

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Freedom Writers is a movie based on the true story which is taken from the *Freedom Writers Diary* by teacher Erin Gruwell and her students. This movie took place in California, United State of America. This movie was released on January 5, 2007. The running time or the duration of this movie is about 122 minutes or one hour and twenty two minutes. The language used in this movie is English. *Freedom Writers* is directed by Richard LaGravenese and produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, and Stacey Shen. The screen play of this movie is Richard LaGravenese. David Moritz is the editor, and Mark Isham and Will .i.am RZA is the music. The music supervisor is Mary Ramoz. The cinematography is Jim Denault. The production designer is Laurence Bennett. And the costume designer is Cindy Evans. The studios to make this film are in the Jersey Films and MTV films. Paramount Picture is the distributor of this movie. The budget that is spent to make this film is \$ 21 million. The gross revenue is \$43,090,741.

The director of the *Freedom Writers* movie is Richard LaGravenese. He was born on October 30th , 1959 in Brooklyn, New York. He is the son of a taxi driver. He is an American screen writer and occasional film director. He graduated from New York University Tisch School of the Arts, Experimental Theatre Program. He currently lives in Manhattan, New York on Central Park

West with his daughter named Lili and his wife named Ann. LaGravenese wrote *The Fisher King* in the late 1980s. It was acquired by Lynda Obst and Debra Hill's Production Company. They subsequently attracted Terry Giliam to direct. The final film was a commercial hit, and brought LaGravenese an Academy Award nomination. It also secured his status as a premier screen writer and script doctor. (www.imbd.com/name/nm0481418/)

The *Freedom Writers* tells about the problems in racism that happened in Long Beach, California. This movie starts with the scene of the *Rodney King* riots that happened in Los Angeles at 1992. The first story comes from Eva, a Latino girl when her friend suddenly died. And the white police catch and bring her father who tries to help her friend in the prison. In Long Beach, the society is divided into several groups they are Latino, Asian, White, and Black. They kill each other for the sake of their race, prestige, and the proud for their groups. Actually, their life is not peaceful because whenever and wherever they can be killed by the other groups.

Eva is forced to study in the Woodrow Wilson High School because the prison officer only gives her two choices. Those are coming to school or staying at the prison. She and her friends always think that getting the knowledge and studying at the school are not important. The important thing is they can survive in their life to keep their groups. Not only in the society but also in the school and at the class they always make group based on their race. The teacher named Erin Gruwell tries to change their views.

The students have their own self background and self experience which influence their personality. This is shown by their behavior such as anarchistic, obstinate, not respect each other, and introvert. They behave like that because they ever got and saw rude behavior in past time. This phenomenon makes almost the students to be a gangster. They do not respect the other groups. They always destroy and criticize each other. They are also proud their groups. It makes the student often fight with other gangster.

One night, Eva and Cindy, a Cambodian girl, find themselves in the same store. At that time, this is a black people named Grant rice that is losing in a game and angry with the owner of the store. He forces the owner to return his money but the owner rejected the Grant Rice hope. Then they have a quarrel. When Grant Rice comes out, there is Eva's boyfriend named Paco, a Latino man, aimed his gun to him. He can dodge it and the slug hits Cindy's boy friend. And Grant Rice tries to survive himself but he is caught and is entered in the prison by the police.

Next, Erin Gruwell always tries to change the views of her students. She gives the stories and books that have content about the conflict among groups. She also asks her students to write their experience in their diaries. She invites them to go to Museum of Tolerance. After the students read the *Diary of Anne Frank*, Erin and her students invite Miep Gies who saved Anne Frank from the German soldiers. From this activity, the students are aware that they have to respect the other people that are out of their community.

Based on the Miep Gies' story, Eva decides to tell the truth of the incident that happened in the store at the night. Paco kills Cindy's boyfriend when he wants to shot Grant Rice. She decides not to provide her groups although she knows that she will get bad effect. She is threatened by her groups. In the end, the students of 203 room are united and they are not separated based on the race. Erin asks them to rewrite their experiences that are written in their diary. She hopes that their experiences can be published and be a motivation for other people or other groups. And the collection of their experiences entitled *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

There are many pros and contras about this movie. Positive response comes from Ruthe Stein, a chronicle senior movie writer. She is interested when this movie shows the racial conflicts among the students. (http://articles.sfgate.com/20070105/entertainment/17226716_1_eringruwell). The second is from Lisa Schwarzbaum. She states Erin is so earnest and gives many inspirations. (<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/020007976.html>). The contradiction comment comes from Desson Thomson. He states that this movie is just satisfying at that time and makes us hunger to the authentic. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/movies/freedom.writers,1125132/critic-review.html#reviewNum1>).

