

**THE ALLEGORY OF MAN IN THE CAVE REFLECTED IN  
TONY IN *GREEN BOOK* FILM (2018)**



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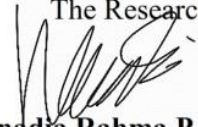
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If later it is proven that there is an untruth in my statement above, then I will be fully responsible.

Surakarta, 10 January 2023

The Researcher



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# **THE ALLEGORY OF MAN IN THE CAVE REFLECTED IN TONY IN GREEN BOOK FILM (2018)**

## **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji film berjudul *Green Book* yang disutradarai Peter Farrelly. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah (1) untuk menjelaskan karakteristik pada orang kulit hitam yang ditunjukkan dalam film *Green Book*. (2) untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana *Allegory Man in The Cave* milik Plato tergambarkan pada Tony di film *Green Book*. (3) untuk menjelaskan perubahan pemikiran terhadap orang kulit hitam. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan teknik deskriptif analisis untuk menjelaskan topik yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian studi Pustaka yang berfokus pada buku dan berbagai sumber referensi yang terkait dengan topik yang sedang dibahas. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan historis dan filosofis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik yang tergambarkan pada film *Green* terbagi menjadi lima, yaitu pekerja kelas rendah; ancaman bagi orang kulit putih; orang yang pasrah; orang yang dibatasi; dan ketidaksetaraan dengan orang kulit putih. Tahapan dalam *allegory man in the cave* terbagi menjadi empat, yaitu: realitas semu, adaptasi kenyataan, realitas sesungguhnya, dan pencerahan. Perubahan pemikiran tokoh terhadap orang kulit hitam karena pertemuan dan saling sepakat untuk bekerja sama antara orang kulit putih dan hitam. Perubahan pemikiran tersebut juga disebabkan karena pemikiran mengenai orang kulit hitam selama ini salah.

**Kata kunci:** alegori, orang kulit hitam, gua, stereotip, orang kulit putih

## **Abstract**

This research examines a film entitled *Green Book*, directed by Peter Farrelly. The purpose of this research is (1) to explain the characteristics of black people reflected in *Green Book* films. (2) to describe how Plato's allegory of man in the cave reflected in Tony in *Green Book* film. (3) to explain why Tony changes his opinion about black people. This is qualitative research that uses descriptive analysis techniques to explain the topics discussed in this research. This is library research that focuses on books and various reference sources related to the topic discussed. The researcher uses a historical and philosophical approach. The result of the study shows that the characteristics of black people depicted in the film *Green Book* are divided into five. These characteristics are low workers, threats for white people, surrendered people, restricted people, and inequality with white people. The stages in the allegory of man in the cave by Plato are divided into four, namely: pseudo-reality, adaptation reality, true-reality, and enlightenment. Tony changes his opinion towards black people because Tony and Don meet and agree to work mutually. So, Tony realized that the stereotype of black people is wrong.

**Keywords:** allegory, black, cave, stereotype, white

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Culture is a way of life that belongs to an association of people which develops every time and is inherited from generation to generation. The culture consists of several

elements that are not easy, such as religions, politics, mores, languages, buildings, clothes, as well as artworks. In English, culture is called *culture* from the Latin word *Colere* which means processing or working. *Colere* also is interpreted to cultivate the land or farm. As explained by Sumarto (2019) that a culture will be more understandable when it has become an act and a work so that it is not only an understanding but a greater benefit for humans. Culture is owned and considered a precious inheritance and becomes the identity and a view of life that needs to be conserved. So as a people they should be consistent to conserve the values in the culture so that they are not displaced by rapid development and change. According to Tylor (in Lowie, 2017) culture is a quite complex system that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, abilities, and habits acquired by humans as members of society.

