

Double Consciousness in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

The present research "Double Consciousness in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" explores the pain and suffering of the major female character Maya through the perspective of double consciousness. She is in one way or the other, traumatized by a history of sexual violence, gender discrimination, racial injustice, and male chauvinism. A white woman changes her permanent name without her conscience. She is also the victim of rape and exploitation. The incidents of the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* mirror the contemporary Western society. The issue of how the protagonist has been as example of the domination in terms of the race has been the basic concern of the research. As Black women experience various kinds of oppressions, the research tries to identify marginalized experience. In the segregated Southern part of America, Blacks face three types of oppressions: racism, sexism and classism. So, the main aim of the research is to find out racial prejudice, Negro resistance, ignorance, sense of worth, segregation, sexual abuse and displacement in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The present research focuses the dark side of the major character Maya in the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The dark aspect of her life involves unexpressed feelings concerning the violence, sexual abuse, gender discrimination, and male chauvinism in the society. Therefore, this research explores the difficulties faced by major protagonist Maya from the theory of 'Double Consciousness'.

The purpose of the research is to probe into the elements of how the black existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. As the dream of equality always remains as the soap bubble, the black self has been thwarted with the absolute power that the Whites practice to find.

The researcher takes the notion of double consciousness conceptualized by the Dubois, Frantz Fanon, Bernard Bell etc. for the elaboration of the present thesis. DuBoisian 'Double Consciousness' has been primarily used to designate a variety of negative feelings and conditions, from and awareness of one's status as an outsider to a state of severe confusion in which one lacks the energy to relate either to himself or to the larger world around him. DuBois often stressed the negative, debilitating forces of double consciousness. In his famous work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), DuBois initiated the concept of double consciousness:

The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world. It yields him no true self-consciousness. The double consciousness always looks at one's self through the eyes of others. It measures one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his twoness. (3)

DuBois explains that African Americans are forced to view themselves from, and as, the negative perspectives of the outside society. Having two antagonistic identities means that a lot of time and energy is spent negotiating and enduring the conflicts between who one is as a person and how one struggles to live with the misrepresentations of the outside world. Having one's own sense of self and also having imposed contempt for an ascribed self, having twoness, is what DuBois calls double consciousness.

Liberation, in Frantz Fanon's sense, includes assessing one's colonized perspective through one's indigenous perspective. He does not claim that people can or should forget the white European perspective, but he maintains that people should not be dominated by, and limited to, the outside perspective. This is the merging of

strivings that DuBois also seeks. Similarly, Frantz Fanon writes about double consciousness:

The first duty of the colonized poet is to define the people. We cannot go resolutely forward unless we first realize our alienation. We have taken everything from the other side. Yet the other side has given us nothing except to sway us in its direction through a thousand twists, except lure us, seduce us, and imprison us . . . We must focus on that zone of hidden fluctuation where the people can be found. (163)

Fanon explains extensively how colonized intellectuals try to liberate their people, but the colonized liberators talk, think and act like the colonizers. It is only when these intellectuals return to the general population that they can regain their indigenous perspective from which to critique their colonized perspective. It is the people who liberate the intellectuals, not the other way around.

There is an interesting parallel between DuBois and Karl Marx on this point. The proposal that race as an emblem could serve to unify the group is similar to Marx's argument that working-class status could be used to unify workers around the world. In both cases the unifying emblem is the very thing created by others to exploit the group in the first place. Both emblems also have the advantage of originating with capitalism and developing out of an opposition within it.

Therefore, they both transcend traditional cultural beliefs and values. This transcendence of tradition is one critical distinction between the African American community and traditional African culture. Thus, in both cases, using the emblem to create solidarity in opposition to the dominant group allows for a transcendence, not only of the false consciousness formerly associated with the emblem, but also of traditional beliefs, values, and inequalities.

Since the publication of the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, it has received numerous copious, appreciation and criticism from different forum of critical scholarship. Different critiques viewed their opinions differently. Bader is of the opinion that in the mind of narrator, obsession, and guilt are represented as the ruling motive. These feelings are intense, over-mastering, passion. Such chronic sense of fear is gratified at the expense of feminine feeling. Bader comments about the novel:

There are different devices that Angelou uses to communicate her message. Angelou uses figurative language to bring the reader to further understand the point she is trying to make. Angelou has strong use of Onomatopoeia. The most powerful use of Onomatopoeia is at the end. The fact that she winced definitely makes the reader realize the determination and pain the Negroes went through just to make something of them.(12)

Bader concerns that Maya is certainly innovative in her choice of style, diction and figurative language. She uses such forms and genres in her work to bring reader understand the point she is trying to express. The use of such diction and figurative language makes the reader go deeply with the pain of suffers. Barnwelle expresses:

I don't wish to sound ageist by mentioning this, as this is still a well-written piece, and he clearly has at least as much talent as a younger author, but I do feel that he perhaps ought to have written about characters of his own age, as I feel he may have been able to characterize them more effectively. However, I feel that the latter of these themes would have fitted equally neatly into an earlier setting, and that the former is a relatively insignificant sub plot which would have been better left untouched in the context. (54)

It does not matter whether you are a feminist or not, if there is a crime committed against humanity then as a human being you have to seal the fate of the oppressor and feel and try to assuage the pain of the oppressed. Likewise, the critic Alice Walker dissects this text through the formalistic perspective:

To claim thematic unity is to argue that form and content work together, an assertion that is an anathema to much current literary theory. However, the formal in *Caged Bird* is a vehicle of the political, and not analyzing this text formally can limit one's appreciation of how it intervenes in the political. Critics should not focus on the political at the expense of the formal but instead should see the political and the formal as inextricably related. Indeed, some of the well-received works on American literature in the last decade offer compelling demonstrations of such a symbiosis of form and content. (93)

Walker says the form and the content of the text *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* supports to create thematic unity and to maintain episodic quality of the novel. She says the formal aspects of the text carry the political aspects about the novel. So people should not focus only one aspect. Cudjoe reveals about the novel:

If an author decides to write a realistic novel, they can use the first person perspective only for one character if they don't want to lose credibility. If they use it for a second character as well, they must introduce a third character or an institution who or which brings the two accounts together in a plausible way. Someone can find two diaries or a confessor reveals the secrets he's heard from two people or I'm wondering again what editors get their salary for. (84)

It is difficult to say much about the biography itself and pick out examples of her experiences because these should be left to be discovered, by the reader. However the biography covers aspects of her childhood, her family life, her married life, and all the other important periods of woman's life. John Keplom has given skeptic eyes on its trustworthiness.

The novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is analyzed from multiple perspectives, but none of the researcher has analyzed from the issue of double consciousness. So, the topic is a newer one and the present novel is analyzed by this perspective.

A white woman mocks Maya's grandmother by posing the physical appearance of the big Black old mother as an ape. They continue the act of mocking up to a hand stand of one of them without any cover of the body in front of Momma. Momma is the respected religious mother who owns the only Black owned Store, and she is the woman who lends money to the poor people without color barrier during the Great Depression. She gets this treatment since she is Black. The novel reads:

I realized that she was aping my grandmother. Another said, "Naw, Helen, you ain't standing like her. This here's it." Then she lifted her chest, folded her arms and mocked that strange carriage that was Annie Henderson. Another laughed, "Naw, you can't do it. Your mouth ain't pooched out enough. It's like this". (29)

Maya observes the scene from the place where Momma told her to be. She becomes emotional against the white children who show rudeness and crudity, and she wishes to stone them. The event causes Maya to react with helpless anger and humiliation, but through the response of Momma to the girls, Maya learns there can be a better and

more effective way to respond.

At first, Maya's reaction to the "powhitetrash" girls is anger, resentment, embarrassment, defenselessness. When the girls ape her grandmother's posture, Maya weeps, thinks of getting her uncle's rifle, and wants to scream at them. When they leave and Momma politely calls good-bye to them, Maya's expresses her anger:

She stopped singing and said, "Bye, Miz Helen, 'bye, Miz Ruth, 'bye, Miz Eloise." I burst. A firecracker July-the-Fourth burst. How could Momma call them Miz? The mean nasty things. Why couldn't she have come inside the sweet, cool store when we saw them breasting the hill? What did she prove? And then if they were dirty, mean and impudent, why did Momma have to call them Miz? (31-32)

However, Maya realizes that her grandmother has achieved something and won it. Maya learns a lesson that there is a more effective strategy for reacting to racism and segregation than rage and indignation, a strategy of fine resistance. Here, the response to the racist children is subtle resistance that doesn't harm life, liberty or property.

The white man named as Mr. Edward Donleavy from Texarkana gives racist speech in front of the Black crowd during the commencement address of the graduation. The white man disheartens and annoys the Black crowd including students and their parents together with school administrators by saying that Black students will be hired in labor-oriented jobs, and they lack mental brilliance so that they could not be like the known scientists.

The anger does not remain limited to the young Maya rather it gets shared now by her community in the hall; ". . . the proud graduating class of 1940 had dropped their heads" (175). The song is called 'Black National Anthem' and every Black in the

hall sings it. In the same vain to the response against powhitetrash girls, the song avoids an out-and-out conflict with the white oppressor and permits the Black community to feel its dignity and superiority; "We were on top again. As always, again. We survived" (179). Here the response is not only noticed from the central character but also from the Black community. The resistance is still not exactly an outright protest and it still avoids open confrontation, since the white insulter has left and does not hear the singing.