Freedom Writers movie has gotten some awards. *Freedom Writers* won a Humanitas Price Award for feature film category in 2007 and Richard LaGravenese as a recipient, and this movie got nominated in Image Award for outstanding writing in a motion picture (theatrical or television) category

in 2008 and Richard LaGravenese as a recipient. (www.imbd.com/title/110463998/awards).

There are five reasons the writer is interested in studying this movie. The first is the character of the movie. This film is based on the true story that shows the racial conflict among the races. This film tells the struggle of Eva and her friends in the 203 room to survive in their life and keep their group. It also tells the attempt of the Erin as a teacher who always supports her students and tries to give the better insight for them. The director must make the strong character in the major character to make the real character that shows the gangster and the kind teacher.

The second reason is the plot of the story. Plot is the arrangement of the story. The director must present the event like the real. The plot in this movie is interesting because it begins from the scene of *Rodney King* riots that shows the racial conflict. Then this film tells the bad experiences of the students. Next the film shows the new experiences that change the view of the students. It makes this film like the reality condition.

The third reason is the performance of the actors and the actress. Their action in this movie is so appeal. In this film, April Lee Hernandez as Eva shows the good performance. She shows the characteristics of the gang's leader who has behavior like a man and always fights with other gangster. Hillary Swank as Erin also shows her good performance as the kind, intelligent, and high educated person. The other good performance was shown by Jason Finn as Marcus. He shows the real gangster who has the

sensitive feelings. The performance of the actors and the actress is not good if the selecting of the character by the director is not appropriate.

The fourth reason is *mise-en-scene*. *Mise-en-scene* is the staging in action that consists of the costume; make up, lighting, and figure expression and movement. The costume and the makeup of Eva are appropriate with her characteristics. She always uses the casual costume and her makeup is natural. The costume and make up of Erin are good. She uses good dresses and her makeup is natural. It shows that she is a kind and high educated teacher. The good lighting is showed this movie. The brighter light is used when the setting is at the noon, and the darker light is used when the setting is at the night. The figure expression and movement of the actors and the actress are good. They express their characteristics by their action.

The last reason is the subject matter. The social issue about the racial conflict is reflected in this movie. This movie tells the racial conflict that happened among Latino, Asian, Black, and White. Almost the students ever got the bad experience because the different of their race. They lost their family, and their friends. This condition creates the bad moral in the student and makes them keep themselves and their group.

Based on these reason above, the writer will analyze *Freedom Writers* movie using sociological perspective. Therefore, the writer is interested in conducting this research entitled **“RACIAL CONFLICT IN LAGRAVENESE’S *FREEDOM WRITERS*: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPERCTIVE”**

B. Literature Review

To support this research the researcher needs the other researches that have been made by other researchers that have a close relationship with the study. The first researcher is Dewi Erna Patmawati from Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2009). Her study is entitled *Struggle for Existence Erin Gruwell's Freedom Writers Directed by Richard LaGravenese: An Individual Psychological Approach*. She focuses her research to find the struggle for existence the major character, Erin Gruwell in the *Freedom Writers* movie. She uses an individual psychological approach by Alfred Adler to analyze the movie. She concludes that there are external factors that defeat Erin; those are the social treatment to her race and her rank ability. But the idealism of teacher spirit influences the character of Erin in struggle for existence that is the harmonious life and equal rights all students. The Dewi's research is different from the writer because Dewi analyzes the existence of Erin Gruwell using an individual psychological approach and the writer analyzes the racial conflict that was reflected in the *Freedom Writers* movie using sociological perspective.

