

**AN ANALYSIS OF RACISM AS REFLECTED IN BOB MARLEY'S  
SONGS : *WAR AND BUFFALO SOLDIER***



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## RATIFICATION

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**An Analysis of Racism As Reflected In Bob Marley's Songs :*War And Buffalo Soldier***

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis entitled "An Analysis of Racism As Reflected In Bob Marley's Songs : *War And Buffalo Soldier*" is a study about the social life of the African people to face the racial discrimination through Bob Marley's songs *War and Buffalo Soldier*. There are two questions to be answered in this research namely: what racial discriminations are reflected in Bob Marley's songs and how the struggle for the right of black people is reflected in the songs. This research is qualitative research. The qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological tradition inquiry that explores the social and human problem. Based on the analysis of the songs' lyric, *War* song presents about the problems of racism experienced by African in their home land-Africa, while the *Buffalo Soldiers* describes about the racism problems experienced by African in America. Significantly, Marley emphasizes on his songs that a race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities. The differences of human traits and capacities leads to discrimination. Through his songs, he motivates people to wake up and against racism.

**Key words: *Racism, Song, and Bob Marley.***

**Analisis Rasisme Yang Tercermin dalam Lagu Bob Marley: *War and Buffalo Soldier***

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***ABSTRAK***

Tesis ini berjudul "Analisis Rasisme Yang Tercermin dalam Lagu Bob Marley: '*War and Buffalo Soldier*'" adalah sebuah studi tentang kehidupan sosial masyarakat Afrika untuk menghadapi diskriminasi rasial melalui lagu-lagu Bob Marley. Ada dua pertanyaan yang harus dijawab dalam penelitian ini yaitu: rasial diskriminasi apakah yang tercermin dalam lagu Bob Marley dan bagaimana lagu tersebut dimaksudkan untuk memperjuangkan hak orang kulit hitam. penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Berdasarkan analisis lirik lagu tersebut, lagu *War* menyajikan tentang masalah rasisme yang dialami orang Afrika di tanah asal mereka-Afrika, sementara lagu *Buffalo Soldier* menggambarkan tentang masalah rasisme yang dialami oleh orang Afrika di Amerika. Secara signifikan, Bob Marley menekankan pada lagunya bahwa sebuah perlombaan adalah penentu utama sifat dan kapasitas manusia. Perbedaan sifat dan kapasitas manusia menyebabkan diskriminasi. Dengan lagu-lagunya, Bob Marley memotivasi seluruh kulit hitam untuk bangun dan melawan rasisme.

***Kata Kunci: Rasisme, Lagu dan, Bob Marley.***

## **I. BACK GROUND OF STUDY**

There are many ways to express idea and feeling. One way to express idea or feeling is a song. A Song has some major elements to support the idea or the theme that will be conveyed by the singer, music is the actualization of the possibility of any sound whatever to present to some human being a meaning which he experiences with his body - that is to say, with his mind, his feelings, his senses, his will, and his metabolism (Clifton 1983, 1).

Levi R. Bryant defines music not as a language, but as a marked-based, problem-solving method such as mathematics (Ashby 2004, 4). An often-cited definition of music is that it is "organized sound", a term originally coined by modernist composer Edgard Varese (Goldman 1961, 133) in reference to his own musical aesthetic. Varese's concept of music as "organized sound" fits into his vision of "sound as living matter" and of "musical space as open rather than bounded" (Chou 1966 a, 1 - 4). He conceived the elements of his music in terms of "sound - masses", likening their organization to the natural phenomenon of crystallization (Chou 1966 b, 157).

Music have important function in daily life especially for expressing the unexpressed feeling. People who can't convey their idea because they are oppressed use songs to express their feeling. For example, Bob Marley writes some songs concerning on the problems of racism. There are two interesting songs wich deal with racism. They are *War* and *The Buffalo Soldier*. These songs can make the revolution in black people experience and free them from the slavery of white people in America. In this thesis, black American will be the foremost topics to discuss. America is a big continent; it has various nations, races, ethnic and lifestyle. Talking about races, we will think about person's physical appearances such as eyes color, skin color, and hair form (Simarnata, 2012: 6). Race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. When skin color becomes the distinguish factor among people or groups, they claimsuperior to the others. That reaction be called racism.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

The study is attempted to seek the answer to questions :

1. What racial discriminations are reflected in Bob Marley's songs ?

2. How the struggle for the right of black people is reflected in the songs ?

### **1.3. Purpose of Study**

Based on the statement of problem, this study is aims :

1. To describe the reason why Bob Marley created the problem of racism as reflected in his songs entitled War and Buppalo Soldier.
2. To find and give the images of Marley's ideas of the struggle for the right of black people.

