

“Black Parade” Song: How Beyonce Criticized Racism

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ABSTRACT

From time to time, the communication media in order to propose social criticism which is expected to provide better changes are increasingly diverse. One of them is through the delivery of messages in the lyrics of a song. Beyonce is one of the artist who often uses song as a media to propose her social criticism. In the case of the death of George Floyd a black American, murdered by the white Minesotta police (white supremacist) he released an album with one of the song in it entitled "Black Parade" to convey her response to this case. This research aims to reveal the meaning contained in the lyrics of the song. In order to find this meaning, the researchers use a qualitative approach to the type of document studies. There are three findings of meaning implied in the lyrics of this song, there are self-confidence, social criticism (racism) and race emancipation.

Keywords: Social Criticism; Racism

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has their own way of proposing criticism to social conditions around them, for example a singers can propose their criticism through their song. According to Hornby (2005) through the lyrics created, they can express their personal emotions and feelings to the listeners. This is an effective way for a star who has a lot of fans to convey his aspirations so that the voice or idea of their criticism will be heard louder by the surrounding community. Hope this idea will bring a significance social change.

There are a number singers who do social criticism through their songs, in Indonesia there are legendary singers and bands such as Rhoma Irama, Iwan Fals and Slank bands who often criticize the social and political conditions of Indonesia through their songs. In abroad there are also several singers such as The Beatles with their songs “Blackbird” and “Revolution” which criticize how social and political conditions led to wars and racism in the 1960s, through its song they proclaim peace

and justice between each other (Susanto & Sukandar, 2013). Besides that, there are also songs called B.Y.O.B and War? It belongs to the System of Down which criticizes the Iraq War and the Teluk War which occurred because it was only because of the egocentricity or interests of a few people that actually harmed civil society (Kurniawan, 2012).

In May 2020, obtained from BBC News Indonesia that there was a violence in the death of a citizen of the United States named George Floyd. The perpetrator of this violence was a white Minnesota police officer. George's death adds to a dark record for black people discrimination cases in America, even counting for more than 156 years of the existence of a self-declared freedom from slavery to black people through the passage of the 13th Amendment as part of the Constitution of the State of Power, there are still a series of cases of inequality attitudes towards black people.

This case made many citizens express their social criticism through demonstrations, open donations made by several social foundations to redeem demonstrators prisoner, hashtag #blacklivesmatter topped the rankings on several social media platforms and others. In the other side, a singer who often calls out social criticism in her songs, Beyonce also speaks up about this social phenomenon. In September 2020 she released her album "Black is King", which almost all of her songs contain social criticism of racism cases that have occurred in America. One of the songs in the album is entitled "Black Parade" its lyrics implicitly convey how Beyonce criticizes the discrimination or inequality of black people. Therefore, in this study, the researcher will investigate the meaning and message of social criticism which is contained in the lyrics "Black Parade" of Beyonce's song.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

Based on some of the previous explanations, we can conclude that the case of racism in America is deeply rooted and affects many aspects in life, from public policies, attitudes to attainments. Several researchers previously conducted a study of focus in the form of films or songs that contained social critical value towards their surroundings that related to this study.

A film titled 42 which was released in 2013 attracted a researcher named Triastama Wiraatmaja to examine the value of the black minority's struggle in competing sports with their opponents which is from white people group. By using a qualitative approach and mise-en scene, the researcher put forward his findings in a journal entitled "The relation of minority group's sport attainment to counter racism: African-American in the movie 42" (Wiraatmaja, 2019) that the film found a scene that shows that a black person can fight against white supremacy by competing in a fair sport process.

Rahmatillah, et al (2020) in their journal entitled "The Reflection Of Racism Towards African American In Selma Movie" investigated the level of racism that occurred in African-Americans people and how is the impact on life in a 'Selma' Movie using a qualitative approach, they found that there were three level of racism detected in Selma movie includes institutionalized racism, personally mediated racism and internalized racism. All these levels of racism are stated to have only a negative impact because they result in feelings of insecurity and worthlessness.

Next, there is a study reported in a journal entitled "Representation of Racism in Cadillac Records Film" (Pratama, 2016) which aims to examine how racism is represented in the film. Using a qualitative approach, this study investigates the results that in life, white people manipulate black people as if it helps lift them out of poverty, but in fact white people only take one-sided advantage and think black people are not more than just a commodity.

These three previous studies that have been described above have investigated how racism is represented in a film but each of them has different aspects of the findings based on their research objectives. The similarities between the three studies above and this research lie in the big theme that will be analyzed in a attainments, its regarding racism and the use of a qualitative approach in research. However, researchers did not find any previous research spesifically examining the value of social criticism contained in Beyonce's song "Black Parade".

