RACE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION REFLECTED IN THE TATE TAYLOR’S THE HELP MOVIE (2011): A FEMINIST APPROACH

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RACE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION REFLECTED IN THE TATE TAYLOR’S *THE HELP* (2011) MOVIE: A FEMINIST APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study is about how race and gender discrimination reflected in *The Help* movie (2011) by using feminist approach. The objective of the study is to analyze the movie based on its structural elements and analyze the movie based on feminist approach. The object of the study is Tate Taylor’s *The Help* movie was released on 2011 in the United Stated. The data source are literary data. Those are the primary data is taken from the movie itself and the secondary data sources are other in formations that are relevant to the subject matter. The method of the data collection is library research. The techniques of data analysis is descriptive analysis. The conclusions of study are, first based on structural analysis of the movie shows Tate Taylor wants to convey a message that black women are have equal right to white women. Second based on Feminist Approach, in this movie there is discriminations of race and gender.

Keywords: feminism, race, gender.

I. Introduction

**Background of the Study:** *The Help* (movie is an interesting movie which success gets second debuting at the box office. It is adapted from bestselling novel by Kathryn Stockett, his childhood friend. She gave him rights to make the film adaptation in June 2008, before the book was published. *The Help* movie was released at August 2011 by Dreamworks
Pictures.

There are some reasons why the writer analyzes this movie. First, *The Help* movie is directed by great director who is adapted from the novel that is his childhood friend’s as the writer. They are Tate Taylor and Kathryn Stockett. Kathryn Stockett gave him rights to make the film adaptation in June 2008 before the book was published.

Second, *The Help* movie is one of most popular movie in the world. It gets some awards for the actress. At January 2012 this film got four academic nomination awards and belongs to the best pictures. Then at January, 29 2012 *The Help* was won Screen Actors Guild for bright job by the actors in the Motion Pictures.

Third, the film was thought us about courageous. Eibileen is the first maid who agrees to talk about her live as domestic. Difference of race doesn’t make her frighten if she would lost the job and violence happened for her. The reason is because she was motivated by a desire to remember her late son.

Fourth, the movie gives positive messages to the viewer. In the story Skeeter Phelan as white person would help the black domestic. In which as physical appearance they are very different but Skeeter Phelan still would help them. Skeeter Phelan has helped them by writing a book.

Fifth, *The Help* movie is relates to feminism. Almost of the story in this movie is discrimination about skin colors of woman. The black domestic works for white families. Their life is only dedicated for the white families

By considering reasons above *The Help* movie in this study will be analyzed by using feminist approach. The title of this study is *Race and Gender Discrimination Reflected in the Tate Taylor’s The Help Movie (2011): A Feminist Approach.*

**Problem statement** is “How race and gender discrimination are reflected in the Tate Taylor’s *The Help* movie (2011)”
Limitation of the Study is the writer focuses on analyzing race and gender discrimination reflected in the Tate Taylor’s *The Help* movie based on a feminist approach.

Objective of the Study is To analyze *The Help* movie based on the structural element of the movie and To analyze race and gender discrimination reflected in *The Help* movie based on a feminist approach.

Previous Study: as far as the writer concern the paper, it’s no other research that has analyzed it. *The Help* movie is a new release film. It was released on August 2011. There is no student in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta who has analyzed *The Help* movie.

II. Research Method

In this study, the writer uses qualitative research. The data sources are library and literary data. Its purpose is to analyze using feminist approach. The steps to conduct the research are as follows: 1). determining the type of the study, 2). determining the object of the study, 3). determining data and data source, 4). determining technique of data collection and finally 5). determining technique of data analysis.

The object of this study is *The Help* movie by Tate Taylor and was first premiered in 2011 by DreamWorks studios. There are two types of data, namely primary and secondary data, as follows: first, primary data: the primary data source is *The Help* movie was produced by Dreamworks Pictures. Secondary data, the secondary data sources are book or any information related to the race and gender that support the feminist analysis.

