



## **REPRESENTATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN KASI LEMMONS'S**

### ***HARRIET***

Anggi Veronika Simanjorang<sup>1</sup>, Syamsul Bahri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> English Literature Program, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

Correspondence E-mail: [simanjorang.anggi13@gmail.com](mailto:simanjorang.anggi13@gmail.com)

#### **ABSTRACT**

In this social condition, it is undeniable that cases of discrimination still dominate actions that are still widely felt by individuals, or groups of people. This discriminatory attitude is still often found in social, cultural, school and work life. This study aimed at identifying the kinds of racial discrimination in Illustration and dialog of script and movie biographies about Harriet Tubman and what are Nigger's resistance toward those discriminations in the movie. This study was conducted by applying descriptive qualitative method. The sources of data were taken from the script. The research instrument was the

researcher herself by using a tool including laptop and books. The results of this research showed that in Harriet movie, there were five types of discrimination with the total of verbal antagonist (37,037%), avocation (18,518%), segregation (37,037%), physical attack (7,4071%). Racial discrimination is a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, and finally discrimination found as the most dominant thing that the depict racism in the movie.

#### **Keywords:**

*Racism, Discrimination, Resistance, Movie*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The formation of racism causes Discrimination between teams that drives the emergence of the latest social ideas and values. Discrimination is defined as a violation of the fundamental principle that each person should be treated equally in equal status. Summarized from Craig (2005), discrimination is divided into four components: 1) the individual or group is treated differently between the victim and the comparator, 2) the difference may be detrimental to a particular racial individual or group, 3) the difference between treatment and effect is causally related to the characteristics of the individual or racial group protected by the anti-discrimination laws, and 4) no exceptions or justifications are permitted for such actions.

A person with a second-generation non-western background have the highest level of perceived discrimination. However, among ethnic minorities with native experience and

citizenship, there is a high percentage of perceived membership in discrimination target teams. This unavoidable contact between various groups of crimes and discrimination, beginning with robbery, humiliation, sexual harassment, trafficking, and murder, has finally emerged as a result of racism. Ethnic countries, as well as the United States, have been dealing with it for decades. "Once someone of the black race has decided to become one of the blacks in American society means that he or she must always be prepared to face anti-black action by white people, in many places and at many times for an indeterminate amount of time. Being black means experiencing various forms of racial discrimination from birth to death" (Feagin 2010:187). This unavoidable contact between various groups of crimes and discrimination, beginning with robbery, humiliation, sexual harassment, trafficking, and murder, has finally emerged as a result of racism. The delivery of messages relating to problems in society, including the issue of racism, can not solely be sent through numerous news, each in print and electronic media, however also can be conveyed through films.

Harriet 2019 is a biographical work based on the real history of a woman named Harriet Tubman in 1871 from slavery in America. Harriet Tubman is a single figure of the slavery abolition movement. Tubman herself was a slave who escaped detention in Maryland and made at least 19 trips to free many slaves. This movie mainly tells about the struggle of a woman's first mission to help other slaves escape from the place of bondage. It reveals Harriet Tubman, a slave in the 19th century who is known for his heroic story. Harriet managed to help about 70 slaves to escape in the years before the civil war in the United States. This film shows several incidents of racism associated contain a background story concerning the clashes that occurred. One event will result in another event that may have consequences for the characters within the film, and zip can stop it.

The movie tells about the struggle of Harriet's own life as the main character that experienced a bad condition as a slave, which causes discrimination feeling in her town. Slightly different from previous research on race caused by gender discrimination, Harriet experienced the case due to the bad experiences, and she had been mistreated for her family and herself for a long time by the white race.

*Harriet: Slavery is still alive. Those rice fields downriver are feeding Rebel troops, with the toil of a thousand slaves still in bondage. Our mission is to free those slaves. We've waited years to be allowed to fight in this war against our enslavement. And it will not be won without us! Now is our time! Are you ready to kill the snake?.*

The disregard for discrimination continued until she became a fighter for her people. This discrimination happened not just once, it was repeatedly in other situations even affecting her life. She felt depressed with that condition, and then she decided to go to Philadelphia to find Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery society, to freeing his people from slavery. This uses the racial discrimination theory by Gordon Allport to describe the history behind discrimination then, to analyze the kinds of discrimination

