

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.I Background of the Study

The problem related deeply with the racism against African – American and other people of color has been a central and continuing in the feature of the U.S society. People understanding on tolerance and behavior as a superior at that time has influenced the thought of Americans. Separating between white and black color has always become a big issue since the US independence in 1776. President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, calls that racism is deeply rooted in American society (Washington Times, Dec 2014).

Racism appears strongly in society especially in the United States. There are many incidents in the United States related deeply with racism. In Cleveland, Ohio, a white police officer shot to dead black children named Tamir Rice with toy guns, aged 12 years in a public park. In another location, there is big news in the United States about the shooting incident involving a young black boy in Florida that was being shot by white American police (Jawa Pos, November 26, 2014). This evidence becomes a proof that racism still exists in America. Those facts bring us to some arguments that many people would argue that a classless/undifferentiated society leads to disorder and anarchy”. It is true that such a proposition has its share of disadvantages but it is an undeniable fact that the hierarchy in our society is what propels a person towards practicing racial discrimination.

This is a fact, due to what is happening nowadays is a reflection of what has been determined by the society. Those are the reasons-why African – British

great director Steve McQueen rises issue of racism in the beginning of the 19th century by *Twelve Years a Slave* film. *Twelve years a slave* tells American and the world that racism is unfair to the human dignity that should not happen in future on the white people have been intimidating and othering Blackmen as slavery for many years, and the Blackmen have struggled for their social status and acceptance from the white people.

Twelve years a slave is a film premiered in lifetime film network in America on August 30, 2013. The film director is Steve McQueen whose life background is African Western (British). He is a director from United Kingdom who directed some of the famous films like *Hunger* (2008), *Shame* (2011) and many other short films. *Twelve years a Slave* got prestige award for the best picture of academy award (Oscar) the Award from Golden Globe award, BAFTA Award, Screen Actors Guild Awards, Acapulco Black Film Festival and many more awards (www.imdb.com).

The director passion of this film has a passion to ask American people and all people around the world to consider and realize about human dignity. Human is basically equal, what makes them different is their ability, kindness and dedication in the community. Steve McQueen is a talented black director from Britain; he agrees and understands on how he and his other Blackman community become minorities in the society.

Twelve Years a Slave is an adaptation of the 1853 slave narrative memoir *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup, a New York State-born free African-American man who was kidnapped in Washington, D.C., in 1841 and sold into slavery. *Twelve Years a Slave* is a very good true story of Solomon Northup.

Northup worked on plantations in the state of Louisiana for twelve years before released. The first scholarly edition of Northup's memoir, co-edited in 1968 by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon, was carefully retraced, validated and concluded to be accurate. Other characters in the film were also real people, including Edwin Mary Epps, and Patsey that also fought for survival and freedom. In the pre-Civil War United States, Solomon Northup (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a free black man from upstate New York, was abducted and sold into slavery. Facing cruelty (personified by a malevolent slave owner, portrayed by Michael Fassbender), as well as unexpected kindnesses, Solomon struggles not only to stay alive, but to retain his dignity. In the twelfth years of his unforgettable odyssey, Solomon's chance meeting with a Canadian abolitionist (Brad Pitt) had forever altered his life. ([http://www.12yearsaslave./](http://www.12yearsaslave/))

In this film the whites reject the Blackman, in this case, Solomon Northup as main character on the film, even though he was rich and had enough dignity as free man in United States in that time. The writer of the study is interested in doing this study because society still rejects the black colors orientation. Therefore this attitude brings the writer to have a research about what exactly happened in racism for Blackman. The object of the study, *Twelve Years a Slave* film is one of the evidences that depicts the rejection of white people in a form of racism.

The previous studies about this film have been explored by the writer. The related studies writer is going to compare the studies equaling on the same object, *Twelve Years a Slave* film that has been explored by many researchers with many theories and many point of views in the last two years. One of them has been

analyzed by Stephanie Li on her research and analysis *about 12 Years a Slave as a Neo Slave* has been published by Oxford University Press on January 31, 2014. *12 Years a Slave* is best understood through one of the most important African-American literary genres of the past 50 years: the neo-slave narrative. First identified by Bernard Bell as “residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom” (289), neo-slave narratives have become most closely identified with texts like Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) and Ishmael Reed’s *Flight to Canada* (1976) that feature enslaved protagonists and which, as Ashraf H. The article explains; interrogate the “relationship between the history of slavery and the social significance of contemporary racial identity”.

