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## The Responses To Discrimination As Experienced By Amma Bonsu In The Novel *Girl, Woman, Other* By Bernardine Evaristo

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**ABSTRACT;** *This research analyzes one of Bernardine Evaristo's notable novels, entitled *Girl, Woman, Other*. The novel chronicles the experiences of a black woman residing in the UK, navigating the challenges of racial discrimination. The novel's character, Amma Bonsu, a Black woman, encounters discrimination against white people in the UK. The objective of this research is to elucidate Amma's responses to the experiences of discrimination depicted in the novel. The present study employed qualitative research methods, encompassing the analysis of relevant literature, the identification of relevant data, its classification, and its reduction for the purpose of analysis. The study's findings are supported by two types of data. First, the study utilizes primary data obtained from Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. Second, it employs secondary data from e-journals, articles, sites, and previous scientific writings. the actions taken by Amma Bonsu in responding to the discrimination she received. There are four forms of action that Amma takes in facing discrimination, such as withdrawal, resignation, acceptance, verbal confrontation, and physical confrontation. Acts of discrimination are shown in several dialogues and narrative scenes in the novel which reflect acts of discrimination from white people towards Amma Bonsu because she is black.*

**Keywords:** *Process, Benefits, Domicile Letter.*

**ABSTRAK;** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui manfaat dan proses pembuatan surat keterangan domisili di kantor Kelurahan Sidorame Timur Medan Perjuangan. Dalam proses mengurus suatu tempat tinggal dikenal dengan istilah domisili, dimana mereka yang berdomisili bertanggung jawab terhadap masyarakat dan pemerintah di Indonesia. Surat Keterangan Domisili diterbitkan oleh kantor kecamatan yang berfungsi untuk membuktikan bahwa seseorang benar-benar tinggal atau berdomisili pada alamat tertentu. Surat ini mempunyai kegunaan yang beragam, seperti untuk administrasi perbankan, pembuatan paspor, pendaftaran sekolah, dan keperluan lain yang memerlukan bukti domisili yang sah. Surat keterangan domisili memegang peranan penting dalam kehidupan administratif masyarakat. Salah satu manfaatnya adalah memastikan warga negara yang bersangkutan terdaftar dan memiliki identitas resmi yang diakui pemerintah. Informasi domisili ini harus sesuai dengan yang tertera pada Kartu Tanda Penduduk (KTP) dan Surat Izin Mengemudi (SIM). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode

pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data melalui proses wawancara disertai dokumentasi. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah mengambil sampel dari salah satu pegawai di kantor Kelurahan Sidorame Timur Medan Perjuangan.

**Kata Kunci:** Diskriminasi, Menanggapi Diskriminasi, Gadis, Wanita, Novel Lainnya.

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## INTRODUCTION

A literary work will seem extraordinary if it can attract the reader's attention. In fact, it brings the reader into the fiction. However, literary works are also inseparable from authors who have come up with ideas. Novel, as a form of a literary work, provides positive values for its readers so that readers can understand the social realities that exist around society. Kartika and Suprpto (115) argued that novels are realistic and imaginary works of fiction. However, novels can also expand the reader's experience built by several elements. The elements build a structure and the elements are closely interrelated and related to build unity of meaning. Therefore, the novel can also be defined as a work of fictional prose in which both the plot and the characters depicted contain life stories, usually taken from real-world events (De 154-170).

Several authors described themes regarding social and human morals such as tragedy, revenge, humor, love and in terms of the issue of racism and discrimination. *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) novel is a work that highlights and tells the life stories of black people who are discriminated against by white people in the UK. Amma, a Black woman, was auditioning for the role. The director perceived her audition as a futile endeavor, deeming her selection as being incongruent with the physical attributes he deemed optimal for the role, namely a tall stature and hips that align with traditional depictions of the African physique. The director's prejudices led him to conclude that the play's casting requirements did not necessitate a black actress. Subsequently, Amma gained admission to a prestigious drama school. Amma's enrollment at the institution marked a notable occurrence, as she became the sole black student among her peers. Consequently, Amma's identity as a black individual became a catalyst for political engagement within the institution. During this period, Amma encountered a gathering of white individuals. Amma reports having overheard white people discussing black people. During the meeting, white people engaged in belittling behavior towards black people, uttering sentences that were perceived as injurious to the emotional well-being of the white individuals

in attendance. This interaction led Amma to feel driven to educate others on her identity and to emphasize the importance of respecting black individuals.

