

Feminism and marginalized black women in the *Hood Feminism* novel by Mikki Kendall

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Abstract

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The purposes of this study are to find out gender inequality and racism cases experienced by the author in Hood Feminism novel. There are some cases related to gender inequality, such as, patriarchal ideology, violation and discrimination against a community, while racism cases cover poverty, gun violence, hunger, injustice, and inadequate education to marginalized communities. The cases that have been studied are then linked with other cases of the same nature from one chapter to another based on Black Feminism approach, so that later conclusions can be drawn from the research. With the obstacles and burdens in carrying out these efforts, this novel becomes interesting to study. The main character in the novel herself also plays a role in the effort to get her rights as black woman. The experience of the main character in the novel is also a supporting factor that creates real facts or evidence, which is also a representation of her own experience that occur in the environment of the community.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is an imaginative and subjective work of the author, but it can present interesting stories that are a reflection of society or humanity. Through literary works, writers can express the various problems of life. Literary works accept the influence of the condition of society with its various problems and represent it in a fictional storyline that can inspire to the reader. Literary works can also have an influence on society. In fact, literary works often tell the values in people's lives in a certain era. There are various types of literary works, and the novel is one type of literary work containing the structure of meaningful signs that have intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

Novels present fictional stories or imaginary stories in the form of narrative stories. The sketches of life depicted in the novel will inspire and provide new experiences for readers through their interpretations. The problems of women's lives are also often the story ideas in a novel. Since antiquity until now, views on women's rights are often judged lower than men's. This problem does not only exist in real life, but also in the world of novels. Issues of women's rights, as patriarchy, emancipation, and oppression can be interesting themes raised in the form of literary works. The novel also expresses many values of life, including the struggle for rights and identity.

One of the novels that are quite famous in the literary world is a novel entitled *Hood Feminism*

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by Mikki Kendall (2020). This novel tells about the writer's experience as black woman who lives in USA. She wrote that feminism that comes from a place of fear, that prioritizes not being effective, is dangerous. She also described black women in ways that play up their sexuality and remove their humanity. If you are speaking of Black mothers, make it clear that they need guidance, financial support, or salvation. They exist to be support systems, wether for men of all colors or women of every color but black. There is a cultural pressure to be an upstanding Black woman, to avoid any behavior that own behavior to avoid the racist, classist, and sexist stereotypes other people might assign to us.

Black women's experiences of sexual assault and disclosure they focused on: (a) The delegitimization of Black women as victims of rape, (b) the social construction of Black women as inordinately strong, and (c) the sanctioning of intraracial sexual assault disclosure (Slatton & Richard, 2020). They found out that utilizing intersectionality and objectification theories, we contend that Black women's body image disturbances must be placed within a sociocultural context based on the intersections of gender and racial oppression (Watson, Lewis, & Moody, 2019).

Fiction written by Black feminists frequently deals with identity politics, the intertwining oppression of race, class, and gender frequently makes it difficult for Black women to develop a positive identity. (Qasim, 2012). In the United States, sexually precocious, future teen mothers who are economically marginalized young women of color are portrayed as being likely to become a burden on the state by racialized and classed "risk" narratives of sexuality (Ray, 2018). Some of the ways that transnational Black feminist theory can be applied to research with marginalized communities to counteract the re-inscription of dominant ideologies, especially when taking into account current national and transnational processes and discourses (Burkhard, 2019). She conducted research to review many forms of violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. I aimed to foster

Black women's empowerment by identifying and legitimating Black women's intellectual production. I believed then as I do now that people become empowered when they think and speak for themselves (Collins, 2004; Rider, 2014) My research is about gender inequality and racism experienced by black American woman who lives in USA.

Therefore, this study is intended to find out what cases occur in the novel, and to find out the steps taken by the main character in her efforts to uphold feminism in her community, where there are several attempts at injustice experienced by applying the reader response theory.