The title of the film taken for this research is *Green Book* by Peter Farrelly in 2018 which was inspired by a book entitled “The Negro Motorist Green Book”. The genre of this film is comedy-drama genre. (*Green Book* (2018), n.d.). This film talks about the story of racism also the togetherness between Tony and Don as the main character journey who carry out their duties to be able to performing piano. Don as the black man always sticks to a travel guide to be able to do their classical pianist tour because they get unfair treatment when they go through the common track by white people. The main character named Don Shirley always does not get the rights as a human just because the skin is different from most people in America.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher wants to analyze Tony in *Green Book* film to see the changes that occur in Tony himself. It is related to Allegory Man in The Cave by Plato. The objectives of the study divided into three points: to explain the characteristics of Black People reflection in the *Green Book* film. The second to describe Plato’s Allegory of The Man in The Cave reflected in *Green Book* film. The third to explain a change of Tony’s opinion about black people.

## **2. METHOD**

This study used qualitative research with philosophical and historical approach. According to Moleong in (2018) explain that qualitative research is a research that is used to understand a phenomenon experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc. describing it in the form of words and language.

Type of data in this study is using qualitative methods, namely by choosing a data source and collecting it by the formulation of the problem and the purpose of the research. The steps are watching the film over and over again, capturing the image to show scenes related to research, writing data, composing data.

This study, the researcher used descriptive analysis for analyzing the data of the film to explain it. So that it will be easier to be able to understand which part that intended in the study. First, the researcher determines the character or object to be more focused on this study. Second, after determining the character or object to be discussed in the study, then focus on the problem discussed or happened by the character in the Green Book film.

### **3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Finding**

Based on the research questions is formulated as:

3.1.1 What are the characteristics of black people reflected in the Green Book film?

1) Low Worker



Picture 1. Scene 00:07:35

When Tony found out that there were black technicians repairing the conduit in Tony's house. Tony showed his displeasure by throwing away the glasses the workers used to drink after they had gone home. Knowing that Tony's wife was not surprised, because he does not like black people. In various places, Don's performance, not a few of the employees who work there are black people. But the employee has a low level of work, such as waiters, valet parking, busboy, doorman, cooks, and also a chauffeur. In those places, Tony could play with black people and laugh, like enjoying piano playing with them.

## 2) White Man's Threat



Picture 2. Scene 00:34:28

Black people were seen as a threat to white people because white people had the perspective that black people had a bad track record. So, there is no point for black people to do any defense because it is difficult for them to get the trust of people, especially white people. White people feel threatened by black people who have criminal behavior, such as theft. In this incident happened at Orange Bird Restaurant.

## 3) Surrendered People



Picture 3. Scene 01:43:49

DS as a black people cannot rebel and argue for the bad treatment that white people give him. DS can only be silent and receive for all that he got. Black people (DS) choose to avoid arguments or fights when they are being treated badly, so the problem does not get bigger. DS does not show his disappointment, sadness, or anger to the general public, especially to white people.

## 4) Restricted People



Picture 4. Scene 00:57:44

Just to enjoy the drink, as (DS) he always feels insecure because of the

discriminatory behavior he always gets from white people. So that makes it not easy for black people to enter places carelessly because not all places can accept his presence. Black people are always considered like trash and do not deserve to be able to live next side by side with white people.

#### 5) Inequality with White Man

As black people (DS) they also understand what they need to do to be able to live a calm and safe life, even though it is difficult for black people to do all of that. So, it is not a strange thing to happen if black people often get a place to live or an environment that is less suitable to be used as a place to stay.



Picture 5. Scene 01:05:04

Even though DS was a performer at a luxury house that night, it did not make the white people change their treatment to black people. Simply to use the toilet, the homeowner prepares a booth made of wood outside the house near a tree. The owner of the house said that the booth was not as bad as it looked, even though it was very clear that the wooden booth was not suitable for use. Moreover, DS was the main performer of the show that night. So, being a black man seems to be disrespected by white people, even though DS is an educated person and includes a rich person.

#### 3.1.2 How is Plato's allegory of man in the cave reflected in Tony in Green Book film?



Picture 6. Scene 00:08:51

The first incident in the Green Book film is shown that Tony looks really hate the existence of black people. A black man arrives at his house to fix the conduit at Tony's house, but Tony and his family are worried that the technician will do something bad.

So that the technician's movement is monitored by Tony's family. After the technicians left, Tony took the glass after technicians used and threw them in the trash can.



Picture 7. Scene 00:34:28

Because Tony still has stereotypical attitudes towards black people, therefore there is no trust in Tony towards DS. When Tony stopped on the side of the road to pee, he went back into the car to take his wallet which left behind because Tony did not believe to leaving it with DS in the car. In this case Tony feels threatened by the existence of DS, even though DS is Tony's boss.



Picture 8. Scene 00:39:20

The first performance of DS that seen by Tony make him amazed. Starting from that, Tony's thought of black people opens up a bit and also there is a change in Tony's attitude. Tony still cannot believe that DS can play the piano so well. The performance of the DS made Tony judge that DS was genius with his great perform. Because DS plays like a white man when he plays the piano.



Picture 9. Scene 00:47:44

Tony did his job to make sure Shirley needs everything before his performance. But in fact, one of the employees who underestimate him and said that Negro can use any brand of piano. Tony gave suggestion to replace immediately because there is still

more time if they replace it. Unexpectedly the employee actually said in a mocking tone that Tony was an Italian. Even though the employee and Tony are white people. At first Tony carried out his duties because of his sense of responsibility in the work.



Picture 10. Scene 00:57:27

When George, DS Trio group friends said that DS was beaten by white people, Tony and him rushed to the place and immediately helped to release DS from the hands of the white people group. Tony says it is fine to make a peace, but the gang refuses to let DS go. In the end Tony frighten them using firearms if they do not release DS soon. Upon his release, Tony tells DS to be aware of the place and do not go anywhere without him. Because it is endangered yourself.



Picture 11. Scene 01:00:41

Tony saw the DS performance again and was still amazed by DS performance. The gaze of Tony showed pride in the extraordinary performance of the DS Trio's performance.



Picture 12. Scene 00:54:58

Tony did not think that the motel for DS had conditions that did not appropriate with the description in the guidebook. A place to live that is not suitable for occupancy, because it looks not maintained and not clean. Different when compared to Tony's

place. So, Tony said that the place was wrong because it did not suitable with description on the book. Because the place is specifically for black people, so Tony cannot stay at the same place as DS. Tony's place to live is not far from Don's place which is across the street, so Tony offers to DS to call him anytime DS needs anything.



Picture 13. Scene 01:06:31

With the previous incident, DS was treated badly by the owner of the house. Tony still did not expect the DS attitude to be friendly and smile with them. Even though everyone knows that white people are very clear that there is no respect for DS. Tony showed disapproval and also annoyed with the treatment received by DS and also the white people did to DS. The thing that makes Tony wonder about DS, DS attitude that does not change even though he is treated inappropriately.



Picture 14. Scene 01:08:53

Tony receives help from DS to help him write a letter to his wife. Tony follows the direction of writing from DS so that his letter becomes neater and more beautiful when read it. Tony did not doubt to get help from DS to write a letter, even though Tony's previous attitude towards black people was to keep distance and do not want to get in touch.



Picture 15. Scene 01:12:15

This location in Macon, Georgia, Tony suggest DS to try clothes in a store because Tony knows that DS wears tuxedos quite often. Unexpectedly, when DS was about to try on one of the clothes there, DS was prohibited by the shop owner. Tony saw the incident and feels disappointed because of the discriminatory attitude shown by the shop owner (white people) to DS who wants to try on the suits that were displayed in that shop.



Picture 16. Scene 01:15:28

When Tony rushed to be able to save DS from his problems, instead DS was annoyed with the way Tony saved him. Tony says if there is no written rule to forbid him from to bribe when DS is in trouble. Tony tries to help and defend DS in any situation. But DS assumes that Tony does that only because of a contract and can be said to be only job, not because he is sincerely helping himself.



Picture 17. Scene 01:32:44

Tony was quite surprised by the sentence delivered by Shirley. Tony did not expect that the life he thought was comfortable and looked happy was not what Tony thought. Shirley has everything but it is still unhappy with his life of loneliness. Even Shirley did not have someone always around him, a white man who always looked down on him badly. Even the same black people as him did not consider it because they felt Shirley was not a part of them.

*“Tony doesn’t know what to say. They stand in the rain while Shirley tries to compose himself. Lip awkwardly touches Shirley’s shoulder. Shirley turns and walks back to the car, leaving Tony standing alone in the downpour.”*



Picture 18. Scene 01:34:34

Tony tells DS that he just has to say whatever he doesn't like. Other people won't know if you don't say it. Then Tony said; *"Thanks for helping me with the letters--you're really good at writin' 'em."*

It's rare for Tony to say thank you even more to black people. At this point Tony's view of black people is different and he's starting to open his mind.



Picture 19 Scene 01:43:53

After long story and accidents DS was silent and never dared to rebel against what the white people were doing. At that moment Tony was full of emotion defending Shirley to come in and have dinner with them. DS asks Tony to decide whether Shirley and friends will continue to performing that night or cancel so they can go home. Tony decided to cancel the perform because he felt Don's performance was not worth with the treatment that they discriminated against black people could not join and just to eat at the restaurant like the others.

### 3.1.3 Why does Tony Change his opinion about black people?



Picture 20 Scene 00:14:40

The meeting with Don resulted in a change in Tony is self. The open of thoughts about black people that he had not thought about until now. Even though, at first Tony purposes was only limited to a job that matched the salary he wanted.



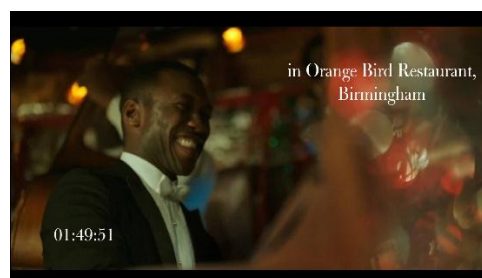
Picture 21 Scene 01:00:41

The first appearance of Don makes an impression on Tony. Even so, to see his performance in the next place still amazed Tony. DS looks professional and perfectly performance even though before that he has problems with white people.



Picture 22 Scene 01:06:31

Another thing that wonders Tony about the attitude of DS is when he is still kind and friendly with white people who treated him badly.



Picture 23 Scene 01:48:50

The DS performance is quite stunning and makes Tony amazed for umpteenth time. Until Tony gave a round of applause and a big smile after the piano performance from DS. DS also looks happier and more relaxed when performing in a place where people reciprocate his presence.

## 3.2 Discussions

### 3.2.1 The Characteristics of Black People Reflected in The Green Book Film

As reflected in the Green Book film, Tony has a bad stereotype of black people. According to Bordalo et al., 2015, stereotypes cause people to think excessively and inaccurately about how particular groups differ from other groups. Low worker in this case does not require high skills and simple knowledge to be able to run it. Black people are not easy to be able to get a job in accordance with their expectations, because not all places want to accept the presence of black people in that place. Low worker is shown as, waitress, valet parking, busboy, doorman, cooks, field workers, and also a chauffeur. The second characteristic of black people is a threat to white people. In this case black people often get prohibition to entering public places, especially if the place is white area. The presence of black people was felt to be a threat to white people because they suspected that they had plans to commit crimes. The third characteristic is black people become people who surrender when they get bad treatment from white people. Black people do not defend or rebel against these treatments. Even though black people have to cover up the sadness of all the bad treatment they get. The fourth characteristic is that white people restrict any movement of black people. To travel and spend the night on the streets, black people need a guidebook to get through the route. Indirectly it restricts black people from being able to enter public places. The fifth characteristic is the inequality of treatment between whites and black. Even to pass certain roads, black people cannot go through that. Because the rule was written that only white people the road can pass the road at night. Whites give a seemingly warm welcome to the arrival of blacks, but they were just formalities and cultural reasons. Even though it looks like that, it does not make white people treat black people as people and not be considered the trash of society.

