

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

*Freedom Writers* is a 2007 drama film, the Major characters are starred by Hilary Swank (Erin Gruwell), Imelda Staunton (Margaret Campbell) and Aprill Lee Hernandez (Eva Benitez). This is film directed by Richard LaGravenese and Produce by Michael Shamberg, Danny Devito and Stacey Sher. It is true story based on the book *The Freedom Writers Diary* by teacher Erin Gruwell who wrote the story based on Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, California. The title is a play on the term "Freedom Riders", referring to black and white civil rights activists who tested the U.S. Supreme Court decision ordering the desegregation of interstate buses in 1961. The location of making this film is in Los Angeles, California USA. This film was released in January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in United Stated.

The *Freedom writer* film tells about racism, juvenile delinquents, gang members among the students. The racism problem appears when the students segregate themselves into racial groups in the classroom, fights break out, and eventually most of the students stop turning up to class. In another case the students take their seats, the black right section is filled by black gang members, and the Latinos sit on the back left side of the room. Besides, the Asians take seat on the front right and one Caucasian boy sits in the front. Not only does Erin Gruwell meet opposition from her students, but she also has a hard time with her department head,

which refuses to let her teach her students with books in case they get damaged and lost, and instead tells her to focus on teaching them discipline and obedience. Erin feels shock when she sees the riot a fight among gang war in and out her classroom. Almost students are underprivileged, Erin never gets respect from her students.

Her enthusiasm is quickly challenged when she realizes that her class is all "at-risk" students, also known as "untouchables", and not the eager students she was expecting. At school, Gruwell intercepts a racist drawing of one of her students and uses it to teach them about the Holocaust. She gradually begins to earn their trust and buys them composition books to record their diaries, in which they talk about their experiences of being abused, seeing their friends die, and being evicted. Determined to reform her students, she takes two part-time jobs to pay for more books and spends more time at school, to the disappointment of her husband (Patrick Dempsey). Her students start to behave with respect and learn more. A transformation is especially visible in one of her students. She invites several Holocaust survivors to talk with her class about their experiences and takes them on a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance. Meanwhile, her unorthodox teaching methods are scorned by her colleagues and department chair Margaret Campbell. The next year comes, and Gruwell teaches her class again for sophomore (second) year. In class, when reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, they invite Miep Gies (Pat Carroll), the woman who sheltered Anne Frank from the German soldiers to talk to them. After they raise the money to bring her over, she tells them her experiences hiding Anne Frank. When Marcus tells her that she is his hero, she denies it, claiming she was merely doing the

right thing. Her denial causes Eva to rethink lying during her testimony. When she testifies, she finally breaks down and tells the truth, much to some of her family members' dismay. Meanwhile, Gruwell asks her students to write their diaries in book form. She compiles the entries and names it *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

Then a pivotal moment changed their lives forever. When a racial caricature of one of the African-American students circulated the classroom, Erin angrily intercepted the drawing and compared it to the Nazi caricatures of Jews during the Holocaust. To her amazement, the students responded with puzzled looks. Erin was appalled to discover that many of her students had never heard of the Holocaust. When she asked how many in her class had been shot at, however, almost all of them raised their hands, and began lifting their shirts to show their scars. This initiated a battle-scar show-and-tell that left Erin Gruwell shocked and inspired to take advantage of the powerful energy she had sparked.

The *Freedom Writers*, in honor of the Civil Rights leaders, the Freedom Riders, the students of Room 203 changed from a group of apathetic, frustrated students to a closely knit, motivated family. They raised funds and arranged for Miep Gies, the courageous Dutch woman who sheltered the Frank family during World War II, to visit them in California. Soon after, Zlata Filipovic responded to the *Freedom Writers'* many letters inviting her to Long Beach, and spent five days with them, swapping stories of their experiences. The visits from Gies and Filipovic reinforced the *Freedom Writers'* beliefs that voices can be heard, change is possible, and that their words have the power to affect people throughout the world.