The second researcher is Abdul Haris Habibi from Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2010). His study is entitled *Self Defense Mechanism of Erin Gruwell in Richard LaGravenese Freedom Writers Movie: A psychoanalytic Approach*. The major problem in his research is how self defense mechanism of Erin Gruwell is reflected in Richard LaGravenese' *Freedom Writers*. He analyzes the major character's behavior from

psychoanalysis approach. He uses the theory of Sigmund Freud named *defense mechanism* that related with *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. He concludes that Erin Gruwell has a lot of defense mechanism in denial. Erin also has a large defense of intellectuality because she is a great teacher, but she rarely shows it in front of her students and her teacher friends. He thinks that it is better if Erin does it directly than doing many talks. And it is better for her to keep teaching the class rather than fighting. The Abdul's research is different from the writer because Abdul analyzes the behavior of Erin Gruwell using psychoanalytic approach and the writer analyzes the racial conflict that was reflected in the *Freedom Writers* movie using sociological perspective.

C. Problem statement

The problem statement in this research is “How the racial conflict is reflected in LaGravenese *Freedom Writers*?”

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the researcher focuses this research in analyzing the racial conflict as reflected in *Freedom Writers* movie using a sociological perspective.

E. Objective of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To analyze the *Freedom Writers* based on the structural elements of the movie.
- 2) To analyze the *Freedom Writers* based on the sociological perspective.

F. Benefits of the Study

The writer hopes this research will be beneficial for the readers and other researchers generally. The benefits of this study are:

1) Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to give additional information and contribution to the large body of knowledge, particularly to the further studies of *Freedom Writers* movie by Richard LaGravenese.

2) Practical Benefit

This study is aimed to give deep understanding in applying sociological perspective in literature. And this research tries to explain about social conflict especially racial conflict that occurred because of the different of race, and skin color. So this research can be moral studies for the reader and the writer.

G. Research Method

The research method of this research paper is divided into five aspects:

(1) type of the study, (2) Object of the study, (3) type of data and data source, (4) technique of the data collection, and (5) method of the data analysis.

1) Type of the Study

In this research, the writer uses a qualitative research. Qualitative study is the study of the fact that involves individual behavior and the result of the study cannot be fact using numbers in analyzing.

2) Object of the Study

The object of the research is *Freedom Writers* movie. This movie is directed by Richard LaGravenese.

3) Type of the Data and the Data Source

Types of the data are the form of script and the image of the movie entitled *Freedom Writers* directed by Richard LaGravenese. The writer divides the data source into two categories: primary data and secondary data source.

a) Primary Data Source

The primary data source of the study is *Freedom Writers* movie that is directed by Richard LaGravenese and produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, and Stacey Shen.

b) Secondary Data Source

The secondary data source is other source related to the primary data source. Data sources are information about the movie, and the social historical background of American society in twentieth century that supports this analysis.

4) Technique of the Data Collection

The technique of collecting data is library digital research. The data from both primary and secondary data sources are collected and by watching the movie and collected from the books related to the topics. The techniques of collecting data are as follows:

- a) Watching the movie several times until the writer caught the information or the data to be analyzed.
 - b) Reading the movie script.
 - c) Reading some related books to find out the theory data and information required.
 - d) Browsing to the Internet to get several information and articles related to the research.
 - e) Taking notes the data and taking the picture of important parts.
 - f) Arranging the important data that related the research and develop them to be a good unity.
 - g) Drawing conclusion based on the data analysis.
- 5) Technique of the Data Analysis

The writer uses sociological perspective and applies it by using the descriptive analysis. In addition, the writer also uses the structural analysis of the work. Firstly, the data are arranged in a list of data. Secondly, the researcher is looking for a selecting the relevant of the data by using the chosen approach. Thirdly, all data from the second step are arranged. Finally, a conclusion is drawn.

H. Research Paper Organization

This paper is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is Introduction, which explains the Background of the study, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Research Paper Organization. Chapter II deals with the

Underlying Theory, which consists of Sociology of Literature, Structural Element of the Movie, and Theoretical Application. Chapter III contains about the Social Background of the American Society in the Twentieth Century, covering social aspect, economic aspect, political aspect, and religion aspect. Chapter IV is Structural Analysis; the researcher wants to explain the structural element of the movie and discussion. Chapter V is Sociological Analysis of the Movie. Chapter VI is the last chapter that consists of Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication.