Racism In Maya Angelou’s I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Abstract

Racism is a form of expression which made people segregate on the basis of skin tone. They use literature as the voice to communicate and share their sufferings. Maya Angelou was a black American writer. She wrote all her work based on racism. Here ‘I know why the caged bird sings’ is also based on racism. This paper mainly focused on the life of Maya, who was struggled to lead her life, for the reason of her skin stone. This merely shook her life and made her lead a pathetic life.

Keywords:

Trauma, Racism, longing for love, Attention, Respect, Life struggle.

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The poem opens with the prologue that Maya recites the poem on the Easter day celebration in the church when the people mock her because she was a black girl. She came out of the church and cry. At the age of three Maya and her brother went to stay with their paternal grandmother Mrs. Annie Henderson because their parents were divorced. She has ignored by her parents at the age of three. She missed her parent's love and affection in her infant life. During this period, the child needs the parents to love .this incident shook the life of Maya and it takes her life on the wrong path too.

According to Maya, her dress would be second-handed. She thinks her dress belongs to the white girl. According to others, she was ugly and she has blond hair, black skin and she was very tall also. According to herself, she was the white-blond angel in the fairy tale. Maya saw her uncle hide in the vegetable and onion pin because the white people search for the scapegoat and they want to beat and lynching him. It was also reported how racism deep rotten one. One Christmas, Maya's mother sent the blond blue-eyed china doll as a gift. She and her brother takes it out and cries at the loss they think that her mother was dead. So they broke the doll. It represents her mother was alive but she did not come to visit her children. So they think she was dead. It also represents how the children longing for their mother's love.

Big bailey was the father of Maya and bailey. He visits and stays two weeks momma place. According to Maya, she feels he was like a stranger. He takes his children to San Francisco. Here her mother was there. Maya saw her mother she was beautiful and she likes her brother. Maya thinks that she stays in another stranger's house. It represents her parents not to share their love and affection with their children. It stays in the strong wound in her heart. She also thinks her family was very beautiful looking except Maya.

Vivian was the mother of Maya who lives with her boyfriend Mr. Freeman. He was molested Maya at an early stage and he threatens if she revealed it he would kill her brother. Later he has

raped her. It was found by bailey so he was arrested and he stands before the judge. The judge asked Maya 'If he is done any molested before the rape'. She was very fearful about revealing the truth so she lied before the court So he got one year and one day Prison for punishment but he was released temporarily later he was killed by her uncle. She thinks that 'her words killed Mr. Freeman so she didn't speak to anyone except Bailey. This incident was wound in her heart.

Bailey saw the Movie, he saw Kay Francis, the white actress who look alike his mother Vivian. Later it was agreed by Maya. Here they compare a white actress to her black mother. One day Vivian's parents mock Maya. Vivian shot her parents without a trigger .this incident closed their relationship. Mrs. Viola was the white lady who gave the job to Maya at the age of ten. She called Maya to marry because her name was too long. Maya breaks their heirloom like an accident.

Mrs. Viola attacks Maya as a black girl and attacks her black community verbally. One of her friends asks if Marry was responsible for it. Viola says her name was Margaret not marry because Mrs. Viola doesn't want to dishonor the name of the goddess. White people call black people crow, boots. So they not called black people names because it may respect one. It also represented the racism deep rotten.

The heavyweight boxing championship was won by Joe Louise who was the black hero. If he was not won the match he was criticized because he was a black man. According to Maya, Joe proves the strength of black people. She was not only represents black domination but also the black people's emergence. During her eighth graduation day, the white speaker Mr. Edward blamed black people only for success in sports, not academics. It represents how white people dominate black people. Henry reed sung the national anthem of Negro's 'lift ev'ry voice and sing'. Maya thinks this song inspires her to more patriotism towards the black community.

Dr. Lincoln was a white dentist. Maya has affected tooth pain. So Momma takes her to Dr. Lincoln's hospital. Once he was debts to momma. But he says 'he enters his hand to dog's mouth not enter his hand to her mouth It represents how the white dominates and how passives the blacks. Maya now stays with her father in Mexico. She drives a car to fifteen miles before she doesn't know about what is driving. She made a minor accident. Bailey not only congratulates her driving skills. But also not scold for her accident. She longing for her dad to scold or praises her.

Big Bailey stays with her fiancée Dolores. According to Dolores Maya has come between them. So she was fighting against Maya When Dolores says Vivian is a prostitute. When she slapped Dolores after Dolores stabbed Maya with scissors. According to Maya, she reacts if anyone criticized her mother she was attacked.it represents her mother has left away from her child but the child attacked the others for her mom. This is the real love that cannot get from her parents. This incident made her stay at the junkyard. Her father took her to his friend's place. Later she went to the junkyard.

In the junkyard, she sleeps in the car. After she saw the group of teenagers like mixed nations and black and white also there. She stays one month in the place. When she learned how to lives confidently and she learned to think broad-mindedly. She was participated in the dance competition and won the second prize. After being relieved from the junkyard, she joined the 'streetcar conductor' she was the first black girl who got this job. She faced many issues like racism and sexism while on the job. Some of the people did not go to her car because she was

a black girl and she was a female.

She has diverted herself to unwanted things. Later she was pregnant which was only revealed to her brother because she wants his advice. She revealed her pregnancy after the completion of her graduation. Her parents have accepted the truth and help her. She gave birth to the baby boy. Vivian was always there and instructed Maya. She was sleeping with her baby without disturbing the baby. The people said we think confidently and work for it . we achieve it. Likewise, she has loved her son. And she wants her son might deserve all love. This love was not received by Maya from her parents. She wants to give her all love and affection to her son.

Maya was faced with almost every struggle. Now she faces how to bring up the child. Still, she was the child and she didn't know what to do it. This poem is titled “I know why the caged bird sings” because as a black person and the woman who was always staying in the caged that means they have lived in constructed and depended and marginalized and face all struggle. How the bird saw everything in and around outside .but it was not allowed to do which was done by outside. Likewise, Maya was not got mother love and freedom and life without racism.

Mrs. Bertha Flowers, who introduce literature to Maya which helps her to escapes the daily struggles and she live with the literary character. She imagines, she was also the angel in the fairy tale. Her life struggle starts with her parent's divorce. They are not taught, how to live in society. This causes her entire life to struggle .she learned how to live when she lived in a junkyard when she gains self-confidence. She got a big responsibility in her teenage now she lived for her son only. Any place did not belong to Maya. Because no place was not given the feeling of her permanent home or place. Displacement also played the main role in the poem. It was not only auto Biography but also the black epic of Negro people.