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**Representation of Human Rights Violations by the
Security Agents in Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*,
Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Ellison's *Invisible Man***

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Representation of Human Rights Violations by the Security Agents in Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Ellison's *Invisible Man*

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Abstract

Purpose: Human rights violation is a universal phenomenon, a constant presence in the news and in daily lives. Such violations are occasioned by the powerful lording it over the powerless, infringing upon the victims' unalienable rights. Human rights violations by the security agents seem to be pervasive in the recent time, resulting in the ubiquity of protests against the security agents for their wanton violations of human rights. Just recently, there were protest against police security bill in Paris, the protest against the killing of Eyad al-Hallaq by Israeli police, the protest against the jailing of Kremlin Foe of Russia, the protest against the murder of George Floyd of America and the recent EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to explore the civil and political rights in the selected novels and how such rights have been violated by the security agents.

Methodology: The research adopted literary analysis, deploying the Marxist critical discourse which concerns itself with the struggles between classes. The reason for this choice is that literature as a major part of the superstructure is determined by the forces that make up a society's base.

Findings: Drawing from the selected texts and from the different reviews of literature, the research finds out, among other things, that the security agents are among the most active violators of human rights. The study also found that human rights violations are everywhere, and not an exclusive reserve of any nation, civilized or uncivilized.

Recommendations: Giving the importance of security agents in safeguarding lives and property of citizens, the governments should include courses on human rights issues in the curriculum/training of the security agents. Different governments of the world should strengthen the aspects of fundamental human rights entrenched in their constitutions and give that hallowed section its pride of place to avoid chaos, anarchy, violent protests or even war that could result from violating the citizens' rights. Governments should set up independent and impartial judicial bodies to adjudicate on the cases of human rights violations by the security agents. The citizens need to be sufficiently sensitized on the operative mechanisms of the security agents to make them know when they are crossing their boundaries or initiating actions capable of compelling the security agents to violate their rights. Literature should be made a compulsory subject in schools and colleges.

Keywords: *Literary representation, fundamental human rights, human rights violations, security agents, Marxist critical discourse*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conceptual Exploration: Human Rights, Human Rights Violations, Security Agents

Human rights are the fundamental rights that a person is entitled to enjoy by virtue of being a human being. In the words of Alan (1980, p. 1), “human rights are the ultimate legitimate basis for a universal human community.” Human community here refers to an ideal association of human persons that is concerned for the individual and collective benefits of its members. Alan (1980) further states that human rights are “claims advanced by an individual or group and enforceable by law.” For Ogbu (1999, p. 2), “human rights represent demands or claims which individuals or groups make on society, some of which are protected by the law and have become part of Exlata (positive law) while others remain aspirations to be attained in the future.” According to Ezejiofor (1964, p. 3), “fundamental human rights are moral rights which every human being everywhere at all times, ought to have simply because of the fact, in contradistinction with other beings, he is rational and moral.” Henkin (1999) defines human rights as those liberties, immunities and benefits which, by accepted contemporary values, all human beings should be able to claim as of right in the society in which they live.” For Dowrick (1979, pp. 8-9) “human rights are those claims made by men, for themselves or on behalf of other men, supported by some theory which concentrates on the humanity of man, on man as a human being, a member of mankind.” It is on this basis that Andrew Clapham maintains that “human rights belong to all human beings and therefore cannot be restricted to a select group of privileged men” (Clapham, 2007, p. 6)

Human rights violation is any attempt by individuals or groups to obstruct the course of human rights. According to Clapham (2007, pp 17-18), “human rights are claims that automatically occur to one once one feels hard done by. A sense of injustice can breed a feeling that one has been denied one's rights.” Human rights are usually invoked and claimed in the contexts of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-slavery, anti-apartheid, anti-racism, and feminist and indigenous struggles everywhere. Clapham (2007) further adds that:

“... a shared sense of grievance provides powerful succour for those claiming their 'rights'. When those of us who feel aggrieved stand together in protest, we find strength through solidarity. The law itself may be the target of the protest. Outrage at law can somehow delegitimize such laws even in the eyes of law enforcers. Obedience to the law is a habit often related to the law's reasonableness. Invoking our human rights has become a way to challenge laws that we feel are unjust (even when the law has been adopted according to the correct procedures). In fact, human rights law has now developed so that, in almost all states, national law can be challenged for its lack of conformity with human rights (p. 18).”