This research investigates the causes of racial and analyzes how discrimination in America has reflected in the movie entitled Harriet. This film based on a real tragedy, and the researcher wants to deeply examine the conflicts of racism that have occurred and are still emerging in the present era. Instruct the readers about various issues and conflicts typical to *Afro-Americans*

## **METHOD**

This research aims at finding the discrimination in the movie script "Harriet". In this research, the researcher would like to find out racial Discrimination as seen in Harriet movie. The researcher takes the data from Harriet movie script. This research focused on the subject of Afro-American discrimination in Harriet movie script. The discrimination is analyzed from the utterances spoken by all characters in the movie. Harriet was a movie by Kasi Lemmons in 2019 and contained 112 pages of the movie script. The researcher used the discrimination theory by Gordon Allport (1954) to find the types and classified the data into five categories of discrimination used in the utterances of the movie.

This research used five relevant studies as a cooperation of this research, Shelley Cob (2018) analyzed about postfeminist, woman's image in serial TV program. This research analyses of race in friends and its representation of gay characters (and others of non-normative identities), Joy Banks (2018), in his article "Invisible man: examining the intersectionality of disability, race, and gender in an urban community". This study aims at analyzing the ways in which an African-American male with cerebral palsy constructed counter-narratives as a tool for challenging the dominant discourse which marginalized his personal experiences within an urban community through from Invisible man's novel. Rachel M. Scrivano & Seth P. McCulloch (2020), in their article "Exploring the Complexities of Racial Inequality and Grandparent-grandchild Relationships in the Classroom: A Review of the Film Black or White". Mike Binder's Black or White (2014) is a contemporary film that depicts an unusual family dynamic between a biracial elementary-aged girl and Black and White

grandparents. Rachel M. Scrivano & Seth P. McCulloch (2020), in their article “Exploring the Complexities of Racial Inequality and Grandparent-grandchild Relationships in the Classroom: A Review of the Film Black or White”. Mike Binder's Black or White (2014) is a contemporary film that depicts an unusual family dynamic between a biracial elementary-aged girl and Black and White grandparents. Jacob Ki Nielsen (2012), "Silent but imperial: ethno-racial transgressions and interracial brotherhood in the French–Hong Kongese fiction film Vengeance (2009).

From previous research, the writer were not find research with the same title as the author's research title. The previous study above in the form of several journals related to the conducted of writer research which became the references so that the writer can enrich the theories used in studying the research conducted. However, the writer raises some research as a reference in enriching the study material on the author's research. From these previous researches it seen that this research is using different object, this research is using Harriet movie as the object. All these relevant studies inspire the writer to analyze racial discrimination. This research used Harriet movie as the object where this film is a true story of the struggle of a black warrior in the 20th century.

This study conducted by using qualitative as a research method. Qualitative research was descriptive in which the writer is interested in the process, meaning, and understanding gained through word or picture (Creswell 2014). The qualitative method is considered relevant for this research on things in the form of actions that reflect racism and social stratification in the activities of whites against blacks based on their representation in Harriet movie.

## **RESULTS**

In the movie entitled "*Harriet*", the researcher examined each kind of discrimination of the utterances and the actions that showed in Harriet's movie. The data were identified according to the level of discrimination used in the film, the researcher found 54 data that described discriminations. After identifying the data, the researcher classified the data into 4 kinds of discrimination and found that there were four out of five types of discrimination that happened in the film, they were; 1) verbal antagonists, 2) avoidance, 3) segregation, 4) physical attack, as showed in table.

No.	Kinds of Discrimination	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Verbal Antagonists	20	37,037 %
2.	Avoidance	10	18,518 %
3.	Segregation	20	37,037%
4.	Physical Attack	4	7,4071 %
	<b>Total</b>	54	100 %

According to the data, the characters in *Harriet* suffered four of it except extermination.

Below are some of the data:

### 1. Verbal Antagonists

#### Datum 1.

Foxx : Minty! She is gone!

Gideon : Stop right there, **nigger!** Where is she? Where's Minty?

John : I told you, I was just coming to see her

The term "nigger" was used as a form of discrimination during slavery and is still used to construct racism against African Americans today. Verbal antagonism is racial discrimination that is carried out through insulting or using words. This includes insults and disparaging racial remarks made in or out of the target's presence. One of them gives the word "Niger" to Afro-Americans as a derogatory term (Allport,1954: 54). Because the term "nigger" was frequently used by white Americans during the slavery era, it is still considered a racist term in the United States and can incite hatred in Afro-Americans who hear it.

#### Datum 2.

John : Suh, me and Minty, we thinking about having a family... and we want our babies born free. So we hired a lawyer...

Brodess : You hired a lawyer. Ben, what the hell is this **nigger** talking about? Hear that, Eliza? We got lawyer-hiring **niggers** right here. You got this will?

The point of verbal antagonist in discrimination context here was despite the right. Enforcement of utterances that corner a group of people that causes conflict and discomfort

in interacting in the social environment. In this discussion, the repeated mention of the nigger against Afro-Americans is one of the terms that discriminate against these people.

## 2. Avoidance

### Datum 3.

Marie Buchanon : You got a man?

Harriet : My husband, John. **He free like you. He was go to run with me, but I's scared if we get caught, they had take his freedom. So I left him.**

The sentence "*He free like you. He was go to run with me, but I's scared if we get caught, they had take his freedom. So I left him.*" showed that Harriet (Minty) Minty ran away because she felt pressured and couldn't find freedom in Brodess' bondage area. So he went to meet the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society to plead for her rights. Avoidance can be a way for a person to feel more at ease in a social setting by grouping himself according to the circle of their desires. Avoidance refers to racial discrimination in the form of escapism to avoid or stay away from a person or group, or refers to preferring the comfort of one's own racial group over interaction with other racial groups (Allport, 1954:56). This action is taken to gain comfort when interacting with other people or to gain a distinct advantage for a group of races. However, this will gradually lead to a form of action against a group of races or things that are distinct from another group.

### Datum 4

William still : Very good. So, tell me, Harriet, how would you characterize your master?

What kind of man was he?

Harriet : He de devil. **Most whites** I know is devilish.

William Still : Not all of them. Mr. Garrett just got you to me.

The point of avoidance in discrimination was limited the inferiors rights and lives. The niggers could not live as normal human. Their lives were rued and white American had been made a path for them about what they should do. In the end it will make a people either as a group or individually will do avoidance to get comfort and freedom for their lives.

### 3. Segregation

#### Datum 5.

John : Sir, me and Minty, we thinking about having a family... and we want our babies born free. So we hired a lawyer...

Brodess : **You hired a lawyer.** Ben, what the hell is this niggertalking about? Hear that, Eliza?  
**We got lawyer-hiring niggers right here.** You got this will.

The sentences " *You hired a lawyer*" and " *We got lawyer-hiring niggers right here.* " described that the Brodess as white American and also their leader is not sure about the decision taken by John, so he opposes and thwarts their demand for the freedom of their children. Segregation is the act of separating people of different races when both perform actions of the same action, such as going to school, going to the cinema, eating at a restaurant, using the restroom, and renting or buying a house. Segregation is a form of racial discrimination that occurs between individuals or groups when actively excluding members of a racial group who are disadvantaged or who are not part of the allocation of resources and access to the institution (Allport,1954:56).

Racial segregation will still occur in many communities because of the actions of their members. However, as everyone's perspective moves toward the realization that everyone is a member of the same human family, such practices are becoming less common, and more and more communities are becoming aware of them.

#### Datum 6.

Eliza : *You have the gall to stand here and tell us you been plotting against us for two years?*

Brodess : ***Now you listen here, girl. Your daddy may be free and your husband too, but you and your mama, your brothers and sisters - belong to me, for life. Your babies will belong to me, and their babies, TO USE OR SELL AS ME AND MY BOYS SEE FIT! YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!!.***

The statement " *Now you listen here, girl. Your daddy may be free and your husband too, but you and your mama, your brothers and sisters - belong to me, for life. Your babies will*

*belong to me, and their babies, TO USE OR SELL AS ME AND MY BOYS SEE FIT! YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!!*" is a form of segregation in law that is carried out by the majority against the minority. Bondress believes that no matter how much Minty and her family try to escape slavery, they will fail.

#### 4. Physical Attack

##### Datum 7.



- Eliza : Don't you say "yes ma'am" to me, you black bitch! Your brothers run off!
- Gideon : What's your part in this, girl?
- Rachel : I don' know nothing, I swear! I don' even know what you saying! Who run off?
- Gideon : **I'll snap your neck.**
- Rachel : I... don'... know nothing. I swear...

