

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Freedom Writer is the American movie that was released on 5 January 2007. This movie is directed by Richard LaGravenese. The genre is urban drama movie. The story is based on a true story about a high school teacher named Erin Gruwell, and her English class students who overcome huge obstacles and use the power of writing to turn their lives around. It is a true story of what happening today in America. In addition, it is the truth about somebody who has braved to stand up to do something for change the future of teenagers. This movie has duration about 123 minutes. The stars of this movie are Hilary Swank, Patrick Dempsey, Scott Glenn, Imelda Staunton, Jason Finn, Hunter Parrish, Deance Wyatt, April L. Hernandez, Mario, Kristin Herrera, Sergio Montalvo, Vanetta Smith, Gabriel Chavarria, Antonio García, Jacklyn Ngan. Music by Mark Isham, will.i.am, RZA, Cinematography is Jim Denault, Editing by David Moritz, Distributed by Paramount Pictures, Country is USA, Language is English, Budget is \$21 million, Gross revenue is \$43,090,741.

The beginning of this movie is about Hilary Swank that plays the role of Erin Gruwell as a new teacher in Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach. This region has new integration program that puts the students of all backgrounds and races in a class together. Her efforts to be a good teacher for

her students and she never gives up until her students to be better. Her enthusiasm quickly dwindles away when she realizes that her class is untouchable students. They must be forced into class by security guards and segregate themselves into racial group in the classroom. The tension is apparent every time students from one race look at those from another. Not only does she meet opposition from her students, she also has a hard time with her head of department, who believes she should focus less on teaching her students to learn and read, and more on teaching them discipline and obedience. One night, two students' of Erin Gruwell, Eva, a Hispanic girl and her gank a Cambodian refugee, Cindy meet themselves together with their own gank in the same convenience store. Another student, Grant Rice (Armand Jones), is found frustrated at losing an arcade game and asks for a refund from the owner of the store. He is so angry and breaks out the things in the store. When he storms out, Eva's boy friend left his seat of the car and tries to shoot, accidentally killing Cindy's boy friend. As Eva is witness, so she intends to protect her own kind race.

At school, after the teachers have been had a meeting, Gruwell comes to the class and intercepts a racist' students drawing one of her students. From that, even Gruwell is conscious about the problem and she uses it to teach them about Holocaust. She gradually begins to earn their trust and buys them competition books to record their diaries, in which they talk about their experience of being abused like seeing their friends die, and being evicted. Therefore, no supporting from the head of department, Erin finds two parts –

time jobs to pay more books about Holocaust. According to her, this is the best way that she can do. She also spends more time in school, it makes disappoint to her husband, Scott (Patrick Dempsey). Her students start to behave with respect and learn more books. A transformation is especially visible in one of her students, Marcus (Jason Finn). 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 Mss. Margareth Champbell (Imelda Staunton). Mss. Champbell does not like to see her success in teaching the students, which are untouchable. Beside that, Erin has a big problem in her family. She is in a divorcing process with her husband. Her husband does not agree with Erin. He thinks about his disagreement life that he has. Erin has a difficult situation and her father always supports her. She has a great father.

In class, when reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Marcus gives Erin idea to all students to write a letter to Miep Gies (Pat Carroll), the woman who sheltered Anne Frank from the German soldier. Then they collect the fund to invite Miep Gies. After they raise the money to bring her over, she tells her experiences hiding Anne Frank. When Marcus tells to her that she was his hero, she denies it, claiming she was merely doing the right thing. Her denial causes Eva to think 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 book

form. She compiles the entries and names it *The Freedom Writers*. Margaret tells her she cannot teach her kids for their junior year. She fights this decision, eventually convincing the superintendent to allow her to teach her kids' junior and senior year. The movie ends with a note that Gruwell successfully brought many of her students to graduation and college.

There are some opinions society about Freedom Writer movie divided into positive opinion and negative opinion. According to Zachary Anderson (reviewed: 1/6/07) posted on 20 August 2009, he said that this was one heck of an inspirational movie. Hillary Swank has best performance in sense Boy's do not cry. It accurately displayed what it is like to go to school in a threatening environment. The problem some people have with this movie is that the story has already been told multiple times, but that is true about most movies. This movie brings a new aspect to the story of the teacher who goes beyond what is required. These kids' stories will make you want to do something to help those around you. It will show you what true strength is, and for some how to use it. Second people said that this movie does have a message, but it does not lean on it in hopes that audiences will be so touched they will be afraid to criticize the film itself. It is backed up by a compelling story with some serious action to fit. For the third people said that this is a little better than all of those. This movie takes place between 1994 and 1996 in Long Beach, CA, so you have to keep that in mind. The music does a good job of placing the time, and all the songs are classics.

