



## **INTERSECTIONALITY IN DISABILITY REPRESENTATION: A STUDY OF RACE, GENDER, AND DISABILITY IN SING, UNBURIED, SING BY JESMYN WARD**

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### **Abstract**

This paper delves into intersectionality as it is associate with the depiction of disability in the literary work *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward. The paper seeks to investigate the portrayal of race, gender, and disability in the story by using the academic frameworks of Crip Theory and intersectionality. More precisely, it aims to illuminate the lives of characters who manage the intricacies of having many marginalized identities. This scholarly paper aims to enhance the comprehension of the idea of intersectionality as it is associated with the representation of disability in literature. It does so by exploring the themes, characters, and narrative techniques used in the literary work *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. This research also offers vital insights into the complex nature of identity and representation by thoroughly analyzing how race, gender, and disability are portrayed in the book. Furthermore, it illuminates the interdependence between oppression and resilience in disadvantaged populations.

Keywords: Crip Theory, Disability, gender, race, intersectionality.

### **Introduction**

This study investigates the complex link between race, gender, and disability in contemporary media and literature and explores how these overlapping identities are portrayed to know the complicated dynamics of diverse cultures. Crip Theory and intersectionality are used to

study how narratives navigate numerous identities. To understand disability experiences and how they are associated with other marginalization, this research investigates the complex link between disability and race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Understanding intersectional disability representation may help us improve social attitudes, policies, and practices for oppressed groups like disabled persons.

### **Literature Review**

According to Yoonji Han (2018), *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is a novel that shows how the characters struggle with the conflicting desires of ghosts from the past. The book's racial conflicts and lyrical writing style made the author think of old rite songs. But at its core, The book explores the emotional connections that individuals have with one another, and it celebrates hope, pain, and survival in our shared past.

A Study of Race, Gender, and Disability in the Novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

*Sing, Unburied, Sing*, was published in 2017. It is the third novel written by Jesmyn Ward, an esteemed American author and released by Scribner. The narrative centres around a familial unit residing in the fictitious locality of Bois Sauvage, located in the state of Mississippi. Based on a study conducted by researchers, the novel garnered an abundance of favourable critiques and was designated by The New York Times as one of the top 10 literary works of 2017.

The novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is situated in the rural landscape of Mississippi. It delves into the narrative of Jojo, a young boy of mixed racial heritage, as he grapples with the intricate dynamics of his family's past and the enduring impact of systemic oppression. Within the theoretical framework employed in this study, the novel under investigation delves into the intricate interplay of race, gender, and disability. The character of Jojo's mother, Leonie, serves as a focal point for examining these complex dynamics. Leonie's battle with drug addiction and mental illness has been observed to have a substantial impact on her capacity to fulfil her parental responsibilities towards Jojo and his sister.

Utilizing a comprehensive study, the present study investigates the depiction of race, gender, and disability in the novel "*Sing, Unburied, Sing*," with a specific focus

on the character of Leonie. It aims to explore the intricate connections and interactions between these social constructs as portrayed in the literary work. The experiences of the individual in question serve to underscore the manner in which systemic disparities intersect and accumulate, thereby moulding both personal identities and familial dynamics. Moreover, the literary work provides valuable perspectives on the prevailing social disapproval associated with mental health disorders and substance dependency within African-American societies which illuminates the intricate nature of intersectional encounters.

The book *Sing, Unburied, Sing* written by Jesmyn Ward digs into the complex interconnections of race, gender, and disability in a way that is both insightful and provocative. Examining the most important ideas and points of view included within this influential piece of work.

#### Uncertainty and Black Lives

The novel written by Ward addresses the increased instabilities that may be experienced by people of African descent. It recognizes the precarious situation and the ongoing scrutiny that people of African descent are subjected to. At the same time, as it refuses to acknowledge the fiction of a post-racial country, the story muddles together three distinct historical periods. Instead, it establishes a connection between the present and both the Jim Crow South of the 1940s and 1950s as well as the Obama years, which are said to be post-racial. When seen through the perspective of Black motherhood, the book depicts the anguish of being a mother to Black boys in a world where their lives are always in danger.

#### Ethical Responsibility and Hope

Despite the difficulties, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* emphasizes the need for individuals to take care of their ethical responsibilities to bring about change. It claims that a different tomorrow is neither assured nor impossible to occur in the far future. To develop this potential reality, love and the rituals associated with grief play an essential role. These interactions acknowledge the significance of the past and provide glimpses of the change needed. The method that Ward takes avoids simple historicism and instead emphasizes embodiment and nuanced influence. Instead, it

depicts the simultaneous motion of moving ahead, remaining in the same position, and moving backwards.

Through the examination of perceptions, racial patterns and ideals, the book demonstrates how the present is moulded by the experiences of the past while simultaneously providing new possibilities.

Racism against black people and its economic impact

The history of antiblackness has consequences that are far-reaching regarding both the economy and society. The current era is governed by it which goes beyond the concept of slavery. The investigation of these topics by Ward encourages readers to face the spectres of racism and to struggle with the difficulties of identity, disability, and justice.

### **Conclusion**

After an in-depth study, it is essential to acknowledge the significant potential for transition that literature presents. The potential for literature to initiate substantial societal changes lies in its ability to challenge dominant narratives, challenge pre-existing assumptions, and increase the voices of marginalized individuals. Through the implementation of a meticulous examination of issues pertaining to the representation of race, gender, and disabilities, one actively promotes the advancement of a society that is characterized by fairness and inclusivity. The primary aim of this endeavour is to ensure that every individual is recognized, esteemed, and empowered to engage fully in the diverse range of human encounters.

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