



RESISTANCE OF BRUTALITY IN THE POEMS *YOUR WAY-OUR WAY-TRUTH* BY ZELDA QUAKAWOOT (2015), *I LOOK AT THE WORLD* BY LANGSTON HUGHES (2009), AND *TRIBAL LINES* BY DAN DAVIS (2000)

Della Haviza¹, Desvalini Anwar²

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: dellahaviza12@gmail.com

Abstract

This research is an analysis of three poems by Zelda Quakawoot entitled *Your Way- Our Way- Truth* (2015), Langston Hughes entitled *I Look at the World* (2009), and Dan Davis entitled *Tribal Lines* (2000). This analysis explores the resistance of the Aboriginal people represented by the speakers in the three poems in obtaining their rights and justice. This resistance needs to be carried out by the Aboriginal people to fight the acts of brutality they experienced as a result of the colonial impact. An analysis of the three poems also reveals the extent of resistance Aboriginal people took of brutality. The study of these poems uses the concept of Post-Colonial theory by Edward Said. The results of this study indicate that the Aboriginal people already have the awareness to fight toward the acts of brutality that they experience. The analysis discusses: 1) Forms of brutality toward Aboriginal people, 2) impacts of brutality towards the lives of Aboriginal people, 3) Resistance made by Aboriginal people against brutality.

Keywords: Brutality, Injustice, Resistance, Impact, Colonization.

A. INTRODUCTION

Despite, human rights have been tried to be upheld by various movements to fight injustice, but the injustice still happens to Aboriginal people in Australia which is caused by racism. Racism has created differences that make other groups weak because they are different. These differences can be in the form of skin color, strength, and values that are deliberately created by people who feel that their group is the strongest and most perfect. The presence of racism creates unfair treatment towards Aboriginal people which can be seen from many things that happen in all aspects of life, for example in terms of education, health and society. As natives, they should have a special place in their own territory. However, in reality they are made foreigners and do not get their rights in life. Although all human beings in this world are

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on September 2023

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



entitled to freedom of their rights, but the implementation is opposite to what happens in real life because of the power that has limited Aboriginal people to express themselves in society.

The impact that the Aboriginal people received as a result of colonial power can be seen from the acts of brutality they experienced. Acts of brutality towards Aboriginal people are very vulnerable to being carried out by parties who have power, such as law enforcement and the government. With the power they have, they can commit unjust acts towards weak people without seeing so many bad consequences from their actions. This is a form of Orientalism that shows how Aboriginal people were required by white to show themselves because Aboriginal people had so much wealth and power that white people wanted. Alang, et al (2017) stated that various mechanisms of police brutality can increase mortality among blacks including physical injury and death, psychological distress, economic and financial difficulties, and powerlessness.

Brutality is a cruel act committed by a group of people over others who are seen as inferior. As often happens in real life, so many acts of brutality towards Aboriginal people. As a result, Aboriginal people are always alienated in society and treated unjust because they do not have the power to fight back. For example, what just happened was the death of a minority group involving the police. In this case, the brutality towards the Aboriginal community is obvious as he was shot dead eight times by police who broke into his house. Though he is not a suspect in any criminal case. Therefore, it can be concluded that minorities are always degraded and receive unfair treatment in all aspects of life. According to Assan, et al (2021), there are clear differences between indigenous and non-indigenous people in all aspects of quality of life such as, low quality of health, education, employment and housing. Then, Alang, et al (2017) add that black people will more often experience acts of police brutality than White people because the police are a tool of white supremacy and racial domination. Therefore, the domination of white people creates inequality and social injustice due to the lack of attention and awareness of law enforcement towards indigenous people.