Human rights need to be protected and it is the onus of the security agents to protect such rights. This calls in the issue of security which Phenson, et al. (2014) see as all measure, precaution, actions and personnel put in place that ensure safety to lives and assets and provide a peaceful atmosphere for citizens and government to pursuit their legitimate activities without fear, threats or hindrances in a given country. Berkowitz and Bock (1968, 40), see “security as encompassing not just the ability of a nation to protect its internal and external values from threats and external attacks but also the way and manner in which nations plan, make and evaluate decisions, policies and issues in order to lessen their vulnerability to threat and increase the stability”. In line with the above, Ukpere (2012) notes that security is the protection of human and physical resources from

hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities. It is the responsibility of the security agents secure the citizens' rights and property.

According to Nweke (1999, 36) security agents “are those officers and personnel on active duty or watches against threats to internal and external peace and unity of a country.” For him, the security agents are made up of the military, para-military, police, security details etc. In line with this, Ogoh et al. (2013, p. 9) define security agents as “all the personnel responsible for the prosecution and security, such as the police, military, state security service (SSS), para-military organization, etc. They are the governmental agents saddled with the responsibility of surveillance and intelligence for the internal security of a nation. According to Ashaolu (2013, p. 1) “*surveillance and intelligence gathering are some of the sophisticated methods that law enforcement authorities use to tackle security challenges. These help them to gather information sufficient to prevent a crime that is yet to be committed, intervene in one that is being committed or investigate a crime that has been committed.*” This suggests that the primary role of the security agencies is to maintain peace and order and to ensure the security of lives and property. Most of the time, however, these security agents turn out to violate the rights they are supposed to secure. Andrew Claphem (2007) captures this succinctly when he noted that:

An assessment of human rights-based justifications for the use of military force is complicated by the following factors. First, in many situations there will be a danger that the necessary force used to intervene could do more harm than good. People get killed in military interventions; how many deaths are justified to save more lives? Even where human rights violations are actually ongoing, human rights activists have sometimes balked at supporting the use of military force in the name of human rights (p. 63).

The above suggests that the security agents sometimes violate the citizens' human rights.

1.2 Categories of Human Rights

Human rights are categorized into three. They are the civil and political rights, economic and social rights and environmental, cultural and developmental rights. Michelle Parlevliet (2010) summarized the three categories thus, civil and political rights generally fall within the first domain, and protect citizens against unwarranted interference and abuse of power by the state; examples are the rights to life, to freedom of expression and assembly and to due process. Social, economic and cultural rights are concerned with the welfare and well-being of human beings, and generally belong to the second category; they include the rights to work, to an adequate standard of living, education and the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community (p. 3).

Civil and political rights are also called the first-generation rights. Civil and political rights include right to liberty and security of the person, right to equal protection before the law, right to freedom of assembly, right to be free from torture, right to freedom of expression, freedom from discrimination, access to the judicial system, participation in political life and so on. When protected, civil rights guarantee one's personhood and freedom from state-sanctioned interference or violence. Political rights include such rights as the right to speech and expression; the right to assembly and association and the right to vote and political participation. Political rights guarantee individual rights to involvement in public affairs and the affairs of the state. “Civil and political rights have been considered fundamental human rights for which all nation states have a duty and responsibility to uphold” (Forsythe, 2000, 28).

Economic and social rights are also called second generation rights. These are security-orientated rights. They include right to education, right to health and wellbeing, right to a reasonable standard of living, food, shelter; the right to work and fair remuneration; the right to form trade unions and free associations, the right to leisure time and the right to social security. When protected, these rights help promote social and economic development, and self-esteem. Environmental, cultural and developmental rights are also called third generation rights. These include the rights to live in an environment that is clean and protected from destruction, the right to indigenous land, rituals and shared cultural practices and the right to speak one's own language and 'mother tongue.' Cultural rights are meant to maintain and promote sub-national cultural affiliations and collective identities. Any of the three categories of human rights can be violated. The different forms of human rights violation and the circumstances that constitute the violation of the rights are examined below.

