

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the study

Racism is a relation in the society of a race-based worldview with prejudice, labelling, and discrimination. Racism can happen in social actions, practices, or political systems that support the expression of prejudice or dislike in unfair practices. It is would have occurred in all around the world. But most of them happened in The United States especially when it is still in the 90's century era. At that time many of "negro" have diversification in all aspects than "white man".

In 1930s racism was not illegal in The United States, still widespread at the time. Whites and blacks were separated and blacks were considered as 2nd class societies. Black people must to paid less than white and work harder than everyone else, often given the more 'dirty work'. Then black people wanted to change the way they were treated but it was very difficult to do this because these were several laws in The United States compulsory between 1876 and 1965 that gave a legal basis for separating and differentiating against African Americans.

Racism or race discrimination is a global issue that never ends from time to time and appears in different forms over time. Racism exists in the form of violence, unfairness, repression, and judgment in the treatment of someone who is considered different, by providing judgments that are measured based on racial, social characteristics or mental concepts about self. Therefore, according to Fredrickson explained that the term racism was first used generally in the 1930s

when describing the theory on which Nazi persecution was perpetrated against Jews. His understanding existed before the term was used to describe racism, then Fredrickson also had two concepts about racism, namely “difference” and “power”. Racism stems from a mental attitude that sees "them" differently from "us" permanently (Fredrickson 2002).

Racism occurs when people believe in the superiority they inherit from other races and drive to racial discrimination. Racist individuals sometimes discriminate against an individual or more races. Forms of racism have been around for thousands of years. In the past African-Americans were forced to get behind while riding the bus, Jews were required to wear a yellow David badge, Japanese Americans were isolated in tents during World War 2, Indian-Americans were seized from their land, and South African society racially divided. In modern times racism is seen in the form of graffiti (wall graffiti) that insults race, destruction of property rights, intimidation, even physical violence. Racism is also carried out openly, such as insulting or telling jokes about ethnicity. Until now, the problem of racism still occurs in various countries, including in The United States. The United States is a multiracial country, inhabited by all races of various kinds of people throughout the world (Alba 1999).

As a multi-ethnic country, the United States has the potential to face racial-based conflict, oppression, discrimination, and violence. Based on the data The United States is one of the most violent countries in the world, and this is being reflected in rates of young adults' lifetime exposure ranging from 76% to 82% for victimization and 93% to 96% for witnessing (Scarpa 2003). Being them as part

of an ethnic minority can distinguish who experience racial discrimination in many aspects very often. The survey shows (Kennedy 2018), the percentage of each group that they have been personally discriminated in the workplace, police and the legal system, seeking housing, and health care because of their race or ethnicity: Whites: 19%, 10%, 5%, 5%; black Americans: 56%, 50%, 45%, 32%; Latinos: 33%, 27%, 31%, 20%; Native Americans: 31%, 29%, 17%, 23%; Asian Americans: 27%, 18, 25%, 13%. As victims, being part of an ethnic minority is not only treated differently but is also subjected to violence.

The understanding of how the whites see the non-whites contributes to discrimination arising from racism. Racism as a form of ethnic dominance and social inequality (Dijk 1991), which means treatment differing from one race which is considered good and superior to another race which is not as good as the opponent, as a result of discrimination and the belief that the qualities of people are determined by their race. This racial issue has been rigidly enforced and discussed for a long time, particularly in America since the 17th century, when black is associated with enslavement.

The word racism itself can evoke a very strong emotional reaction, especially for those who have felt the oppression and exploitation that comes from racist attitudes and behaviour. As members of American coloured people, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, racism has created a social history shaped by prejudice and discrimination against them. For individual members of this group, racism has caused the pain to be oppressed. For those who are part of a cultural group that already has the power to oppress and exploit

others, the term racism often evokes equally powerful thoughts and emotional reactions that deny responsibility and participation in racist actions and thinking (Koester and Jolene 2003).

Inherent in various racist representations is a view that contains an unspoken understanding, but is empathically understood that whatever is 'white' is normal. The negative connotations of 'blackness' are also considered to be naturally correct. Stuart Hall (1987) describes the views of White Americans in the 19th century about black slaves who supported slavery of them and placed them as children of nature, as something less than 'civilized' humans, born by nature as a waiter. We can broaden our views on this naturalization process when taking action to support various power inequalities in terms of gender, social class, and so on. Stating that women are naturally better than men at caring for children is as dangerous as stating that black people are naturally better than white people at dancing (Burton 1999).

Relations between the majority-minority often lead to social conflicts characterized by subjective attitudes in the form of prejudice and unfriendly behaviour. There is an attitude of racial influence in which the majority claims biological superiority because of the assumption of negative values from minorities. In general, dominant groups tend to maintain their current position and resist the process of social change that might disrupt the existing status quo. Fear of losing power makes them oppressive on the one hand and ignores the productive potential of minorities on the other (Dijk 1991), which can then lead to discriminatory actions. During the world's conditions that are undergoing this

transformation, problems relating to being minorities, such as this continue to occur in communities in various parts of the world, including in The United States.

Conveying messages on issues to the public, such as issues concerning racism resistance, can not only be conveyed through print or electronic media but can also be conveyed through film. The mass media, both print and electronic media play a very important role in shaping prejudices against individuals and other groups. Film is one form of mass media can be a medium to convey messages directly to the public. Films can be a means of communication that can influence society through a series of images displayed. As Graeme Turner explained, the meaning of the film as a representation and reality of society. Film as a representation of reality means that film forms and represents reality again based on the codes, conventions, and ideologies of its culture (Sobur 2003).

A film is a communication tool that is capable and has the power to reach many social segments, which makes film experts have the potential to influence their audience. That, the film can cause anxiety and public attention when presented, for example about violence, rebellion, anti-social, etc. This is because the depiction is contrary to reality. Public anxiety arises from the belief that the contents of messages have moral, psychological, and social problems that are detrimental, especially to young people, and lead to anti-social behaviour. Film is also a medium of mass communication, which means that film as a means of delivering various types of messages in this modern era.

Various ways are often used in the process of communication, one of them is propaganda. According to Harold D Lasswell in his writings, *Propaganda Technique in The World War* (1927) propaganda is solely the control of opinions carried out through symbols that have meaning, or convey concrete opinions and accurate through a story, pictures, rumours and other forms. In his other book, Laswell also said that "Propaganda" is a technique to influence human activities by manipulating their representations (Lasswell 2013).

Racism seems to be a very interesting theme for Hollywood filmmakers to bring this theme to the big screen. The film has made a significant contribution to uncovering this issue in society and thus created awareness for very real problems. Several films have been listed on racism, from various angles, in whole or in part. Racism in a film does not only contain elements of discrimination but rather films that contain violence become top-grossing movies. Recently, there have been several studies that have researched films that contain violence into best-selling films. Forty-five best-selling films in 2005-2015 have more negative themes that contain violence than positive themes (Heasley 2018). Another study conducted by Bauer found that 30 superhero films contain more acts of violence than positive themes (Bauer, et al. 2016). Based on ticket sales at the box office, in 1992-2012, ticket sales of violent films at the box office became the best-selling movie (Barranco, Rader and Smith 2017). Zillman says that representatives of violence on films such as barbarian heroes and villains who slash, shoot, and machine-gun are sensations of cinema entertainment (Zillman 1998).

Some of the movies that depicted racism issues *Get Out* that tells the exploitation of whites American toward blacks American to be slave, *Detroit* is a documentary movie that tells the story of the Algiers Motel incident during the 1967 12th Street Riot, some white Americans who were not convicted after killing black Americans., and *3 1/2 Minutes 10 Bullets* is a documentary movie that tells a white man shoots a black teenage boy because of the rap music debate. Since the character marginalized and discriminated against violence, these movies seem to use racial issues.

The depiction of racism that contains violence against ethnic minorities in the United States which is an issue in this study was shown through a movie entitled *The First Purge* (2018). This movie contains many actions that cause physical injury. According to (Yekeley and Meloy 2012), violence is an action that can cause physical injury, carried out by one person to another person, or groups are motivated consciously or unconsciously. *The First Purge* (2018) directed by Gerard McMurray was released on July 4, 2018, by Universal Pictures. It has grossed over \$137 million worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing entry in the franchise (IMDb 2018). This movie is banned in Indonesia, not shown on Indonesian box movies, Indonesian Netflix, Indonesian google film, all who use the Indonesian domain cannot access this movie, except buying foreign TV channels can watch it or buying Blu-ray, this is because this movie contains too much cruel violence. So, I got this film by buying Blu-ray from Amazon. *The First Purge* (2018) is part of *Purge* series movie, this movie set was taken before the occurrence of the purge in the previous movie, *The First Purge*

tells the beginning of the concept of “purge” in The United States. The concept of a purge is all types of criminal acts are legalized every March 21, for 12 hours, for annual. Despite having the same concept "purge", but each movie in *the Purge* series has different attention.

*The Purge* (2013) this movie as the first series portraits a rich family and their spiteful neighbours. When “purge” began, a stranger entered who was a fugitive of their neighbour, he was rescued by one of their sons, and that's where the conflict began. It can be concluded that the purge as a system of violence for the individual's interests. *The Purge: Anarchy* (2014) as the second series, is a continuation of the first movie series *The Purge* in which the purge becomes the Annual Purge, in this movie depicting social-economic elements working class as anti-purge, and the purger as the upper class can buy those who under their class as hunting objects. *The Purge: Election Year* (2016) as the third series contains political elements, where there are senatorial elections in The United States, and one of the Senate candidates, a white American who became an anti-purge supporter. The senator received a lot of support from the citizens, but she was a threat to the NFFA who was the founder of the purge, and she was attacked by the NFFA supporters. So, it can be concluded that this movie illustrates the conflicts that occur between whites who have different political interests.