In the Poems, *Your Way-Our Way-Truth* by Zelda Quakawoot (2015), *I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes (2009), and *Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis (2000), explain that Aboriginal people still struggle to get their rights in life because throughout the history of the Aboriginal people, they have never been respected as natives who should have more rights over their own territory. Therefore, that makes Aboriginal people always get acts of brutality from a group of people who have power. However, Aboriginal people still try to get their rights in life that have been restricted by the colonizers.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis of the three poems, *Your Way-Our Way-Truth* by Zelda Quakawoot (2015), *I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes (2009), and *Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis (2000), was carried out through text- and context-based interpretation. It is done by analyzing several parts of the poetic elements, such as; figurative language, tone, speakers, and settings. Speakers are used to reveal about the resistance that Aboriginal people have put up against brutality. Then, the setting relates to circumstances and atmosphere that can assist the writer in expressing history related to what is happening now. These elements are analyzed based on the concept of Orientalism by Edward W. Said.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section starts with the discussion of the impacts of brutality towards Aboriginal people and the resistance made to against brutality in the poems *Your Way-Our Way-Truth* by Zelda Quakawoot (2015), *I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes (2009), and *Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis (2000). Speakers from the three poems describe the injustice experienced by the Aboriginal people from the acts of brutality they experienced. Then, the analysis is continued on discussing the impact caused by acts of brutality on the lives of Aboriginal people. Lastly, the analysis discusses the resistance that Aboriginal people made against brutality in the three poems.

1. The Forms of Brutality towards Aboriginal People

The forms of brutality towards Aboriginal people that still occur today are the result of the influence of colonial powers that make Aboriginal people live in injustice.

1.1 Taking the Rights

This new history that is being formed has blinded the world's eyes to ignoring the fate of the Aboriginal people. Everything had been arranged for the benefit of the colonialists and impacted the lives of the Aboriginal people who did not get benefit from their own wealth. This situation is supported in the following quote:

Community is replaced by profit

Social issues stocks are down

It is easier to make up more rules

Since our voices are silent sounds

(*Your Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, Stanza 3 lines 9-12)

In this quote, it is clear that Aboriginal people are still being treated unfairly today. In this line "*It is easier to make up more rules*" reveals that the colonialists arbitrarily made rules without thinking about the fate of the Aboriginal people who had nothing to do because their voices were never heard and valued. This is supported in the next line "*Since our voices are silent sounds*", which explains that justice is only for those who have power. When we do not have power, our voice will never be valued and that is a challenge for the Aboriginal people because their power are limited by colonial rules. Therefore, it is necessary to make a resistance for justice for the lives of Aboriginal people as indigenous people.

1.2 The Oppression towards Aboriginal People

Acts of oppression experienced by Aboriginal people is a form of brutality. From all the acts of brutality they experienced have made they could not feel freedom in life. This can be seen in the following quote:

Our Tribal Lines were crossed, the day, you dropped your anchor.
And set your foot on our sand, it was then our spirits felt poor.
We lost all the richness we felt as free human beings.
Killing of everything that was ours, without even seeing.
(*Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis, Second stanza lines 5-8)

This quote expresses the speaker's affirmation that freedom or what they have should not be lost. In addition, there is a tone of sadness and disappointment towards the irresponsible people who have crossed their limits to take away the rights of indigenous peoples. The use of the "*Our Tribal Lines were crossed, the day, you dropped your anchor.*" explained that this was an act of brutality that shattered all Aboriginal people's dreams of a free life based on their culture and traditions. This is caused by the colonizers who crossed the line. This is a form of Orientalism which expresses that the colonialists needed the Aboriginal people to show themselves. This was done by taking all the wealth of the Aboriginal people and making the Aboriginal people look weak. With the weakness of the Aboriginal people it could open up opportunities for the colonialists to show themselves as people in power. With a sense of innocence, the colonizers continued to cross the tribal line deeper and take away all the justice that the Aborigines should have felt until now. In the next line "*We lost all the richness we felt as free human beings.*" it can be said that there is no justice on their side because the wealth that has become their strength has been taken by the colonialists. The greed of the colonialists was very clear when they took all the property rights of the Aborigines without seeing that their actions would make Aboriginal people miserable in the long run even today. This is also supported in the next quote:

