

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### **A. The Background of Study**

Along the history of America, this country is well known as a diversity country which the societies come from those immigrants spread everywhere. Every immigrant such as Blacks, Latinos, and Asians could be found in America as the result of the immigrations (Mahfouz, 2013: 1). Back to the history of America, undoubtedly America has many histories and timelines which showed how actually a change appeared from the dark history into the brighter ones. One of the major issues which developed in America was slavery related to racism.

It was obviously known that slavery and racism had been major issues in America even all over the world. Slavery was the impact of social injustice which spread because of color differences. The Oxford English Dictionary indicated that before the sixteenth century black meant “soil, dirty, foul ... atrocious, horrible, and wicked.” To the first Europeans who explored Africa and encountered blacks the difference of color made a profound impression and, in the long run, skin color defined the relationship between blacks and whites (Dinnesrtein, 1990: 17).

This indicated that there was a stigma spread that some groups claimed the genetic factors are the primary determinant to decide someone’s trait such Whites felt superior toward ‘colored skins’ and the colored skins were forced to think that they were inferior towards Whites. Many Blacks, Latinos, and Asians experienced disrespectful treatments, poor service, prejudiced comments, encounter with

people who are suspicious of them because of their ethnicity or color (Williams, 2004: 17).

Although America is well known as multicultural country, but it could not be denied that those immigrants not only came from Europe and Asians but also but surely also were forcibly slaves from Africa and Native Americans. This made that there was a significant situation of how American was called as representative of democratic country and unfortunately the history's note of darkest racial discrimination related to slavery which had long history and stood as a serious social problem ever existed.

Racism which was categorized as serious social problem could happen wherever since it related to life. Life has many elements and differences in terms of biological concept. Life also cannot be separated from human and human rights, right for having prosperity, right for living as what humans did, and right for being admitted as the same of God's creation. Even though slavery which related to racism did not happen in Indonesia but those who called as human everywhere need to learn how to appreciate the differences in terms of culture, religion, ideology, life style and biological differences. Indonesian should learn from the past Tragedy of Ambon 'Religious Intolerance' in 1990 which was the most dangerous and sensitive tragedy in Indonesia since the differences of religion. Tragedy of Ambon gave much more harm to those societies physically and mentally even based on the source approximately 600-700 people died on that bloody tragedy.

Looking back at the history of racism which ever happened in Indonesia, those societies really need to learn much about sensitive case included religion, ethnic, ideology and biological differences. Indonesian also were hoped to be wiser living on this multicultural country. This research hoped can give impact to those societies especially university students as the young generations to keep respect on those differences since no matter who they are, where they came from, what blood types they are, what colors their skins are, what religion they are, the matter is all human are definitely same of God's creation. Moreover, differences are power.

Nowadays there were some movies published which told about slavery and racism, one of them was "12 Years a Slave". "12 Years a Slave" is a 2013 period drama film and an adaptation of the 1853 slave narrative memoir *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup, a New York State-born free African-American who was kidnapped in Washington, D.C., in 1841 and sold into slavery. This movie was based on true story about how actually life of Solomon Northup who was one of slaves and how he struggled to be free from enslavement. This film was directed by Steve McQueen and the screenplay was written by John Ridley.

Salomon Northup was a New York State-born free African American who was kidnapped in Washington, D.C., and sold into slavery in 1841 and rescued in 1853. By the time of experiences being a slave, in 1855 he wrote his life experiences and finally is published with the same title "Twelve Years a Slave".

His life experiences being slave written by him was recognized as Slave Narrative and being the part of African-American Literature. In his slave narrative *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon Northup wrote that the aim of publishing its book was to tell all over the world either being slave or free-man how was actually life of being slaves in Whites' plantations, what kinds of oppressions he faced and how he struggled for finally getting free (Northup, 1855: 2).