Stephanie Li’s research is closely related to the way identifying the discrimination and racism toward African American since she is also the author of three books including *Something Akin to Freedom: The Choice of Bondage in Narratives by African American Women* (2010) and *Signifying without Specifying: Racial Discourse in the Age of Obama* (2011). Her next book, “*Playing in the White: Black Writers, White Subjects,*” will be published in 2015.

In addition, Li reveals inability of black men to protect enslaved women from rape, physical abuse, and the hardships of work all slaves endured, while Northup is explicit in his written narrative about his despair in seeing women like Eliza and Patsy beaten. Therefore this study is different from writer’s study since the previous study (Stephanie Li) was a slave as an object of analysis and focus without any aspect of analysis in racism. While the writer will analyze the film *Twelve Years a Slave* on the racism aspect on a Solomon Northup’s character and

support it using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focusing on Historical Approach, revealing the historical aspect of the story.

In another related study explained by Valerie Smith in the *Black Life in the Balance: 12 Years a Slave* published on February 20, 2014 by Oxford University Press suspects that Northup's *12 Years a Slave* has achieved success with a global viewing audience precisely because it is a story about the tenuous nature of black freedom. *12 Years a Slave* offers a nuanced view of the racial, gender, class, and power dynamics that underwrote and enables the system of slavery. Both through the narrative of a northern black man captured into slavery, and in the casting of actors from across the diaspora, the film reminds viewers of the national and global reach of the institution. The research shows that racism is not some abstract artificial concept, but it is part of the lives and social experience of African Americans in today's society and that it has real effects on the body.

The third study tells on article entitled *12 Years between Life and Death* by John Stauffer published on January, 31 2014 by Oxford University Press. Here the film brilliantly dramatizes the psychology of slavery about the violence toward the slaves and the main character Solomon Northup also emerges. *12 Years a Slave* highlights the theme of survivalist in several ways. Immediately after Northup becomes a slave, also after having enjoyed a successful—indeed “distinguished”—middle-class life in Saratoga Springs, New York. There is about the film analysis on the social and personal abuse by the white to Blackman in this case is Solomon Northup. The inhumanity in many scenes tells that slavery has no right to live properly and be equal with to white.

Those three studies explored the racism and the issue of ethnic in different time and circumstances. However, all the writers' study only told the racism with itself without supporting the historical background and the discourse analysis that will be analyzed more in this study. The character of Solomon Northup as a represented of Blackman in the mid-19th century in this study can complete the weakness of those previous studies. This research can give a new perspective about what was happening in mid-19 in United States in case of the racism that until now still happend everywhere. In this study the writer identifies racism represented in the film *Twelve Years a Slave* embodied through Solomon Northup character and the writer is going to reveal the historical aspect through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on specific Historical Approach.

The reason for the writer chose this object of the study is because of the writer's interest in main character Solomon Northup as one of the victims of the radical by white American in the mid of 19th century. Examining the racism theory that racism serves the interest of the capitalist or employer class dividing black and white worker reduced their potential unity and thus their bargaining power. The ending of the Solomon Northup in the story is getting his dignity again after twelve years being enslaved and inequality by the white man. The clear implication is that society needs to address systemic discrimination should not happend. There will be a lot of losses obtained when the society especially in big society is keeping racism in their life. The hardest things for Blackman in

This analysis portrays racism toward the Blackman in the mid of 19th in U.S and how Solomon get the freedom back in film of *Twelve Years a Slave*. The writer focused on the racism criticism toward Solomon Northup in the film

Twelve Years a Slave by using the theory of critical discourse analysis on historical approach by Ruth Wodak. Even though in the end, Solomon gets the freedom back from white kindness people not on his result of struggle. It is really clearly shown that this story is about the superiority of white man toward the Blackman.

Therefore, this film can create a new opinion about how America treated the black men in mid-19th and current. Since the Black man has a big portion in the government the paradigm has already changed that black man dignity is equal even though the implementation is not as same as the jargon. The human dignity between white or black people has same and equal in the society.