Crossing the Tribal Lines, you put a curse on yourselves.
The land that you call heaven, you've turned into hell.
We only have a few left who know our rightful words.
But nowadays only your language can be heard.
(*Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis, Third stanza lines 9-12)

In this quote it can be explained that the Aboriginal people were only given false hopes about the wealth of their land by the colonialists in the interest to controlling the territory of the Aboriginal people. There is a metaphor in line 10, "*The land that you call heaven, you've turned into hell.*" which explains that Aboriginal people's dream of their land which is the most valuable thing became a source of wealth for colonists. As a result, the Aboriginal people are still victims of colonial greed. This refers to the word "*heaven*" which means the dream place of Aboriginal people who have been turned into "*hell*" by the colonizers. Then, there is irony in line 12, "*But nowadays only your language can be heard.*" which reveals that all things about Aboriginal people have begun to be obscured by the world because it has been slowly eliminated by the colonizers. Now, people only know new stories about colonial culture and forget the important history behind it all. This is very ironic when history that should be respected is replaced by new history.

2. The Impact of Brutality towards Aboriginal People

Acts of brutality are the impact of colonialism that still exists today. Although colonialism may not be carried out anymore, its impact greatly affected the lives of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people who should have a peaceful life instead have to live in injustice because the acts of brutality they have experienced made them miserable. The forms of brutality that Aboriginal people experienced can be in the form of physical and mental violence.

2.1 Limitations in Self-Expression

Colonial power which is still influential today makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to express themselves because access to all aspects of life has been limited by the colonialists. Aspects of life that have been limited by colonial rule can be seen from what happened in real life, such as in terms of education, employment, health, and public places. All these limitations can exist because of the colonial power. The colonialists had arranged all the life of the Aboriginal people so that they could not develop in society. The greed of the colonialists who always wanted to be in power had a very bad impact on the Aboriginal people. In addition, their sense of power also made Aboriginal people get acts of brutality such as not being given the opportunity to experience a just life. This can be seen from the following quote:

Tradition is replaced by authority
Respect is replaced by greed
What is happening to this nation,
Is the planting of an evil seed.

(*Your Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, First stanza lines 1-4)

This quote explains the change in life from previously living a life based on tradition and now being forced to live according to the rules made by people in authority. There is a repetition of the word "replaced" which expresses an affirmation of the speaker's disappointment with the changes in life, all of which have been replaced by people who have power. In the first line, the word "authority" is a justification of rights carried out by authorized persons. Therefore, when tradition has been replaced by authority, life for minorities will be increasingly limited because of the rules of the majority. Then, in the second line, "Respect is replaced by greed" explains that respect which should be upheld by equality has been destroyed by greed which means that the weak will always lose and the strong will always win. From the last line of this stanza "Is the planting of an evil seed." reveals that the world has been forced out of faith and planted seeds of evil that will make the country even more chaotic. In addition, it can also be said that the appearance of acts of brutality has begun to emerge from the seeds of evil that have been designed by the colonizers. This act of brutality can be seen from the honor of the indigenous people who were not respected at all and instead were destroyed by the colonizers. This was a mentally shattering act for the Aboriginal people which had a devastating impact on their lives. It will be difficult for them to develop in society because they are not valued as indigenous people who should have a special place. This is supported in the next quote:

History is shaped by education
Understanding is replaced by books
Technology replaces timelessness
They forgot about the land that was took

(*Your Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, Sixth stanza lines 21-24)

From this quote, it can be revealed that there are acts of brutality committed by the colonizers towards generations that should have a good impact on the lives of the Aboriginal people. However, the colonizers have arranged everything well so that people can obey their rules. Colonizers have brainwashed generations of indigenous people to become alien parts of themselves. They forget where they actually come from, so they forget the traditions, culture and respect that they had built in the past. In the line 21, "History is shaped by education" explains that the colonizers have made the

natives forget the long history full of struggles that they have been defending and replaced with sophisticated new stories. This is one of the very ironic acts of brutality when generations who were expected to fight together instead became opponents for themselves. It appears that the after-colonial influence was enormous for the Aboriginal people as it made it difficult for them to express themselves when they were no longer valued.