### **1.4. Scope of the study**

This study was focusing on an analysis the songs of Bob Marley which deal with racism society of black people and their struggle to get the same right with white people.

## **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **A. Critical Race Theory**

As gender critique of the theories of sociology, critical race theory also from the subjective experience of group-specific racial and ethnic groups were oppressed as a cornerstone of criticism. The theory that there is deemed not able to explain the conditions they faced, and how to keep them out of the situation. As men and women, black and white race is also a category of history, politics, and culture. He is socially constructed is the result of ideological struggle between social classes in society.

The political struggle of blacks in America, as well as women in Contexts of gender, is a response to the conditions of Injustice and inequality experienced them. However, not as gender struggle predominantly white, mainly of middle-class women, the struggle of blacks led by reviews Reviews those who are poor, the working class, and mar ginalized. There are different types and patterns of movement of blacks in the South and North. In the South they are fighting for civil rights and social equality with white skin. Seidman, (2008: 9).

Strategy is the special thought or behaviors that individual use to help them comprehend, learn or certain new information. (O'Malley & Chamot.1990:1)

learning strategy is specification taken by the learner to make learning process easier, faster enjoyable, self-direct and more effective (Oxford, 1990, p.8 in Samida). In this study strategy refers to student specific action to increase reading achievement. Strategy is a procedures used in learning, thinking, which serve as away of reaching a goal. In language learning, learning strategies are those conscious and unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using a language. ( Richards, 1987).

## **2.1 Theory of Racism**

In this study the writer collected several theories and definitions related to the topics that focus on social problems and have a relationship with racial discrimination. The writer uses the theory of racism In his book Prejudice and Conflict, Prof. Dr. Alo Liliweri, M.S. (2005: 29-30) defines racism as follows :

1. An ideology that bases itself on the idea that humans can be separated into racial groups; that the group can be structured on a degree or hierarchy based on cleverness or skill, ability, and even morality.
2. An organized belief about the inferiority of a social group, and then in combination with power, it is translated into life practice to show different qualities or treatment.
3. Discrimination against a person or a group of people because of their race. Sometimes this concept becomes a political doctrine to claim a race more than any other race.
4. A complex belief that some subspecies of human (stocks) are inferior (lower) than in other human subspecies.
5. Sometimes racism also becomes an ethnocentric ideology in certain racial groups. Moreover, this ideology is supported by the manipulation of the theory to myth, stereotypes, and social distance, as well as discrimination that deliberately created.
6. Sometimes this understanding also contributes to the superiority and inferiority characteristics of a group of people based on physical reasons as well as other innate factors of their birth. Racism is one of the special forms of prejudice that focuses on physical variation among humans.

From the definition above can be interpreted that the things included in racism is an attitude based on characteristics superiority and inferiority, ideologies based on degrees human, discriminatory attitudes, and attitudes that claim a more race superior to other races. This often happens in society multicultural.

Another definition of racism or often in the same sense with rasislisme (racism and racialism have the same meaning) as it is in Hoakiau's book in Indonesia, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1998: 50):

Racism is a notion that rejects something of a society based on other races. Racism arises or may arise when a society of a minority has abnormalities of the biological bias present in the citizens, and it arises or may arise because a small or minority group can not defend itself. As a result there emerged white supremacy that harmed other colored citizens.

It can be concluded that racism may arise within people who still follow superiority and minority, where in these minority societies there are abnormalities biologically than generally. So from there arises an understanding who rejects a society based on race, and as consequently the rise of white supremacy as superior to the disadvantageous colored or inferior races.

Racism is also inseparable from two aspects of racial discrimination and prejudice. The term racial discrimination includes everything form of differentiation behavior based on race. The form of racial discrimination is evident in the segregation of certain racial residences in the big cities of the West and the East. Also the inter-racial social order that treats etiquette based on class superiority / inferiority. Including the selection of friends and matchmaking (Adi, 1999: 97).

### **III. METHOD OF STUDY**

#### **3.1. Type of Research**

This research is qualitative research. The qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological tradition inquiry that explores the social and human problem (Herdiansyah, 2010). This analysis deals with the explanation of words, not in the statistic form.

#### **3.2. Data Sources**



The source of data in qualitative research is society, social phenomenon, literary works, manuscripts, etc, and its data can be words, sentences, or discourses (Subroto 1992). The writer uses the song lyrics as the main data and the supporting data is a data which the writer takes from document in World Wide Web. Both data are used by the writer to analyze racism as reflected in Bob Marley's songs.