1.3 What Constitutes Human Rights Violations?

A violation of human rights occurs when one's inalienable rights are constrained. On this, Egbeke (1996, p. 155) states that "if we are not able to act on our judgment, but are forced to do as others order us, then we are acting under compulsion, and this is the opposite of freedom". It is a situation where someone's freedom or right is refused him or her. A denial of human rights occurs when any person, state or non-state actor breaches any part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Treaty or other international human rights or humanitarian laws. The circumstances that constitute or lead to the denial of human rights are quite enormous but the ones to be examined here are those related to civil and political rights.

Human rights violation occurs in a situation where somebody is intentionally deprived of his/her life by an individual or the government. This constitutes the denial of the person's right to life guaranteed under Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Similarly, human rights violation occurs in a situation where a private person is prevented from establishing a school, press media and other institutions of learning or where already established ones are abolished by the government without cogent reasons for doing that. This constitutes the denial of the person's fundamental human rights to the freedom of expression and the press guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Human rights violation also occurs in a situation where the privacy of somebody's home, family or correspondence is encroached upon. This constitutes the denial of the person's rights to arbitrary interference of one's privacy guaranteed under Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Equally, human rights violation occurs in a situation where aggrieved persons are against a particular policy of the government or against what happened to them and want to hold a peaceful rally or protest to show their grievances but are prevented by the police on the orders of the government or any other purported authority. This constitutes a denial of their right to peaceful assembly and association protected under Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Again, human rights violation occurs in a situation where a person is arrested for any criminal or civil offence and is detained without explaining to him or her the nature of the offence committed. This constitutes a violation of the person's right to freedom from arbitrary arrest guaranteed under Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Studies: Human Rights Violations and Literary Representation

Human rights violation occurs when someone's inalienable right is denied him or her. The research presents the struggles between the powerful and the powerless, between people who deny people their rights and those whose rights are denied. For this, Marxism is used to form the theoretical framework of the study.

Human rights are those rights possessed by a person as a result of the fact that he or she is a human being. According to Nagendra Singh (1986, p.1), "human rights refer to those fundamental rights to which every man or woman inhabiting any part of the world should be deemed entitled merely by virtue of having been born a human being." They are the rights and freedoms that relate to human beings who constitute members of a group, community, society or a state. Human rights issues as universal phenomena provide veritable tools for literary works. This is because the raw materials for literary representations are human actions or, better still, human experiences. Human rights issues represented in literature provide insights into the sufferings of human beings as a result of the violations of their rights. This implies that literary representation and human rights issues are almost inseparable. In his study on "The Deep Structure of Literary Representation," Joseph Carroll (2012) maintains thus, throughout the greater part of our history, our best psychologists have been playwrights, poets, and novelists. Literary authors have intuitively understood that the subject matter of literature is human experience, that experience is grounded in common natural motives and feelings, and that sympathetic response to the depiction of experience in texts depends on the common shared experience among authors, the characters depicted, and the audience (173).

Human rights issues deal with human experiences which are products of literary representations. In his study of the relationship between human rights and literary representation, Chakrabarty and Beniwal (2012) studied the literary representation of Dalits or the marginal/tribal people in Indian fiction in English. The work studied human rights violations through Indian fiction in English. The study involves a critical dissection of the chosen literary texts that highlight and problematize certain human rights concepts embedded in them. The researchers maintain thus, the concept of human rights is as old as art. Being about life, art takes its substance from life and, as such, it is not only an artistic manifestation revealing a profound aesthetic construct but also a bearer of social and human significance. At one level, artistic explanation concerns itself through exploration and postulation of human rights. And perhaps, that which deals and depicts life in its spectrum manifestations is literature. Literature in this process not only engages itself with human rights concepts, their vicarious possibilities, but also paves way for interdisciplinary readings of these two interrelated disciplines. Literary works can, therefore, be seen as potent and rich resources to correlate and study the human rights concepts, as both literature and human rights become complementary to each other (1).

