



逢甲大學學生報告 *ePaper*

## 報告題名

Who Is Defeated?

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Racism has always been a remarkable issue in this world's history. In "The Defeated", we see the two young girls who live in a world which two cultures compete with one another. From the description, we can see there's a different social status obviously from the way they talk in conversation and the way the narrator describes about their mental states and the dirty living environment she sees. From the way the narrator narrates, it is clear to see how black people are discriminated and unfairly treated under that society. A sense of contempt is told indistinctly; however, this feeling seems to be changed step by step and finally turns out to be a sense of sympathy and feels a lose of a friendship.

In many respects, the two girls find themselves in struggle between the two cultures. Miriam struggles between her own culture which she lives with since she was little and another which the narrator is in. Miriam ought to be glad when the narrator smiles at her but she hesitates because there's an invisible line that separates them which meant that they are supposed not to have any connection with each other since the situation has been long remained in the same way they used to have and perhaps this is why Miriam saunters. Miriam seemingly does not care how other people see her, how she behaves, and regardless of how she, as a black person, might be look down, but somehow it gives me the feeling that Miriam actually feel hurt while seeing how the narrator is treated in her family and how lovely her home is, though she still stands still and be strong without looking down herself. This characteristic which Miriam embodies perhaps is just a disguise so that she can be brave to face her destiny. Perhaps she always looks indifference about the difference between the narrator and herself, but it may just be that she does not want to recognize the truth that she is lower; besides, she has her own dignity. Later on, she is really changed as she grows up gradually, for this pressure indeed remains or perhaps enlarges in her mind and makes her pursue a sense of belongings to the Jewish part, which has high social status in the society. It seems like she is eagerly trying to make herself look like she belongs with them and erases the image that she is from the lower class which she can hardly deny. As for the narrator, she is not only influenced by her own Jewish culture but also on the realm of a culture which belongs to Miriam. She is supposed to live in a culture that will not be disturbed by the other culture which is lower. Nonetheless, it is destined that this is a world that she has to explore inevitably, resulting from the fact that her parents always leave her at home alone which is really a sad thing and probably that's the reason that makes her have the strong feeling to go into the culture which is quite different from hers to fill up the emptiness in her heart. She admires the busy street and people down the street, though she cannot get used to it which gives her a culture shock. She, then, has to adapt to the

way Miriam lives which she is quite amazed the first time she met Miriam. She is supposed not to have any relation with Miriam but she did and she feels that there's no big deal with it. She is constantly shifting between these two cultures which she leads on afterwards.

The friendship which is made between Miriam and the narrator is rare and commendable since there is an invisible line exists between black and white people at that time and it is this line that separates Miriam and the narrator from getting to know each other for quite a long time. Fortunately, one breaks the ice first and makes communication with each other. Miriam and the narrator become friends simply because of the narrator's smiling. I really believe that a simple smile can overcome almost everything. There must be someone who has to show his or her friendliness first so that the other person would open their heart and start to interact with each other, especially when it is very hard to make friend between white and black under that kind of harsh situation since black people are considered to be lower and dirty. Therefore, it is very incredible that the situation gets improved through the friendship made by the narrator and Miriam which should be really cherished. Their friendship gets better and stable day by day and finally they become real friend from the moment Miriam asks the narrator to go inside the Concession store. The gap between them seems to be broken. This is the time that they truly accept each other in each one's life even though it does not last long at last which is quite a pity.

Once there seems to be a light dawns on Miriam and the narrator which is likely to break the distance, the discrimination between white and black people; however, as the end reveals, it goes the same way back. Nothing changes in the end except their will which has been torn down. They remain silent as their lives go on and more humble than ever. Miriam still struggles with her life, confronting two conflict cultures. She has to choose either to live as the same way as she used to have or another life with changing possibility. Still, she cannot get out of that mud and sink in an uncertain way. Ultimately, their friendship cannot withstand the tension. However, it should already be a wonderful memory in each other's life. After all, what really matters is the process which is beautiful, though the end might be not that perfect as one may imagine.

Besides, there is a cultural difference between the black and white people toward the education issue. Though it is not told in this article, we can still perceive that both of the narrator's parents receive education obviously. Thus, education does not really mean a problem for them. They are able to obtain it for their children since

they have sufficient money for back-up. So, when the narrator discusses the will of entering a university, her parents nod agreeably. By contrast, Miriam's parents receive little or no education and that's why they are especially proud of Miriam. They always do their best to give Miriam a space to study as we can see from the statement that Saiyetovitz whisper when Miriam is doing schoolwork, for they are afraid that they might interrupt Miriam's study. When it comes to go to university, Saiyetovitz nod also but bitterly, for what they worry about is the money. While Saiyetovitz frown, Miriam seems to stay in an indifferent attitude, feeling like it is none of her business. It is sad to perceive this phenomenon. It seems like the only thing her parents can do is to take that announcement and start to work even harder to make money so that they can make enough money to support her education. It is indeed a struggle for Saiyetovitz but not for Miriam. How satiric this is. It supposed to be that as children we have to considerate our parents and share the burden with them. However, for Miriam, she is not worried about that at all, as though it is nothing to do with her. Miriam is spoiled perhaps. She seems to take what her parents do for her for granted, for she thinks that her parents ought to do everything for her and to be responsible, making money for her education no matter how hard they have to work and how fatigue her parents may be. We cannot see anything from the narration that Miriam does do something for her parents indeed. What we have is the sense that she does not have sympathy or empathy for her parents. Probably she might feel guilty somehow in her mind; still, she does not show it and we cannot see it clearly, for most of the time Miriam is ashamed of her family and her lower status somehow deep in her heart.

Moreover, there's sadness exist between Miriam and Saiyetovitz. There seems to be a gap between these two generations. As Saiyetovitz know nothing and have poor English, Miriam, nevertheless, is well-educated and can speak English well. This might be the reason that why Miriam look down her parents and result in the fact that when she got married she did not even introduce her parents to his husband. Furthermore, she seldom goes back to her home where she used to live with Saiyetovitz. This relation, to her, seems to be a shameful secret which should not be revealed and should be hidden from her husband and people around her, for she has a family that is dirty and ugly.

There's an interesting question about "the defeated." Perhaps not only Saiyetovitz and the native are defeated but also Miriam and the narrator herself. There seems to be no more hopes for changing the situation they are now. They are even more defeated than ever. It's useless to fight and silence is all they got. Also, what they have is an even sadder world as time passes. Miriam seems successful; however,

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she is defeated somehow by the society and herself. She was ashamed of her culture, environment, and condition and that's what makes her eagerly try to integrate herself to another better condition. She was defeated and mixed with the main stream in that society, trying to escape what she has been suffered for so long. Miriam loses what she should keep and flow with the main stream and eagerly stay away the life she used to lead. As for the narrator, she is defeated by her helpless to stop this situation from worsening. She abandoned her favorite career as a teacher and flew to other country to be as a nurse under the war. Time flies, things still remain the same but worsen and people change. Everyone is defeated by the invariable rule set by the society. Standard still remain the same or much worsen than it used to have. Life isn't an easy climb under such society. It is hard and bitter under the pressure of the white men. In the end, there seems to have a sense of coldness, depression, and loneliness. There is no warmth or fairness in the society. Even though it has, it shines in a quick flash.