Social Criticism

Social criticism realtes with social control. When a social rule does not work ideally, for instance a social injustice or social change that leads to a dissonance society in the reality of social life, there will be many responses in the form of criticism, this criticism function is to make people aware of the problem that is happening and then move to make a change that are considered as ideal or better social condition. With this function of social criticism, social criticism is expected not only to contain criticism, hate speech but also to call for change, several messages of progressive improvement (Rusnianto, 2016).

So, it can conclude that social criticism is an important thing in social life. By social criticism, social conditions will develop properly because people are free to voice their aspirations in their own ways. Of course, this social criticism is really expected to become the voice of society and the benefits are also for them, not only from a few people for personal or group interests which only caused social inequality.

Music as Media for Social Criticism

Communicating with the public by media is very diverse today, in the past it was only possible with a newspapers or radio which were very limited for many people. Nowadays, with the sophistication of communication media technology, it is increasingly developing and widespread in the society, today information is not

something that is difficult to obtain. From various kinds of communication media, music is one of the media that is universal and can be accepted by society and listeners wherever they are (Nurahim, 2009).

In addition, through music social media criticism is more effective because with creative experience and having musical activities, it is easier to build access for anyone at any time, the listener will be more motivated to make behavior changes. For some people listening to music whose lyrics contain moral messages, they tend to use language that is easy to understand (Djohan, 2006). Therefore, from the descriptions above, music is an effective medium to convey social criticism to society.

Racism

Racism begins from a belief that assumes some people are better than them because they come from a certain race, this understanding of 'race' then becomes the basis for social injustice in some cases of racism. Moreover, race here is categorized based on something that is clearly visible in the body (physical appearance) and human behavior (social category) (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).

A deep-rooted belief that continues to the next generation is transformed into an ideology. Ideology itself is part of culture that we can analyze and recognize through symbols that exist in people's life, and symbols are the result of sustainable human interaction process (Wiraatmaja, 2019).

In this discussion, racist ideology is specified to white-supremacy ideology, an ideology that considers white people to be superior to black people (inferiority). Ferrante (2008) explains that at least we can detect the existence of a racist ideology in a social life by mentioning some characteristics attitude. They tend to group people based on certain physical characteristics because they think that determines what language, how to dress and their intelligence. In another study, Tindall (2013) found that black people are associated with darkness and crime, in addition to that black people are considered to be lazy and stupid. Based from this assumption they tend to influence how they will behave unfairly to black people.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach design. According to Mukhtar (2013) data is things known or assumed, in the context of this study the data samples taken were the lyrics of Beyonce's Black Parade song, besides that the researcher also reviewed supporting data regarding the black parade route whose start-up page accompanied the release of this song album. In addition, the researcher investigates other data related to this research through several previous research results in the form of journals and books. Because the data used in this research is

in the form of several authentic documents to find research objectives, this research is included in the type of document studies.

Procedure and Instruments

According to Gay and Airasian (2000) the instrument is a tool used by researchers in obtaining data to be analyzed. Sugiyono (2008) states that in qualitative research the research instrument is the researcher himself. In line with the context in this study, the research instrument is the researcher itself. because the data to be analyzed is in the form of several authentic documents and the researcher itself seeks and validates their own ability to do this. Meanwhile, the procedure carried out by researchers in searching for data was reading the lyrics of the black parade song, then choosing words and sentences that were indicated as having a specific value. Furthermore, the researcher will investigate it deeper into this meaning through other authentic documents, for example, books and previous research journals. For more details explanation, this will be explained in the data analysis part.

Data Analysis

As previously explained, the data obtained through the song lyrics and several documents related to the meaning of the lyrics will be analyzed. This analysis of the representation of the value behind a sentence is known as a discourse analysis. Discourse analysis recognizes a sentence or expression not only as a description or representation of human experience, but is a form of the many social conditions and ideologies that influence it (Thorne, 2000). In the context of this research, the researcher relies on sociolinguistics and cognitive psychology to analyze and try to understand what social conditions and thoughts affect the creation of these lyrics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Some of the findings in these lyrics will be grouped through the meaning of the values contained in, the findings and discussion are as follows:

Self-Confidence

*I'm goin' back to the South
I'm goin' back, back, back, back
Where my roots ain't watered down
Growin', growin' like a Boabab tree
All fly, above of the ground, ancestors put me on game
Ankh charm on gold chains, with my Oshun energy, oh
Drip all on me, woo, Ankh or the Dashiki print*

In these lyrics Beyonce tries to describe a black person through the word "south" which means an African country in the southern part of the world map, "Boabab Tree" is a Madagascar tree that is found in Africa, and "Oshun" is an African yoruba

goddess of love, "Dashiki" colorful clothes that are synonymous with African clothes.

