

## HARRIETT'S STRUGGLE FROM HATRED TOWARD THE WHITE PEOPLE IN LANGSTON HUGHES' *NOT WITHOUT LAUGHTER*

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses Harriett's struggles from hatred toward the white people in Langston Hughes' Not Without Laughter. It aims to (1) explain Harriett's struggles from hatred toward the white people in Langston Hughes' Not Without Laughter and (2) explain the effects of Harriett's struggles toward herself. This article focuses on the novel Not Without Laughter as the main source of data. The researcher uses articles and online sources as the references. This article applies four theories. They are theory of feminism, black women struggles, psychology and hatred. In addition, psychological and sociological approach are also used in this article. Library research is applied for data collection technique. The analysis focuses on the Harriett's struggles from hatred toward the white people in Langston Hughes Not Without Laughter. Langston Hughes in his novel describes about the struggles of black women to equate their position with the white people and free themselves from the segregation and discrimination in the United States. Harriett faces many problems in order to against her hatred toward the white people. Harriett becomes a person who does not believe in God. She oppose her mother's word, and being an avenger because she really hates the white people. When her mother passes away, Harriett finally regrets her actions. She promises not to do the same mistakes as she has already done toward the white people. Harriett becomes a responsible woman to her family, and she finally raises up her race to get the same rank as the white people.*

**Keywords:** *The White People, Hatred, Struggle.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This article is conducted to analyze about the Harriett's Struggle from hatred toward the White People in Langston Hughes *Not Without Laughter*. The analysis aimed to find the effect of Harriett's struggle toward herself mentioned before.

Literature forces human brains to understand and memorize its elements, such as plot, theme, character, and setting that occur in the story. By understanding and memorizing those elements as a unity, the readers will comprehend the contents of the literary works. Literary works express and communicate someone's feeling, thought, and attitude toward his or her life that expresses through a written and oral language. Meyer in *What is Literature* states that:

Literature is a term used to describe written texts marked by careful use of language, including features such as creative metaphors, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, alliteration, which are esthetically read or intended by the author to be aesthetically read and are deliberately somewhat open in interpretation (1997:1).

In addition, reading literary work also gives an important roles because it can help the readers to understand what the writer has felt, thought or done in his life through a written language.

There are three kinds of literary works, namely prose, poetry and drama. Prose can be divided into novel and short story. Novel is different from short story. The researcher is more interested in reading and analyzing novel than short story. The researcher thinks that comprehending novel is such an interesting challenge. The researcher needs high concentration in understanding and memorizing the elements of novel in order to catch the content of the novel. Jones states that a novel is a long story written in purpose, but it differs from short story in some ways (1968: 80). The main difference between novel and short story is on focus. A novel has a far range focus that relates to number of incidents, while short story only has one incident in a time.

The researcher is interested in Langston Hughes's novel entitled *Not Without Laughter*. Langston Hughes' is one of many talented black authors who had to do with development of art known as the Harlem Renaissance (Baym, 1958: 1655). He achieves fame as a poet during the period. He is a poet, novelist, playwright, columnist and essayist. In 1929, as Hughes' complete his year at Lincoln University. He also completed his first novel *Not Without Laughter*, which was published in 1930. This novel talks about the struggle of black people to get the same rank as the white people. Actually the main character in this novel is Sandy. However, in this article the researcher is interested to analyze the character of Sandy's aunt named Harriett.

This article is concerned with the effects of main character Harriett in *Not Without Laughter*. The analysis is aimed to find the effects of Harriett struggle from hatred toward the white people and toward herself in Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter*.

Some relevant theories are used to support the analysis. The theories are feminism, black woman struggle, psychology, and hatred. Feminists find no grounds for the exclusion of women from this special human activity, nor from its natural outcome in the revision of society. (Sean Sayers, 1990: 74) It implies that women can do anything that is related to social activities and change the mindset of the people who rule out the position of women in society, both in terms of economic, social and political justice.

