COUNTER RACIAL PREJUDICE
REFLECTED IN FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE

Submitted as a Partial of the Requirements for Getting Bachelor Degree of
Department of English Education

By:
DESSYA DIAH RAHMAWATI
A320170251

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
2022
APPROVAL

COUNTER RACIAL PREJUDICE REFLECTED IN FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE

PUBLICATION ARTICLE

By:

Dessya Diah Rahmawati
A320170251

Approved to be examined by Consultant
School of Teacher Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

Consultant,

Titin Setyabudi, S.S., M.A
NIDN. 0617047701
ACCEPTANCE

COUNTER RACIAL PREJUDICE REFLECTED IN FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE

PUBLICATION ARTICLE

By:

Dessya Diah Rahmawati
A320170251

Accepted and Approved by the Board Examiners
School of Teacher Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

The Board Examiners:
1. Titis Setyabudi, S.S., M.A
   (Head of Examiner)
2. Nurhidayat, S.Pd., M.Pd
   (Member I of Examiner)
3. Dr. Phil. Dewi Candraningrum, S. Pd., M. Ed
   (Member II of Examiner)

Dean,
Prof. Dr. Sutama, M.Pd.
NIDN. 0007016002
TESTIMONY

The researcher truly testified that there is no plagiarism on the research paper that the researcher submitted in this scientific publication there is no work that has ever been submitted to obtain a bachelor’s degree at a university and to the best of my knowledge there is also no work or opinion that has been written or published by another person, except the reference mentioned in the literary review and bibliography.

Later, if this research paper proved that there is plagiarism, the researcher will be responsible for the risk.

Surakarta, 21 Mei 2022
The writer

Dessya Diah Rahmawati
A320170251
COUNTER RACIAL PREJUDICE REFLECTED IN FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE

Dessya Diah Rahmawati, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

Abstract
This study analyzes the anti-racism in the film Freedom Writers, directed and written by Richard LaGravenese. This study aims to identify anti-racism depicted in the film, describe how anti-racism is reflected in the film, and explain why a character named Erin Gruwell supports anti-racism in the film. This research is a library research. The type of data in this study is text, including narration, dialogue, and monologue. Data collection is done by watching and understanding the film’s storyline which is the object of this research. Qualitative data analysis was applied in this study, carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This study shows that there are two aspects of anti-racism depicted in the film, namely education aspect and togetherness. Second, the anti-racism reflected in the film is illustrated by learning about tolerance for differences. And finally, the reason Erin Gruwell supports anti-racism in her classroom is that she wants to inspire students to learn and have a good view of differences.

Keywords: anti-racism, freedom writers, qualitative analysis, difference

1. INTRODUCTION

Racism is inequality based on one’s skin color, race, ethnicity, and origin that limits one’s rights and freedoms. Racism is also often interpreted as the belief that humans can be divided into separate groups based on biological characteristics called “race”. This idea also holds that there is a causal relationship between the physical characteristics of a race and personality, intelligence, morality, and other cultural and behavioral traits, which makes some races ‘innately’ superior to others. Racism is not a trivial matter, “Racism” means a belief system or doctrine which states that the inherent biological differences of the human race determine cultural or individual achievement, that a particular race is superior and has
the right to rule over others, (Rofifah, 2020). Meanwhile, anti-racism is beliefs, actions, movements, and policies adopted or developed to fight racism. In general, anti-racism aims to promote an egalitarian society in which people do not face discrimination based on their race, but are defined. Anti-racism attitudes also grow along with the times. “Freedom Writers” is an American movie directed and written by Richard LaGravenese. This film raises the issue of racism in America in the 1990s. At that time there was rioting and looting everywhere. The story of Erin Gruwell, who devotes her life to teaching her students, is the film’s main draw, attracting researcher to study it. Furthermore, the characters in this film are fascinating. The personalities of the characters in this film are all quite strong. And because this film addresses many examples of prejudice that occurred at the time, the researcher is eager to dig deeper into it. Because racism is a topic that is frequently discussed in numerous areas. Erin Gruwell becomes anti-racist as a result of it. And it’s just too difficult to be anti-racist like the protagonist. Her life appears to be challenging as well, as evidenced by the fact that she was divorced by her spouse. Nonetheless, she remained courageous and upbeat.

