

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

United States of America is a country which was formed by many cultures and races. However, the white Americans dominated the society by becoming the majority group. The people of color have been long considered as the minority group. The white privilege, unfortunately, have made such an unfair treatment to those who belongs to the color people. Yet, black Americans had it worst. African Americans have a long history regarding racism and oppression. African American had has experienced slavery in almost 250 years in the past (Ferris State University 2018). Americans called this period with a term called *black slavery*. Black slaves were made to work on the plantations which produce cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco crops for fifteen until sixteen hours a day. Further, they still had to do some other chores (Patrick 1997). This is how black were treated back then, till the slavery was officially abolished in 1865 at the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution by Congress. This statement has also been strengthened by the Fifteenth Amendment which gave the right for the African American people to vote and prohibiting any kind of discrimination based on race, skin color and national origins (Drexler 2019).

White privilege is the product of everyday racism. The notion about privilege means one could have more values than others. Thus, it means that one should withstand such a disadvantage, while the other could enjoy the advantage.

The one who bear the disadvantage was the color people, especially the black. Meanwhile, of course, the white people had the advantage. Black people have to face oppression from the society as the result of the white privilege. In returns, black people could not compete with white people in society, such as in job hunting, education, and public service (Farley and Gregory 2005, 33). These actions are categorized as racism toward the black. It caused psychological effect on the black people, which makes them feel inferior as a nature (Bivens 2005, 44). Moreover, the black people tend to surrender to the white rather than trying to compete with them. It is surely the result of being treated as an inferior all of their live without any way to escape. This is what the racist theorist called as psychological effect, which has another name called internalized racism. Internalized racism is the systematic racism constructed by the society which makes people of color believed in white superiority (Tyson 2015, 346).

Internalized racism forced black people to ‘agree’ with the oppression they got (Lipsky 1982, 144). Black people, in all means, believed that they were inferior. It prevents black people from realizing and putting themselves in action to protect themselves from the oppression. Black people believe that they possessed no power to overpower the majority group. They suffer from self-destructive behaviors, such as having low esteem. Thus, patterns of internalized racism were actually misinterpreted as ‘the way they are’ without any hints to change it because it is becomes familiar as they think it belongs to their culture. These kinds of mindset have locked them up into their roles as victim of oppression (Lipsky 1982, 145).

Everyday racism occurred by the term called “ordinariness”. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001, 7), “racism is ordinary... ordinariness, means that racism is difficult to cure or address.”. When the society have built the white privilege as an ordinary, it is rather impossible to change this mindset. Hence, white privilege still existed in America until today. In addition, this ‘ordinariness’ made the racism which was practiced in the society became natural thing to do. Hence, the society became unconsciously repeating racism as if it was not a wrong thing to do (Bivens 2005, 45). Thus, internalized racism is easily practiced in American society.

White, who believed as the founder of the new land and the origin of America, has more advantages since they are majority. Thus, the new comer of the other skin color has no place in America. In result, color people have been experiencing such an unfair treatment from the society. Therefore, even an American-born African is not considered as an American because of their black inheritance. It is the impact of how the social thought or prejudice about black people, who are dangerous, uncivilized, and villainous. Slavery was long abolished in 1865, yet, black people still being oppressed by the society. These stereotypes are produce by society to maintain the power domination of white. Since the majority of American society is dominated by white, black people have no chance to overpower it. Thus, it comes to the statement that racism is not disappearing but it is just going ‘underground’ (Tyson 2015, 344-365).

Since Trump wins at the election on 2016 as the new president of United State of America, racism toward the people of color become more uncontrollable. Boghani (2020) said, “Trump became the face of the so called “birther” movement.”. The ‘birther’ movement is the conspiracy in which believed that the first African American’s president, Barack Obama, was not born in the United States. This movement is questioning the origin of Obama to confirm his ineligibility to hold the status as the president of America. Trump uses this conspiracy to attract public’s interest and gain supports from white people on his campaign. Even after wins the election in 2016, Trump has show his indifference toward the other races. “He challenged Obama’s citizenship, ...argued that immigration was changing the ‘character’ of the United States and openly courted white supremacists” (Eddie S. Glaude 2018). Trump also promised to build a wall along the border’s entire 2.000-mile length to prevent the immigrants keep coming and seek asylum in America (Rodgers and Bailey 2019). He wants to keep and bring back the originality of America, which dominated by white’s culture, that has been broken on Obama’s era. Thus, in returns, the openly racism by the new white presidents brings African American in disadvantages because they were labeled as people who are not belong to the white’s dominated society.

Responding to the discrimination and oppression, black American writers have expressed it into literary work, such as *Tyler Johnson Was Here* by Jay Coles. This novel is one of literary works which brings the issue of internalized racism on the story. Coles was a young black author who was born in 1995. Despite his young age, Coles has experienced the internalized issue which made

him write his debut novel *Tyler Johnson Was Here* (2018). Regardless of the fact that this novel was his first work, Coles has a remarkable recognition for delivering black oppression issue which affected a teenage black boy psychologically that surprisingly was based on real experiences. He suffers from losing a cousin due to police violence. Hence, Coles growing up seeing many of his kind lose their life due to the same causes. Coles said that even though he did not get it at the moment due to his young age, he felt anger and pain as a response of that accident. However, there is nothing he could do.

