

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The plight is the situation of life that unpleasant or difficult, especially an unfavorable or unlucky one: to get oneself in a regretful plight. The plight here is about the plight of being black especially in America. Moreover, the plight of being black is so distressing for the reason that they have to complete the command of their white master. The blacks are always implicit as the inferior in the society. In along history, blacks are minority people who are underestimated by whites and they become poor people with the lack of knowledge and dexterity. The white people made the black people as their slaves. As the minorities in society, sometimes the blacks were treated unjustly by the whites. Many states conceded laws said that black people and white people could not use the same facilities, such as schools, restaurants, parks, and public bathrooms. Separating people like this because of their race, color, sex, religion, or age is called segregation. This condition makes the social distinction between the blacks and the whites. In generally, the blacks are always been subtracted by the whites. This condition can be seen in *The Help* movie.

The Help is a 2011 American drama film adaptation of Kathryn Stockett's novel of the same name. This film adapted for the screen and directed by Tate Taylor. *The Help* movie is place in Jackson, Mississippi, and the stars Emma Stone as Skeeter, Viola Davis as Aibileen, Octavia Spencer as

Minnie Driver as Hilly Holbrook, Jessica Chastain as Celia Foote, Sissy Spacek as Mrs. Walters, mother's Hilly Holbrook, and Allison Janney as Charlotte, mother's Skeeter. This film produced by Dream Works Studios and distributed by Touchstone Pictures. *The Help* movie opened to positive reviews and became a massive box office success with a gross of \$211.6 million against its budget of \$25 million. In February 2012, *The Help* movie received four Academy Awards nominations including Best Picture and, Best Actress for Davis, Best Supporting Actress for Chastain, and a win for Supporting Actress for Spencer. On January 29, 2012, *The Help* won the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture.

The Help film tells about a young white woman, Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan as a journalist, and her relationship with two black maids in the early 1960s during Civil Rights era America. Skeeter is a journalist who decides to write a controversial book. She writes about colored people in Jackson, Mississippi from the point of view of the maids referred to as "the help".

In *The Help* film exposes the racism about black people; black people in here are faced with their job for white families as the maid that treated unjustly. *The Help* movie told from the first-person perspectives of three women, they are Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter. Firstly is about Aibileen, she is an African-American maid who is patient. She works to clean houses and care for the young children of various white families. Her job is tending the Leefolt household and also helpful for their child, Mae Mobley. Secondly is about Minny, she is Aibileen's confrontational friend. Her habitually always tells her employers what

she thinks about them. Minny's employer was Mrs. Walters, mother of Hilly Holbrook. Hilly is the social leader of the community, and head of the Junior League. She is the nemesis of all three main characters. But she was fired because she did the big mistake, it is, she uses toilet in Hilly Holbrook's house. Hilly Hollbrook is too discrimination the colored people.

And finally about Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan, she is the daughter of a well-known white family whose cotton farm employs many African-Americans in the fields, as well as in the household. Skeeter has just finished college and comes home with dreams of being a writer. Her mother's desire is for Skeeter to get married soon. But she doesn't care about it. Skeeter frequently wonders about the sudden loss of Constantine, the maid who cares her. Whereas Constantine had been writing letters to Skeeter when she studied at college and her last letter promised a surprise upon her arrival. But Skeeter doesn't find her. Skeeter's family tells her that Constantine immediately quit, and then went to live with family in Chicago. Skeeter does not trust that Constantine would leave suddenly without give her know and she always asked to her family, but no one will talk about it. Therefore, she wants to write a controversial book about the colored people, especially in Jackson, Mississippi because of going Constantine. She thinks that her friends' maids are treated very differently from how the white employers are treated. Skeeter struggles to communicate with the maids and gain their trust. The dangers of undertaking writing a book about African-Americans speaking out in the South during the early '60s hover constantly over the three women, because there is segregation in the South at that time. Racial issues of

overcoming long-standing barriers in customs and laws are experienced by all of the characters. The lives and morals of Southern socialites are also explored.

Tate Taylor is the director of *The Help* movie. Moreover, he is an American actor, screenwriter, and film producer. He was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. He is a close friend of writer Kathryn Stockett since they were in preschool together in Jackson. Taylor worked for 15 years in New York and Los Angeles. Since 2011 he lives on Wyolah Plantation in Mississippi. He debuted as a feature film director in *Pretty Ugly People*. He's also known for directing the Academy Award nominated film *The Help*, based on Stockett's novel *The Help*. She gave him rights to make the film adaptation in June 2008, before the book was published. At the 2012 BAFTA Awards, Taylor and actress Octavia Spencer talked with Miss Piggy for her Orange Film red carpet show, where the latter mistook *The Help* for a remake of The Beatles' song "Help!" Previous roles include a recurring role on *Sordid Lives: The Series*, guest spots on *Six Feet Under*, *Queer as Folk*, *The Drew Carey Show*, and films including 2001's *Planet of the Apes* and *I Spy*.

"Tate Taylor's adapted screenplay for *The Help* artfully distills the empowering essence and core emotional truths of Kathryn Stockwell's novel, translating it into a film that forcefully illustrates how ordinary people can impact positive social change. Evoking a specific time and place, the film's message is ultimately universal and remains relevant today. Tate's honor is well-deserved – and his script does Paul Selvin's legacy proud by conveying the continuing power

of the written word,” said WGAW President Christopher Keyser. In addition to Taylor receiving a 2012 Writers Guild Award nomination for Adapted Screenplay, *The Help* recently received four Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, Best Actress, and two nods for Best Supporting Actress.