2.2 Being an Object of Violence

Acts of brutality can also be seen from the violence that is often experienced by Aboriginal people until now. This was caused by the limitations of Aboriginal people in expressing themselves, which made them look weak. Thus, the weakness was used as an opportunity for the colonizers to rule. This can be seen in the following quote:

Security is replaced by wars
A nation so young to the slaughter
The old white leaders send to battle
The innocent sons and daughters
(*Your Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, Fourth stanza lines 13-16)

This quote shows that it was difficult for Aboriginal people to live in security due to their lack of strength to fight back. As a result, they were forced to follow colonial rules which were very unfair to Aboriginal people. When they get violence, they will never get fair legal treatment because behind that law there are people who are against the progress and convenience of the Aboriginal people. In the line 14 "*A nation so young to the slaughter*", there is imagery which makes us feel how a nation that has not yet achieved its dream must be used as a tool to achieve victory for the colonizers. The colonizers forced the young generation who were still innocent to plunge into a world that was harsh and cruel. They are used as objects of violence by the authorities. This is still happening today because there is no justice in favor of minorities. Acts of brutality like this can damage the physical and mental generations of indigenous people because of their fear and anxiety about the harsh world. Therefore, acts of brutality are a challenge for Aboriginal people. This is supported in the following quote:

Oppression can rise to the challenges
And determination is the key
Already exists a tradition
This inspired an historical need
(*Our Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, First stanza lines 1-4)

This quote reveals that all forms of brutality such as oppression and violence have been a challenge for Aboriginal people for a long time. Aboriginal people are often used as objects of violence because they lack the strength to fight back. The acts of violence they often experience should be used as a source of voice for Aboriginal people to complain to the authorities. However, such efforts do not work because their voices are never heard and they are always victims of the actions of irresponsible people. In the line 2 "*And determination is the key*", explains that the speakers in this poem try to invite the Aboriginal people to awaken their determination to fight against all the injustices that have been felt so far. If there is no resistance, Aboriginal people's lives will always be haunted by the effects of colonialism. There is an irony when Aboriginal people must forever be made strangers in their own territory and let outsiders rule it.

3. The Resistance made by the Aboriginal People Against Brutality

The acts of brutality experienced by the Aboriginal people so far have the right to be resisted. It is hoped that the resistance carried out by the Aboriginal people will produce results that can change the lives of Aboriginal people even though they have to go through many challenges. However, all of these challenges can be overcome if Aboriginal people have a strong determination to get their rights which should be respected. To get satisfactory results does require a long time and effort. Therefore, Aboriginal people need to show their resistance to open the world's eyes that they deserve to be respected and get justice.

3.1 Revealing the Past

One of the resistance that can be done by Aboriginal people is to revealing the past. By revealing the past, it is hoped that it will open the eyes of the world that it is the Aboriginal people who are most entitled to their own territory. In addition, it also shows to the world how much their ancestors struggled in defending their territory and culture which had been taken by the colonialists. When remembering how their ancestors struggled can inspire generations of Aboriginal people to defend their territory and culture because the pain they feel is not worth what they are getting now. Therefore, there was resistance from the Aboriginal people to take back their rights. This resistance can be seen in the following quote:

Tribal Lines, Tribal Lines, what does this mean to me?
I wish I could cross back over, then a part of me will be free.
I wanna know more of my culture, talk like my grandfathers did.
But at least knowing who I am, I can be proud of it.
(*Tribal Lines* by Dan Davis, Fourth stanza lines 13-16)

From this quote, it can be revealed that there is a spirit that can be seen from the speaker to rise up against the brutality that has been experienced. In the line 14 *"I wish I could cross back over, then a part of me will be free."*, reveals that there are many speakers' hopes to feel pride when they can live according to their tradition. The setting in this poem which is in Australia is very influential for the reader to be able to reveal the history made by the Aboriginal people in defending their country. In addition, there is also imagery which allows us to see the spirit to rise from within the Aboriginal people in the line 16 *"But at least knowing who I am, I can be proud of it."* This reveals that there is a new spirit that emerges when they see how the struggle of their ancestors was not appreciated at all. The word *"But"* means to express the feeling of resistance of the Aboriginal people against colonialists who have taken away their rights. Therefore, it is necessary for Aboriginal people to make resistance by revealing their past which is full of struggle and effort. This resistance was carried out by Aboriginal people by opening voices about what they are getting now is not worth with their struggle. Other actions of this form of resistance can also be seen from what happened in real life, such as holding demonstrations against the government to get recognition for their existence. This is also supported in the next quote:

To stand proud and strong for history
 Our Elders continually guide
 Respect for the heritage of the first nation
 'Cos it will continue to strive
 (*Our Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, Third stanza lines 9-12)

In this quote, it is reiterated that history which has elders who fought in it needs to be used as a guide for never giving up and enthusiasm for generations of Aboriginal people. In the line 9 *"To stand proud and strong for history"* explains that the main reason for fighting is to defend a very valuable history. The passion for resistance is necessary to get a fair life for Aboriginal people as indigenous people. When people realize that indigenous people deserve to be respected, their lives will be far from the acts of brutality that physically and mentally damaged their generation. Then, there was a tone of enthusiasm to rise in the line 12 *"Cos it will continue to strive"*, which shows that they must keep fighting to get honor for their heritage and history. As a result, they will be recognized in their country as people who also have the right to be happy without any acts of brutality.

3.2 Improving Self-Quality

In the harsh life of the Aboriginal people it is necessary for them to improving self-quality because they can show to the world that they too are capable of being an important part of their country. So far, Aboriginal people have always been looked down upon and incapable, so they have always been

treated unfairly. This was caused by the limitations imposed by the colonizers to narrow the space for Aboriginal people to develop. Therefore, Aboriginal people must make a smarter resistance by improving self-quality to open the world's awareness that they too are capable. This resistance can be seen from the struggle that is being carried out by Aboriginal people today, such as their persistence to get a proper education, study independently, raise awareness of their rights, and try to get jobs that can support their careers. This is supported in the following quote:

I look at the world
From awakening eyes in a black face
And this is what I see:
This fenced-off narrow space
Assigned to me.
(*I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes, First stanza lines 1-5)

This quote explains that there is a speaker's awareness to fight against the high walls that have been built by the colonizers. This can be seen in line 3 "*And this is what I see:*", which reveals that speakers must be strong in accepting the harsh realities of world life as a result of the influence of colonialism. Therefore, in the line 5 "*Assigned to me.*" revealed that speakers carry a very difficult task when they accept the fact that their lives must be fought for in order to get justice for their rights. Therefore, to face a big challenge, a big resistance is also needed. This big resistance was built by improving self-quality so that it could increase the space for Aboriginal people to penetrate this big challenges. In this stanza there is a spirit of revival from the word "*Assigned*" which means that there is a responsibility that must be carried out by Aborigines as people who are entitled to their own justice.

Then, in improving self-quality, self-confidence is needed to convince the world that Aboriginal people also have the skills to appear in society. Not only being a slave to the rules of the colonizers that forced them to follow it. This is supported in the following quote:

I look at my own body
With eyes no longer blind
And I see that my own hands can make
The world that's in my mind.
(*I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes, Third stanza lines 11-14)

In this quote there is an increase in the quality of their awareness to take the resistance by focusing on goals and fighting the fear that has been blocking all this time. This is shown in line 12 *"With eyes no longer blind"*, which explains that Aboriginal people are no longer silent about all the acts of brutality they have experienced. They began to believe that they had the strength to fight back. This is supported in the next line *"And I see that my own hands can make"*, which expresses that there is an affirmation of their belief to achieve a decent life. They will show the world what they can do with the spirit of revival for the resistance they put up. Then, in line 14 *"The world that's in my mind."*, explains that with effort and struggle they can definitely reach the world they want.