There are previous studies that have raised the same topic as discussed in this study. The first researcher belongs to (Azna Yulinarni, Asridayani, 2020) from English Literature, Faculty of Languages, Muara Bungo University (2020) with the title “Racism and Its Effects in the Film Freedom Writers by Richard La Gravense: Sociological Approach”. In their article they wrote the purpose of this research, namely 1) to classify the types of racism that appear in the film “Freedom Writers”. 2) to find out the effects felt by the characters in the film “Freedom Writer”. In conducting this research, the writer uses a qualitative descriptive method, which is a research method that finds basic answers about racism and the types of racism and explains the effects caused by acts of racism on the characters of the players in the film using a sociological approach. The author also finds three fundamental effects of racism in 5 data based on Allport’s (1991) theory, namely Anticuotin, Discrimination, and Physical attack. From all the data provided, it can be found that individual racism appears the most in the film, then followed by Institutional Racism and some of the effects that exist in the film “Freedom Writers.” And the difference with what the author wrote in this study lies in the analysis, in this study using a Sociological approach. Then (Yulia Shinta K, 2010) from Diponegoro University Semarang (2020) with the title “Anti-Racism in Erin Gruwell’s Character in the Freedom Writers Film by Richard Lagravenese.” This study tells about an anti-racist teacher named Erin Gruwell in Long Beach, California as shown in the film “Freedom Writers” directed by Richard LaGravenese. The purpose of this study is to find out Erin Gruwell’s anti-racism, analyze Erin’s life and environment that made her an anti-racist person, and understand her anti-racist effect through pictures and dialogues in the film “Freedom Writers.” Social psychology and sociology approaches are also used to analyze Erin’s anti-racism. The results show that Erin’s anti-racism attitude can be seen from the conflicts that occur in her. In the end, Erin’s anti-racism
effect appeared. This shows that Erin’s students in class 203 changed their behavior to be anti-racist. This research is almost the same as what the researcher will write, only the difference is in this study using a social psychology and sociology approach. (Syahri, 2011) from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta (2011). This researcher uses qualitative and descriptive analysis methods, as well as Rolan Barthes’ Semiotics theory. Based on the analysis that has been done, the writer can understand the messages or symbols that exist through dialogue, taking pictures and the actions of the Freedom Writers players. The difference between this research and the research being conducted by the researcher is the approach taken. (Kurniawan, 2011) from University of Muhammadiyah Malang. In this study, researchers the film Freedom Writers which focused on the anti-racism message in each scene. Researchers here use the method of content analysis (content analysis), according to Barelson content analysis is a research technique that is carried out objectively, systematically, and quantitatively describes the media content that is manifest. (Martono, 2010:76). The researchers determined three categorizations to facilitate research, namely: categorization of education, togetherness, and idealism. The data analysis technique used is frequency distribution analysis to know the occurrence of each category. The conclusion of this study found that there are 61 scenes containing anti-racism messages in the film Freedom Writers by Richard Lagravenese. Even though they both use the film with the same title, the difference lies in the research technique. (Fitria, 2013) University of Muhammadiyah Malang with the title, “Racism in American Film Production (Semiotic Analysis in the Freedom Writer Film by Richard LaGravense).” The approach of this research is qualitative with the type of interpretive research intended to interpret signs that contain the meaning of racism contained in the film “Freedom Writer”. The object of this research is several scenes that are suspected to contain the meaning of racism. While the unit of analysis in this study includes the language of appearance, shooting techniques, and narrative elements. the results of the analysis of the units of analysis in the film, the researchers finally concluded that the film Freedom Writer as one of the American films that loudly shouted about anti-racism kept a racist ideology behind it. This racist ideology can be seen from the alignment with the White Race group and the discrediting of the Outside White Race group in several elements contained in a film. This alignment appears in the elements of character formation, both main characters, and extra characters. In addition to the characterization elements, alignments with the White Race group are also found in the film’s narrative and camera treatment of certain characters.