### **3.3 Methods of Analyzing Data**

In this research, the writer takes some steps. First, the writer decides the works, the songs, which are going to be analyzed. Second, the writer reads the songs profoundly to analyze the content. Third, the writer finds some supporting data either from book or internet to get deeper understanding of the songs. Fourth, after understanding the content, the writer decides the topic and the problem statements. The problem statements are used to develop the discussion.

The next step is to find the theory that is related to the topic. It is used to answer the problem. After finding the data and the theory, the writer begins to analyze the data, the songs, to answer the problem statement that is Bob Marley's description of racism in *War* and *Buffalow Soldier*.

## **IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will discuss the selected Bob Marley's song lyrics extracted from its album and compilation to answer the problem statements. To achieve maximum result, the discussion will cover both lyrical and musical analysis. Furthermore, this chapter will be divided into two sub chapters. The first is Racial discriminations are reflected in Bob Marley's songs lyrics. The second is The struggle for the right of black people as seen through Bob Marley's song lyrics. The discussion will be conducted through the analysis of the two song lyrics extracted from Bob Marley's album. The song lyrics which are going to be analyzed are *War* and *Buppalo Soldier*.

### **4.1. Racial discriminations are reflected in Bob Marley's songs**

#### **A. War songs**

The song "*War*" was recorded with the Wailers and it appeared in the album *Rastaman Vibration* in 1976. We are going to explain you in which way it

is a protest song. Firstly, we will analyze the lyrics and their meaning. Then, we will associate them with historical and cultural contextual elements.

The lyrics of the song are part of or inspired by the speech of the Ethiopian emperor before the United-Nations in 1963. Haile Selassie condemn the Italian aggression against his people. Bob Marley really appreciate this speech and put it up in the rehearsal's local of the Wailers. A few years later he decided to use the speech for the lyrics of his song.

The first and second verse tells us about

*Until the philosophy,  
Which hold one race  
Superior and another, inferior  
Is finally, and permanently  
Discredited and abandoned  
Everywhere is war  
Me say war*

*That until there're no longer  
First class and second class  
Citizens of any nation  
Until the colour of a man's skin  
Is of no more significance  
Than the colours of his eyes  
Me say war*

The first verse instantly bumps into the superiority of the race, which makes the world divided between the superior nation and the inferior nation. The superior refers to white people and the inferior refers to black people. Bob Marley is denouncing discrimination in the world and in the countries. The beginning of the lyrics are a direct quote of Selassie's speech. He explains that today there are different categories of citizen and different races which are not equal. He also says that in any nations the color of the skin is more significative than the color of the eyes, he fights against those discrimination and declare a pacific war on this philosophy.

*That until that day*

*The dream of lasting peace  
World citizenship  
Rule of international morality  
Will remain in but a fleeting illusion  
To be pursued  
But never attained  
Now everywhere is war, war*

In the third verse Marley elaborates deeper about peace in which it relates the pretension of Marley to agin racism. He declares that for him the basic humans rights must be “guaranteed to all without regard of race”. It is another reference to white people who reproach to black not to respect the international rights with the colonization of Ethiopia. Once more, and as in the other verse , he says war.

#### B. Buffalo Soldier songs

The song Buffalo Soldier was written by Bob Marley and Noel Williams in 1980. It was released on the "Legend" album in 1984 The Buffalo Soldiers was the name given to the African American soldiers who fought in the 10th Cavalry during Native American conflicts in 1866. The Native American tribes gave them the nickname because their dark skin and dark curly hair reminded them of the buffalo. The African Americans were also strong.

*Buffalo Soldier, Dreadlock Rasta:  
There was a Buffalo Soldier in the heart of America,  
Stolen from Africa, brought to America,  
Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival.  
I mean it, when I analyze the stench -  
To me it makes a lot of sense:  
If you know your history,  
Then you would know where you coming from,  
Then you wouldn't have to ask me,  
Who the 'eck do I think I am.  
I'm just a Buffalo Soldier in the heart of America,*

*Stolen from Africa, brought to America,  
Said he was fighting on arrival, fighting for survival;  
Said he was a Buffalo Soldier win the war for America.  
Dreadie, woy yoy yoy, woy yoy-yoy yoy,  
Woy yoy yoy yoy, yoy yoy-yoy yoy!  
Woy yoy yoy, woy yoy-yoy yoy,  
Woy yoy yoy yoy, yoy yoy-yoy yoy!*

The first verse of the song tells about how the Africans were brought here against their will. They had to fight to survive from the moment they came to this country. Initially, they fought just to stay alive. Later on, they were forced to fight the war for America and kill the Native American people.