By the time, finally an African director Steve McQueen cooperated with screenwriter John Ridley decided to adapt the slave narrative into a movie in purpose of the world broadly could see how actually the slavery happened and how bad it was. As long as the process of making its movie, principal photography takes place in New Orleans, Louisiana from 27 June to 13 August 2013 and released on 30 August 2013. The locations used were four historic antebellum plantations: Felicity, Bocage, Destrehan and Magnolia.

"12 Years a Slave" received widespread critical acclaim, and was named the best film of 2013 by several media outlets. The film won three Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actress for Nyong'o starred as Patsey and Best Adapted Screenplay for Ridley. The Best Picture winning made McQueen the first black producer ever to have received the award and the first black director to have directed a Best Picture Winner. The film was awarded The Golden Globe Award, British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

Some researchers actually had studied topics related to racism and oppression with the different results. Aydemir (2012) studied about the suffering of Black Women in life experiences and in black community through four different novels. The novels analyzed were *The Color Purple*, *Meridian*, *Beloved* and *Bluest Eye*. Aydemir found that the oppressions faced by the characters were being rape, incest, physical abuse, discrimination color, and violence not only from whites but also from black man. This research was different from the research above since the writer used the different theory of oppression and also the writer focused on describing oppression faced in slavery and the most important one, the writer also explained what resistances were shown by the two main characters – Platt and Patsy – do for deciding their fate whether finally getting free or not which obviously could not be found in the research above.

Chegeni (2013) also did a research related to the topic; he studied about modern Feminist Movement through Toni Morrison's novel "*Sula*". This research focused on explaining how black women suffered from multiple oppressions by being black and women at the same time. This research was concerned the depiction of black women's marginalization and oppression and represents the various levels of women's oppression in South Africa and America and to resist against such a patriarchal society to achieve self awareness and self-empowerment. This research was different from Chegeni's since he much more concerned on the struggle of black women towards race and gender.



Similar with the two researches above, Zarrinjooee (2014) also did the research; he studied Nanny, Leafy and Jeanie as the main characters that faced double oppression not only from black men but also white men. He focused on the way of Black women in Zora Hurston's *Their Eyes were watching God* (1937) were oppressed and suppressed through the process of colonization and the dominant practices in the male-dominated African culture brought to America by the slaves. The result of this research was black women especially the character of Nanny, Leafy and Janie in this novel faced the harsh reality of being exploited both in terms of their gender and their race. White men thought of them as objects of watching sexual enjoyment; white men had no respect for their identity as a black woman or as a woman. Being a black woman made Nanny and Leafy an easy target for being raped. His research much more related to this research but still had the differences on the theory and also the resistances shown towards the oppression faced.

Therefore, those explanations above became the reasons why the writer chose its film or movie and topic of oppression related to racism became the center of this analysis. Showing the readers about how actually the slavery happened, what kinds of oppression the slaves got and how racism influenced blacks could be properly displayed.

## **B. The Problems of Study**

The problems of this thesis focused on oppression as displayed in “12 Years a Slave” movie especially on two main characters. The problems were analyzed based on Young’s theory (1990). The problems of this study were formulated as followed:

1. What oppressions were faced by the two main characters – Platt and Patsey – in “12 Years a Slave” movie?
2. What resistances did they show toward its oppression?

## **C. The Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were:

1. To describe the oppressions faced by the two main characters – Platt and Patsey – in “12 Years a Slave” movie
2. To explain the resistances were shown toward its oppression.

## **D. The Scope of the Study**

In doing this research, the writer limited the discussion on the oppressions which were faced by the two main characters and those resistances shown by the two main characters toward those oppressions which happened in “12 Years a Slave” movie. The writer focused on two main characters – Platt and Patsey – and those utterances, statements or actions toward them.

### **E. The Significances of the Study**

The writer hoped the result of the research would be advantageously to her specifically and reader generally, in order to know how bad the oppressions toward blacks of the racism in America.

In addition, the writer hoped that this research gave more or less contribution especially for English and Literature Department State University of Medan. Many things could be found in this research that oppression towards racism was one of social problem ever existed. The last, the writer hoped the result of this research made those readers were conscious on that issue.