METHODS

In this study, the author applied black feminism approach to analized Hood Feminism novel written by Mikki Kendall. This approach will be used as a means of interpreting a case in the novel being studied. Some examples of cases investigated especially about gender inequality, marginalized black women and racism.

The data to be studied will be taken directly from the writings written by Mikki Kendall as the writer in *Hood Feminism* novel. (Prestes & Paiva, 2016) (Breeze, 2011) (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021)The author will analyze the data based on Black Feminism approach by Patricia Hill Collins as written in the book entitled *Black Sexual Politics* published in 2004. She proposed Black Feminism Thought aimed to foster Black women's empowerment by indentifying and legitimating Black women's intellectual production. Black women can never become fully empowered in a context of social injustice. This black gender ideology also draws upon widespread cultural beliefs concerning the sexual practices of people of African descent (Kendall, 2020, p. 17) black sexual politics occur at the particular intersection of gender, race, and sexuality that African Americans face (Kendall, 2020, p. 17).

Because African Americans have been so profoundly affected by racism, grappling with racism occupies a prominent place within Black sexual politics (Kendall, 2020, p. 17). Black sexual

politics consist of a set of ideas and social practices shaped by genders, race, and sexuality that frame Black men and women's treatment of one another, as well as how African Americans are perceived and treated by others (Kendall, 2020, p. 18).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Poverty

In theory, we understand that poverty is a feminist issue. Indeed, we consider it a feminist issue for the countries, and that we live in an era where grit and determination can lift anyone out of poverty. But, in reality, it takes far more than bravado.

“I was poor, and it wasn't easy, but I had the handholds it can take to be upwardly mobile when you're marginalized and life is working against you in other ways.” (Kendall, 2020, p. 34).

In the quote above, the main character in the novel states that the poverty can be a factor in the issue of feminism. These poverty factors will later have an impact on one of them, namely hunger. In this chapter, the main character in the novel explains the causes and effects of poverty itself. Starting from the causes of poverty that are widely experienced by the black community, which is due to racial discrimination and limited access to finding decent jobs, so that they cannot make a better life.

Hunger

Hunger can be cited as one of the effects of poverty. In that chapter, a statement regarding the impact of the famine that occurred in the black community. Those who have experienced cases of hunger that also have an impact on health problems, to their daily work. The local government programs in dealing with cases of hunger that occur in the region, have not been able to become a mainstay solution for the local community, especially the black community. So cases such as malnutrition for mothers and children are still often found in the community.

“Food is human right. Access to adequate food and nutrition allows communities to thrive.” (Kendall, 2020, p. 44)

From the quote above, it can be seen that food is one of the main things from human rights. Because if this is not the case, various problems will arise so that they can disrupt the stability of a community.

Inadequate Education

In some communities, especially the black community in America, still have inadequate Education. This is due to instability and equality experienced by the community. Moreover, the discovery of military-style school system that is most likely to lead to discrimination from teachers against students which makes the quality of education increasingly decline. Bullying of a race, especially the black race, is also commonplace in several educational institutions.

“*The most common form of racial discrimination in education is harassment of students of color by their white counterparts*” (Kendall, 2020, p. 181). In the quote above, it can be seen that the bullying of a race is one of the causes of the decline in the quality of education in the black community.

Injustice Solidarity

A literature research method is needed in this research, which will later become a reference in carrying out research. With the medium of a novel entitled hood feminism, which in the novel describes many cases, and stories of the author's own experiences, of course, it will be very interesting to be critiqued and studied with the reader-response criticism method. There are several cases in the novel such as injustice, poverty, and the decline of a black community in America, which made a feminist movement in the area (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020). Where at the beginning of the novel, she explains that solidarity is only for white women, it has shown a small part of the injustice of the novel's contents. In addition, the case of celebrities who were appointed into this novel to be feminist information. Many white feminist pundits were shocked when Donald Trump was elected in 2016, and despite his poor record of women's issues, race, class, gender, and education, the majority of white women voted for a man who promised to abuse them. It became clear that he did. He

promised a lower competitive future where the mythical black or white women living in fear of Muslims would feel their fears justified and racism justified (Kendall, 2020, p. 20)

Gun violence

Not only that but armed violence is also mentioned in the novel. An experience by the author where he was saved by her grandfather during an armed conflict on a street near a beauty shop. In particular, the number of homicides using firearms has risen sharply in recent years. The 19,384 gun homicides in 2020 are the highest since at least 1968, beating the previous high of 18,253 recorded by the CDC in 1993. "Mothers bury their children because of gun violence" (Kendall, 2020, p. 23). In this statement, it can be concluded that armed violence against a community has become a habit or commonplace. This statement is reinforced by a quote in the novel as follows:

"It can't be treated as a distant problem when in some neighborhoods, bullets are as common as rain" (Kendall, 2020, p. 23).

"Likewise, the time a guy tried to rob my mother at an ATM and pointed a gun at me to make her comply is as American and mundane as apple pie" (Kendall, 2020, p. 27).

In the novel, the main character has experienced verbal violence from the police. It is hereby assumed that there is a case against Trayvon Martin in Florida, which relates to police violence or abuse of authority of a police institution in which Martin was killed.

"I can't tell you how many times I have been in contact with police officers over the years. I've just been lucky about the kind of officer I have encountered. I have been verbally abused by a police officer, threatened, harassed, but never assaulted." (Kendall, 2020, p. 32).

There is also a perception of the black community in the eyes of the police in Chicago, like seeing a criminal. This is evidenced by the case that ever happened in the city, a black woman was killed and a black man was injured as a result of being shot. With several cases that have been experienced and have occurred within the character circle, she has thoughts in moving bright feminism, that a problem must be solved without armed violence. With these efforts, she hopes to

form a community or public that upholds tolerance and avoids violence.

Patriarchal Ideology

It can be seen that there is a chapter from the novel that strengthens the role of feminism in the midst of an environment that is predominantly patriarchal. In the chapter, it is written "It's raining patriarchy" which can be interpreted that patriarchy still plays a strong role in a community so that the role or effort of feminism is a little difficult to apply or get. In this chapter, a story is told of a character who lives with a traditional grandfather, broadly speaking the character assumes that people born in the 1919s have a patriarchal view, where men occupy a higher degree than women. Some of the patriarchal attitudes are shown by the grandfather of the novel's character during his life.

"Sometimes he opens his mouth and the patriarchy comes tumbling out on any topic..." (Kendall, 2020, p. 67).

The discontinuity between the grandfather and the main character in the novel, where one is patriarchal and the other is feminist, makes things awkward. Although there are no problems in the incident, the main character does not feel very comfortable when discussing feminism with them. Women activists require a more practical understanding of the complex nature of patriarchal impacts on marginalized people. On the off chance that standard white women's liberation needs something to do, needs to assist, this is often one range where it is vital to step back, to hold up to be welcomed in. On the off chance that no welcome is prospective, ready to continuously challenge the white patriarchy. There is a social way to be an upstanding dark lady, to dodge any behavior that produces dark ladies "see awful". We are anticipated to always alter our claim behavior to dodge the bigotry, classist, and sexist generalizations other individuals might dole out to us. Politics also play a role in the affairs of the black community. On the Kendall (2020, p. 89, par. 3), it is explained that there is contempt for marginalized communities, for example, described in Kendall, (2020, p. 89, par.2) which is the treatment of African Americans who do not speak English