Through previous studies in the previous paragraph, there are several similarities with this research, including; both the characters studied in the films dealing with anti-racism by the characters and some from the same film. The difference is that some of them identify anti-racism in different films and use different theoretical approaches.
2. METHOD

The purpose of this study is to obtain data that will be used in analyzing the topics raised based on the selected issue. Data is the most important tool in research. The form of data in this study is qualitative data. That is in the form of text, including narration, dialogue, and monologue. Researcher used two types of data sources in this study, namely:

1. Primary Data Source
   The primary data source in this research is the film “Freedom Writers (2007)” is an American movie directed and written by Richard LaGravenese. The movie was produced by MTV Films, Jersey Films, and 2S Films, and distributed by Paramount Pictures. This film is the main determinant of the data that can be said to be valid because what is studied by researchers in this study is a film.

2. Secondary Data Source
   The next data sources used to support the strength of the main data sources are documents related to this research and previous studies that have been discussed in the previous chapter. These documents are related to the topic raised in this research or they could be related to the issue used by the researcher in analyzing this research.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 FINDING

3.1.1 Kind Of Anti-Racism Displayed In The Movie

   Anti-racism is the attitude and action of opposing and rejecting a racist understanding that is considered incompatible with human values. And in the film Freedom Writers, it begins with the riots that occurred in Long Beach because of acts of racism between blacks and whites that caused many victims.
Eva: We fight each other for territory. We kill each other over race, pride and respect. We fight for what is ours.

(00:03:40-00:03:46)

Jamal: Man, I know you ain't talking to me!
Erin: Okay...
Jamal: Look, homey, I'll beat that ass, homeboy.
Erin: Can you please sit back down?
Jamal: Look, I got your spot on the team.
      That's why you're over there wagging your tongue.
Erin: Please sit back in your seats.
Jamal: Look, your spot is good as gone. I don't know why you keep wasting your time coming to practice with them two-year-old Nikes on your feet!
Andre: You don't know nothing about me, coz! Broke down my whole situation.
Erin: Jamal?
Jamal: So, now you're in my face now, right? Sit your punk ass down!
      Sit your punk ass down, homeboy!
Andre: I will run that ass off the field.
Jamal: Shut your ass up. What's up, homey?
      I mean, what's up? Sit your ass down, homey!

(00:11:04-00:11:30)

And they even fight with each other over trivial matters that make Erin who is still a new teacher confused about what is happening in her class. Bad and racist relationships like this in that year, 1994 were common because they were used to living in their respective
groups. And if someone violates their territory then something will happen. For example, there was a fight between Paco and Grant Rice which caused Paco to shoot the wrong way and assign it to Grant Rice as the main suspect and Eva as a witness. In this case the relations between other races in the school are getting heated. Even in class they are suspicious of each other. However, in a short time they finally realized the racism they had done so far and made them aware of racism. The anti-racism they do has two aspects, namely in terms of education and in terms of togetherness.

a. Educational Aspect

In this case, it can be seen from the side of student interaction in the school environment, especially in the classroom environment. Like what happened in class 203 which was so warm after the change.

Marcus : Good to see you, man.
Ben : Hey, yeah.
Marcus : How was your summer?
Ben : Great.
Marcus : You're still white, I see.

The relationship between Marcus and Ben who initially hated each other because Ben was white in the end they were friends and refused to be racist.