In this representation word it is very synonymous with Africans because the term used to refer to this ethnic group is African-American in history including negroes, blacks, and other terms in English: colored, Afro-Americans (Pratama, 2016). Meanwhile, the meaning of "Ankh" is also known as the holding cross, in *The Quick and The Death* (Gordon & Schwab, 2004) this symbol means life. Based on some of these lyric pieces, it can be concluded that a black person with all their uniqueness, the hallmark bestowed by God must be confident in introducing their characteristics without feeling inferior to the characteristics and uniqueness of other people.

This value is certainly different from the results of Tindall's (2013) study which states that many Americans still think that black people tend to have many deficiencies than white people, such as a high level of laziness and ignorance. So we can conclude that, these lyrics have the meaning of reducing the negative stigma about black people by proclaiming them for feel confident. Black people also have the same ability to process as other humans in improving their quality through their own uniqueness.

Social Criticism (Racism)

*Ooh, motherland, motherland, motherland, motherland drip on me
I can't forget my history is her-story, yeah
Being black, baby, that's the reason why they always mad, they always mad, yeah
Been past 'em, I know that's the reason why they all big mad, and they always
have been*

The phrase "motherland drip on me" implies that the lineage is an inherent inheritance to come in their lives. It is a history about how, where and from whom they were born. In the first 2 lines in this lyric pieces, it still has an implicit meaning which is still related to the first discussion above, still regarding the inherent characteristics passed down from their ancestors. This is something that cannot be denied and forgotten, no matter how that characteristic will remain forever. In the third verse in this lyric pieces, Beyonce clearly proposes a social reality that just because they are black, other people (white people) feel in power or have the right to discriminate against them.

As like as the research conducted by Rahmatillah et al (2020) in a film called *Selma* which was made to describe how is the social conditions and racist behavior that occurred in America. They find out one of the scene is brutality anger without any logical reasons by white police against a black man who was protesting the injustice that occurred. They state that this kind of case have a negative influence the black people to feel insecure and helpless, and this is very clearly detrimental to black people because they do not have the same rights in their personal security.

The difference value between this song and Selma movie is in the case of how they criticize the social condition, in the movie find out that they have criticism through people in power. While in this song, Beyonce intrinsically criticize the social condition by affecting the societies' movement. The attitude described above is a form of racism or racism. More clearly, racism is an idea or thought that assumes that the physical appearance of a person affects or has a certain impact on intellect, culture, inheritance or a combination of all of them. So this causes the perception of certain groups that demean other groups, such as in the case of white supremacy and discrimination against blacks.

Race Emancipation

*Honey, come around my way, around my
Whenever momma says so, momma say
Here I come on my throne, sittin' high Follow my parade, oh, my parade
Talkin' slick to my folk (My folk), lift that lip like lipo (Lipo)
You hear them swarmin', right? Bees is known to bite
Now here we come on our thrones, sittin' high Follow my parade, oh, my parade*

In this lyric fragment, it means an invitation to get up and unite together in order to free ourselves from the shackles of discrimination based on skin color, "come around my way" Beyonce's invitation is also proven in a movement to establish a start-up business that promotes specifically skinned entrepreneurs. black. Apart from eliminating skin color discrimination, proving that a work or product is seen as beneficial for life, not who owns or makes the product, it can also make black people economically empowered. This is also due to the consideration of the experiences gained by black people in America who also experience discrimination when interacting in the economic world.

Beyonce's hope that is implied in the lyrics "Now here we come on our thrones, sittin' high Follow my parade, oh, my parade" with the combined power of black people and their economic power will make them even more proud of what they have. and will slowly eradicate the discrimination that occurs. This finding is also in line with an intrinsic meaning in 42 movies, this research was conducted by Wiraatmaja (2019) and resulted in the meaning that somehow black people should not be consumed by the negative stigma around them, which causes them to feel insecure. Black people have the same rights in the process to get their success.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that Beyonce wants to convey two meanings in this Black Parade song. First, she wants to criticize the social conditions that discriminate against black people in America. She also wants to make people realize that a physical characteristic that is hereditary cannot be used as a basis for prejudice of something that happened in the past, will repeat itself or black people today also have the same thing (lifestyle, intellect and attitude).

Therefore, white people should not feel that their social position is higher than black people. Because everyone has something special in their own way. The second is to want to awaken black people to remain confident and unite energy, strength and voice so that they sound louder, make themselves free from the shackles of racism.

Our suggestions for future researchers can explore more deeply the implied meaning of the words in the lyrics of this Black Parade because it can be seen that a lot of the use of words in these lyrics use symbols of a characteristic that shows their true meaning. Further research can also add to the moral message that is conveyed uniformly in this new Beyonce album because we can see that this album has a big goal towards liberating black people from discrimination.

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