, is a popular literary work. The theme brought makes the people are interested to know it. There are many researchers that have studied this novel before. They are Mayrina Susanti Puspitasari, a Sanata Dharma University's student, with **“The Reflection of Maya Angelou’s Resistant Against Racism in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*: A Socio- Culture Historical Approach”** and Yuni Ariany, a student of Sanata Dharma University, with **“Maya Angelou’s Purpose of Writing Her Bibliography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*: Autobiography Approach.**

The first researcher studied about the factors that bring the existence of racism. Her finding shows that all of those factors that bring existence of racism could not be wiped out as soon as possible until early twentieth century. The factors are ancestral experience as a consequence of slavery, black environmental and racial prejudice. She supported with the Angelou's resistance against racism and how she protest any kinds of practices of racism.

The second researcher concerned with the purposes of Maya Angelou in writing her autobiography. The purposes of writing the autobiography insisted that Angelou wants to make a confession toward the tragedy of rape she faced, informs her protest against society around her and her family, and makes the reader follow the story of her life by reading her phenomenal autobiography continuously. She emphasized that Maya Angelou described her difficult and hard life through her literary work.

Here, the writer concerns with the racism happened in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. She uses a Marxist perspective to analyze the novel.

C. Problem Statement

The main problem that is analyzed in this study is 'How racism occurred in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

D. Research Limitation

The limitation of the study of the study is how racial discrimination occurred in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, especially viewed by Marxist. The researcher uses Marxist to analyze the novel because this approach is suitable to draw the major condition during the period within the novel.

E. Objectives of the Study

This thesis aims to analyze the novel in terms of its structural element based on Marxist Perspective.

F. Benefits of the Study

1. Theoretical Benefit:

It gives contribution to the larger body of knowledge particularly in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

2. Practical Benefit:

It gives deeper understanding in literary field as the reference to the other researcher in analyzing this novel in to different perspective.

G. Research Method

1. Type of Study

This research applies qualitative research.

2. Data and Data Sources

Data in this research is text consisting of words, phrases, and sentences.

Data sources in this research are:

- a. Primary data source is novel of Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.
- b. The secondary data are taken from some reference and material related to the study whether by picking up from books and internet.

3. Data Collection Methods.

Data collection is done through documentations or library research. The steps to gain the data are as follows:

- a. Reading novels rapidly
- b. Taking notes of information in both primary and secondary data
- c. Arranging the data in to several based on its classification
- d. Developing of data provided

4. Technique of Data Analysis

In this study, the technique that is used to analyze the data is descriptive analysis through Marxist Approach.

H. Paper Organization

This thesis is divided into five chapters. First is introduction that covers the background of the study, literary review, problem statement, research limitation, objectives of the study, benefit if the study and research method.

The second chapter delivers Marxist approach containing Marxist Literary Critics, especially the notion, the major principle of Marxist and

Theoretical application. The third chapter includes the social background of United State Society in 1930s. The fourth chapter covers the structural analysis and Marxist analysis of the novel, by describing character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, style also the theme. The fifth chapter analyzes the novel by employing the concept of dialectical materialism, history materialism, alienation, class struggle and revolution. Then it exposes the discussion of the struggle structural elements and Marxist analysis. The sixth chapter draws of conclusion and suggestion.