The Help movie invites controversy pro and contra in society. This film is so interesting because this film rises the distinguish between the black people and white people about the dignity of the family, racial and economic. This movie also shows the excellent act from all of the stars, with taking place in Jackson, Mississippi, 1960s. There are four points that make this movie interesting to be analyzed. Firstly, *The Help* describes racial discrimination of African American family and white family. So this study is crucial to be conducted due to the discrimination of being black in *The Help* movie is so fascinating to be analyzed. The plight of being black in America is so pathetic because the treatment of the white people is so painful to the black people. The black people are the slave of the white people.

Secondly, *The Help* reflects cultural values of African American people in America. *The Help* describes the condition of African American family who is slaves for the American family. While the black people have different style, and the white people regard the black people is the minority society and the last is past and current discrimination and economic inequality between the black and white. They life during slavery as a part of the control mechanism of slavery was to strip the black identity, language, and the culture of their homeland. This was done by

undermining and replacing family structures with transient ones built around identity as slaves. Further, when slaves were able to secure their freedom, they often worked to get money to buy the freedom of their spouse and children.

Thirdly, describes social background of America in 1960. Racism in the United States has been a major issue since the colonial era and the slave era. Legally sanctioned racism imposed a heavy burden on Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latin Americans. European Americans (particularly Anglo Americans) were privileged by law in matters of literacy, immigration, voting rights, citizenship, land acquisition, and criminal procedure over periods of time extending from the 17th century to the 1960s. The most influence is the discrimination in economic and racial. The African American people, who called black people, always become poor or lower class. While American people, who called White people, always become a rich people.

Finally, the present I will be a teacher later and this project is necessary to be carried out to widen, enlarge, and insert more knowledge to my professional competence as teacher. So this is one of the requirements of being the professional teacher.

According to those reasons, the writer would like to analyze the plight of being black based on the Marxist approach. The writer will employ a Marxist approach to analyze this movie, because a Marxist approach is suitable to analyze this movie. The writer takes this research entitled THE PLIGHT OF BEING

BLACK REFLECTED IN TATE TAYLOR'S *THE HELP* MOVIE (2011): A MARXIST APPROACH.

B. Previous Studies

The writer has been looking for the literature review in many libraries especially in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and in University in Central Java at least, she has not found the research about *The Help* movie done by the other researcher. So that the writer cannot compare this research with other research because this is the first study of *The Help* movie. The writer uses Marxist approach to analyze the data and using *The Help* movie as an object. The writer analyzes "THE PLIGHT OF BEING BLACK REFLECTED IN TATE TAYLOR'S *THE HELP* MOVIE (2011) : A MARXIST APPROACH".

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the study above, the problem statement of the study is "How is the plight of being black reflected in Tate Taylor's *The Help* movie (2011)?"

D. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem that has stated above, the writer formulates the objective of the study as follows:

1. To analyze the plight of being black reflected in Tate Taylor's *The Help* movie based on the structural elements on the movie.
2. To describe the plight of being black reflected in Tate Taylor's *The Help* movie based Marxist Criticism.

E. Limitation of the Study

To make the study easier, the writer makes a limitation of the study which focuses on the analysis the plight of being black reflected in Tate Taylor's *The Help* movie by employing a Marxist approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

1. Theoretical Benefit

The result of this study is expected to be able to give theoretical contribution in the literature study, particularly psychological study on literature about the Marxist theory.

2. Practical Benefit

Hopefully, this study can give knowledge about the Marxist issue in *The Help* movie (2011).

G. Research Method

The research method of this study is elaborated into five elements, namely: (1) type of the study, (2) type of the data and the data source, (3) object of the study, (4) techniques of collecting data, (5) techniques of analyzing data. The enlightenment of each branch will be discussed further below:

1. Type of the Study

In analyzing *The Help* movie, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative is a type of research which result the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the observed object.

2. Type of the Data and the Data Sources

The types of data of this study are the images and the text which forms such like words, phrases, and sentences in a dialogues or monologues. There are two types of data, namely primary and secondary data, as follows:

a. Primary Data Source

The primary data source is the movie of *The Help* movie produced by Dream Work Pictures.

b. Secondary Data Source

The secondary data sources are books or e-books, journal, internet or any information related to the plight of being black.

3. Object of the Study

The object of the study is *The Help* movie by Tate Taylor and was first premiered in 2011 by Dream Works Pictures.

4. Techniques of the Data Collection

The writer uses note-taking and image-capturing as the method of collecting data in this research. The steps are as follows:

a. Watching *The Help* movie repeatedly.

b. Taking notes of important parts both primary and secondary data.

c. Arranging the data into several groups based on its theoretical category.

- d. Selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis.
- e. Drawing conclusion and formulate its pedagogical suggestion.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive approach. The steps taken by the writer in analyzing the data are as follows: the first is analyzing the data based on its structural elements. Focus will be paid on the structural analysis of the movie. The second step is analyzing the data based on Marxist perspective. Focus will be paid on the meaning of the plight of being black.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research paper consists of six chapters. The first chapter is introduction, which contains the background of the study, literary review, problem of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and paper organization. Second chapter is underlying theory. The third chapter deals with Social Background of *The Help* movie. Fourth chapter deals with the Structural Analysis of *The Help* movie. Analysis and discussion of *The Help* movie is presented in fifth chapter. Finally, the sixth chapter consist conclusion and suggestion.