The issue of racism arises from a perspective that perceives individuals as something eternally distinct and incompatible. According to Romero, racism is a combination of prejudice and discriminatory practices that are biased against specific individuals or groups (235-267). This prejudice encourages people of different races to feel superior, dominate and discriminate against people of other races. According to Willmore's statement, discrimination is defined as treating a person or group differently or offensively than others based on race, religion, gender, or belief (2). Fredman's argument also asserts that racism is not predicated on objective properties; rather, it is characterized by relationships of domination and subordination. Fredman further contends that this form of hatred toward "other races" is perpetuated to safeguard "selfishness." Fredman asserts that this phenomenon is both observed and justified through the medium of images such as: Other races are depicted as part of something inferior, despicable, and even inhuman (Fredman 10).

Referring to racial discrimination, Pager and Shepherd mentioned that "Racial discrimination, in its simplest definition, refers to the unequal treatment of people or groups based on race or ethnicity." The report states that race and ethnicity can lead to racism, which is when a society classifies people based on physical characteristics such as the skin color of their ancestors, leading to unequal treatment (Pager 182). It could also be said that racial discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Furthermore, according to Ben Bowling and Coretta Phillips (as cited in Haryanti, et al 422), discrimination is classified into two types that are direct discrimination and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination is an unjust and indirect manner of treating victims due to the characteristics of the victim. Things that are included in direct discrimination include gender discrimination, religious discrimination, race or skin color discrimination, age discrimination, discrimination based on national origin, and health discrimination. Whereas indirect discrimination Indirect discrimination denotes a form of treatment that can be characterized as "equal" across various groups but essentially constitutes discrimination against a specific group.

As a result of discrimination against black people, the identity and self-esteem of black people became scattered, black people lost their self-confidence because they were always

considered inferior. Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes (as cited in Haryanti, et al 423) hypothesized four different types of responses to discrimination. That are withdrawal, resign acceptance, verbal confrontation and physical confrontation. Withdrawal happens when individuals from a minority group perceive discrimination, lack the desire to engage in the discriminatory environment, and choose to evade and depart from the area of discrimination. Resign acceptance means ignoring discrimination and continuing to interact. Verbal Confrontation refers to a verbal denial of discrimination that occurs in response to a disagreement, without any real or suggested physical threat. Physical confrontation is characterized as a physical reaction to discrimination. In contrast to verbal conflict, physical conflict is a reaction to a disagreement that includes physical threats.

This responses to discrimination is exemplified by Amma. Amma's actions serve to emphasize the importance of recognizing the inherent value of Black individuals and the rejection of prejudicial attitudes towards their identity. Given Amma's stance in combating racial discrimination, she has the potential to evolve into a powerful figure who is unafraid to confront those who have discriminated against her and other individuals of color.

There were some previous studies done by some researchers that highlighted the issue of racism and discrimination. The initial research centered on the examination of structural oppression faced by black women and the efforts they have made to combat such oppression. The second research focused on the discussion of how women's oppression is manifest in conditions of exploitation. The third research examined how black and biracial women grapple with their identity, self-image, and self-acceptance in the context of multiple oppressions. In the context of this research, the problem formulation pertains only Amma's responses to the discrimination she encounters in the novel.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research used a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on collecting non-numeric data from research objects through observation. Based on Lim (43), qualitative research is defined as a method of doing scientific research that enables the study of human experience in social and personal contexts.

There are two types of data that were used, primary and secondary data. Novel *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo was the main source or the primary data that was used for this research. In addition, the secondary data was supporting data that came from journals,

articles, sites, previous scientific writing to help discover about the responses of discrimination. After having all the data, the next step was identifying data which suit to the problem formulation. Finally, the data was analyzed using a qualitative method examining the problem formulation which reveals the responses of discrimination happened to Amma in *Girl, Woman, Other*.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research found all four types of discriminatory responses experienced by Amma.

### **1. Withdrawal**

Withdrawal occurs when people from a minority group suspect discrimination, have no intention of participating in the discriminatory situation, and decide to avoid and leave the place of discrimination (Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes as cited in Haryanti et al. 423). This happened to Amma when she was fighting discrimination in the form of withdrawal by going to a café.

“Amma was disappointed to be placed in roles such as slave, maid, prostitute, nanny or criminal and still not get the job.

Amma denounces her fate in a Soho cafe while devouring fried eggs and bacon spread between two slices of soggy white bread washed down with tea. Next to the sex workers who plied their trade on the streets outside long before Soho became a gay colony. trendy. to me? Dominique said, and Amma did, there was nothing submissive, maternal or criminal about her she was so cool, so beautiful, taller than most women, thinner than most women, with glassy cheekbones and smoky eyes with thick black lashes that really cast a shadow on her face.

she wears leather, keeps her hair short except for black bangs that are swept to one side, and rides around town on an old butcher's bike chained outside, can't they see that I'm a living goddess? Dominique shouted with flamboyant movements, flicking her bangs, taking sultry poses while turning her head.” (Evaristo 13).

This part illustrates that withdrawal means avoiding discrimination. In this part, Amma experienced disappointment because she is assigned a role such as an enslaved individual, maid, prostitute, caregiver, or criminal and has yet to secure a job or is uncertain. Consequently, Amma criticized or mourned the destiny she encountered while savoring a meal in a café. This implies that visiting a café and relishing the meals allowed Amma to feel liberated since she departed from the discriminatory surroundings.

Another part that shows Amma's response fighting discrimination in the form of withdrawal is the part that explains Amma realizes that some forums want a place to live according to the wishes of their respective forums.

“Radical feminists want women-only residences, self-governed by cooperatives. Lesbian radical feminists want their own residences away from non-feminist radical lesbians, also self-regulated by cooperatives Black radical feminists want the same except on the condition that no white person of any gender is allowed in anarchists because any form of government is a betrayal of all who They believe. Amma prefers to run alone, and hang out with others who don't try to impose her will on others. In the end, the rotating management committee is immediately formed with various rules.” (Evaristo 24).

This part illustrates that withdrawal means avoiding discrimination. Amma understood that certain groups sought a space to exist based on the desires of their individual groups. Amma, aware of this, opted to leave it behind, decided to be solitary, and connected with individuals who did not enforce her will. Amma distances herself by avoiding relationships with individuals who did not impose her will. In this manner, Amma can experience greater accessibility without facing discrimination from white individuals or groups.

## **2. Resign Acceptance**

Resign acceptance is defined as the acceptance of oneself, the adjustment to social conditions, the adherence to existing customs and applicable rules, standards, or laws, the reconciliation of oneself as it is, and the acceptance that something undesirable is inevitable (Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, as cited in Haryanti et al. 423). Amma's struggle against discrimination in the form of accepting resignation is contained in the narrative which explains when Amma attended a forum containing white and black organizations. In this forum, the presence of black organizations was deemed undesirable, including Amma, who is black.

“Amma spoke about going to her first black women's group in Brixton in her last year at school he listened as they debated what it meant to be a black woman and what it meant to be a feminist when white feminist organizations made them feel unwelcome. How it felt when people called them nigger, or racist thugs beat them up? what it was like when white men opened doors or gave up their seats on public transport for white women (which was sexist), but not for them (which was racist) Amma could relate to their experiences, began to join in with the refrains of, we hear you, sister, we've all been there, sister it felt like she was coming

in from the cold. At the end of her first night, another woman says goodbye and Amma offers to stay in the back to wash the cups and ashtrays with Elaine.” (Evaristo 20).

This part explained that resign acceptance means ignoring discrimination while continuing the interaction. Amma attended a forum that included white and black organizations, and in that forum, the black organization felt the white organization did not want its presence. Even so, the forum continued even though there were differences between white and black people and after the forum was over, Amma, who is black, chose to stay in the forum to wash ashtrays and cups with Elaine when the other women left the forum. This means that it can be said to be a resignation acceptance because even though there are differences between white and black people, Amma still accepts the difference.

### **3. Verbal Confrontation**

Verbal confrontation is conceptualized as a verbal refusal of discrimination in response to disagreement, devoid of any tangible or implied physical menace (Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, as cited in Haryanti et al. 423). Amma fights discrimination in the form of verbal confrontation in the part that explains that Amma is the only black student at an orthodox drama school and the principal politicizes her.

“When I was accepted into a very orthodox drama school, I was already politicized and challenged them on everything, Amma the only person of colour in the whole school. She demanded to know why the male parts in Shakespeare couldn’t be played by women and don’t even get me started on cross-racial casting, she shouted at the course director while everyone else, including the female students, stayed silent. I realized I was on my own. The next day I was taken aside by the school principal, you’re here to become an actor not a politician. You’ll be asked to leave if you keep causing trouble. You have been warned. Dominique tell me about it, Amma replied, shut up or get out, right? as for me, I get my fighting spirit from my dad, Kwabena, who was a journalist campaigning for Independence in Ghana.” (Evaristo 17).

This part explained that Amma was accepted into an orthodox drama school where the school only accept white students. Amma, who is black, also responded to this. Amma responded with a verbal confrontation by shouting at the casting director. Amma screams that she is not accepted and demands that the drama school not start cross-racial casting. As is known, Amma is the only black person at the school. That is, Amma fights discrimination in



the form of verbal confrontation by shouting and asking why drama schools don't do cross-racial casting.

Another part that shows the experience against discrimination in the form of verbal confrontation is in the narrative that explains when a white person named Nzinga discriminates by ridiculing black people.

“Nzinga sat cross-legged in the circle of women on the floor Nzinga demand everyone eat according to her preferences) the conversation was lively, everybody wanted to talk to Nzinga who'd been afforded a gravitas she had not earned, Amma thought, simply by looking like a swamp-diva-vooodoo-queen. Nzinga lapped up the attention, was friendly, no magnanimous, with everyone, until she ruined it by exclaiming, somewhat scornfully, how weird it was to hear so many black women sounding so Britisssshhh.

Amma thought she was accusing them of being too white or at best, inauthentically black, she'd come across it before, foreigners equating an English accent with whiteness, she always felt the need to speak up when it was implied that black Brits were inferior to African-Americans or Africans or West Indians.” (Evaristo 76).

This part explains that verbal confrontation as verbally challenging discrimination in response to disagreement where no physical threat exists or is implied Amma gathered with a group of women in a circle. Nzinga remarked that individuals of African descent appeared British. Consequently, Amma believed it was necessary to assert that black individuals in the United Kingdom are not lesser than white individuals in the United Kingdom. In other words, Amma believed that black individuals are not inferior to white individuals and should not be unjustly undervalued.

#### **4. Physical Confrontation**

Physical confrontation is defined as a physical response to discrimination. Unlike verbal conflict, physical conflict is a response to a dispute accompanied by physical threats, either accurate or implied (Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, as cited in Haryanti et al. 423). Amma showed physical confrontation when she was belittled during a drama casting. Therefore, Amma resisted using physical confrontation.

“Amma was shorter, with African hips and thighs. perfect slave girl material one director told her when she walked into an audition for a play about Emancipation whereupon she walked



right back out again in turn a casting. Director told Dominique she was wasting his time when she turned up for a Victorian drama when there weren't any black people in Britain then she said there were, called her ignorant. Before also leaving the room and in her case, slamming the door Amma realized she'd found a kindred spirit in Dominique who would kick arse with her." (Evaristo 15).

This part explained that in contrast to verbal confrontation, physical confrontation occurs as a reaction to dissent when there is a present or suggested physical danger. When the Director remarked that there were no black individuals in the drama, Amma apathetically inquired if there were black people in the drama, and promptly Amma exited the room and slammed the door. In other words, Amma also discovered a new enthusiasm for confronting other white individuals and will retaliate against anyone who has been involved with her.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, this research showed that there is discrimination against minorities, which was experienced by Amma, the main character in Bernardine Evaristo's *Novel Girl, Woman, Other* (2019). Specifically, the discrimination experienced is racial discrimination. This research also describes how Amma responded to the discrimination she experienced. The way she responded to the discrimination that happened to her was in the form of withdrawal, resigned acceptance, verbal confrontation, and physical confrontation.

Until now, this social issue has been present everywhere, not just in educational institutions and employment settings, so this research aspires that the subject and focus of the study can impart knowledge or enhance understanding, particularly for students of the English Literature study program concerning racial discrimination.

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