Futhermore, Davis in *Women, Race and Class* states that

During the post-slavery period, most black women workers who did not toil in the fields were compelled to become domestic servants. Black Women worked as cooks, nursemaids, chambermaids and all-purpose domestics, white women in the South unanimously rejected this line of work. The occupational equation of black women with domestics service was not, however, a simple vestige of slavery destined to disappear with the passage of time. For almost century they would be unable to escape domestic work in any significant numbers (Davis, 1944: 90).

The quotation means that black women are willing to contribute the assessment of the power and the emergence of multi-racial movement for women's political rights. Black women also have to work until they could work again.

According to Loftus and Wortman (1985: 3)

“psychology can be defined as the study of behavior and mental processes. It is also a set of procedures for systematically observing facts about behavior and for organizing these facts into generalizations, or law, that seek to explain why human beings and other animals act as they do.

It means that psychology is the scientific study about human being's behavior, mental or mind, and act. The theory is used to look for the reason and fact why people act.

Moreover, Staub in *The Psychology of Hate* states that Hatred is a strong, negative feeling against the object of the hatred. The hater sees the object of their hatred as bad,

immoral, dangerous, or all of this together (2003: 56). It means that hatred is based on the perception of the other, but also has a strong relationship with oneself, one's personal history, and its effects on human personality, feelings, ideas, beliefs, and especially one's identity.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

### **I. Harriet's Struggle from Hatred toward the White People**

#### **1. Giving a Good Education for Sandy**

Harriett has a sister named Anjee. Anjee has a child named Sandy. Due to financial problems, Anjee does not be able to fulfill all of Sandy's needs. Since, Harriett is Anjee's sister, automatically she takes care of Sandy's life. Harriett does not want to waste her success only to herself or have fun with her friends. After achieving her dreams, Harriett shows more attention to her family. She focuses to fulfill her family needs and Sandy's life. Sandy is her nephew that always gets bad treatment from his friends in the school. So Harriett tries to make her race useful for their life. It can be seen in the following quotation:

"How much do you earn a week?" Harriett asked suddenly, looking at her nephew across the table.

"Fourteen dollars."

"Pshaw! Is that all? I can give you that much myself", We've got straight bookings until Christmas then cabaret work's good around here. Bill and I can make the dough- and you go to school."(NWL, 1930: 297).

Harriett wants her nephew to continue his school. Although there are many bad treatments faced by Sandy, Harriett never gives up defending her nephew and tries to fulfill all of his daily life by her own money. She wants Sandy to become a good man for family and their race in the future.

Harriett continues her mother's duty to keep Sandy in school to continue his education. Sandy will become a great man. He has been prioritized by Aunt Hager and Harriet to help the whole race. Therefore, she gives more attention to Sandy's future life. Harriett not only pay attention to sandy by giving some motivation for being a good man in the future which is desired by Aunt Hager, but also Harriet really pay attention to Sandy in financial terms. The manifestation of Harriett's effort to help Sandy is giving some money to Sandy. It can be seen in the following quotation:

I reckon I wouldn't," Anjee murmured, shaking her head. "You know damn well you wouldn't," Harriett concluded. And, before they parted, she slipped a ten-dollar bill into her nephew's hand. For your books,"she said.(NWL, 1930: 298)

Hence, Harriett convinces Anjee not to do the same mistake again. She feels angry with Anjee but it does not make her attention to her family decrease.

Before leaving, Harriett gives Sandy some money and reminds him not to follow his mother's wishes.

#### **2. Being a Hard Worker**

After facing many problems in their life, black women finally get some jobs out. They work in the white family as servants, but this job does not make the black woman ashamed to the white people. They do it seriously and they try to be the best Nigger's worker.

