

**MARGUERITE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
IN MAYA ANGELOU'S *I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS* :
AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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DENI ARINTO
A 320 040 400

**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
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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. She always tries to be brave, strong, clever and care of anybody and society where she lives.

The story begins 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 too 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 wits 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. After returning she gets a job as the first black conductor on the city Street-cars. During her first voluntary sexual experience she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son. She, whose feelings are awkward, gains; a sense of which she is and learns how to make her way 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 using by 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 being 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 Maya Angelou in combining the structural elements to become a whole as a novel in order to help the reader to understand through those structural elements. The structural elements include 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*, the writer 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 individual psychological approach. In this study, the writer encourages to do a research entitled "**MARGUERITE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN MAYA ANGELOU'S I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS : AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL 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.

Presently, the writer concerns with the racism happened in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. He uses a individual psychological perspective to analyze the novel.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of the research is "How is struggle against racial discrimination reflected in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings?*"

D. Research Limitation

The researcher focuses his discussion on the Marguerite's struggle against the practices of racial discrimination in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by using individual psychological approach. This approach is chosen because the writer wants to explore the individual psychological of Marguerite.

E. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of study are as follows:

1. to describe the structural elements of the novel, and
2. to analyze the novel based on the individual psychological perspective.

F. Benefits of the Study

1. Theoretical Benefit:

It gives significant 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 researchers in analyzing this novel with different perspective.

G. Research Method

1. Object of the Study

The object of the study is the novel of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, written by Maya Angelou.

2. Type of the Study

This research paper uses qualitative research in the form of literary work. Qualitative research is a type of research that does not use any calculation or statistic procedure. Here, the writer does not include statistic procedure.

3. Type of the 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*, and
- b. The secondary data are taken from some references and material related to the study taken both by picking up from books and internet.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

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, and
- d. Developing of data provided

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

In this study, the technique that is used to analyze the data is descriptive analysis through individual psychological approach.

H. Paper Organization

The research paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction covering background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objective of study, benefit of study, research method, and paper organization. Chapter two is the underlying theory, namely; the individual psychology by Alfred Adler. Chapter three is the structural analysis. Chapter four discusses the individual psychology analysis. Finally, chapter five is the conclusion and suggestion.