### 3.2.1 Plato's Allegory Man in The Cave Reflected in Tony in Green Book Film

#### 1) The First Stage, Pseudo Reality

At this stage, Plato delivers that everything we see around us is a reality that comes from the shadow of something in the world of ideas. The theory that delivers this stage of pseudo-reality is when prisoners see shadows on the cave wall. The adaptation of film Green Book film at this stage, corresponds to Tony having wrong views to black people. Tony agrees with that black people have the same preferences. Even though Tony accepted a job offered by a black person (DS), Tony's mindset about black people was still the same.

## 2) The Second Stage, Reality Adaptation

In the second stage, Plato said that the process of humans is freeing themselves from the previous shape and description of the adaptation stage. According to the theory, the adaptation stage is where the prisoner sees the fire used for lighting in the cave. The adaptation of Green Book film at this stage, Tony has started to see a different side after recognizing DS. It turns out that black people are not as bad as Tony thought all this time.

## 3) The Third Stage, True Reality

The theory explains that true reality happens when the prisoners can be free and see the outside world for real. The adaptation of Green Book film at this stage, Tony defends DS. DS gets unfair treatment from people, especially from white people. Tony said that white people should not treat black people (DS) like that. Tony's excuse for defending DS is that the white people should not discriminate against black people, not all of them had bad intentions. White people did not treat DS well enough.

## 4) The Fourth Stage, Enlightenment

The last stage is enlightenment. When humans realize that what they have been observing all the time is real. Most people have a closed mindset because of the environmental education they get. The people around them make them grow into someone who is a rigid and close mindset. The theory explains that the stage of enlightenment is when the prisoners return to the cave and try to tell other prisoners about the beauty and the real-world in outside. The adaptation of Green Book film at this stage shows when Tony defends or helps DS. White people ridicule and even hurl bad words that Tony does not like what they said. Tony felt that they should not say something like that to black people.

### 3.2.2 Tony Change His Opinion About Black People

There are ten things related to Tony's changing opinion of black people. It started when Tony saw the DS performance for the first time. It turned out that DS had good musical knowledge and skills. It happens with the good music performance, delighting the audience on stage. The bravery of DS when tour to Birmingham. DS said that white people treated black people with disrespect and paid them for culture when in fact white people still treated black people badly.

Tony feels that DS should get special treatment if he is a guest at a dinner party, but he gets the opposite. Tony realized that they should not have differentiated the DS. Whereas they need DS expertise to entertain the guests that night. Despite receiving bad treatment from white people, DS still smiles sincerely and friendly when dealing with white people. After several times Tony watched the performances by DS. Tony feels impressed and says that DS is the best pianist. Tony was more impressed with the last performance by DS even though it was not the place where he was supposed to be performing. DS as a black man who can play the beautiful piano and amazed with his skills. The ability to play music is not only possessed by white people, as Tony had thought.

#### **4. CLOSING**

The characteristics of black people (BP) divided into low workers, white man's threat, surrendered people, restricted people, and inequality with the white man. Allegory man in the cave by Plato has similarity with Tony in the Green Book film. Pseudo-reality is when prisoners see shadows on the walls of the cave. In the Green Book film, Tony is still tied up with the stereotype which exists in him because of the cultural inculcation of white people. The adaptation stage is where the prisoner sees the fire used for lighting in the cave, in the Green Book film Tony has started to see a different side after recognizing DS. It turns out that black people are not as bad as Tony thought all along. True-reality when prisoners can be free and see the outside world for real, in Green Book film Tony defends DS, who gets unfair treatment from people, especially white people. The enlightenment is when the prisoners return to the cave and try to tell other prisoners about the beautiful and the real world outside. Unexpectedly these prisoners get resistance and ridicule, and even worse they threatened to kill the prisoners if what was said was a lie. In the Green Book film Tony defends or helps DS. Tony had seen the truth in black people that they were not what white people thought all this time.

The change in Tony's perspective towards black people (BP) was more due to DS's musical skills (C11), DS's intellectual ability (C14, C34), and DS's personality (C32, C57). After the change in perspective of DS, there was an attitude of defense when DS got bad treatment from other white people.

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