b. Togetherness

With a sense of sympathy for each other makes their friendship stronger and closer like a family.
Miguel: Ms. G? Can I read something from my diary?
Erin: That'd be great.
Jamal: Who is he?
Gloria: Man, he’s been with us from freshman year, fool.
Jamal: What’s his name?
Gloria: I don’t know.
Miguel: “This summer was the worst summer in my short 14 years of life. It all started with a phone call. My mother was crying and begging, asking for more time as if she were gasping for her last breath of air. She held me as tight as she could and cried. Her tears hit my shirt like bullets and told me we were being evicted. She kept apologizing to me. I thought, I have no home. I should have asked for something less expensive at Christmas. On the morning of the eviction, a hard knock on the door woke me up. The sheriff was there to do his job. I looked up at the sky, waiting for something to happen. My mother has no family to lean on, no money coming in. Why bother coming to school or getting good grades if I’m homeless? The bus stops in front of the school. I feel like throwing up. I’m wearing clothes from last year, some old shoes and no new haircut. I kept thinking I’d get laughed at. Instead, I’m greeted by a couple of friends who were in my English class last year. And it hits me, Mrs. Gruwell, my crazy English teacher from last year, is the only person that made me think of hope. Talking with friends about last year’s English and our trips, I began to feel better. I receive my schedule and the first teacher is Mrs. Gruwell in Room 203. I walk into the room and feel as though all the problems in life are not so important anymore. “I am home.”
Erin: Yes, you are.

(01:14:19-01:14:42)

The message really made Miguel’s friends feel sympathy and emotion when he read the contents of his diary in front of everyone. Even Erin was touched by the students who turned out to be comfortable in her current class. Because he already has friends and this class is considered a home for him because he can share together in the class. This shows their anti-racism side because they also respect each other and
support what is in front of them.

Togetherness and sympathy for each other made them fade the racism they had been doing, replaced with an anti-racism attitude in order to maintain their unity and togetherness to live a comfortable life.

3.1.2 Anti-Racism Reflected In The Movie

By holding a tour to the museum, the 203th grade students are at least aware of the act of racism that ultimately leaves the victim. They learn many things about past events in the museum. With the guidance of Erin Gruwell as their teacher and person in charge. They see a lot about racism and tolerance for different races.

Andre : Ms. G had a beautiful dinner for us at the hotel where she works. She invited real Holocaust survivors from the museum to meet us. There was Elisabeth Mann.

Elizabeth : I had my parents, my sister, my two brothers.

Jamal : Gloria Ungar.

Gloria : If any of you have seen someone with a number on their arm. These were the lucky people. The people who, when we came to Auschwitz. When they tattooed the people they took us to do the slave work. Not the others, and that included many of my family. So, we ran away, some of the young kids.

Eddie Liam : I was at that time 11-and-a half years old. And where to go, I didn’t know. But I remember one place where I used to live. So when I ran there, there was not one Jew left.

Renee Firestone: I was in the worst camp. I was in Auschwitz. And Renee Firestone. When I arrived, my parents were immediately taken away from me. My little sister, who was then 14 years old. Stayed with me for a little while. And then later on, I was separated from her also.

Andre : She lost her whole family at the camps. She came to this country with $4 in her pocket and a newborn baby. I’ll never forget these people.
Over a wonderful dinner, they listened to stories from many about the past of the atrocities rooted in racism and its aftermath. This then makes them aware of the badness of the racism they have done so far because their environment has taught them that way from generation to generation. And with the conversation, their minds began to open to not act racism anymore.

The relationship that occurred between Eva and Sindy, who initially became enemies, became friends because of Eva’s courage in court by not defending her people and telling the truth in order to save the innocent Grant Rice. Although she was scolded by her people for treason, but she felt what she did was the right thing. And Sindy feels that is what is called justice and she sympathizes with Eva. The tolerance that is formed between the two races is one of the anti-racism actions that have taken place in Long Beach, especially at their school. And with Erin Gruwell’s teaching method that is different from the others, it makes them aware of the importance of anti-racism actions in social life as humans live.

3.1.3 Erin Gruwell Support Anti-Racism In The Movie

Erin talks about an art that is almost similar to Tito’s drawing in a museum. Pictures of the past of a gang making fun of each other spread across the national media. Then she told the bad that happened after. All of the students listened to her very wisely and studied what Erin had just conveyed, although some of them still felt irritated and annoyed because Erin did not understand what they had experienced and felt so far. But she tries to understand what is going on between her students with her explanation slowly.
Erin explained that she was a teacher who didn’t care about skin color. She continues to encourage her students who are still concerned about skin color because of the past with all her understanding of all that. She encourages her students so that they can graduate from school and continue on to a higher level so that they are no longer belittled and can determine their own destiny in later life. That’s how Erin supports the anti-racism movement that she spreads to her students so that they become social human beings as they should be.