And all the while Sandy said nothing to his father about having seen Harriett dancing in the minstrel tent that afternoon. Sandy had lived too long with three women not to have learned to hold his tongue about the private doings of each of them. Nobody would know he had watched his Aunt Harrie dancing on the carnival lot today in front

of a big fat white man in a checkered vest while a Negro in a red suit played the piano. (NWL, 1930: 115)

The quotation tells about Harriett who uses the time to work by dancing in front of a white man. Harriett often works hard outside the house without her mother and her sister permission. Accidentaly, Sandy figures out at carnival time, he see his Aunt Harriett. However, Sandy chooses to keep his secret because he knows that Harriett dances not to have fun but to gets money.

Those previous quotations show that Harriett and her race are trying to give the best for their living. They do not give up, eventhough they are considered as slaves by the white people.

## **II. The Effects of Harriett's Struggle from Hatred toward Herself**

### **1. Negative Effects**

#### **a. Being Stubborn**

Everyone experiences a change in his or her live when she or he grows up to be a mature person. When Harriett grows up, she experiences many changes, both physical and psychological. Harriett does not respect to the other opinions. When Harriett comes home, she tells her mother if she gets an offering from her friend about a new job in Stanton County Country Club. She can bear the treatments any longer.

“You ain't gonna work in no hotel. You hear me! They's dived o'sin, that's what they is, an' a child o' mine ain't goin' in one . If you was a boy, I wouldn't let you go, much less a girl! They ain't but strumpets works in hotels.” Maudel's no strumpet.”

Harriett's eyes narrowed. (NWL, 1930: 52)

The quotation shows that Harriett's job makes her mother shocked. She does not want her daughter to work in a hotel because she thinks that hotel is like a prostitution place. Hager knows that only prostitutes work in a hotel. Unfortunately, Harriett does not listen to her mother's advice. She trusts her friend rather than her own mother. She defends her friends and hurts her mother's feeling.

“You can bark at me if you want to, mama, but don't talk about my friends. I don't care what they are! Maudel'd do anything for me. And her brother's good kid, whether he's been in reform school or not. They oughtn't to put him there just for shooting dice. What's that? I like him, and I like Mrs. Smothers, too. (NWL, 1930: 53)

Harriett opposes her mother to prove that there are still good white people. Futhermore, Harriett explains that Mudle and her family are different from common white people. She blames her mother because she thinks that her friends give her an interesting job vacancy. Whereas her mother tells the truth but Harriett still keeps her opinion. So, she likes to do whatever she wants without listening to her family's advices.

“aw, come on and go away,” pleaded Mingo. “After I been savin' up my dough for two weeks to take you, and got my suit cleaned and pressed and all. Heck! If you couldn't go and knew it yesterday, why didn't you tell me? That's a swell way to treat a fellow!” Because I wanted to go, said Harriett; and still want to go..... Don't make so much difference about mama, because she's mad anyhow.. (NWL, 1930: 94)

Harriett makes plan to have fun with Mingo who is her boyfriend. However, Harriett's plan does not run as well as she has planned. Moreover, Mingo states his disappointment toward Harriett. Suddenlly, Harriett changes her mind and talks to her boyfriend to ignore the words of her mother. She prefers to go on a date to stay at home

The previous quotations imply that Harriett feels that she has made the right decision without listening to others' opinion. She does not want her mother to interfere with her business. She ignores the others for her own pleasure.

### **b. Being an avenger**

An avenger is a person who wishes to take revenge other people's mistakes or crimes. Due to excessive revenge within oneself, someone can be an avenger. The emotional wounds cause someone feel hurt prolonged, so it becomes revenge. Revenge can be interpreted as the hatred to others in a long time. Because Harriett hates white people for a long time, she keeps a sense of deep resentment in her heart. She totally does not like the white people in her life. It can be seen in the following quotation:

"I know white folks, too," he said. "I live in the South."

"And I ain't never been South," added Harriett hoarsely, "but I know 'em right here...and I hate 'em!"

"De Lawd hears you," said Hager. "I don't care if He does hear me, mama! You and Annjee are too easy. You just take whatever white folks give you-coon to your face, and nigger behind your backs-and don't say nothing. You run to some white person's back door for every job you get, and then they pay you one dollar for five dollars' worth of work, and fire you whenever they get ready." (NWL, 1930: 86)

Harriett firmly responds her mother and her brother, Jimboy's, statement if she really hates white people. She knows all about white people. Although on other place they are nice people. Harriett assumes that white people have bad characters. Wherever and whatever white people do always hurt her feelings and common black people. Therefore, Harriett hates them all over her life.

White folks run the world, and te only thing colored folks are expected to do is work and grin and take off their hats as though it don't matter..... O, I hate 'em!" Harriett Cried, so fiercely that Sandy was afraid. "I hate white folks!" she said to everybody on the porch in the darkness. "You can pray for 'em if you want to mama, but I hate 'em! ... I hate white folks!.... I hate 'em all!" (NWL, 1930: 90)

Harriett vents her anger by crying in front of her family. She cries because she is hurt by white people. When her mother tries to calm her down by telling her to pray for white people, Harriett answers her mother rudely. She does not want to pray for white people because she hates them. She hates white people so there is no single way for her to forgive them.

### **c. Being an Atheist**

After getting some jobs as a singer and dancer, Harriett does not believe in God anymore. Harriett can be said to be an atheist. Atheist refers to anyone who does not believe in God. They think that God exists but does not regulate human life, so they believe in themselves. Atheist refuses to accept or believe in the existence of God. The same thing also happens to Harriett. She spends her time to take revenge toward the white people by working hard. Because of the situation, Harriett ignores the religion. Consider the following quotation.

"Long's it keeps you off de streets, I's glad," said Hager, rocking contentedly. "Maybe I can git you goin' to church again now."

"Aw, I don't like church," the girl replied. "An,' chile I can't blame you much," said Sister Johnson, fumbling in the pocket of her aporn (NWL, 1930: 81).

Aunt Hager with her strong faith and believe in God, tries to remains her daughter about religion. After seeing Harriett busy with her job, Hager tells her to go to church and pray for her life. However, Harriett reminds at her principle. Harriett does not like to go to church. She does not want to pray in the church again. She just wants to work and work without having to pray to God. She thinks that she can be famous and get a lot of money because of her hard working. Harriett adds that it has no correlation with God's interference.

“Jimboy’s right,” said Harriet. “Darkies do like the church too much, but white folks don’t care nothing about it at all. They’re too busy getting theirs out of this world not from God. And I don’t blame’em, expect that they’re so mean to niggers. They’re right, though, looking out for themselves... and yet I hate’ em for it. They don’t have to mistreat us besides, do they?? (NWL, 1930: 82).

Harriett thinks that black people spend too much time to the church and God. They always pray and give their time to God but their lives are always problematic and underestimated. On the other hand, white people rarely spend time to God and they are busy with their work. However, they can live a perfect life and doing all the things in the world depends on themselves without the interventions of God. Those opinion make Harriett does not believe in God and church anymore.

## **1. Positive Effects**

### **a. Becoming an Actress**

Harriett eventually becomes a famous actress. She is called the princess of Blues and many people like her. She has a good job and can earn some money for her living. She works at the theatres that are controlled by the Jews. Harriett likes to work with the Jews because she thinks that they are not like the other white people. They give an opportunity to everybody who can give new shows.

“I left Stanton the week after,” Harriett said,” and haven’t been back since. Had hard times, too, but we’re kinder lucky now, Billy and me-got some dates booked over the Orpheum circuit soon. Liable to get wind of us at the Palace on Broadway one o’ these days. Can’t tell! Things are breakin’ pretty good for spade acts-since Jews are not like the rest of white folks. They will give you a break if you’ve got some hot numbers to show’em, whether you’re colored or not. And Jews controlee the theaters” (NWL, 1930: 296).

Harriett spends much time in order to do some jobs in various places. She really loves and enjoys her jobs, but she still hates the white people. She cannot change the way she thinks of the white people, although she has been an actress at the time. Harriett assumes that the white people still treat her and her race as they want.