when they appear on a TV station. The use of slang words by a community that is used to insult other communities has become a habit that occurs in the black community. Talking about rights and what black women get now, we can go back to the beginning of the chapter on the novel (Kendall, 2020, p. 83, par.2) , where there is an explanation of stereotypes on black women, descriptions of black women based on economy, sexuality, occupation, and finance. There is also a statement that a black mother needs guidance in the form of support and rescue, with the intention of saving their work for those who have less decent work (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020). This is certainly a factor of difference and the cause of the emergence of the general perception that women are actually women other than those who are black. So that people assume that they are only black women, and thus they do not have enough knowledge, do not have enough wealth, and have low self-esteem in the eyes of women of other races. Inequality between genders is already visible in this problem. The cornering or marginalization of the black community, especially women who are in that community, so that they cannot develop like women in other communities. The jobs of low-income black women are often abused and unappreciated. We always see them fighting and pretending that it is not the result of a system that is voluntary and maintained by a powerful minority who is fundamentally anti-black and patriarchal. It requires respectable emotional labor, doesn't annoy anyone, and isn't angry enough to challenge you, let alone confront someone who might harm them, especially for black women. If we pull back the formulation of this problem to the chapter that has been discussed previously, there are several visible links, which in the end emerges an impact where women in general, especially black women have a negative mental effect on their environment, the work they do is less appreciated (Belfort, 1913). As well as patriarchal and anti-black adherents who make them even worse. From the quote on (p.95, par.1), it can be said that they are black women until the end they hide their identity just to compete with others. There are also several perceptions that arise, which we can take

from the quote above that patriarchal and anti-black understanding makes it difficult for them to compete in any aspect, both in their work and in their community environment. In this chapter, homophobia and transphobia are also explained among hip-hop artists, country musicians, or popular media. The black community actually emphasizes threats such as the same-sex community that comes into their community (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020). There is no doubt that the white supremacist patriarchy needs to be dismantled, but it cannot be pretended that class discrimination is not a major issue within the black community. They ought to extrude how they speak approximately blackness, approximately poverty, approximately the ladies who inhabit the one areas in which get entry to and possibility hardly ever intersect. The main character in this novel also expressed her opinion that the community she was living in was like her own home, only that she realized that the privilege of seeing the civility of the middle-class had given her enough access. This of course supports her efforts in mobilizing feminism which she wants to show to her community and environment. The main character in the novel also states that there are some white people who are in the lineage of her extended family, where there is a mixture of black and white Irish in her family. A small description of the appearance and family tree of the main character is explained in the chapter "*Pretty for a...*" (Kendall, 2020, p. 95, par 1). She also told her experience when she was a teenager, she had a special relationship with a man who once said to her "*You're pretty for a black girl*", and she responds with indifference. She described herself as a youth with low self-esteem, as she considered herself at that time to be an awkward child. She also said that she had lighter skin than her cousins. It can be said that because she has white ancestry in her family tree. The main character in the novel also reveals her hair problem, until finally one of her family helped her fix her hair problem by taking her to a beautician, where she was given alkaline lubricants to her hair which made her hair burn and bleed. This caused her to cry by the time she was three years old. She was born afro-haired and light-

skinned, so it seems her family is urging her to change her appearance by taking her to the salon every two weeks after the relaxer incident she had before. With her hair problem that never ends, she tried to find a solution by finding a product other than a hair relaxant that is suitable for her. The explanation and complaints that she gave above regarding her hair are described in detail including the efforts she has used as a form of solution to her hair problem, it looks like she wants to improve her appearance a little so that she looks the same as most of her family members. She also got support with evidence from her family who helped her in finding a solution for her by taking her to the salon every two weeks as previously mentioned (Kendall, 2020, p. 98, par.1)

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that gender inequality experienced by the writer because of patriarchal ideology, violation, and discrimination against a community. Racism cases also accrued in the novel in the forms of poverty, gun violence, hunger, injustice, and inadequate education. The experience that has been experienced by the main character in the novel is also a supporting factor that creates facts or concrete evidence against those mentioned in the novel with the same case, as well as several acts of injustice that befell black women in their community which is one example of an obstacle in realizing the role of feminism.

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