

Racism Faced by Natives with Reference to Gabriel Okara's *You Laughed And Laughed And Laughed*

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Abstract

This paper throws light on the poem *You laughed and laughed and laughed* which depicts the life of African people who faced on racism by white. They were laughed by white for their songs, dance and music which brought out their inner feelings of black natives which also brought out their emotions. Then at end, the black gave a sizzling attack on white as frozen and death. All the parts of their body become frozen. The black natives had a contact with natural elements such as to warmth with Sun, swim deep inside the sea and facing an ablaze fire which made them strong and brave. This gave them an extra ordinary power. These things melted the frozen heart of white people and these whites wanted to know the secret of their powers and their merriment. Black replied that their contact with natural element and walking with bare-foot all over the land made them strong which was not done by white.

Keywords: Gabriel Okara, *You Laughed And Laughed And Laughed*, racism, barbarian, ablaze, wrathful, noxious, sizzling attack, dominations.

African literature is a literature about the African people and that continent. It contains various languages and genres. The major themes of the African literature are culture, conflict, religion, colonialism, modernism and racism. Nigerian poet Gabriel Okara's poem '*You laughed and laughed and laughed*' brings out an emotion, feeling and pain faced by black people. This poem also brings out the sufferings faced by black people. This poem is as discussion between the black natives and white people which brings an rules, beliefs and practice of African. Okara brought out the suffering faced by the native people in this poem.

Gabriel Imomotimc Gbalngbain Okara was his full name. He was born on April 24, 1921 in Bomoudi at Nigeria. He was a poet and novelist. He brought out the problems of African people in both his poem and prose. His notable works include *The Voice*. He died in March 26, 2019 at age of 97.

Mostly African poetry deals with a problems and suffering faced by black people and they were always dominated by the white. The native black people were not allowed to move

freely around their land. This poem '*You laughed and laughed and laughed*' deals with the olden tradition that arose from various countries of Africa which paved way to African literature. The original language of Africa which resulted in noxious effect of slavery and colonization were led way to European language that spread all over continent. The African poem mainly concentrate on the domination, slavery, racism, marginalization, colour discrimination of black natives.

The author named his poem *You laughed and laughed and laughed* because in this poem the black Africans were laughed and mocked by white people. They were laughed for their song, dance and music. These were considering to be an cultural norms of black people and also they were discriminated for their colour. Throughout the poem it portrays the domination of white people. Okara used the word 'laughed' in this poem, denoting the white, who dominated the native for their abnormal actions. As an African poet Okara brought this concept in his poem and named it so.

The poet mainly focuses on the theme racism faced by the people in Africa and also brought out the problems and suffering faced by black, created by white, they did not understand the feeling of black people who suffered with pain given by white. The entry of European language paved way to the white people to enter Africa and the try to make African's as their slave.

The white people laughed at black natives for whatever things they do. They sing song which brought out the pain, emotion of the people was not understood by the white people, its sounds them as misfiring and choking of car which has stopped. The sound of song was harsh, and it was criticized and laughed by white.

“In your ears my song
Is motor car misfiring
Stopping with a choking cough
And you laughed and laughed and laughed”
(lines no: 1-4)

The natives are not stylish are modern when compared to white people, they have a clumsy figure. They were mocked for their walk and it was said has an 'Ante natal' which is an immature man's walk. The clumsy figure was overwhelmed by the extraordinary power which they gained naturally, that was not noticed by white and laughed for their appearance.

“In your eyes my ante –

Natal walk was inhuman, passing
Your ‘omnivorous understanding’
(line no:6-7)

Again, they were teased for their mad furious dance along with heavy beating of drums, which was considering to be a traditional and cultural rituals. The drum beaten in curious and wild way which made them to look as if barbarians. The sound which produce, reveals the mood of the people of native. the sound produces by drum made them to dance which brought out the inner feeling of the black people. The white people shut their eyes and ears which was considered to be a clumsy one and laughed at them.

“You laughed at my dance
You laughed at my inside
You laughed and laughed and laughed”
(line no:18-20)

The white people did not treat the natives as a ordinary human they did not understand the inner feeling of native and dominate by their appearance, colour and their actions. Black natives were laughed by the white people.

The narrator, by seeing all problems faced by his natives, gives an enormous attack a white people and described them as frozen. All the parts of the body were frozen like eyes, ears, tongue, heart and was considered to be an death one because they does not have the mind to understand the inner feeling of native. Their conduct with natural elements like warming their body in sun, moving deep into sea, facing burning fire made their body strong and brave. The white wonder by the action of black, who was filled with merriment. This fire of merriment melted the ear, eye, heart of white and was excited to know the secret of the strength.

The white awed by the manual action of black, one who laughed at black. They were interest to know the secret behind their strength. They replied that they have contact with natural elements like sun, sea, air and fire. The walk in bare footed all over the land but the whites have contact only with machine, not with nature.

“And I answered;
Because my father and I
Are owned by the living
Warmth of the earth
Through our naked feet.”

(line no 40-45)

In the poem *You laughed and laughed and laughed*, Gabriel Okara brought out the suffering of black natives by white which was the cause of racism. Okara brought the problems faced by the African people. Being an African poet, he supported his native people and fight for the rights of his people to lead peaceful and happy life.

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