The *Freedom Writers* have continued on their mission to teach tolerance and share their story of success. In 1997 they organized an "Echoes of the Soul" fundraising concert to help pay for a trip to Washington, D.C., where they toured the Holocaust Museum and presented their diary to Secretary of Education Richard Riley. In 1998 they won the Spirit of Anne Frank Award and traveled to New York for the acceptance ceremony. In the summer of 1999, The *Freedom Writers* achieved one of their most far-reaching goals; they traveled to Europe and visited Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam, the concentration camps in Germany and Poland, and their friend, Zlata Filipovic in her native Sarajevo, Bosnia.

This movie also created the pro and contra from the public response. People have argued that Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank) is a first-time teacher who wants to make a difference. She has little idea of what she's getting into when she volunteers to be an English teacher at a newly integrated high school in Long Beach, California. Her students are divided along racial lines and have few aspirations beyond basic survival. When Erin discovers how much of their lives are blighted by racial prejudice. ([www.freedomwritersreview.com](http://www.freedomwritersreview.com)).

The *Freedom Writers* movie tells about the behavior of the students in a school, which has bad setting and effect for them. If the students are allowed to have bad behavior, it would be a dilemma. But Erin has methods, the methods is exposure to an adult that encouraged them to view diversity as a chance to learn about other cultures, to shatter old stereotypes and to change their lives for the better by ridding themselves of bigotry and preconceived opinions about themselves and others. As

they progressed from freshman to seniors under her tutorage the students, found themselves and their attitudes towards each other and learning changing to such a point that they all united dubbing themselves the *Freedom Writers* in honor of the original Freedom Riders involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

The real life, based on the story makes this film interesting to be watched. There are some reasons why this film is called interesting to be watched, the first reason is it is real life, that especially in Los Angeles, US and also it is adapted from true story. The true story behind *The Freedom Writers Diary* is an uplifting, unforgettable example of how hard work, courage on the spirit of determination changed the lives of a teacher and her students.

The second reason is about the themes, Throughout the *Freedom Writers Diary*, the *Freedom Writers* moved from the victim mentality to an empowered mentality. As the students studied various authors and realized they were not alone in their pain, they become more philosophical about their situation and took steps to improve their environment. Once they began to conquer the "us versus them" mentality and see each other as human beings rather than Latino, Black, Asian or White, the move from victim to empowerment occurred rather quickly. As the reader peruses the diary entries in chronological order, it's quite apparent that this shift is taking place.

The third reason is about the major character, Hillary Swank as Erin Gruwell. She is an English teacher. She never gives up teaching her student with the different

race. She always smiles and is happy with her students although she feels under pressure. She tries to give the best to her students.

The fourth reason is unique. The writer finds that the movie is unique because the director of movie uses different characters from ordinary people that challenge to be explored. The writer finds the good characters, she is Erin Gruwell who changes the bad characters from her students with different strategy.

*Freedom Writers* is the movie that tells about the racism that is done by the student in America. The students have bad behavior. Every time they are fighting in inside and outside of the classroom. One day, Gruwell intercepts a note being passed between students, the paper reveals a racist caricature full of hate. Gruwell tells her class that it is this sort of hate and misunderstanding that leads to the Holocaust. It is one of the racism that is show in the *Freedom Writers* movie.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe *Freedom Writers* movie by using Marxist Approach theory by Karl Marx, so the writer constructs the title “RACIAL DISPUTE IN LAGRAVENESE’S FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE (2007): A MARXIST APPROACH.”

## **B. Literature Review**

*Freedom Writers* movie is interested to be studied. However after looking for some literature reviews in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta which was done by Wiwin Astuti (2009), the research concerns with the *Freedom Writers* done by other researchers. She will analyze “The Influence of Teaching-Learning Model on Student’s Personality Development in *Freedom Writers* movie By Using Educational Psychology Approach”. It tells about the problem in education institution racism, happened in class or out of class that influences in teaching-learning. But Erin Gruwell has several methods in her teaching-learning process. The writer takes the research because it has same object to be research.

