

Chapter I

Introduction

I.1. Background of the Study

Racism has never been an ending problem among the nations around the world. The issue of racism goes across communities, countries, and continents. As a multicultural continent with several different races, racism also spreads in the United States of America. America is often one of the first places people think of when racism is discussed. "In the United States race prejudice is predicated upon the belief that the colored race is naturally inferior to white race, physically, intellectually, religiously, socially and morally" (Cashmore and Jennings 13). Considers as colored race, discrimination and segregation should be faced by African American.

A Report from survival international about racial discrimination in Bracey's book entitled *Erasing Racism* mentions that there are many prejudice cases with black people as the victim of prejudice, such as police often stopped and arrested African American student who were walking on elite campuses for no other reason than that they were black, differentiation in getting good education between white and black students, discrimination in obtaining job; black job seekers get unequal treatment compared to white seekers, discrimination when seeking apartments and most of the time when looking for houses, the history of slavery and the rising antipathy against African immigrant in America. These discriminations effectively keep the nation segregated and isolate black (44-45)

However, since the rising of Civil Rights Movement, The Black Power Movement and The Black Arts Movement in 1960s, many black people start to struggle for equality in achieving their rights and opportunities as human being. That historic accomplishment is a sign of great progress and a hope of better things to come for racial equality and justice in the United States. Unfortunately, racism against African-Americans is still prevalent in the United States. According to Willis in his article *Racism in the United States* posted on 17 September 2009, despite laws and other protections against discrimination, African-Americans are still facing discrimination in housing, employment, and education. African-Americans are still victimized by red-lining insurance, an illegal practice in Pennsylvania and many other states.

“Although racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan have small memberships, they have been actively recruiting and holding rallies in Pennsylvania and other states and spreading their messages of hate against African-Americans, Jews, Catholics, and other minorities” (Willis Jim).

The illustration of racism also can be seen between two athletes, Tiger Woods and David Beckham; Woods was born as black American while Beckham was born as white. Woods is an American professional golfer whose achievements to date rank him among the successful golfers all the time. *Tempo Interaktif* on 8 December 2008 mentioned that he was the highest paid golfer in 2008. He has two children from his marriage with Elin Nordegren. However, everything changed after his affairs with several women blew up. His contracts

with several big companies such as General Motors, Nike, Titleist, American Express, Gillette were stopped because the companies doesn't want Woods' bad attitudes influence the image of their product. All of his achievements nowadays are nothing because of his affairs. It is quite different from Beckham. In *Cosmopolitan* magazine on April 2008 stated that he had several affairs with several women such as with Rebecca Loss and a night club singer Paris Mendez (33) However, as we can see until now his career is still sparkling in his football club "Los Angeles Galaxy". Even several companies still trust him to be a model of their products such as Adidas, Coca-Cola, Giordano Armany and many more. Here, racism can be seen between Woods and Beckham. Although both athletes have affairs but the way American society perceive them are completely different.

Seeing racism as a never ending issue, some black people try to show their protest against racism. Actually, the protest against racism issue itself can be reflected in several ways such as demonstration, literary work such as novel, drama, poetry, movie, even by song. From these several ways, song becomes the most effective one to get attention. One reason is a song can be easily broadcasted not only in country where the singer or the writer comes from but also around the world. Besides, song is a part of music. Music is part of every culture on Earth. Today, popular music is everywhere. It has become more and more unavoidable part of our lives (Storey 93). Many people feel that music makes life worth living. We can hear music on CDs and on radio or television. Therefore, song will not only be listened once however it will be listened many times.

Actually there are several songs which represent racism such as *Simple Song of Freedom* by Bobby Darin (1969), *I Ain't Marching Anymore* by Phil Ochs(1965), *Say it Loud- I'm Black and I'm Proud* by James Brown (1968), *You Haven't Done Nothing* (1974) by Joan Baez, Grandmaster Flash (1982), *The Message*, Boogie Down (1988) *Stop the Violence* by Public Enemy (1989) *Fight the Power* and *Black or White* by Michael Jackson (1991), *Big Black Buck* by Donnie (2002), *My People* (2007) by Angie Stone feat James Ingram and many more. Among these songs, the writer chooses Michael Jackson's *Black or White* as the object of her research because it is a very legendary song. Written, composed, and arranged by Michael Jackson as the king of pop make this song very famous and interesting to analyze.

