Name of Student

Name of Professor

Name of Class

Day Month Year

Prayer to the mask is the masterpiece of Leopold Sedhar Senghor. He has expressed the ideology of Négritude with his strong words that cast an everlasting impression on the readers. He has expressed his point of view with a sense of empowerment in a most beautiful and deep way. It argues about the colonialism and its condemnation. It delivers a strong message that raises voice for the people of Africa in a thought-provoking way.

The poem is about an African man who visits spirits of his ancestors which are represented by masks by the poet *“that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any mortal smile”* (Prayer to the Mask).The main theme of this poem discusses spiritualism, customs, and traditions of precolonial Africa. His poem strongly reflects the condition of Africans in that time period when Africans were treated as inhumane and considered as extremely low. The man in the poem argues with his ancestors that they have made his face like that *“You have composed this image, this my face that bends”* (Prayer to the Mask). He calls upon his ancestors that the colonialism is dying and it is time that Africans get the place that they really deserve. He addresses the crimes of Europeans and all those who got power over Africans and treated them like animals. He addresses the extreme inhumanity of the world towards Africans which did not even leave little children. Little children with small hands and weak bodies were made to work hard like grownups; they sacrificed their childhood, dreams, and life for the hard labor of so-called superior races.

The condition of Africans who were thought as slaves by those who were in power is discussed by the poet as *“cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men”* (Prayer to the Mask).Because of racial discrimination and ugly concepts that were circling in the world, people of Africa were considered to work at their lowest, live with no right and supposed to be governed by those who were in power.

The poet basically discusses the power of Negritude in the poem and its significance for the people of Africa. Raising voice for something that demands freedom, rights, and humanity does not harm anyone in this world. Senghor stated Négritude as:

*“The sum total of black Africa’s cultural values’ …the cultural heritage, the values and above All the spirit of Negro- African civilization’ ‘the re-affirmation our being, and development of African cultural values."*

This poem has discussed how racism around the world poisoned the roots of society and made people commit inhumane sins. He discusses the significance of the time that Africans have to make their way through to achieve a humane place in the world.

Abiola Irele, mentioned in his “What is Negritude” that:

*“The term thus has been used in a broad and general sense to denote the black world in its historical being in opposition to the West and in this way resumes the total consciousnesses of belonging to the black race as well as awareness of the objectives, historical and sociological implication of that fact."*

Senghor has portrayed Negritude as everything in his poem. He illumed the importance of the chance that Africans had at that time, he motivated and empowered people to stand up for what is humane and right. His poem drives readers in pain and invokes the agony for the people of Africa. His this masterpiece was reflects the condition of the heart of every African who has suffered the cruelty of the world and raised awareness about Negritude.

Work Cited

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