Bernard W. Bell, anchoring his discussion of double consciousness in the African-American literary tradition, places emphasis not on the dark vision that double consciousness is felt to usher in; but on its more positive implications. In a section of his *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987) titled "Sociopsychology Roots: Double-Consciousness, Double Vision, and Socialized Ambivalence," Bell states that:

The historical pattern of contradictions between the ideals of white America and the reality of black America has resulted in what I prefer to call ethnically rather than racially different cultural heritages and a complex of double consciousness, socialized ambivalence, and double vision which are healthful rather than pathological adjustment by blacks to the rigors of the New World. (5-6)

Double consciousness, for Bell, thus preoccupies the African-American, but it does some more through affirmation than negation, from this perspective, double consciousness may well be seen as the negative other of America, but it is the positive space of personal harmony for African-American themselves.

One of the greatest abuses occur when Stamps' white and only dentist - to whom Maya's grandmother had lent money. He refuses to treat Maya's severe

toothache, and he says:

“Annie, you know I don’t treat nigra, colored people.” “I know, Dentist Lincoln. But this here is just my little grandbaby, and she ain’t gone be no trouble to you ” “Annie, everybody has a policy. You have to have a policy. Now, my policy is I don’t treat colored people” “Annie, my policy is I’d rather stick my hand in a dog’s mouth than in a nigger’s.” (183-184)

What makes the discrimination not to treat Maya the worst thing of racism and rudeness is that the dentist is the man who received much money at the time of Great Depression from Maya’s grandmother. The maltreatment is not limited to Maya rather it goes to Mrs. Henderson, who is the richest Black in the area. The seriousness of the pain of Maya’s toothache and the openhandedness of Mrs. Henderson do not bother the arrogant white dentist to say no for their inquiry since they are not white rather they are Black. Similarly, with the case when powhitetrash girls tease Momma, now also Mrs. Henderson warns her grand-daughter to leave the room and wait outside to save the child from racist events happened, which may be dangerous for the growing child. This shows how Momma, as expected, is role model of her grand-daughter.

The only part of the novel presented in stream of consciousness tells us what Maya thinks in her mind at the time when she was waiting for her Momma outside of the building. Momma threatens the white dentist in front of him which is unusual to her. Actually, this happens in the mind of Maya who fantasizes her grand-mother bothers her enemy. The actual event happened to the dentist is that momma collects an interest of the money she gave him before. The italicized passage reveals what Maya wishes her grandmother could do to the racist dentist.

Maya noticed no open confrontation from her Momma against the racist

whites, and she knows that is out of momma's philosophy. The act created by Maya herself highlights that subtle resistance is not enough as an overall strategy for responding to racist oppression. On the other hand, the fantasy passage anticipates the kind of outright confrontations between oppressed Black and racist oppressor.

Although it is only a fantasy, it is the first instance in the novel of a Black person openly confronting a racist white, and thus is the first hint that such confrontation is a possibility.

Our name is an essential part of our identity when someone deliberately changes our name, it is a lack of respect for our identity. Maya's name gets changed easily by a white woman from 'Marguerite' to 'Mary' without her consent. The act is totally unkind for the poor Maya, who sympathize to the woman. Maya first began working as a domestic-in-training for Mrs. Cullinan. She felt forgiveness for her mistress. Mrs. Cullinan was fat and could not have any children because she had no organs. Even when she pronounced Angelou's name incorrectly from 'Marguerite' in to 'Margaret', Maya smiled and felt sorry for her.

However, her feelings get changed when one of Mrs. Cullinan's friends suggests that she calls the girl Mary, as this was shorter and easier to say than Marguerite. The novel reads: "Well, that may be, but the name's too long. I'd never bother myself. I'd call her Mary if I was you" (104). Mrs. Cullinan received the woman's advice, and proclaimed that Angelou was 'Mary' from now on. It shows the lack of respect white mistresses have for their servants, who are considered as inferior just because they are Black. So, it is natural that Maya didn't like being called out of her name. First it meant the white does not respect her, and then it reminds her of the slavery times when Blacks were named on the will of their masters.