The second verse are sung in normal voice tone, while the first verse of the third verse are sung in high voice tone to emphasize the anger feeling of the singer when he sings the song lyric *"If you know your history than you would know where you coming from, Then you wouldn't have to ask me"*, Bob Marley tries to rising his pitch when he enters the part of the songs. Bob Marley is angry that history is not taught inaccurately.

When Bob Marley says, *"Win the war for America"* is the most powerful critique, use the slaves to win the economic battle for America, it is ironic since on of the American's attractions for its immigrant is its ideal of equality, but ethnic minorities achieve the lower level of the social ladder in American society.

"Marley" means there is a pathway to America and Jamaica. It is the capital and most populous municipality in Puerto Rico, an unincorporated territory of the United States. San Juan, as a settlement of the Spanish Empire, was used by merchant and military ships traveling from Spain as the first stopover in the Americas. Because of its prominence in the Caribbean, a network of fortifications was built to protect the transports of gold and silver from the New World to Europe. Because of the rich cargoes, San Juan became a target of the foreign powers of the time.

The name *"Buffalo Soldier"* is often proudly used in reference to any man of Black American descent in the United States military, it originally denoted those who served in the cavalry, and infantry, fighting in the Indian Wars. Over 180,000 Buffalo Soldier ( mostly on the Unionist side) fought during the American Civil War and over

33,000 died. This song lyrics shows the difficulties such as racism and hostilities faced by these Buffalo Soldiers. It describes the conditions under which these special units fought and their role in the peace-keeping attempts between the whites and the Native Americans, "*Buffalo Soldier*" was given to the black men that made up most of the army which were used to displace Native Americans from their reservations in the name of the United States Manifest Destiny doctrine. These men were mostly slaves taken directly from Africa and other freed black men who were for the most part illiterate and ignorant as to the motives of the American government.

Bob Marley speaks about race and the behavior of white Americans in their forcing African Americans, then called buffalo soldier, to unwillingly fight for the United States. His song "buffalo Soldier" goes hand in hand with this notion and discusses the hardships faced by African Americans during the Civil War, as fourteen black soldiers were taken to fight for the Union.

Both in America and in Jamaica the Buffalo Soldier have been in a perpetual struggle against the dominant society to establish their rights and to insure their dignity. Timothy White speaks about how Bob became interested in conveying the message of the Buffalo Soldier through his music in his book *Catch a Fire*. Always a history buff, Bob had begun working on *Buffalo Soldier* in 1978 after reading about the black American soldier decorated in the late 1800s. He cut an explosive demo version of the song with a band led by co-writer N.G. Williams, aka King Sporty, before settling on the more thoughtful treatment done with the Wailers (333).

*Buffalo Soldier* is a clear reflection of Marley's life and the class division he witnessed growing up in Kingstone, Jamaica. A short way up the road from the slums of Kingstone were the Cross Roads. The area was named this because it divided the poor neighborhoods from the affluent. Throughout his life Bob Marley was deeply troubled when his people were not judged by their character, but rather their skin color and amount of their finances. Through songs like "*Buffalo Soldier*", Marley was able to voice his message of freedom and allow his voice to be heard world wide; creating an audience for reggae music that is increasing in popularity each year. Many Jamaicans, especially Rastafarians like Marley, identified with the "Buffalo Soldier" as an example of exceeding Black men who performed with courage, honor, valor, and distinction in a

field that was dominated by whites, and persevered despite endemic racism and prejudice.

## V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### 5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, racism is a horrible problem that affects all of American society. In fact, race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. When skin color becomes the distinguish factor among people or groups, they claim superior to the others. That reaction be called racism.

In Marley's experience, racists are often insecure and ignorant people who act racist because of a fear and hatred of different people. Racists usually ignore the simple fact about all humans, through his songs Bob Marley created the problem of racism, there are two interesting songs wich deal with racism, *War* and *Buffalo Soldier*. These songs can make the revolution in black people experience and free them from the slavery of white people in America.

Based on the analysis, *War* song presents about the problems of racism experienced by African in their home land-Africa, *Bob Marley* is denouncing discrimination in the world and in the countries. The beginning of the lyrics are a direct quote of Selassie's speech. He explains that today there are different categories of citizen and different races which are not equal. He declares that for him the basic humans rights must be "guaranteed to all without regard of race". It is another reference to Selassie who reproach to Mussolini not to respect the international rights with the colonization of Ethiopia. Once more, and as in the other paragraphs, he says war.

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