

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

A human race is defined as a group of people that shared certain commons that distinguished them from other people. There are plenty human race in this entire world that have their own characteristics which distinguished them with other race. Therefore, it cannot be denied that there is a diversity in human based on their race. However, those diversity could not make a certain race is more previledged than the others. People are born equal, and people should be free. There should not be superiority or discrimination such as unequal facilities and treatment that certain race received (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 10-11).

People of color should embrace their culture and heritage. They must be proud of who they are such as African Americans who must have pride in being black and positive about their self (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 59). Black pride is about celebrating black culture, and how they are supposed to be proud of themselves biologically and racially (Eccles, Wong and Peck 2006). Many of literary works contain black pride as their issue. Those literary works try to speak up about equality that everybody is the same and he/she might be proud of who he/she is.

Racism refers to racial superiority, inferiority, and purity based on the conviction that moral intellectual characteristics, like physical characteristics, are biological properties that differentiate races (Tyson 2015, 344). Racism relates to an unequal power in society based on race that resulting in a discrimination. There

are many kinds of racism that African-Americans have received. They have experienced slavery and discrimination in workplace and public facilities.

The history of African-Americans begins with slavery. Africans arrived in America when white European settlers brought them to the America as slaves. There were different perspectives towards slavery in America during the 19th century that led to the Civil War. Right after the Civil War ended, slavery was abolished including the freedom for four million slaves. However, the racism caused by the slavery still continued. The black people then encouraged to make a movement of resistance, including the Underground Railroad, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Selma to Montgomery March. These events made the African American authors, writers, and poets mostly talked about racial injustice and discrimination in their writings (Tyson 2001, 153-154).

One of the poets who talks about racial injustice and discrimination in his poems is Langston Hughes. He was born on 1st February 1902 in Joplin, Missouri, when the African American was considered as a backward race in United States. He was inspired by W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, published the year after Hughes's birth in 1902. The work defined the lives of African American in the after-math of the Civil War (Rampersad and Roessel 1994, 3). He was a respected poet, because of his influential poems. He became known to the world when he was 19 years old. His poem entitled "The Negro Speaks of River" appeared in Du Bois' magazine called *Crisis* published in 1921 (Rampersad and Roessel 1994, 4). Works by Langston Hughes during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's were very influential. His poems and literature reflect black working-class lives in America.

He challenged racist prejudices, and argued against social status. Hughes' reflections unified African-American and African people around the world to nurture their strong black identity. He published his first poem when he was in high school. Langston Hughes also won several prizes, including Witter Bynner Undergraduate Poetry Prize in 1926 and the Spingard Medal by the NAACP in 1960.

This study focuses on analyzing the poems “I, Too”, “The South”, and “Let America Be America Again”. Those poems were written when there were mistreatment and oppression faced by African-American people. Hughes tried to express what African-American felt back then. Hughes represented the black people as an oppressed race, and they are still mistreated, as what happened at that time. However, through these three poems, Hughes tried to encourage black people to love themselves and be proud of what they are.

Hughes expresses his feelings about his proud of being black through the poem “I, Too”. The poem was written in 1924, when Hughes lost his passport and stranded in Genoa (Rampersad and Roessel 1994, 9), and later the poem appeared in the book *The Weary Blues*. It is said that in this poem, black people are mistreated. Through this poem, Hughes tried to encourage people that they should love themselves no matter how other people treat them. Hughes also believed that black people will have a better future ahead.

“The South” appears in Langston Hughes’s book entitled *The Weary Blues*, too, and published in 1926. “The South” talks about how racist the American was.

‘The South’ is racist towards black people, because, the South (the Confederacy) rejected the banning of slavery, based on the Civil War (Gunderson 1974, 919). Langston Hughes wants to express that how racist and cruel the South is. He illustrates the South is snob and cruel, although the speaker in this poem, who is a Black, has good personality, he/she is still mistreated.

“Let America Be America Again” published in 1935 in response to the Great Depression (Rampersad and Roessel 1994, 4). The poem expresses Hughes’s radical political views, talking about equality and freedom. Hughes wants to express that America should treat not only African Americans, but also other minorities in America as well as they treat the whites. Hughes deplored that America should be better than before. America is known as a free country, but America still treats its people unfairly, especially when it treats minorities and immigrants.

This study analyzes Hughes’s voices of color represented in each poem. The voice of color is applied to analyze the racial discrimination represented in each poem, then the analysis about racial discrimination leading to the black pride. The writer examines the ideologies in these poems with Critical Race Theory. The basic tenet that the writer chosen is the voice of color, because the voice of color is about the expression of people through their works. The voice of color allows people of color to expressed their experience through their works because their experiences made them benefited to speak about racial issues (Delgado and Stefancic, Critical Race Theory: An Introduction, Second Edition 2012, 9)

There are previous researches related to this study. One of them is from a journal article conducted by Jacques Mangama Duki, a Ph.D. entitled *The Essential Characteristics of Langston Hughes' Poetry and Their Impact on the Congolese Conscious*. In his article, he decodes Hughes' poems such as "I, Too". He stated that Hughes' ideas are powerful and empowering black people to love who they are. However, the gap between this study from Duki's work is that the writer examines the black pride in the poems as Hughes' voice of color, which means focusing on Hughes expressions towards African Americans through the poems, rather than the impact of the poems.

Another study conducted by Hend Hamed Ezzeldin with the title *Re-Deconstructing Reality: The Dream Motif in the Poetry of Langston Hughes*. This study focusses on the significant role played by dreams within the construction of reality in the poetry of the American writer Langston Hughes. Hughes recorded the subtleties of Black life and the dissatisfactions they confronted, battling to discover a put in a world that would or maybe deny their exceptional presence. He imagined of a world that would treat all people similarly and would grant voices to all minorities and ethnic groups. Hughes was hopeful that his dreams as well as the dreams of all the black community would be realized. The dream motif has passed through a number of stages in an attempt to reconstruct reality, both in the internal as well as the outer levels (Ezzeldin 2016). So far, that previous study will give valuable contribution to the writer's study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the issue that described in the background of the study, the statement of the problems for the study are:

1. How is black pride presented in each poem?
2. How is the Hughes's voice of color reflected in the poems?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of problems, the purpose of the study is:

1. To find out the way of presenting black pride in each poem.
2. To find Hughes's voice of color reflected in the poems.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The poets created poems to express their feelings, so the readers know what they have felt. Poets use issue related to them. Each poet has his/her own characteristics on the own works. Even, some poets made few works with the same issue. Those things distinguished one poet's work with others' works. Furthermore, the writer of this study examines what the poet's wanted to express through his poems, by digging the poems deeper. The writer also wants to learn the issue about black pride through Langston Hughes' poems "I, Too", "The South", "I, Too", and "Let America Be America Again". There are very few study in Universitas Airlangga about black pride on Langston Hughes poem. Therefore, the writer wants to contribute by making this study, so the students of English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Airlangga would be expected make studies about black pride on other poems as well.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Black Pride : proudness encouraging black people to celebrate and embrace their culture and heritage

Equality : the right between a group of different objects, persons, or circumstances that have similar social position and receive the same treatment

Racial Injustice : violation of right or of the rights of another that based on race.

Slavery : Slavery is any system in which principles of property law are applied to people, allowing individuals to own, buy and sell other individuals, as a de jure form of property.

Voice of Color : Minority status that brings competence a presumed competence about race and racism.