The negative opinions are from three audiences. First, according to Ky (Posted 18 Jan 2009 at 5:58 am). He said that he is not sure what was so unique about this movie, nor is it clear how exactly it offered any insight into the issue of race relations. Second, Angel (reviewed 21 September 2007) said that this film reminded them of *Dangerous Minds* without the good sound track, it is watchable but nothing special. For the third person according to Chez (Posted 2nd January, 2008) said that he thinks this film was good, but a bit similar to that other film cannot remember the name though.

This movie also gives positive market response. In the CNN report, the Perry Township representatives cite the bad language in the book. The lawyer for the school board remarks it would serve as a bad role model. He does not know if every member of the school board read the entire book. If they did not, that would not surprise him. If they did read it, they are banning more than bad language. *Freedom Writers Diary* was a national best seller, so this movie becomes the U.S. Box Office in 2007 and gets the result about \$86,181,482 from domestic and foreign. Those, it can cover the expense the production of *Freedom Writers* movie that finishing about \$36,581,633 with distributors from Paramount Pictures, and United International Pictures (UIP).

Freedom Writer garnered a number of nominations in the 2007 film awards season, in the Academy Awards, popularly called the Oscars, *The Oscar* (film), a 1966 comedy about a film star, *Oscar* (1967 film), a comedy starring Louis de Funès, *Oscar* (1991 film), a remake of the 1967 film, starring Sylvester Stallone. Richard LaGravenese had written *The Chronicles*

of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (2010) (*filming*) (screenplay), *P.S. I Love You* (2007) (screenplay), *Freedom Writers* (2007) (screenplay), *Paris, je t'aime* (2006) (segment "Pigalle") *aka Paris, I Love You* (Hong Kong: English title) (International: English title) *aka Paris, je t'aime* (UK) (USA), *Beloved* (1998/I) (screenplay), *Living Out Loud* (1998) (written by) , *The Horse Whisperer* (1998) (screenplay), *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996) (screen story) (screenplay), *Unstrung Heroes* (1995) (screenplay), *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995) (screenplay), *A Little Princess* (1995) (screenplay), *The Ref* (1994) (screenplay) *aka Hostile Hostages*, *The Fisher King* (1991), *Rude Awakening* (1989) (screenplay)

The research discover fourth reasons why choosing this movie. First, from character and characterization, the major character of this movie gives many understanding in society. Eva (Jewish people) gives explanation about the situation that happen in Long Beach, California, USA in the starting of the movie. There are some races like Cambodia, White, Black, Latino and Jewish. From the differences of race that make prejudice and stereotypes in multicultural among the races in a place. It makes in the researcher's initiated to understand more about the societies' situation that happen in Long Beach in 1992 reflected by the major character in this movie.

Second, plot the story of *Freedom Writer* is so interesting because it starts from the top of conflict that real happen directly in California generally and it portrays Woodrow Wilson High School as the specific object. Eva's

dilemma and what the resolution is, one of the main problems in the movie that allows us to realize the development of Gruwell's work with her students.

Third, setting of place in this movie is in California as a special place in United States. This place is one of the famous places to be a moviemaker place. This movie gives the real event that happened in California before this movie was made. And in California, there are a lot of events that are created in the past to be of famous history.

Then, the last reason is from the point of view of the narrator. The researcher focuses on the differences of the race in California, USA especially in Long Beach reflected by their behavior in society among the gang. It is about inner city children struggling to have an education, living with poverty, gang violence, domestic abuse, homelessness and racial intolerance. The theme in this term is the badness of people to follow the prejudices and stereotypes in different races and other skins.

A prejudice is a bad assumption about people that has different in physics because of race, social class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability, political beliefs, religion, line of work or other personal characteristics. Prejudice also can be called a sentence that says, "You judge someone before you get to know them". A stereotype is a commonly held public belief about specific social groups, or types of individuals. Stereotypes are standardized and simplified conceptions of groups, based on some prior assumptions. Also can be called a sentence that says, "an exaggerated description applied to every person". Therefore, prejudice and

stereotype has a close relationship as the result of community in society. In other side, prejudice and stereotype not only happen in different race or color but also in same color, race, and others

The researcher turns to analyze *Freedom Writers* movie based on the sociological perspective because of the two considerations, the first is Eva as a woman who has a hard character to defend herself and her race in riots among the gank that reflected in social condition of this movie. She has a role in her life as a Jewish people to defend her life when shooting in mini market. She thought that she had to protect her own race and it is taking leave with the truth. The second is that the movie has great possibility to know the phenomenon in prejudice and stereotypes in multicultural society using sociological approach of the major character. In this study the researcher encourages herself to give a title **PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY IN RICHARD LAGRAVENESSE'S FREEDOM WRITERS MOVIE (2007); A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

B. Literature Review

As far as the writer knows, there are two researchers that has conducted to study the *Freedom Writers* movie in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

The first previous researcher is Astuti (UMS, 2009) in her paper *The Influence of Learning Model on Student's Personality Development in Freedom Writers Movie: Educational Psychology Approach*. In this research,

the researcher employs qualitative method. She uses two data sources namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the movie itself and the secondary data sources are books, internet, journal, etc. The method of data collection is descriptive technique. Based on the analysis, the result of this study source that the students' personality in school can be formed by a teacher who understands his or her roles as the teacher based on educational psychology and also he or she has to know the characteristic of the adult learners. A teacher is an agent of change. This research has the same object, *Freedom Writers* movie. The difference of this research is from the approach of the research.

Second, Dewi Erna Patmawati (UMS,2009) in her paper Struggle for Existence in Erin Gruwell *Freedom Writers* directed by Richard LaGranevese: An Individual Psychological Approach. According to her the object of this research is the movie entitled *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGraneverse. The major problem of this study is how the struggle for existence reflected in Erin Gruwell's a major character of *Freedom Writers*; therefore the objective of the study is to analyze *Freedom Writers* based on structural element and to analyze main character based on individual psychological approach. This study belongs to qualitative study.

She uses two data sources; they are primary and secondary data. The primary data is *Freedom Writers* movie directed by Richard LaGravenerse. The secondary data sources are the books about psychology and the other sources, which are related to the analysis. Based on the analysis, the study

reveals there are some motives underlying the struggle of Erin Gruwell. The motives are, getting safety in the job, family, respected by other and the last motive is to actualize the potential as professional teacher.

The differences of this study and two previous studies are in the perspective of the research. The first researcher uses Educational Psychology Approach. In her research, the teacher must know the development of a psychology a student. The teacher has to know the characteristic adult learners. Then, the second researcher said that the profession as a teacher is a motivation to get more safety job in family, respected by other and the last motive is to actualize the potential as professional teacher. Then the similar previous research with this research is it has the same object, there is *Freedom Writers* movie.

C. Problem Statement

In this study, the writer proposes a single problem statement. The major problem is “how prejudices and stereotypes of race and skin color in multicultural society are reflected in Lagravenesse’s in *Freedom Writers* Movie.”

D. Limitation of the Study

The researcher will focuses on the analysis of prejudices and stereotypes in multicultural society reprotayed in Richard Lagravenesse’s *Freedom Writers* movie viewed from the sociological perspective.

E. Objective of the Study

Concerning with the problem statements, the objectives of the study are as follow to analyze the movie based on the structural elements of the movie and to analyze the movie especially about the freedom and sacrifice using Sociological approach based on sociological condition of America's society.

F. Benefit of the Study

The writer takes an expectation that this study gives benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The study is dedicated to the development of literary study in Surakarta University, especially in English Department and to give deeper understanding in literary field as the reference to the other researchers in analyzing the movie that is analyzed in this research into different perspective.

2. Practical Benefit

The result of the study is expected to broaden the writer's own comprehension about Richard Lagravenesse's *Freedom Writer*. This study is also expected to contribute to the development of the large body of knowledge, particularly literary studies on Richard Lagravenesse's *Freedom Writer*.

G. Research Method

1. Object of the Study

The object of the study is Richard LaGravenesse's *Freedom Writers* publishing by Paramount and DreamWorks Pictures in 2007.

2. Type of the Study

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative is a type of research, which result the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the observed object.

3. Type of Data and Data Source

1. Type of Data

The data of this study are image and text in *Freedom Writers* movie by Richard LaGravenesse.

2. Data Source

- a. The primary data sources in the movie are script, conversation and acting of both actors and actress from *Freedom Writers* movie directed by Richard LaGravenesse which is related to the study.
- b. The secondary data sources are the books and other sources that support the analysis.

4. Method of Collecting Data

The method of data collection in this study is note-taking and image-capturing. The researcher views the primary data repeatedly to reach more understanding of source. Next, the writer takes, compares, quotes, and

studies others data into some categories and develops them into a good unity.

5. Technique for Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, the researcher employs the descriptive analysis in Eva Benitez's social in savage and discrimination in differences of races and color that make prejudice in their stereotype and the major character in Richard LaGravanes's movie, viewed from the sociological perspective.

H. Research Paper Organization

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction which explains background of the study, literary review, problem statement, and limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory of Sociological perspective. The third chapter consists of structural analysis of the movie and discussion. The fourth chapter consists of analysis based on Sociological approach. In addition, the last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.