

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Humans are created equal but different. They have different races, religions, ethnics, and traditions. As human beings, they should live together to complement each other. However, some people feel unfit with other kinds because of domination of one racial or ethnic group over other group(s), and maintain psychological, social and material advantages for the dominant group (American Psychological Association, 2019).

There are many reasons to make people do racism. It usually comes from relatives because when family members or friends express racist opinions, people will take those views for themselves (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019). The other reason is people like to spend time with people who have the same interest, background, ethnic, and language. Then, people are quick to judge others. They often put labels on people such as stereotypes. The last reason is people blame others for minorities' problems. People talk differently to others as an easy target. It can be happening today in a comment like "those people take our jobs."

People are actually taught to be tolerant in school as Pidi (2019) says that racism happened because character building in school just was indoctrination. In evidence, there are so many bullying on students. This affects them seriously. The victims feel depressed for a long time, and the doers frequently do the same thing on society.

Racism in America was brought from European culture. The Spanish brought first African Americans as slaves in 1526 by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (Restal, 2000). In 1619, the British transported 20 Africans to Jamestown, Virginia as laborers (Weiser, 2019). In 1641, the British legalized slavery for the first time in Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In America, slavery had been considered as the main reason which caused Civil War. At that time, Confederation in Southern America disagreed with Abraham Lincoln's racial emancipation. It continued after Civil War, and made Jim Crow Laws as white Democratic dominated the state legislature which mandated racial segregation in public places (Legends of America, 2019). The laws were run in Southern America, and the black people were discriminated and sometimes harassed by Klu Klux Klan, the white supremacist group. Jim Crow was fully dismantled in 1965 after several Civil Rights Movement including Martin Luther King Jr.'s protest against segregation and discrimination.

The "12 Years a Slave" is an autobiography memoir and slave narrative by Solomon Northup. According to his book, Solomon Northup was a free black man which means free from slavery. However, he was kidnapped by two men and sold into slavery (Osborne-Bartucca & Suduiko, 2019). This autobiography was later adapted into movie on the same name in 2013.

Slave narrative itself was popular during 19th century because slavery was still practiced in America. The genre was popularized by the release of Uncle's Tom Cabin in 1852. It was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and become the best seller books at that time. She shared ideas about injustice of slavery, pushing back against dominant cultural beliefs about physical and emotional of the black people. She became a leading

voice of anti-slavery movement also known as abolitionism. (Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 2019). The book was later inspiring Solomon Northup to write “12 Years a Slave” about his own life after being a slave.

According to Adawiyah (2015) research, Solomon Northup never stopped to escape from slavery. He tried to write letter to his family several times but failed. In the last story, he met an abolitionist white man who was known as Mr. Bass who helped Solomon to release him as a slave and meet his family.

Northup’s struggle to fight racism inspired the writer to study about racism on this autobiography because there are many racist acts also in Indonesian society. The case of Papuan students’ experiences in Surabaya, for example, is a clear example how people have tendency to treat others unjustly only because of differences in race and religion. A fake news about racist teacher provoked people in Wamena, Papua to create riots and damage buildings and vehicles. Before that, a post had told Papuans was physically like a monkey. Fortunately, the suspect was found guilty by prosecutor. (Rachmawati, 2019)

The case that racism acts also happen in Indonesia encourage the writer to deeply analyze the characters who act as racist because some people in the past thought that the black people were the lowest class. As the lowest class, the black people were usually used by the whites as slaves. It is expected that the study will raise better awareness about racial issues in Indonesia by reflecting what happened in the United States through this novel.

1.2.Research Question

- How do the characters’ acts as racist in the *12 Years a Slave* autobiography?

1.3.Objective of the Study

The writer wants this study to explore the characters from the autobiography who names acts as racist. In order to do that, the writer finds out the dialogs and lines which contain racism in autobiography.

1.4.Significance of the Study

The benefit of the study is for readers who want to know about racism in United States as shown on Solomon Northup's "12 Years a Slave". By reading this study, people will learn more about about how people treat others differently based on race, and reflect this to contextualize in their life.

1.5.Theoretical Framework

The writer uses J.M. Jones (1997) and Rae Sibbith (1997) theory of racial act. Jones explained that there are negative and positive prejudice which leads to stereotype. Sibbith defined that the perpetrators have bad behaviors to minorities especially African-American in this study. The behaviors are racial harassment or violence physically and verbally.

The writer uses critical theories based on Abrams (1971) as theoretical framework. He defined four dimensions approaches: pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective theories. The writer uses objective theory as the findings of research questions because objective theory contains element such as theme, character, plot, and point of view.

1.6.Scope and Limitation

This study is focused on racist character to the black people based on Solomon Northup's "12 Years a Slave". The characters are Edwin Epps, James H. Burch the slave dealer, and more who treat blacks differently. This study is not discussing about slavery in America at that time and victim's perspective about racism.

1.7.Definition of the Key Terms

1. Racism

A belief that race is primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race (Merriam-Webster, 1828).

2. Act

To do something for a particular purpose or to solve a problem. (Cambridge Dictionary, 1995)

3. Slave Narrative

Slave Narrative is an account of the life, or a major portion of the life, of a fugitive or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave personally (Britannica, 2019)

4. *12 Years a Slave*

12 Years a Slave is an autobiography the true Solomon Northup's life during enslaved for 12 years. The book was published in 1855 by Miller, Orton, and Mulligan for the 1st edition.

1.8.Organization of the Study

In this study there are five chapters:

1. Chapter 1 is the introduction of the study which consists of background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, scope and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization of the study
2. Chapter 2 is related literature which consists of underlying theories, related studies, and the difference and similarity between my research with others.
3. Chapter 3 is research methodology which consists of research design, research subject, treatment, instrument, data analysis technique, data analysis procedure, and data analysis presentation.
4. Chapter 4 is findings and discussions which consist of the subject research and discussions of the research.
5. Chapter 5 is conclusions and suggestions which conclude the research and future research suggestions.