This study establishes a relationship or interconnectedness between literary representation and human rights violations. As human rights denial presents the ugly experiences of individuals who have been denied their certain inalienable rights, the above researchers see literary representations as better ways of expressing those feelings of denial. In this vein, the researchers see literary representations and human rights issues as being complementary to each other.

Also, Daniel Sip in his research on the literary representation of torture and torture experiences states that “the fictional accounts of torture like *1984* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* have been interpreted in such a way as to show why totalitarianism or apartheid was an inhuman practice” (Sip, 2012, p. 1). In George Orwell’s *1984* and John M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the researcher explores the different facets of human rights denial and the agonies of the people whose rights are denied under the oppressive regime of totalitarianism. The researcher sees human rights denial in literary works as tools for human rights activists and organizations. He asserts that “it is the responsibility of writers to carefully represent torture experiences and that the work of human rights organizations relies on the positive power of pain in literary representations” (Sip, 2012, p. 1).

Human rights violations sometimes elicit reactions from those whose rights are denied. As they struggle to regain their rights, their oppressors also intensify their efforts to have the oppressed perpetually subdued. This agrees with Ram Bhawan Yadav’s opinion when he states that human rights demand arises as reactions to situations of exploitation, deprivation and operation. Here, the researcher states the forms of human rights denial the oppressed are subjected to and their struggle to be free from oppressions. According to him, the subjugated or subaltern people are subject to suffer culturally, socially, politically and professionally by the hand of bourgeois class. They have the instinct of rebellion, but keep them checked, by remaining in the service of their masters; they become well acquainted with the life style of their masters, their strengths and their vulnerability and then wait for the opportunity to strike back at the ‘beast’ in order to get the ultimate goal of being counted (Yadav, 2012, p. 6).

A fight for human rights violation is a fight to be counted, a fight to be recognized as a human being who has dignity. Commenting on this, Lipson (2012, p.1) states that “in the globalizing world we occupy, literature and film can be powerful tools for spreading the word about an ongoing conflict or galvanizing international opposition to human rights abuses.” Reactions against human rights denial could be the major cause of the protests all over the world these days. Just recently, we have experienced the protest against police security bill in Paris, the protest against the killing of Eyad al-Hallaq by Israeli police, the protest against the jailing of Kremlin Foe Navalyn of Russia, the protest against the murder of George Floyd of America and the recent EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This research explores the civil and political rights in the selected novels and how such rights have been violated by the security agents.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Human rights violation can be studied with Marxist theory. This is because human rights denial depicts the struggle and suffering of those who are subjected to torture by their supposed superiors. This type of struggle creates a sharp contrast between the oppressors (those who deny people their rights) and the oppressed (those whose rights are denied.) In this type of study, Marxism, which is a theory concerned with class struggle, becomes an ideal to form its framework.

Marxism is a political and economic theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which class struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change in societies. Ann Dobie states that in Marxist criticism, the researcher “will search out the depiction of inequality in social classes, an imbalance of goods and power among people, or manipulations of the worker by the bourgeoisie and will then point out the injustice of that society” (Dobie, 2009, p. 94). In the societies of the selected novels, injustices of different kinds pervade.

In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, the immigration officers extort the travelers, the corporal shoot the uncomplying traveler dead, Mama Akosua dies of the harassment from a soldier while Nii and his colleagues are enslaved by Paleo, one of the immigration officers. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the Head of State uses his power to silence Eugene's newspaper company, *The Standard*, so that he continues his discriminatory attitudes towards the citizens. The letter bomb that kills Ade Cocker has the Head of State's seal. The murder of Ogechi Nwankiti is also linked to the Head of State. Also, the ruthless General introduces a sole administrator in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to discriminate against the university workers. In *Invisible Man*, the Marshals's treatments of the Provos and the gruesome murder of Tod Clifton by the cops violate the victims' rights. The denial of the people's rights and the sufferings that such denials cause them carry a clear social commentary and Dobie maintains that "such a society is uncaring and unjust. It exists on assumptions that allow the powerful to keep the comfortable positions only if the powerless remain oppressed and convinced that it is right that they are oppressed" (95).