The writer is interested in studying racism related with Michael Jackson's song entitled *Black or White* because from several songs related to racism, *Black or White* is the most legendary song. As one package, the lyrics and also the video clip seem very brave in criticizing and protest against racism in America. It can be seen from the lyrics and also the amazing video clip with 11 minutes duration. In this song we can find lots of words and phrases that are closely related to the protest especially against racism issue.

Black or White is the most popular song from Michael Jackson's Album entitled *Dangerous*. *Black or White* is described as a mix of hard rock, dance and rap with hard rock elements such as Slash's guitar and Jackson's vocal style. *Dangerous* was released on 14 November 1991. "It premiered simultaneously in 27 countries, with an audience of 500 million viewers, the most to ever watch a music video"

(*Dangerous Album 1*). The single also made an extraordinary and amazing debut in the UK. *Black or White* hit number one in the US, the UK, Mexico, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, India, Israel, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the euro chart 100. “This single is considered the biggest selling rock song of the 1990s” (Jackson 3). *Black or White* video is featured by Macaulay, Culkin, Tess Herper, George Wendt and supermodel Tyra Banks.

Michael Jackson was born in Gary, Indiana on August 29, 1958. He was born as the fifth children of the nine. He was born as a black American. His parents Joseph and Katherine Jackson were African American working class. Rafa Alexander in his book *Fakta dan Kontroversi King of Pop*, mentions that in 1964, Michael and his older brother Marlon had joined in a musical parody, they become the Jackson 5 (7). Since then, Michael’s singing and dancing talents were amazingly mature and he soon became the dominant voice in the Jackson 5. He proved that he is able to make his father proud of him.

In addition, Michael Jackson was unquestionably the biggest pop star of the '80s, 90s, and certainly one of the most popular recording artists of all time (Alexander 2). He began as part of American culture, and his talents became known worldwide. His strong characters and uniqueness make many people wanted to “be” like him. Many fans are trying to imitate the seemingly inimitable slide, called the moonwalk. Michael identical with hat, gloves, amazing dance talent makes him has uniqueness and style than other artist. He brings new changes as seen in each performance, and many people try to imitate his style not

only in the United States but also around the world. That is why he is the only artist who called as the king of pop. “Fans will remember where they were when they watched Thriller on TV. Many people will pursue their own dreams, as they find inspirations in the stories of this star” (Alexander 3)

Most all of his song is able to “hypnotize” many people around the world. He is born as a black but he is able to attract many fans and adored by million people around the world including white people. “Many of today’s Black celebrities owe their careers to him and yet despite his changing physical appearance and his controversy life he was a man scorned as much as he was loved” (Alexander 32). He is the only one who is called as the king of pop around the world. *Black or White* itself is a very famous and legendary song, it is the best selling rocks single ever with more than 5 million copies the entire world (*Dangerous Album 1*). Hence, Michael is one icon of popular culture.

The success of Michael Jackson’s song leads the writer to conduct a study toward his song. From all his works, the writers interested to choose Michael’s song entitled *Black or White* that represents protest about racism issue as her thesis object. This song which contain deep message about racism in United States that is being criticized by Michael Jackson are very interesting to analyze. In this thesis, the writer would like to investigate the song’s lyrics supported by the video clip in order to find out the meaning of the song and also Michael Jackson’s expectation as the song writer that want to be delivered in this song.

I.2. Statement of the Problems

In order to analyze *Black or White* song which contains of protest against American racism issue, the writer of the study would like to state three questions to elaborate her analysis:

1. How is the protest against American racism conveyed in *Black or White* song?
2. What are the issues raised in *Black or White* song?
3. For whom is the protest presented to and why?

