

English literature

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Like a Winding Sheet by Ann Petry The short story Like a Winding Sheet is written by Anne Petry. The story revolves around the prejudice faced by the African American during 1945, a time when men were engaged in war and the women were engaged in the production of weapons needed during war. The background of the story was set in mild summers of 1945 surrounded by the environment of conflict, war and disruption which was the outbreak of the prejudice and discrimination against the African Americans. Mr. Johnson, the main character of the story, is living happily with his wife Mae. He is an African American citizen who is unhappy with his job. He finds his job degrading with long working hours and little time for sleep and rest. His boss is a woman and “ It was funny to have a white woman for a boss in a plant like this one” (Petry n. p.). His lack of interest in work often infuriates his boss. Their stern and hostile behavior makes him angry and it gets hard for him to resist the urge to beat her white employer, saying that he would never beat a woman.

Further in the story, Mr. Johnson encounters a white girl working at a coffee shop who refuses to serve him just because he is black; it could be solely Mr. Johnson’s thinking that made him to think that every white person hates the black person. However, he resists his anger with his heart pounding to beat her but somehow; he learns to control his angers and walks out of the coffee shop.

Anne Petry further explores how the bad sense of humor that Mae possesses makes Johnson to think that he is a black man with no respect in the society. She jokingly calls him a “ nigger” (Petry n. p.). Her bad sense of humor provokes him to take out his anger, frustration and humiliation he

encountered the entire day on her. The story projects that how the evils of racism was a bitter part of reality in American society in 1946. The story revolves around two main themes such as racial discrimination and domestic abuse. The domestic abuse that Mae faced was the outcome of the psychological aggression that was brought into Mr. Johnson due to the humiliation he faced by the hands of two white women. He hated to raise his fist against a woman but his aggression let him do that but this led to the death of his family's belief, not to hit on any female. Anne Petry explains how our bottled aggressions and frustrations make us to do things that we consider immoral. Johnson is a colorful example of a man who fails to control motions unwinding his sheets of anger and frustration on his wife.

Work Cited

Petry, A. *Like a Winding Sheet*. Literature and the Writing Process. Elizabeth McMahan, Susan x Day, and Robert Funk. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ Prentice Hall, Inc. 1. 84-0., 1945. Print.