I.2 Statement of the Problem

The statements of the problems proposed in this study is as follows;

1. How do five discursive strategies work on the film *Twelve Years a Slave* in potraying racism?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study which is related to the statement of the problem above is:

1. To identify the potrayal of racism embodied in the Solomon Northup in *Twelve Years a Slave* film.

I.4 Significance of the Study

Through the objective of this study, the writer would like to elaborate some of the significance of the study. First, the writer estimated that the conflict which is experienced by the main character, Solomon Northup in *Twelve Years a Slave* film related with the real life, as the writer explained before that this film

based on the true story which is happened in 1841s,so the writer tries to formulate this and hope that it is quite good material study about racism issue with the theory of critical discourse analysis on historical approach by Ruth Wodak. Second, there are some conflicts which are appeared in this film. The racism towards Solomon Northup as main character and his journey as African American to fight with emotional without any struggle from him, until support from the cameo character by Brad Pitt.It can be interesting for the readers, so the writer thought that this study can be the reference for the reader to have a different perception towards the racism in United State in that time and the writer also hopes that the readers can give more attention to the racism. The last purpose of the writer in making this study is to give the contribution to Cultural studies in Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Airlangga especially in Racism issue.

This film was analyzed using the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on historical approach. To investigate historical, organization, political topics and texts; the discourse – historical approach attempts to integrate much available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social field in which discursive events are embedded. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be defined as being fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse). Further, it analyzes the historical dimension of discursive action by exploring the ways in which particular issue of discourses are subject to diachronic change (Wodak.1990: Wodak 1994: Wodak, 1996). More

importantly, this is not only viewed as “information”: at this point we integrate social theories to be able to explain the so-called context. In her book, she argues that one of the most salient distinguishing features of the discourse-historical approach is its endeavor to work interdisciplinary, multi methodically and on the basis of a variety of different empirical data including background information (v. for example Wodak et al. 1998 and Wodak et al. 1999).

Wodak divides the context of discourse into four levels named triangulation concept: (1) the immediate, language or text internal co-text: (2) the intertextual and inter discursive relationship between utterance, text, issue and discourse: (3) the extra linguistic social/sociological variables institutional frames and specific context of situation (middle range theories): (4) the broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in related to the grand theories (Wodak,2006,p.67)

This study analyzes racism embodied in the Solomon Northup, a character in *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013) film. This study contained main questions which related to the issue that the writer analyzed. Deeper understanding of relevant issues concerning racism and historical approach by Ruth Wodak will be discussed further in this film.

In this study, the writer applied qualitative approach since this study is using the film as the object. There are some steps to conduct this study. Qualitative approach is commonly used for research which relies on the interpretive and critical approach to social sciences in which the report often contains rich description and detail explanation. In this case, the representation

which is depicted in racism criticism is dealing appropriate with qualitative approach.

The writer did some steps, first analyzing the subject for study of literary work that be examined: in this case Solomon Northup as the main character. Second step is watching the film to make the writer understand more about the character and the conflict which is happened in the film. Third, the writer is focusing on the main character Solomon Northup and trying to analyze the racism which happened to him by his society. Fourth, the writer is trying to formulate the conflict on film *Twelve Years a Slave* by exploring the issue of racism. Last the writer is identifying carefully to some of the aspects and elements in linguistic such as grammar, vocabulary, and syntax.

The writer collects the data from the source above, film *Twelve years a slave*. The writer is also looking for another information or the secondary sources from the library, online researchs like review and critics and also the plot of the film *Twelve years a slave* to collect the data that the writer needs beside Louis Tyson, and another relevant sources such as journals, PDF files containing the issue that the writer analyze.

The writer includes the concept of theory Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Ruth Wodak. She divides the context of discourse into four levels named triangulation concept: (1) the immediate, language or text internal co-text: (2) the intertextual and inter discursive relationship between utterance, text, issue and discourse: (3) the extra linguistic social/sociological variables institutional frames and specific context of situation (middle range theories): (4) the broader

sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in related to the grand theories (Wodak,2006,p.67).

In analyzing the film, *Twelve years a slave*, and the writer used the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA) on historical approach by Ruth Wodak which focuses on racism issue toward Solomon Northup. The writer also wanted to concentrate on Non Narrative of this in film. Non Narrative is also an important aspect that the writer had to analyze because in the film especially in Racism and discrimination film, it has many differences to others film in some elements such as the camera, scene, editing, sound, colors and acting aspect or gesture.

I.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Blackman** : a term used in certain countries, often in socially based systems of racial classification or of ethnicity, to describe persons who are perceived to be dark-skinned compared to other given populations. (Wikipedia)
- Racism** : racism must be understood as ideology, structure and process in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different ‘race’ or ‘ethnic group’. (Essed 1991: 43)
- Discrimination** : refers to the generalized and absolute evaluation of real or fictitious differences that is advantageous to the accuser and detrimental to his or her victim. (Memmi 1992:103)