I.3. Objective of the Study

Relate to the statements of the problem, the aim of the analysis of the thesis are:

1. To expose the portrayal of Michael Jackson's protest as reflected in *Black or White*?
2. To describe what issues raised in *Black or White* song
3. To get a right understanding on whom the protest are presented to and the reason behind.

I.4. Significant of the Study

Broadly, through this study the writer hopes that the result of this analysis will give a contribution to literary studies especially as the reference to help the readers and those who would like to analyze literary works such as novel, or song's lyrics that represents racism using African American Criticism and nonnarrative as the supporting theory.

Specifically, by analyzing the issues raised in *Black or White* which contains protest against racism by investigating the song lyrics supported by the video clip, the writer hopes that this work would become a valuable reference for the students of English Department of Airlangga University and also for those interested in the study about *Black or White* by Michael Jackson and American racism.

I.5. Scope and Limitation

In order to get a depth analysis, a scope and limitation will be determined in this study. The first thing to be noticed is the work itself. Here, the object of this study is a song entitled *Black or White*, written and composed by Michael Jackson.

This analysis focuses on Michael Jackson's protest about racism in America which is delivered in *Black or White's* lyrics supported by the video clip. Here, the writer wants to investigate *Black or White* song that contains Michael Jackson's feelings and expectations as the composer and the singer of the song regarding racism issue in America at that time. Therefore, this study will only concentrate on the data that is taken within the lyrics as the main object of the research, supported by the video clip and other sources from books, articles and online journals that can support the arguments of the analysis.

I.6. Theoretical Background

In order to analyze the research, the writer would like to use African American Criticism. The fact that *Black or White* is written and composed by

Michael Jackson who was born as a Black American has drawn the writer to use African American Criticism by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Gates uses the concept of “Signifyi(g)” or Signifyin’

Gates argues that in literature written by blacks we have to think the distinct black different. “Signifyin’,” is a name for a particular practice, which Gates links to “the dozens,” calling out, rapping, and testifying (Gates 4). Gates introduce Signifyin’ as a strategy that used by the Afro-American writers to deliver protest against racism by showing black aesthetics (7)

African American literary critics have sought to explain the unique quality of African American literature by citing its African sources or its African and European American sources. Much effort has been expended in delineating the distinguishing features of what has been identified as the African American literary tradition (Tyson 385).

African American criticism is created based on African American traditions which had been oppressed by whites. Their purpose is to present protest against discrimination and racism by showing black aesthetics and characteristics which is different from white culture.

I.7. Method of the Study

The object of the study is the song entitled *Black or White* which is written by Michael Jackson. To analyze the problems, the writer needs to do several researches to find information which is important to the analysis. The writer will also uses library and online research as the data collection. The writer also

compares the data from various books as well as online sources in order to provide sufficient supports to elaborate the studies. The data includes the main source of the analysis, *Black or White* lyrics supported by the video clip, and the biography of Michael Jackson. The next step is to arrange the data to observe the matter which is being analyzed. In order to get deeper understanding, descriptive method will be applied as a method of the study. The final step is making a conclusion based on the analysis.

According to Newborn, Descriptive research is a fact-finding with adequate interpretation. This follows the data classification. The true meaning of the data collected should be reported from the point of view of the objectives and the basic assumption of the project underway (Ratna 33)

Besides descriptive method, Nonnarrative theory by David Bordwell will be applied. Nonnarrative is other element beside narrative. According to *Bordwell in Film Art an Introduction* "Setting, costume and make up, lighting and figure expression and movement those are elements of Mise-en-scene" (Bordwell 141).

I.8. Definition of Key Terms

Racism: A believes in racial superiority, inferiority, and purity based on the conviction that moral and intellectual characteristics are biological properties that differentiate races.

Protest against racism: A complain to express strong position to or disapproval of racialism and discrimination based on different race.

Equality: Having equal rights, treatment, quantity, or value equal to all others in a specific group.

Bravery: the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course of action.

Freedom: freedom where people have the right to live without other's domination, it is a condition when people are free from slavery, dominations, oppression, persecution which created to keep black America is segregated.

Mockery: act of mocking in order to critic or protest toward something.