

A study: Intolerance of black in *Telephone Conversation* by Wole Soyinka

Angela Christy. A

1st M.A. English

PG Department of English

Don Bosco College (co-ed)

Yelagiri Hills

Christyanand25@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is intended to explain the binary opposition of black and white. During 19th century in the civil war the black people fought for their equality and rights to vote to white population. The aim of this paper is explicit the color discrimination in the society. In Wole Soyinka's poem "*Telephone Conversation*". The black is asking an apartment to the White but White discriminates the black and refuses to give the apartment due to the color of the man, here starts the color discrimination. When she tries to mock the black man, the black did not give up he had courage to win the argument through this explanation of his color. "white people how tan to get darker; And black people were their hair like white people... we are all confused... deep down we admire each other, but why can't we accept it?".

Key words: Binary opposition, discrimination, racism.

"It is a shame we have to dominate them. They are better than us, in so many ways. But hey, that's nature of you". The people those who are high in status they use to dominate the people those who under them to show the superiority of them to others. In the same way White people use to dominate the Black people. It is the nature of them because they practice this from their generation. This domination and struggled has project in the Wole Soyinka's poem "*Telephone Conversation*". She is a Civil Right Movement writer. During 1960 to 1964 the Civil War movement has took place, The Black people fight for their rights. The movement of Civil war leads Soyinka to write about the suffering of the African people. In the year 1963 King also delivered his "*I have a dream*" speech.

Racism is a belief that the superiority of one race over another .It often result in discrimination and prejudice towards people based on their ethnicity. Soyinka's "*Telephone Conversation*" also projects the difficult faced by the black man during the conversation. Instead of asking the money, payment and the condition about the apartment the landlady has asked the black man to describe the color him. The poet also place before us the struggle was faced by the African during the explanation of his identity. She knows that

how the African people will be, even though she knows she asked the black man, HOW DARK? Here the author projects the superiority of the white landlady to the African man by mentioning his color.

“HOW DARK? ... I had not misheard ARE YOU LIGHT / OR VERY DARK? Button B. Button a Stench” (line 10-11). The black man said to the landlady that he is black in color .But again the landlady asked HOW DARK?, The landlady trice to show that the black man is lower than her .Here the binary opposition says that if we want to witness something we need the opposite one. Then only we can compare and confirm which is good and bad. If we want to find something good , we need to know what is bad.so to find good we need the opposite of good then only we can fixed that is good and this is bad. Before the binary opposition there is a language system which is created by structuralist they said that Black/White, good /bad, God/evil etc. This concept also one of the reason that the domination of the black people. Because they believed that the white color is something high and the Black color is something low. Here the discrimination has starts. If we want to prove the White is the best they need the Black community. The source of white superiority is the black community.

“Facially, I am brunette, but madam you should see the
Rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet.
Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused-
Foolishly madam-by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black-One moment madam!-
Rather
See for yourself?”(Line 30-40).

In this the Black man says to the landlady. Then he says all the color that he has in his body. Then the black man mocks the landlady that “sees for yourself?” In Soyinka’s poem the conversation has started as the landlady tries the black should feel inferior about his color. But at last the black man mocks the landlady. And he proved that he has the courage to mock he white people. During 1960s the black people has struggled a lot to get the rights from the white people. Even the black did not commit sin also they died. “*To kill a mocking bird*” is a novel was written by **Harper Lee**. In the novel there is a white girl was raped by her own father.

The same time a black man (Tom) who went to meet the white girl in her house. There he has accused by the girl’s father that he raped his daughter. The judge did not consider the black man’s words because the girl’s father is a white man. In the court the black man tries to convene that, the girl was raped by her own father but instead of accepting his mistake he is blaming on me. He witness that her father had

gave slap on her left side. After seeing the slapped symbol on her face everyone comes know that the mistake was done by the father. Even though they did not ready to punish the white man. If there is any problem between white and black in the society, the white will not accept their mistake they usually blame on the black people. During those days they believe only the words of the white people not the words of black people. At last they decided to give Capital punishment to the black man. By knowing this the black man trice to escape from that place, but a police had short the black man. This was the situation during the 20th century in America.

In “*Telephone Conversation*” Soyinka express the racial discrimination thought between the black and the white with the use of the conversation between the white landlady and the black African. But the black is the main source of white people superiority. During the conversation the white lady made the black man to feel inferior to express identity to her. But the black man tries to explain that he is black in color. The white landlady speaks with the black man with pride but the black man did not do like that. Before or during the civil right movement the black people did not have the courage to revel the truth, If they express also they will not consider their thoughts. In the novel “*To Kill a Mocking Bird*” the black man (Tom) will die because of the injustice. We should judge the people by their eyewitness and evidence not based on their color. In the novel the black man did not have the courage to fight against the white people. But in Telephone conversation the black man have enough courage to win the conversation by mocking the white lady. Black people also can do the things like white people, but they are not expressing it out.

References

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1986/soyinka/biographical/>

<https://www.slideshare.net/aliciagomeznyc/racism-in-america-today>

https://www.k-state.edu/english/westmank/spring_00/SOYINKA.html

<https://www.slideshare.net/amyestrop/binary-opposition-theory>

<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/summary/>