In the selected texts, there is unacceptable, oppressive and repressive leadership. This type of leadership in the texts creates an environment that generates struggles: struggle to be free from oppression, struggle to overthrow the oppressive government, struggle to fight for one's rights, struggle to sustain acceptable values in society. And literature as a part of superstructure is one of the major constituents of consciousness and should be studied within the framework of the history that creates it. For Marxism, literature can be viewed in two main ways: as a reactionary narrative that aims at enforcing the ruling classes' ideology and as a progressive narrative that champions the oppressed in their long and bitter struggle against the decadent social order. As one of the major goals of Marxism is to change the world, Marxist critics believe that progress or change occurs in the struggle between different social classes. Olaniyan and Quayson state that "central to Marxist criticism of African literature has been the definition of literature as essentially a vehicle of class struggle" (2007, p. 461).

From the in-depth study of the selected texts, it is discovered that the struggles in the texts are between the dominated majority (the common and armless masses) and the dominating minority represented in the texts by different security agents. Such struggles are among the major concerns of Marxism and that is why the theory was considered appropriate for the study.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/ANALYSIS

3.1 Human Rights Violations by the Security Agents in Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*

Though the security agencies like the army, the police and the immigration officers have vital roles to play in society, some of them are presented in this novel to being grossly corrupt and as agents of human rights violations. At the border, the immigration officer asks Nii and other travelers to pay a fine of ten naira each and if they do not pay the fine, they will be taken to the tribunal to be tried as dissidents. The travelers pay up, including Nii. Already, one of the uncomplying travelers is seriously wounded by the soldiers, probably because he resists paying the fine. And to add insult to injury, the corporal walks to the wounded traveler, examines him for a while, bends down and collects the wallet in the wounded man's pocket. Nii has wanted to protest but the corporal shouts at him saying: 'What are you looking at? Go!' (p.138). With this, Nii hurries away and soon, the man's moaning disappears. The corporal may have shot him dead for him not to expose them. This is a violation of the traveler's right to life.

Also, Mama Akosua dies of heart attack as a soldier points a gun at her, a mere armless market woman. The narrator reports this thus: “The mustached soldier raised his gun and pointed at the crowd. People ran and fell here and there. Mama Akosua collapsed on the ground and fainted right where she fell, as the crowd surged away from the soldier’s aim” (P. 114). As the armed soldiers drag the fallen woman away, Nii has to ask: “Does the government know this?” (p.114). When Nii and his colleagues are traveling from Lome to Benin, he asks the young man with whom he is traveling whether he knows the one that was shot by the security agents. The young man shakes his head to indicate that he does not know the person that was shot, adding thus: ‘It happens all the time along this border, and there’s nothing one can do. Let’s move on’ (P. 140).

Inspector Paleo enslaves Nii, Aaron and the carpenter in his Miliki home to his advantage. We see this in the way Inspector Paleo treats Nii and his colleagues. Instead of taking them to cell or deportee camp, Paleo diverts them to his Miliki home to work in his cassava farms and run other businesses for him. Inspector Paleo tells one of the soldiers thus: “If they get home, I’ll employ them. I’ve got some farms at Ilere, and I need more hands” (p.148). He puts them under a caretaker who treats them just like slaves. Aaron complains of blisters on his palms and Nii replies: ‘Damn it! We are now in slavery’ (p.185). The caretaker complains of their laziness just because they take some time to rest, saying: ‘No rest until you finish the day’s work. That’s that’ (p. 187). Nii replies: ‘You mean we should work like slaves?’ (p. 188) Paleo uses his power as an immigration officer to enslave Nii and his colleagues. This violates their right to freedom from arbitrary arrest as well as their right to private life.

At the border in Nigeria, Kweku reports that “the army men took all the naira on me” (p.266). At Hajj camp a young lady who has followed the woman in labor comes to report that one of the security personnel in the camp attempts to seduce her. Someone in the crowd comments: “It’s an abomination, a cowardly attempt at desecrating our people” (p. 283). This causes pandemonium in the camp as the crowd surge to the corporal for his action. The corporal’s action violates the young lady right to private life.