This treatment is a physical attack carried out to get their goal so that they don't get harmed on the other hand Rachel and her families are trying to get freedom. Bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability is a crime. Physical attack is a form of racial discrimination that involves hitting, harming, or attacking someone (Allport,1954: 56). Physical attacks, as a type of direct attack, can cause racial segregation. In several ways, it differs from racial discrimination. Individual actions can be discriminatory, as can socially enforced discriminatory behavior or discrimination between members of different races.

#### CONCLUSIONS

There are five (5) levels of discrimination were occurred in Harriet movie based on Gordon Allport's theory; verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attack, and extermination. There were four out of five levels of discrimination experienced by the characters in Harriet movie; there are verbal antagonism, avoidance, Segregation, and



physical attack. The racism system shows that the gap between whites and blacks still exists. White domination clearly makes African Americans and other people of color the target of acts of exploitation and oppression that discriminate against them in all aspects and cause them to lose control over many aspects of their lives. Thus, African Americans could not do much, even though they received a lot of painful treatment from white people. But, the Afro-American also fought for discrimination.

## REFERENCES

- Artt Sarah, Schwan Anne (2016)., Screening Women's Imprisonment: Agency and Exploitation in Orange Is the New Black.
- Ault Elizabeth. (2012)., "You Can Help Yourself/but Don't Take Too Much": African American Motherhood on The Wire.
- Amber J. Johnson | (2020) Examining associations between racism, internalized shame, and self-esteem among African Americans, *Cogent Psychology*, 7:1, 1757857.
- Blank, R. M., Dabady, M., & Citro, C. F. (Eds.). (2004). *Measuring racial discrimination*. National Academies Press.
- Berg, Bruce L., and Howard Lune. 2012. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cobb Shelley.(2018)., "I'd Like Y'all to Get a Black Friend": The Politics of Race in Friends.
- Dietrich, D. R. (2013). Avatars of Whiteness: Racial Expression in Video Game Characters. *Sociological Inquiry*, 83(1), 82–105. doi:10.1111/soin.12001
- Feagin, J.R., 1999. Excluding blacks and others from housing: The foundation of white racism. *Cityscape*, pp.79-91.
- Golash-Boza T. A Critical and Comprehensive Sociological Theory of Race and Racism. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. 2016;2(2):129-141. .
- Hollingsworth, Juana D. (2016)"Racial disparities among African Americans primarily in the criminal justice system and other areas in society".

- H. J. Christopher, Roy Donovan. R. (2020). *When They See Us: An Unshaken History of Racism in America*. Vol. 12.
- Joy Banks (2018) *Invisible man: examining the intersectionality of disability, race, and gender in an urban community*, *Disability & Society*, 33:6, 894-908.
- Laurenson, Diana., & Swingewood, Alan. 1972. *The Sociology Of Literature*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Lieway, M., Sharp, E., Gambrell, K., Medina, C., Reyes, P. and Nguyen, V., 2017. *Hidden Figures: Calculated Responses to Sexism and Racism in 1960s America*.
- Lieway, M., Sharp, E., Gambrell, K., Medina, C., Reyes, P., & Nguyen, V. (2017). *Hidden Figures: Calculated Responses to Sexism and Racism in 1960s America*.
- Nielsen, J. K. (2012). *Silent but imperial: ethno-racial transgressions and interracial brotherhood in the French–Hong Kongese fiction film Vengeance (2009)*. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 13(4), 614-622.
- Pincus. FL. *Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural*. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 1996;40(2):186-194.
- Boggs Joseph, M., & Petrie, D. W. (2000). *The Art of Watching Film*.
- Perrin, A.G., 2012. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: The Web of Racial, Class, and Gender Constructions in late 1960s America*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 45(4), pp.846-861.
- Swingewood, A. (1972). *Introduction: Sociology and literature*. *The Sociology of Literature*.(Ed.) Diana Laurenson, Alan Swingewood. London: Granada Publishing, 11-22.
- Scrivano, R. M., & McCulloch, S. P. (2021). *Exploring the Complexities of Racial Inequality and Grandparent-grandchild Relationships in the Classroom: A Review of the Film Black or White*. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 64(4), 425-429.