Black servant, Maya, is called out of her name at the time when she is working

for Mrs. Cullinan:

She called me by the wrong name. Miss Glory and I were washing up the lunch dishes when Mrs. Cullinan came to the doorway. "Mary?" Miss Glory asked, "Who?" Mrs. Cullinan, sagging a little, knew and I knew. "I want Mary to go down to Mrs. Randall's and take her some soup. She's not been feeling well for a few days." Miss Glory's face was a wonder to see. "You mean Margaret, ma'am. Her name's Margaret." "That's too long. She's Mary from now on. (105)

Mrs. Cullinan gives new name to Marguerite as 'Mary' that is not really related to the original name. The boss provides the reason behind changing the name of her servant as the first name is quite long to call and better to change it with the short one. Mrs. Cullinan's act is a violation of Marguerite's identity since she is Black.

There are other incidents of racism. When Maya and Glory serve Mrs. Cullinan, it is strictly forbidden to share any materials even drinking ones with the white family members. The two Blacks have separate glasses to drink from and their glasses were kept in separate shelves. Maya says: "I had a glass to drink from, and it sat with Miss Glory's on a separate shelf from the others" (103). This is an act of racism that shows the misrepresentation of Blacks as non-humans who shouldn't be served equally with whites the so called humans.

One of the noticeable experiences that happened to Maya in the novel is standing up for what you believe in and not allowing anyone to take advantage of you. Angelou demonstrates the racist habit of renaming African-Americans, as shown when her white employer insists on calling her Mary. Angelou describes the employer's renaming as the "hellish horror of being 'called out of his name'" (106).

Maya understands that she is being insulted and rebels by breaking Mrs. Cullinan's favorite dish. The passage reads:

Her own name that was given to her by her parents is just now so easily being changed by the white women, and the action makes her very angry. She feels that she was just robbed of something important, her name. She doesn't want to tolerate such mistreatment. Her inner dignity and pride arise and push her to forget about her need of money and job. That is when she decides to change all that once and for all. . . . She breaks her employer's favorite piece "china from Virginia". (107)

Maya disliked Mrs. Cullinan for changing her name, and it is really painful to let a white woman rename you for her convenience. Following her brother's advice, she dropped and broke Mrs. Cullinan's favorite dishes; a fish-shaped casserole dish and green glass coffee cups on purpose. She rebelled against her: "When I heard Mrs. Cullinan scream, "Mary!" I picked up the casserole and two of the green glass cups in readiness. As she rounded the kitchen door I let them fall on the tiled floor" (107). It shows how Marguerite expresses her internal feelings without any hesitation. After calling her a few discriminatory names, Mrs. Cullinan finally called Maya by her correct, but still mispronounced name 'Margaret'. Maya, with her active protest against the injustice, deserves her identity at least by getting her favorite name. This is the actual open confrontation against racism next to the hint in the scene of the white dentist.

DuBois's double consciousness thus presupposes the existence of a hierarchy of values, since the tensions that result from trying to measure up to the standards of others rest upon privileging one culture and its way of life over others. For DuBois, the privileged culture and attending values were not those of Blacks of African

descent, but those of White America.

Maya Angelou skillfully presents two stories to compare and to make a reader clear more with the idea. While the act shown above is a huge act against the oppressor, the Black girl named as Glory shows opposite position with regard to the change of name. The novelist expresses:

“Twenty years. I wasn’t much older than you. My name used to be Hallelujah. That’s what Ma named me, but my mistress give me ‘Glory. I likes it better too.” I was in the little path that ran behind thehouses when Miss Glory shouted, “It’s shorter too.” It was a tossup over whether I would laugh or cry. My anger saved me from either outburst. I had to quit the job, but the problem was going to be how to do it. (106)

Maya becomes really ashamed of Glory who does not mind to be renamed by the white lady. This incident is provided to make a contrast of feeling created to Maya and Glory. Maya becomes angry with the act of the boss, whereas Glory enjoys the new name since it is, as she says, ‘short’. Though the Black girl is victim of the attack, she does not realize it is an insult. The relationship between Glory and Mrs. Cullinan is well, glory seems to have accepted the fact that Black people are under the control of white section.

Even though Mrs. Cullinan renames her Glory, Glory accepts it. However, Angelou did not appreciate being treated like she was an object that could be given a new name whenever its owner pleased, but she also pitied her mistress, and she conveyed her feelings by using an angry tone of writing. She acts against the white women directly in front of her by destructing the precious properties.

In San Francisco, it was a dream to see a Black woman being streetcar

conductor before Maya Angelou's success to be the first Negro girl street car conductor. In fact, it is not the interest to challenge the institution rather a need to survive that leads Maya to apply for the job. But, eventually, it brings another interest beyond securing her income not to pause her education. At the beginning, Maya knows from her mother that it is impossible to be hired as a conductor being a Black girl. Maya says: "To her question of what I planned to do, I replied that I would get a job on the streetcars. She rejected the proposal with: 'They don't accept colored people on the streetcars'" (257).