4.2 Human Rights Violations by the Security Agents in Adiche’s *Purple Hibiscus*

There are a number of human rights violations in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. It starts with Ade Coker’s death. Ade Coker is the editor of *The Standard*, Eugene’s newspaper company. He is arrested on several occasions for his objective publications in *The Standard*. In one of such occasions of arrest, the soldiers invade the secret place where the workers of *The Standard* are, break down their equipment and lock up the staff members, Ade Coker included. The arrest of the workers has some connections with the story in the last edition of *The Standard*. The government agents do everything possible to dissuade Eugene and his editor from publishing something about Ogechi Nwankiti’s murder because the Head of State is interested in the case. Eugene and his editor refuse and go on with the publication. After the publication in *The Standard*, Ade Coker is killed by a letter bomb with the head of state’s seal. The narrator states this thus: “Ade Coker was blown up when he opened the package – a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State ...” (p. 206).

The death of Ogechi Nwankiti and Ade Coker are evidences of human rights violations, denying them of his rights to life. Ogechi Nwankiti and Ade Coker are all murdered. Because of the death of Ogechi Nwankiti, Nigeria is suspended from the Common Wealth. The military head of state himself is involved in drug trafficking. The letter bomb that kills Ade Coker has the seal of the

military head of state. Again, the head of state himself pays some people to transport heroine for him. In the end, the people who are not the chief barons are killed. Eugen himself comments on this thus; “ I knew his arrest was because of the cover story in the last *Standard*, a story about how the Head of State and his wife had paid people to transport heroin abroad, a story that questioned the recent execution of three men and who the real drug barons were (p. 38).”

At the beginning of the story in *Purple Hibiscus*, the citizens are protesting against the military government for their wanton violation of human rights. It starts with driving with leaves on one’s car to signify peace, to people doing nothing as soldiers whip wantonly in the marketplace. This leads to protests, deadly roadblocks, and harassments by the soldiers. See pages 27-28. This is a violation of the right to be free from torture. The soldiers’ action of censoring *The Standard* newspaper is a violation of their right to expression. Again, the institutional issues like installing sole administrators in universities also violates the civil servants’ rights to expression. The police and the warders who are supposed to fight corruption are perpetuating it. The police collect money on the roads while the warders collect bribes in prisons. In the prison also, the inmates are unnecessarily detained without trial. According to the narrator, Oladipupo, the chief of the cell has been on awaiting trial for eight years. For Jaja’s three years in prison, he is still on awaiting trial, *Purple Hibiscus*, (p. 300). This denies them their right to fair trial.

4.3 Human Rights Violations by the Security Agents in Ellison’s *Invisible Man*

Most of the episodes in Ellison’s *Invisible Man* borders on the fight for human rights. Ras the Exhorter is a human rights activist. When the narrator is about to take on his job for the brotherhood, Brother Jack is quick to remind him thus: “Brother, you have heard of Ras? He is the wild man who calls himself a black nationalist” (p. 336). Ras is a human rights activist who is struggling to organize the blacks as a body to fight the racist white folks. The Brotherhood (before it deviates from its former agenda) is another human rights group formed primarily to fight dispossession of the colored people by their white counterparts. Apart from other human rights violations replete in the novel, a number of such violations are perpetrated by the security agents.

To start with, the eviction scene by the security agents called the marshals portrays the violation of human rights. The marshals, acting on the order given to them to drive the Provos out of their apartment without prior notice, engage in the violation of human rights. In surprise, the narrator asks: “You mean they’re putting them out of their apartment?” (p. 249) When Sister Provo wants to force herself into the apartment to pray, one of the marshals threatens: “I’ll jug you, by God, I’ll jug you” (p. 254). When the marshal later strikes the old woman, a West Indian woman screams with shock: “He struck her. The filthy brute struck her” (p. 254). At the top of the stair, the marshals are pushing the Provos violently to the extent that the old woman falls backwards. At this point, one of the marshals threatens as he draws his gun: “Stand backward or I’ll shoot you. I swear I’ll shoot you. You don’t know what you’re doing but I’ll shoot you!” (p. 254) For the maltreatments the marshals have given to the Provos, the crowd descend on them. This later escalates into a full-blown riot as more cops are invited to calm the situation. The marshals’ actions towards the Provos violate their right to respect for private and family life and their right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The gruesome murder of Tod Clifton by the cops is a violation of his right to life. Commenting on the illegal killing of Tod Clifton, the narrator states “*But the cops would be Clifton’s historian, his judge, his witness, and his executioners, and I was the only brother in the watching crowd. And I,*

the only witness for the defense, knew neither the extent of his guilt nor the nature of his crime (p. 406).”

In reaction to Tod Clifton’s illegal killing by the cops, the people begin to protest. The narrator tells us that a group of civil-liberties workers is circulating petitions demanding the dismissal of the guilty policeman and that a familiar woman street preacher is shouting a sermon about the slaughter of the innocents (p. 442). Towards the end of the story when violence has engulfed Harlem, one of the looters asks how the mayhem started. One of them replies: “A cop shot a woman or something.” Another says that it is caused by people’s reactions on Tod Clifton’s murder” (p. 499).

Again, one of the looters dragging a safe is killed by the police during which a stray bullet hits the narrator’s head. One of the men tells the narrator: “Man, you lucky you ain’t dead. These sonofabitches is really shooting now” (p. 497). In further reactions on the violations of human rights by the security agents, a group of young men organize themselves to fight the police. One of the young men says: “We aim to stop some of this head-whopping they been doing” (p. 455). All the above amount to the violation of the victims’ rights to life.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Human rights violations depict the sufferings and struggles of people whose rights are constrained by their superiors. In this study, civil and political rights and the various ways such rights could be denied were examined. Such rights include the rights to life, freedom of expression and assembly, right to fair hearing, right to respect for private and family life and right to political participation. The denial of these categories of human rights was examined in the selected texts chosen from Ghana, Nigeria and America, suggesting that human rights violations are everywhere, and not an exclusive reserve of any nation, civilized or uncivilized. The study maintained that human rights violations are representable in literature and could be engaged using the Marxist critical discourse. The study concluded that human rights violations are unacceptable and that the security agents could be oppressive, repressive and destructive despite their acclaimed responsibility of securing the people’s lives and property.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Giving the importance of security agents in safeguarding lives and property of citizens, the governments should include courses on human rights issues in the curriculum/training of the security agents. This is because some security agents seem not to be aware of such rights or take them for granted, thereby trespassing on the fundamental rights of the citizens. Such courses on human rights issues will help to equip the security agents in intelligence gathering and in the management of the complex situations in securing the citizens’ rights and property.
2. Different governments of the world should strengthen the aspects of fundamental human rights entrenched in their constitutions and give that hallowed section its pride of place to avoid chaos, anarchy, violent protests or even war that could result from violating the citizens’ rights.
3. Sequel to the above, governments should set up independent and impartial judicial bodies to adjudicate on the cases of human rights violations by the security agents. These independent, unbiased and corrupt-free bodies will see to it that justice is done concerning cases of human rights

violations by the security agents. Such unbiased judgements on the cases of human rights violations by the security agents could serve as deterrents to others.

4. The citizens need to be sufficiently sensitized on the operative mechanisms of the security agents to make them know when they are crossing their boundaries or initiating actions capable of compelling the security agents to violate their rights. This is because certain actions like resisting arrests, aggressive behaviors or violent protests could receive counter attacks from the security agents which may lead to the violation of the citizens' rights.

5. Lastly, this paper maintains that literature could be a veritable instrument in the ideological struggles of classes and then recommends that literature be made a compulsory subject in schools and colleges. This is because unlike any other subject, literature could provide an avenue for the exploration of human rights violations, the traumas, the struggles for freedom, and the demands for justice against the oppressive individuals, groups or agents. This could be a possible way of minimizing human rights abuse by the security agents.

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