Finally the two blacked-up fellows broke into a song called Walking the Dog, flopping their long-toed shoes, twirling their middles like egg-beaters, and made their exit to a roar of laughter and applause. Then the canas street-scene rose, disclosing a gregoreus background of blue elvet, with a piano and a floor-lamp in the centre of stage. “this is Harriett’s part now,” Sandy whispered excitedly as a tall, yellow, slick-headed young man came in and immediatly began playing the piano. “And, mama that’s Billy Sanderlee!” Sure is,!”said Anjee (NWL, 1930: 292).

Harriett becomes very famous. Wherever she goes, she makes everyone surprised and amazed to see her and her friend Billy, when they act on the stage. Everyone recognizes her ability by giving an applause when she ends her performance.

Harriett becomes very popular, not only among black but also among the white people because of her ability in singing and dancing. She is not ashamed to show her ability in front of many people, especially white people. She believes that nothing is impossible if she continues working.

### **b. Becoming a Responsible Woman**

Beside being an actress and getting a lot of money, Harriett is also well known as a responsible woman in every condition for her family and her race. It can be seen in the following quotation:

And for a moment nothing was heard save the shuf-shuf-shuffle of feet and the immense booming of bass-drum like a living vein pulsing at the heart of loneliness. "Sandy!...Sandy!...my starts! Where is that child? .. has anybody seen my little nephew?" All over the hall..."Sandy! oh-o-o, Lord!" Finally, with a sigh of relief: "You little brat, darn you, hiding up here in the balcony where nobody could find you!...Sandy wake up! It's past four o'clock and I'll get killed." Harriett vigorously shook the sleeping child, who lay stretched on the dusty chairs; then she began to drag him down the narrow steps before he was scarcely awake. (NWL, 1930: 106)

After having party, Harriett realizes that she loses her nephew. Although she is drunk, Harriett still remembers about Sandy. Harriett is always worried about her nephew. She keeps looking until she finds Sandy asleep on the balcony, because his stomachache. Harriett knows that she makes fault, therefore she is responsible for keeping her nephew.

Responsibility and taking care of families are greater than the attention to herself. Harriett is willing to do anything to save her family and her race from white people insult. Harriett often gets a lot of problems since she was in her childhood. She never gives up on her problems. The problem makes her become a responsible person. In this case, Harriett tries to show her responsibilities by telling her experiences to her family, that the white man is not as good as they think.

Harriett is angry when she knows that her family is not treated well by the white people in their workplace. Harriett does not want her family to continue working at the white's house. She knows that the salary which is received by his family is out of balance with their work. It is seen as in the following quotation.

"What for?" Harriett retorted angrily. "There's plenty what for?" All that work for five dollars a week with what little tips those pickers give you. And white men insulting you besides, asking you to sleep with 'em. Look at my finger nails, all broke from scurbbing that dining-room floor." She thrust out her dark slim hands (NWL, 1930: 52).

Harriett tries to give a good view of life for her family. She invites them to realize and to be more careful in finding a job. Harriett has suffered many bad treatments while working at the white's house, so she does not want her family gets the same experiences as what she has already got.

### **c. Being Regretful**

Harriett never listens to someone else's opinion including her mother. When Harriett's mother asks her to take care of Sandy, she does not do and follow what her mother said. Therefore, she feels regret and realizes for making mistake. On the other side, she regrets her actions that always hurt her mother, her family and also to the white man. Consider the following quotation:

"I'm scared to death!" said Harriett. "Lord, Sandy, I hope ma ain't up! I hope she didn't come home last night from Nis' Lane's. We shouldn't've gone, Sandy... I was guess we to run fust to keep up with her. "Gee, I'm scared!" (NWL, 1930: 108).

Harriett and her boyfriend meet each other. At the time she is afraid because she leaves Sandy alone at home. She realizes that she has deceived her mother. Harriett wishes that her mother is not angry, as she has done a great mistake against her mother's words.