The resistance made by Aboriginal people is not only enough to improving self-quality because self-quality will be useless if it is not shown. By showing the quality of Aboriginal people it will make people believe that they also have the right to be seen as something worthy of respect in the eyes of the world. We can see this in the actions taken by Aboriginal people in real life, such as demonstrations by claiming that they are entitled to their own territory, holding talk shows about their struggles, and holding exhibitions that can raise world awareness. This can be seen in the following quote:

For in a lifetime is purpose
Our customs passed on and on
Not based on material values
Just ensuring you know why it's wrong
(*Our Way* by Zelda Quakawoot, Fourth stanza lines 13-16)

When in the previous stanza entitled *"Your Way"* which explained that it was the Aboriginal people who had to follow the colonial way. The word *"Your"* which refers to the colonizers who controlled the territory of the Aboriginal people with their own *"Way"*. However, in the stanza *"Our Way"* revealed that the time had come for Aboriginal people to determine their own way by showing the quality they had previously improved.

In line 13 *"For in a lifetime is purpose"*, expresses the enthusiasm to continue their duties as people who have to put up a resistance to get their rights for the acts of brutality they experienced. Speakers are always seen trying to get Aboriginal people to stand up and show that Aboriginal people do not just give up. They still continue their traditions even though they are no longer recognized by their own country. This can be seen in the next line *"Our customs passed on and on"*, which explains that this is a form of their resistance by showing that they have the strength to continue their tradition. Then, in line 16 *"Just ensuring you know why it's wrong"*, explains that there is an enthusiastic tone trying to assert that they will show the world the truth about Aboriginal people. There is a visible belief in the speaker to get up.

They believed that the strength they were trying to show would make the colonizers realize that they too had the ability to progress and would no longer be treated unfairly. This is also supported in the next quote:

Then let us hurry, comrades,
The road to find.

(*I Look at the World* by Langston Hughes, Third stanza lines 15-16)

This quote reveals that there is imagery that can make us feel the spirit of the Aboriginal's struggles to stand up for their rights. In addition, in line 15 "*Then let us hurry, comrades,*" expresses that there is confidence to move because they feel that they have the strength to fight back. If they delay the time to take the resistance then the colonizers will increasingly make more advanced steps to dominate. Therefore, they will always try to show their quality by appearing as people who have the ability to move.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In Zelda Quakawoot's poem *Your Way-Our Way-Truth* (2015), Langston Hughes' poem *I Look at the World* (2009), and Dan Davis's poem *Tribal Lines* (2000), it can be concluded that acts of brutality experienced by Aboriginal people deserve to be done resistance. The resistance was carried out to show the world that Aboriginal people also have the right to a just life. The forms of brutality they experience in the form of taking the rights and oppression can have a disastrous impact on the lives of Aboriginal people. Therefore, resistance needs to be carried out to make the world aware that they have been influenced by the influence of the colonialists who made the world treat Aboriginal people unfairly. To grow this awareness, it is necessary for the struggle of the Aboriginal people to put up a smart and strong resistance.

The results found from this study indicate that Aboriginal people already have awareness of acts of brutality that have an impact on their lives. Thus, this awareness will trigger resistance to rise from an unfair life. The forms of resistance found in this study are not only related to physicality but also how they make intelligent resistance by improving their quality of self which can be shown to the world that they have abilities. This is known because of the impact of brutality which not only affects the physical but also the mental. Therefore, the resistance carried out by the Aborigines is a resistance that will form a strong physical and mental.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alfred and Corntassel, T. (2005). Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism. *Government and Opposition*, 597-614.
- Alang, M. M. (2017). Police Brutality and Black Health: Setting the Agenda for Public Health Scholars. *National Library of Medicine*, 662-665.
- Alang, VanHook, Judson, S. (2022). Police Brutality, Heightened Vigilance, and the Mental Health of Black Adults. *Psychology of Violence*, 211-220.
- Assan, Zheng, Wilson, R. (2021). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. *Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems*, 1-13.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. United State: Panthoen Book's, A Division of Random House.