3.2 DISCUSSION

*Freedom Writers* is a film that raises the issue of anti-racism in the 1990s. Although it describes many issues of racism, it does not at least raise the issue of anti-racism, including the experience of the main character in the film, Erin Gruwell as a new teacher at the Woodrow Wilson school, Long Beach, United States in the 1990s. At first she was a little stressed because she was confused about her students who seemed to be suspicious of each other. Until she had to rethink how to teach these children according to their individual needs and supported by anti-racism measures that made everyone have to work together with each other.

Considering the interactions that occur in the classrooms where there are groups and there is no sympathy for each other, Erin tries to change their seat positions by arranging them according to her directions so that all students can mingle with each other with the various races in class 203. Erin, who felt that her teaching method was effective, then invited her students to take a tour of a historical museum to introduce her students to racism and its effects. And also she invites her students to eat together while bringing in important people who will teach about tolerance to her students.

With these actions, the students’ interactions are getting better and better and they even greet each
other regardless of their race. Andre and Ben who initially hated each other were finally able to be friends. The game lessons given by Erin are also growing. And increasing the sense of tolerance among students. Even when they finished reading the book about Anne Frank, one of Marcus’ students wanted Erin to bring Mrs. Giep went to their school because they wanted to hear the real story live. Erin explained that it was impossible for the school to fund them because they invited Mrs. Giep has a high cost. All the students then said if they could raise funds to bring Mrs. Giep. And from this fundraising, the 203 class’s sense of togetherness, which initially hated and suspected each other, became like a family who both helped each other and were passionate about a common goal. Until finally, Mrs. Giep also came to their school thanks to their hard work and also from Erin and her father. With the arrival of Mrs. Giep made them more aware of tolerance and help even though they are of different races. Their sympathy was also open. Until Eva realizes about the importance of justice. So, when she was in court it was Grant Rice who became the main suspect in the shooting of Sindy’s friend, even though it was the fault of her boyfriend, Paco. Finally told the truth in court. Although she is considered a traitor by her people, thanks to that her relationship with Sindy improves. And they become friends at the end of the story.

4. CLOSING

This research was conducted by applying analytical methods to find out the anti-racism in the film Freedom Writers. In this study, the characters in the film are depicted not in good social interactions, even their socialization is also bad. Whether it’s at school or outside of school. They were suspicious of each other to the point of causing division. However, thanks to Erin Gruwell’s different teaching, she made her students aware of anti-racism. So that the interactions that were initially bad became good and they made the union of various races in their class to create a comfortable atmosphere in the class. They even consider everyone in the class to be family.

Every character in the film is depicted with a racist sense. So as a teacher Erin Gruwell then gave a lesson about tolerance for differences by inviting them to go to the museum and bringing in people who could explain it. So that they are aware of their racist actions so far and make them anti-racism.

One of the reasons Erin Gruwell supports anti-racism is because she wants to inspire students to learn and have a good view of differences. And with her seriousness in teaching and explaining racism to her students, she made them realize the importance of anti-racism for their lives.

REFERENCES


Graciella Stephanie Ganadhi. (2021). *WOMEN GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA LEADING TO KIM JI- YOUNG ‘S HWABYUNG SEEN IN CHO NAM- JOO ‘S KIM JIYOUNG, BORN 1982 WOMEN GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA LEADING TO KIM JI- YOUNG ‘S HWABYUNG SEEN IN CHO NAM- JOO ‘S KIM JIYOUNG*, BOR.


Graciella Stephanie Ganadhi. (2021). *WOMEN GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA LEADING TO KIM JI- YOUNG ‘S HWABYUNG SEEN IN CHO NAM- JOO ‘S KIM JIYOUNG, BORN 1982 WOMEN GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA LEADING TO KIM JI- YOUNG ‘S HWABYUNG SEEN IN CHO NAM- JOO ‘S KIM JIYOUNG*, BOR.