The novel is about Marvin Johnson who is looking for his twin brother, Tyler, who went missing after a gunshot which happened on a party they were attending. The set of this novel is Sterling Point, Alabama on 2018. It is not a rare view if there were police visits, vandalism, gang-infested streets, robberies, and gun violence in their neighborhood. The father of this twin has being imprisoned over some crime he did not commit for eight years. Even though their father is a proper black man who have decent job, it is inevitable for him to avoid such a false accusation. Thus, it left such a big wound on them both. Moreover, the hatred toward the cops actually peaked once when Tyler had to lose his life due to being shoots three times by the racist white police officer Marvin, who is the twin of Tyler, becomes vulnerable as he knows that he lost his sibling and could not do something over it. The process of how Marvin realized that he is living in a *white man's world*, how he always told himself to surrender to the oppression and how he portrays the internalized pattern will be the discussion of this study. This study intends to discuss about the internalized racism which is experienced by Marvin.

The black people realized that they were living in the white's man world, thus, unfair and injustice treatment just an inevitable experienced and they got used to it. This is all because black discrimination and segregation is an everyday life. The oppression which becomes an ordinary thing happened, unfortunately, impacting on psychological aspect for the black people. The black American believe that they could not avoid the oppression from the majority group because it is *a white man's world* that they are living in. Thus, it is better to just surrendered. It is proved that racism initiated systematically and powerfully enforced by the culture and the institution of the member of majority (Lipsky 1982).

Internalized racism is considered as a systemic oppression, thus, it need to be separated from human wounds, such as self-hatred, in which all people become helpless (Bivens 2005, 45). Internalize racism patterns were misinterpreted as the part of black's culture. However, it is actually exists as a psychological response to the oppression. Racism was practice daily and socially constructed as a standard life of Americans, hence, people of color who experienced unfair treatments became subconsciously aware of their inferiority towards the white American (Febrina 2012, 1). Hereby, it is significant to comprehend internalized racism which is systemic; since it has cleared that the problem is not solely of individuals but it also lays on structural problem.

African American are experiencing not only physically, but also psychologically discriminated. However, this study would only examine the psychological impact of the racism. Samuels and Clenora (1999), argues that

black develop the ontological structures and mythological thought system, regarding the white privilege, to interpret and strengthen their definition of self and existence, in fact, have more harmful impact on them.

Racial discriminations experienced by the African American are not only physically, but it also psychologically. However, this study would only examine the psychological impact of the racism. Samuels and Clenora (1999), argues that black develop the ontological structures and mythological thought system, regarding the white privilege, to interpret and strengthen their definition of self and existence, in fact, have more harmful impact on them. Internalized racism is the manifestation of how ordinary racism could be in the society.

The aim of this study is to reveal the internalized racism pattern which developed by the main character, Marvin. In order to analyze this study, the internalized racism' patterns proposed by Suzanne Lipsky and found four patterns which portrayed by Marvin, which are; individual relations, internalized stereotypes, needing to feel good right now, and survival. Two basic tenets of critical race theory from Delgado and Stefancic, which are; everyday racism and social construction, also being used to prove the racism practiced in the novel. This study focused on how Marvin being affected psychologically by the black stereotyping. Thus, it makes him believe that black people should submit to the white as he has acknowledging that he lives in a 'white man's world.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In order to analyze the pattern of Internalized racism developed by Marvin in the novel *Tyler Johnson Was Here* by Jay Coles, the writer of the study would like to state one question to elaborate her analysis:

How is internalized racism portrayed through the main character, Marvin, in Jay Coles' *Tyler Johnson Was Here*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Regarding to the statement of the problems, the aim of the study is:

To examine how the main character, Marvin, experiences internalized racism in the novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Black slavery was marking the start of the existence of physical discrimination. Even though the black slavery has long been abolished, the practiced of black racism still remained. Racism becomes habit to the American society. Thus, the psychological impact still remained. This study is expected to give a reminder to the readers that black oppression still exists and how it has been portrayed by the black author on a literary works such as novel. The other research about internalized racism on a literary works had the setting of the early American history, however, this study used the setting from 2018 where Trump become the new president of America. Trump is well-known for his indifferent with immigrants, thus, racism in his era is severe. Thus, this study is held to examines how black writer portrayed racism in the era of Trump.

The writer of the study wishes that this study has a contribution as a reference for the students of English Department Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Airlangga who also has interested in analyzing literary work using African American criticism. It will remind the reader that even the term have been diminished, however, the habit to oppress and being oppressed still exist. Also, the writer of this study hopes that this study would become worthy addition amongst the studies of Internalized racism, and Jay Coles' *Tyler Johnson Was Here*.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

There are some important terms needed to be defined. Those are listed as follows:

African-American Racism : Various forms of physical, emotional, social, economic, and psychological exploitation and oppression of black Americans of African (J. M. Jones 1988).

Everyday racism : Racism is an ordinary thing. It is not aberrational—“normal science”, rather, the usual way society does business, the common, or everyday experience of most people of color in this country (Delgado and Stefancic 2001).

Internalized racism pattern : The chronic patterns resulting from systematic and institutionalized mistreatment (Lipsky 1982).

Racism : Racism is the expression of racial prejudice or aversion through individual actions or social and institutional practices (Jones and Carter 1996).

Social construction : Races are not objective, inherent, or fixed. Race corresponds to no biological or genetic reality, rather, are categories that invented, manipulated or retired when convenient by society (Delgado and Stefancic 2001).