However, *The First Purge* (2018) clearly, focuses on a racial issue that is appropriate with the director of African Americans. In this movie, the concept of purge itself is a barbarian experiment, all types of criminal acts are legalized every March 21, for 12 hours, every year. It means that all criminal acts are permissible,



including killing which is the main objective of this barbaric experiment, all people can easily release their anger and hatred by hurting people or even killing. According to the NFFA, which is a powerful political party, the experiment was carried out aimed at reducing the crime rate, even by reducing the number of human lives that could reduce the number of economic crises in America.

The movie set is in Staten Island, especially in Park Hill, and this movie tells the origin of the purge. Staten Island, Park Hill is an isolated area, inhabited by those who as ethnic minorities, they are subjected to barbaric experiments by NFFA, white Americans. This movie describes how they are ethnic minorities who labelled as the others, but among them the ethnic minorities, black Americans get the lowest position by getting the worst stereotype among other ethnic minorities. Categorizing the class order depicted in the movie, black Americans are in the lowest category among other ethnic minorities, which is influenced by the history of slavery that has occurred in The United States. Although black Americans who are in the lowest class, but they become heroes for other ethnic minorities in the resistance struggle against white Americans. This is because they are the majority among other ethnic minorities and those who get the cruellest treatment that makes them strong fighters.

Three of the film *the purge* series directed by James DeMonaco who is a White American. So, these films depicted the purge as an individual interest that portrayed by White American, portrayed social class, and conflict inter-racial portrayed by whites. However, *The First Purge* (2018) directed by Gerard McMurray who is an African American. This film focuses on the racial issue,

through this film Gerard McMurray represents how is being as others. This film depicts ethnic minorities, African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. Gerard McMurray represents African Americans as the lowest race among minorities, becomes the most struggling against White Americans, also as a hero among minorities. Those content connect to the history of enslavement in The United States.

Several related studies discuss racial issues used to support this study. The first study is an undergraduate thesis by Nanda Sanjaya Utama from Universitas Airlangga entitled *Systemic Racism in Crash Movie*. This study focuses on the historical background of racial oppression toward African Americans that is portrayed in the *Crash* movie. The second related study is an undergraduate thesis by Grace Yunita Sari from Universitas Airlangga entitled *Racial Discrimination Presented in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Novel Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This study focuses on the effects of racial discrimination on African Americans during slavery and what kind of survival techniques. The third related study is an undergraduate thesis by Vinita Navyona Kurnia Arifin from Universitas Airlangga entitled *The Construction of Racial Issue in Get Out (2017) Movie* written. Arifin's study focuses on the White Colonization towards Black people. The last related study is an undergraduate thesis by Movie by Wayan Swari Mahayoni from Universitas Airlangga entitled *Negotiating Systemic Racism Through American dream in MCFALLAND, USA (2015)*. Mahayoni's study focuses on the American Dream as the solution to racial inequality toward Mexican Americans

through hard work and achievement. Thus, these related studies will be used as the references for the writer to discuss the analysis.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem

After watching the movie and determining the topic in this study, there is one major question:

1. How is systemic racism practised in *The First Purge* (2018)?

## 1.3. Objectives of the study

In connection with the statement of the problem, the objective of the study is

1. To reveal how systemic racism is practised in *The First Purge* (2018).

## 1.4. Significance of the study

This research seeks to show how through the social dimension of race, we see the world as one of the social problems. The writer hopes that through systemic racism, readers will be able to understand the concept of racial inequality toward ethnic minorities. The problem in this movie reminds us that in everyday life, racism still exists. The writer hopes this research will explain the study of racism. This research is also intended to provide readers with valuable insights into their academic discussion guides.

## 1.5. Definition of key terms

Race : Grouping of people based on physical differences biologically into categories that are generally considered different by society (Barker 2005)

Ethnicity : Large groups of people identified by common

- race, ethnic, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural origin or history (Oudhof 2007)
- Systemic Racism** : A conceptual framework to understand the racialized dimensions in the society: the racist framing, racist ideology, stereotype attitudes, racist emotions, discriminatory habit and actions, and extensive racist institution developed over centuries by whites (Feagin 2006)
- Oppression** : The framework was not a intentionally of history, But has been made and supported intentioned by white Americans (Feagin 2006)
- Violence** : An action that can cause physical injury, carried out by one person to another person or groups are motivated consciously or unconsciously (Yekeley and Meloy 2012)