However, she continues to struggle for the job. When the white secretary of the San Francisco street-car company repeatedly frustrates her attempts for a job interview, Maya is at first persuaded not to take it personally:

The incident was a recurring dream, concocted years before by stupid whites and it eternally came back to haunt us all. The secretary and I were like Hamlet and Laertes in the final scene, where, because of harm done by one ancestor to another, we were bound to duel to the death. Also, because the play must end somewhere, I went further than forgiving the clerk, I accepted her as a fellow victim of the same puppeteer. (260)

But then Maya decides that the rejections, which have everything to do with her race, also have everything to do with her personally, and this is because her personal identity and her racial identity cannot be entirely separated. After a long and tiring bargain with the white receptionist, she becomes the first ever Black girl streetcar conductor in San Francisco.

Bell argues that "over a long period process of acculturation has settled in the deep consciousness of the individuals who went through it as both self-protective and

compensatory cultural behaviour, the double-consciousness that African-American novelists, sometimes self- consciously but often unconsciously illuminate for readers" (9).

San Francisco is a place where there was serious racism. Attaining the street-car conductor's job becomes not only a victory for civil rights, as a result, but also a personal victory for Maya's sense of self. The active resistance and outright protest, that is Maya's persisting and breaking the 'color line' of the San Francisco street-car company.

The young Maya is raped at the age of eight by her mother's boyfriend-Mr. Freeman. Maya is abused many times by whites since she is Black, but now she gets hurt by a Black man since she is a woman. As she herself mentioned at the very beginning of the novel, it is quite doomed to be woman in racist and sexist society of America. Black women in America face double jeopardy from the white and the male group. Hence, Black females are double alienated in the society. Blacks curse themselves simply being females and Blacks in their own land.

Angelou's depiction of rape exposes the real suffering of many Black American women. There is one more way that men exploit women by sexual mistreatment. This is what happens to the poor young Maya by the man who, as the same time, owns her mother for his sexual practice. Mr. Freeman is probably initiated by the absence of strict rules that guard Black women in the country at that time. It is noticed that he is released after a very short period of time for his severe crime from jail. That is why one of the uncles of Maya, though not clearly mentioned in the novel, murders him to get justice by his own.

DuBois says that the life of the African-American was a constant struggle to achieve material betterment within the dominant white culture. Since this struggle

sometimes entailed denying or repressing the values and life style of one's own racial heritage, the results were often frustrating and painful. On the other hand, when seeking to live up to the standard of others does not require abandoning one's cultural and racial values, then the awareness of one's "twoness" need no be construed as a negative experience. It rather comes across as a healthy pluralism of the sort DuBois describes when he speaks of merging his double self into a truer and better self:

In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows. (3)

In this passage, to be a Negro and an American still means to retain a sense of duality and doubleness. But given DuBois's call for reciprocity and mutual recognition, the duality does not result in tension or pathology. A persistent and central concept in Du Bois's thought, "dualism" is, philosophically, any system of thought which insists on the existence of two independent, separable, unique realms: supernatural/natural; spirit/matter; soul/body; visible world/invisible world good/evil; Black White. A detailed examination of "Our spiritual Strivings" reveals that Du Bois's discussion of double consciousness is actually an attempt to transcend the dualistic view of human consciousness in favor of the monistic notion of unity.

Mr. Freeman deceives Maya by pretending as if he were playing with her without any sexual desire:

Turning the radio up loud, too loud, he said, "If you scream,

I'm gonna kill you. And if you tell, I'm gonna kill Bailey." I could tell he meant what he said. I couldn't understand why he wanted to kill my brother. Neither of us had done anything to him. Then there was the pain. The act of rape on an eight-year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot. (79)

Mr. Freeman threatens to kill Maya's brother Bailey if she tells anyone concerning the rape. After Maya lies during Freeman's trial, stating that the rape was the first time he touched her improperly, Freeman is murdered by one of Maya's uncles and Maya sees her words as a source of death. As a result, she resolves never to speak to anyone other than Bailey. Angelou connects the violation of her body and the devaluation of her words through the depiction of her self-imposed, five-year-long silence. Angelou later states:

In those moments I decided that although Bailey loved me he couldn't help. I had sold myself to the Devil and there could be no escape. The only thing I could do was to stop talking to people other than Bailey. I knew that because I loved him so much I'd never hurt him, but if I talked to anyone else that person might die too. Just my breath, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die like the Black fat slugs that only pretended. I had to stop talking. (84)

Maya chooses not to speak after her rape because she is afraid of the destructive power of words. Maya's rape demonstrates how as a Black woman, she is violated as she moves from childhood to adolescence. The act of rape happens to another girl at

the time when Joe Louis had boxing race with his white counterpart. During the process of the race when Louis fails, many events take place around the Black community. Among these, rape to the ladies is the serious one. One more woman ambushed and raped. In general, it can be taken as a depiction of burden and a demonstration of the manner in which the Black female is violated.

Maya is transferred around different homes between the age of three and sixteen. She is sent from California to Stamps, to Los Angeles, to Oakland, to San Francisco, to Los Angeles, to San Francisco. As is shown in the novel, overwhelmed by the triple oppressions that are racism, sexism, and classism, young Maya is degraded at every turn, making her feel uncomfortable staying in one place.

When she is thirteen and moves to San Francisco with her mother, she identifies the city as a town full of displaced people. Her personal dislocation echoes the larger communal forces that displaced Blacks all across the country. She realizes that thousands of many scared Black children made the same journey as she and Bailey, traveling on their own to newly rich parents in northern cities, or back to southern towns when the north failed to supply the economic prosperity it had promised.

Disarticulation worsened Maya's pain of being in the centre of hostile society. She is sent to live with her grandmother at the age of three and she becomes uncomfortable with the segregated South despite the strong and religious Momma. Her parents get divorced and none of them dare to keep the baby with them. She is a kind of useless and unwanted property as the parents forget her for a long period of time. It is her father that comes to visit when she is four years old.

Looking back on her childhood experiences, Maya notes that she not only fell to suffering in an unfriendly, racist and sexist society, but to other social forces as

well, including the displacement she felt from her family. Maya feels displaced primarily because when she was three years old, her parents sent her away to live with her grandmother. This early separation, as well as subsequent ones, leaves her feeling rootless for most of her childhood. Her constant awareness of her own displacement – the fact that she differed from other children in appearance and that she did not have a sense of belonging associated with any one or any place becomes ‘unnecessary insult’ that she must deal with at such a young age.

It is essential to point out that an altogether different and powerful source of psychic distress in *The Souls of Black Folk* could be found in a process of misrecognition, or disrespect encountered on a daily basis—that is, in the general refusal on the part of whites to acknowledge the humanity of blacks. DuBois has mentioned the systematic humiliation black people faced on a daily basis:

But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black,—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom "discouragement" is an unwritten word.(23)

This despair was an expression of the anguish experienced by African Americans who could not help but have internalized at least some of the negative sentiments that white society held towards them. The perils of such distorted self-consciousness among blacks did not pass unrecognized by other educated Afro Americans.

Angelou captures Maya’s childlike observations about what makes white

people different. Her fixation on clothing as a sign of difference also refers back to the incident in church when she suddenly realizes that her fairy-tale dress is really an old, faded white woman's hand-me-down.

Stamps, Arkansas, suffers so thoroughly from segregation and Maya's world is so completely trapped in the Black community that she often finds it hard to imagine what white people look like. They appear to her more like supernatural ghosts with strange powers and magnificent possessions than as Black human beings.

Maya's fellow men and women meet at her grandmother's store to listen to the live commentary of the boxing race between the Black Joe Louis and the white counterpart. Maya expresses:

My race groaned. It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another Black man hanging on a tree. One more woman ambushed and raped. . . . This might be the end of the world. If Joe lost we were back in slavery and beyond help. It would all be true, the accusations that we were lower types of human beings. Only a little higher than the apes. (131)

Maya crowds around the Store's radio with the rest of the community to listen to Joe Louis defend his world heavyweight boxing title. The Black community lives separately far from white's district. The Black people meeting at Mrs. Henderson's Store to share their psychological hope with the metaphor of the fight between their hero and the white one. The public victory of the Black Joe Louis proves to Blacks in the Store that they are the most powerful people in the world and enables them to live another day with strength and vigor in the face of oppression. Even though, some Blacks from rural areas fail to go back to their home in the night since walking on the road too far is quite dangerous for their life since the white representative is defeated

on the same day.

Segregation is noticed with unfair schooling service provided for particularly Black women and for Blacks in general when compared with the rest of white students in America. As it is mentioned by Angelou, There are separate schools or colleges for Blacks and whites. At the time when Maya attends training, she notices that Black girls had a less privileged education than white girls.

When Maya attends her schooling in Lafayette County Training School, the school for Blacks, up to grade 8, she observes the school quite inferior to the 'White school'. The school where she graduated grade eight lacks many necessary things including teaching aid materials and qualified teachers:

Lafayette County Training School distinguished itself by having neither lawn, nor climbing ivy. Rusty hoops on the swaying poles represented the permanent recreational equipment, although bats and balls could be borrowed from the P. E. teacher if the borrower was qualified and if the diamond wasn't occupied. Trained Negro youths to be carpenters, farmers, handymen, masons, maids, cooks and baby nurses. (165)

Hence, segregation, as revealed in the novel, is one of the dominant experiences of Black women in America. It has been the common thing to be surprised to see a Black woman in white's school, cafeteria, hotel and sometimes road.

Bernard W. Bell, anchoring his discussion of double consciousness in the African-American literary tradition, places emphasis not on the dark vision that double consciousness is felt to usher in; but on its more positive implications. In a section of his *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987) titled

"Sociopsychological Roots: Double-Consciousness, Double Vision, and Socialized Ambivalence," Bell states:

. . . The historical. pattern of contradictions between the ideals of white America and the reality of black America has resulted in what I prefer to call ethnically rather than racially different cultural heritages and a complex of double consciousness, socialized ambivalence, and double vision which are healthful rather than pathological adjustment by blacks to the rigors of the New World.(5-6)

Double consciousness, for Bell, thus preoccupies the African-American, but it does some more through affirmation than negation, from this perspective, double consciousness may well be seen as the negative other of America, but it is the positive space of personal harmony for African-American themselves.

Since she had been twice sent away by her parents to live with her grandmother, it is no surprise that Maya had an insecurity and identity problem. In the opening pages of the book, Maya suffered from a strong sense of racial self-hatred, fantasizing that she was "really white," with "light-blue eyes" and "long and blond" hair. As a young girl, Marguerite has no self-confidence. She longs to be someone else, believes she is ugly, and can almost convince herself that she is actually white instead of Black. Maya reveals: "I was going to look like one of the sweet little white girls who were everybody's dream of what was right with the world" (4). Maya entirely separates her sense of self from her sense of race, and this is part of her identity crisis, since she refuses to accept being who she is and wants a foreign identity that is a compound of received ideas of white feminine beauty.

One of the crucial transition points in this evolution over the course of the entire book from the total separation of self-image and race to the connection of the

two comes in the part where Mrs. Flowers makes Maya feel liked and respected. "It would be safe to say that she made me proud to be Negro, just by being herself" (92). This is the first statement of Black racial pride in the novel, but others appear later: Joe Louis's victory, which "proved that we were the strongest people in the world" (132), and Maya's conclusion at the end of the graduation scene that "I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful Negro race" (179).

Maya's sense of self-worth is still a little shaky-she thinks Mrs. Cullinan might be making fun of her because she knows about Mr. Freeman. Maya expresses: "I wondered what they could be laughing about...Maybe she knew about Mr. Freeman" (104-105). Maya still thinks his death is her fault. But when her mistress calls her Mary, Maya suddenly understands what she will and will not accept. She gets herself fired, not caring about the consequences, rather than be called a name other than her own.

Maya feels very proud of herself for graduating, even though the white speaker at the ceremony suggests that she and her class will never be what they really want to be. She understands that this attitude is not a reflection of her-it is racism, pure and simple. She sees that her people have not given up hope, and that in itself gives her hope. Her self-esteem is not shaken by the white speaker; it is now grounded in her own achievements.

Alone on the mountainside, Maya realizes she can accomplish even the most frightening thing if she puts her mind to it. Maya states, "Ofcourse I could drive. Idiots and lunatics drove cars, why not the brilliant Marguerite Johnson?" (230). She is never the same afterward: she has a new confidence that sets her apart from most people her age. She develops confidence in herself. Following her achievement of riding a car, in the junkyard, Maya learns to take care of herself, and she begins to

understand that people of all races, and all personality types, can be friends.

The kids accept her without questioning her. This helps her to feel less alone because of her own race, and makes her feel like a normal human being, rather than an unwanted, ugly Black girl who doesn't belong. Rather she becomes proud of her physical appearances as "...my hair pleased me too" (168). Therefore, the question of self goes from self-hatred into self-pride or from the idea of taking Blackness as ugliness into the slogan 'I am Black and I am proud of being Black'. The novelist says:

In addition to her grandmother's, Maya's ignorance is pervasive in the work. Due to segregation problem, Maya, like most people in Stamps, knows almost nothing about white people. She does not even consider them human. She thinks that they are too different from her. She perceives them as creatures with see-through skin and who are unpredictable, difficult to understand and very strange. (25)

Ignorance really affects Marguerite at the time when she understands nothing about the approach of Mr. Freeman towards her. She likes him, though, and she wishes she could know. She does not understand why he has to be so secretive and mysterious, why he can't take the time to explain anything to her, when she tries so hard to understand. Even after receiving the worst attack from him, she does not know that what happened was not her fault. In fact, she doesn't really know what happened at all. She is not sure when to tell the truth and when to lie.

If one lacks knowledge over something, it is quite difficult not only to make a decision but also to talk about. This is what happened to the young Maya when her real mother gets insulted by the new, scarcely older to Maya herself, step-mother as 'she is a whore' (239). Maya is upset when Dolores calls her mother a whore partly because she is insulted, but also because she is afraid Dolores might be right. Maya

expresses, "If there was a chance of truth in the charge, I would not be able to live, to contribute to live with mother, and I so wanted to" (239). Maya has no idea whether the accusation is true or not, so it terrifies her to hear it spoken. Maya lashes out as Dolores because there is nothing else she can do. Though this is the consequence of her displacement, she commits the foul of being ignorant of her mother's true nature.

In discussing the specific character of African-American culture, although DuBois did not lose sight of the importance of Western influences, he was quick to point out, however vaguely, what he took to be "African" and "Black" qualities. Again, as Rampersad, makes clear that DuBois has "set against the money-mad, Philistine white America the original music, folk tales, and 'pathos and humour' cultivated by blacks. He declared that blacks were 'the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness'" (62). But included in DuBois's characterization is the acknowledgment that 'aesthetic' qualities were not the only ones by which Blacks were to be defined. As products of America, a nation itself marked by contradictions and value conflicts- i.e., material versus spiritual progress-thrift, industry and "smartness" were also part of their nature as well. The story says:

Maya is also ignorant about what lesbian means. After reading the book called *The Well of Loneliness*, and looking at her undeveloped breasts and other sex organs, she thinks that she is going to be a lesbian. However, if she had any idea what a lesbian was, she would not be worried. Equipped with an overactive imagination, self-consciousness and rumors, she decides she must be abnormal. As a result, she reaches a decision to make sexual intercourse with a man that was not really her friend to check and to make her normal. (265)

Motherhood is one among the various experiences of Black women demonstrated in

the novel. Like other female Black autobiographers, Maya Angelou exposes the stereotypes against African-American mothers as breeder and matriarch, and presents them as having a creative and personally fulfilling role. The protagonist reveals:

Though Maya is afraid to have her baby alone, she is strong enough not to force its father to take care of her. She knows he had no part in her decision to have the child, so she knows she must shoulder the responsibility alone. Though she is afraid at first, once she realizes that she is capable of loving and caring for her young son, she relaxes and feels more confident. (279)

Maya becomes a mother at the age of 16. She has a duty to care for her child at her teenage without any support of the husband or the father of the child. Once she gets pregnant on a single meeting with the guy, the rest of pregnancy cares lie with Maya. As she puts it “the father had stopped speaking to me during my fourth month” (280). Though motherhood is the issue that is addressed briefly at the end of the novel, it is one of the shared experiences of Black women in America. Angelou herself cleverly and broadly addresses maternity in her following autobiographical novels.

By implication Black women, like Marguerite, were servants to white people and Black men. They received no respect, and as a result, they had no hope for the future. They existed within society, but they had no opportunity of improving their positions within it. If Black men were seen as sub-human by white people, Black women were considered to be sub-sub-human by white and Black people alike.

A consequence of years of slavery and segregation, double consciousness has been described throughout this research as an awareness of the African American’s sense of being not merely different from white America but wholly ‘Other’. The

characters managed to salvage something positive out of their status as outsider and other. The novel indicates that most of the characters view their outside status as negative which ultimately translate them into lost opportunities, negative self-images, and various other social and psychological problems of great magnitude. Moreover, that double consciousness presents itself as a problem in the novel. The story told by the author is not merely the result of her artistic imagination. The author actually lived with the realization that she was perceived as being different and, therefore, an outsider in American lifestyle. This double consciousness is at the very heart of African-American life. It undergoes mutations but never disappears.

The researcher wants to say that the merging of a double self into a better and true self will offer the best fulfillment of the desire for full interpersonal and intrapersonal harmony that stirs in each African-American. Appreciation for the similarities among the author cannot, however, be allowed to obscure the equally important differences in their treatment of the African-American's sense of twoness. It is necessary to highlight her respective vision.

African-American literature mainly focuses on portraying experiences of marginalization. Maya Angelou depicts self by using first person point of view. Maya Angelou manifests experiences of marginalized women by taking herself as a central character of her first autobiographical fiction *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

The novel directly or indirectly deals with the power of women to survive and shape their own future despite hardships. The research reveals that failure is inevitable but it is quite necessary to lift oneself up again. The novelist Angelou, tries to make visible the relationships between Black and White people via the experiences of the Black girl in Southern America.

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