On the other hand, the writer found another study in Diponegoro University entitled “*Anti Rasisme Pada Tokoh Erin Gruwell Dalam Film Freedom Writers Karya Richard Lagravenese*” which was done by Yulia Shinta K (2005). This research about anti racism, to analyze Erin’s life and environment which makes her become an anti-racist person, and to understand the effect of her anti-racist through pictures and dialogs in “Freedom Writers” film. The result shows that Erin’s anti racism can be seen from conflicts happened to her. Besides, there are other factors that make her as an anti-racist such as her identification process, outside social interaction, selectivity, motive, social nature, and relationship with her social environment. At the end, the effect of Erin’s anti racism appears. It shows that Erin’s students in 203 classrooms change their behavior to be anti-racist. Now, the writer analyzes the same object but

also analyzes the different approach. The writers uses Marxist Approach to be analyzed.

### **C. Problem of the Study**

Reflected on the background, the researcher proposes problem, which is “How is Racial Dispute reflected in *Freedom Writers* movie?”

### **D. Objective of the Study**

Based on the problem statement above, the researcher can propose some objectives of the study bellow:

1. To analyze *Freedom Writers* movie based on its structural elements of Movie.
2. To analyze *Freedom Writers* movie based on Marxist Approach.

### **E. Limitation of the Study**

To make the research appropriate to the objective of the study, the researcher will make a limitation to the research. She will only focus on the Racial Dispute on *Freedom Writers* Movie using Marxist approach.

## **F. Benefit of the Study**

By presenting this thesis, the writer hopes that there will be some benefits as follows:

### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

To give deeper understanding in literary fields as the reference to the other researcher, and to enrich the literary study, particularly among the students especially on Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

### **2. Practical Benefit**

To give some contributions to the larger body in knowledge or the development of knowledge particularly studies in LaGravenese's *Freedom Writers* Movie.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

The type of the research is descriptive qualitative or library research which data are based on non-human sources. It is descriptive qualitative because it describes the Racial Dispute reflected in LaGravenese's *Freedom Writers* in description text.

### **2. Object of the Study**

The object of the research is the Racial Dispute in LaGravenese's *Freedom Writers* movie.

### **3. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

In this research, the researcher uses two data sources that are primary and secondary data sources.

a. Primary data Source

The data is the *Freedom Writers* movie by LaGravenese and the script.

b. Secondary Data Source

The data are taken from some references related to the research by picking up both book and the Website.

**4. Technique of the Data Collection**

The method of the data collection is done through documentation or library research. There are some steps of collecting data:

- a. Watching the movie many times until the researcher gets adequate information or data analysis.
- b. Taking notes of the information in both primary and secondary data.
- c. Arranging the data into several information groups based on their classifications.
- d. Developing the provided data.

**5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

For analyzing the movie, the researcher uses descriptive analysis technique. It is begun with analyzing the structural elements and then Marxist approach. It is interpretation of the characters of the movie and content to get understanding the data based on Marxist approach.

## **H. Research Paper Organization**

The research consists of six chapters and each of them is divided into subsequent divisions. There are six chapters. For the first chapter is introduction which explains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. Chapter II presents underlying theory of Marxist approach; it covers nature of Marxism, major principles and theoretical application. Chapter III comprises historical background explain the social background of America in the Twenty first; it deals with social, economic, political, science and technological, culture, and religious aspects. Chapter IV comprises the structural analysis. The researcher describes the structural elements of the *Freedom Writers* movie and discussion. Chapter V presents the Marxist analysis and discussion related to the problem of the movie. Finally, Chapter Vi delivers the integrating the overall discussion, and bringing it to the conclusion of the study and also the suggestion of the researcher.