“An’ since then I’s met many a white lady an’ many a white gentleman, an’ some of’em’s been kind to me an’ some of’ em ain’t; some of’ em’s cussed me an’ wouldn’t pay me fo’ ma work; an’ some of’ em’s hurted me awful. But I’s been sorry fo’ white folks, fo’ I knows something inside must be aggravatin’ de po’ souls. An’ I’s kept a room in ma heart fo’ em,’ cause wite folks needs us, honey, even if they don’t know it. They’s like spoilt chillens what’s got too much o’ ever’thing-an’ they needs us niggers, waht ain’t got nothin’.” (NWL, 1930: 183)

It shows that Harriett admits her guilt. She even advises Sandy about white people. Harriett feels good with the white people after she works with them in Stanton. She says that white people will not hate the black people as long as they do not reply white people actions or words. Harriett also regrets the words and deeds of the white people in her school. She tries to love and pray for white people like her mother said.

Those quotations remind that everyone has their own mistake. Because of her regret, Harriett finally understands not to do the same mistake. She regrets all of her action due to her mother and her hatred toward white people. Harriett realizes that what she has done to everyone and also her mother is a bad thing.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Literature forces human’s brain to understand and memorize its elements, such as plot, theme, character, and setting that occur in the story. Literature consist of novel, drama, short story and poetry. The researcher is interested in analyzing novel because the researcher thinks that comprehending novel is such interesting challenge. The primary data of the research is taken from the novel entitled *Not Without Laughter* written by Langston Hughes. He is well-known as the American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He is one of the earliest innovators of the new literary art’s form called jazz poetry. Hughes is also best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. He finished his college education at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania three years later. In 1930, Hughe published his first novel, *Not Without Laughter*, and won the Harmon gold medal for literature. Harriett’s Struggle from hatred toward the white people is taken as the topic of the research.

This article has two objectives, to find out Harriett’s Struggles from hatred toward the white people in Langston Hughe’s *Not Without Laughter* and to find out the effects of Harriett’s Struggles toward Herself. The researcher uses some theories in doing this article. The theories are feminism, black women struggle, psychology, and theory of hatred. The researcher uses two kinds of research approaches to analyze the data. Those are psychological approach and sociological approach. Library research is used to conduct the research.

There are two problems discussed in this article. The first is about, Harriett’s struggles from hatred toward the white people in Langston Hughe’s *Not Without Laughter*. The first problem is differentiated into taking care of Sandy and being a hard worker. Harriett does not want to waste her success only to herself or have fun with her friends. After achieving her dreams, Harriett shows more attention to her family. She concerns more to fulfill Sandy’s daily life. She does many things not only for herself but also for her entire race. On the other hand, Harriett manages to make her race popular in the community, especially for the white community. She does everything to show that black people can get a good job.

The second problem is the effects of Harriett’s struggle toward herself. The effects are negative and positive effects. Harriett experiences many challenges that influence her in order to fight the black people’s life. The negative effects are being stubborn, being an avenger and being an atheist. When Harriett grows up, she experiences many changes, both physical and



psychological. Harriett does not respect the other opinions. Harriett firmly answers her mother and her brother Jimboy, if she really hates white people. Because of her hatred Harriett keeps a sense of deep resentment in her heart. Harriett ignores the religion and God because of the situation and hatred toward whites. While the positive effects of Harriett's struggle toward herself are becoming an actress, becoming a responsible woman and being regretful. Those effects change Harriett's life. It makes her well known in the society. As a woman who has many talents, Harriett tries hard to rescue and bring her black people to become free from racial segregation in the United States. She does a lot of ways, so that they are not underestimated by the whites. Harriett in this novel is known as the main character as Sandy's aunt.

Moreover, this article gives some message for the readers. The readers may get some social and moral values that can be contemplated by the readers in their life. Therefore, the readers will not hate the other people although they get hurt and be responsible for everything around them. In other hand, the readers can be patient, steadfast and never despair in solving the problems of their life. Hopefully, the readers can forgive someone who make mistake or hurt their feeling.

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