The techniques of data collection are as follows: watching the movie repeatedly, taking note of important parts both primary and secondary data, arranging the data into several groups based on its theoretical category, selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis, drawing conclusion and formulate its pedagogical suggestion.

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 in analyzing the data based on its structural elements. Focus will be paid on the
structural analysis of the movie. The second step in analyzing the data based on the feminist approach. Focus will be paid on the race and gender.

III. Research Finding

In this research finding, the writer analysis some points in order to analyze *The Help* movie.

1. Analysis the structural element of *The Help* movie
   a. Characteristic element

   1) In this novel there are major character and minor character. The major character is Eugenia Skeeter Phelan acted by Emma Stone. Physically, Eugenia Skeeter Phelan is white girl. She is pretty woman, she is tall and sexy. She has long blonde curly hair. She has blue eyes and pointed nose. Sometimes she wears glasses when writing.

   Hilly Holbrook : I’ve got a great summer planned for you
   Skeeter Phelan : Great. I went ahead and I picked up my black dress from the cleaners this morning. (The Help, 2011, 00:11:26)

   Mentally, she is smart, attractive, brave and honest. It can be seen the action of Skeeter Phelan around the movie.

   Mr. Blackly : Right. Here. This… This is a rejection letter.
   Skeeter Phelan : Not exactly. See, Miss Stein thought…
   Mr. Blackly : Stein?
   Mr. Blackly : Oh, Lord.
   Skeeter Phelan : I’m gonna be serious writer, Mr. Blackly. I applied for a job, but Mrs. Stein thought…
   Mr. Blackly : She said no.

   Socially, Skeeter Phelan is a kind person, friendly, helpful, and communicative.

   Skeeter Phelan : I’ve never seen you out of uniform before. You look really nice.
   Aibillen Clark : Thank you.
   I ain’t never had no white person in my house before. (The Help, 2011, 00:41:37)
Morally, Skeeter Phelan is good, respectful and responsible as writer.

Aibileen Clark: Congratulation!
Skeeter Phelan: I’m not taking it.
Aibileen Clark: What you mean you are not taking it?
Skeeter Phelan: I can’t just leave you two here. When things are getting bad from the mess that I created. (The Help, 2011, 02:11:34)

The Minor character is Celia Rae Foote acted by Jessica Chastain.

Celia is a sharp contrast to women like Hilly and Elizabeth. Physically, she is pretty woman, she is tall and sexy. She has light skin and short blonde curly hair. She saves Minny's life by warding off a violent after fired by Hilly Holbrook.

Celia Foote: (excitedly) Hey! Come on! Aibileen said you’d be on time.
I’m Celia Rae Foote.
Minny Jackson: I’m Minny Jackson. (The Help, 2011, 00:49:34)

Morally, Celia is friendly and kind person. She is not like Hilly Holbrook, she can accept black woman. She would to eat one table with black woman.

Celia Foote: There you are. I’m starved. Looks so good
Minny Jackson: We done over this, Miss Celia. You supposed to eat in the dining room. That’s how it works. Let me take your plate back.
Celia Foote: I’m fine right here, Minny.
Minny Jackson: What?
Celia Foote: I just want you to know I’m real grateful you’re here. (The Help, 2011, 01:06:06)

b. Setting
1) Setting of place
The story take place in the Jackson Journal, Skeeter’s house, Aibileen’s house, Elizabeth’s house and the cafe.

2) Setting of time
The time of the story is around early twenty first century.
c. Plot

1) The Beginning

Aibileen Clark is a black woman who works for a white family, the Leefolts. The bridge game being played at the Leefolt’s house. In attendance are Hilly Holbrook and Eugenia Skeeter Phelan, they are Elizabeth Leefolt's best friends and Elizabeth’s other friends. Skeeter tells that she got a job that day in the Journal Jackson for the Miss Myrna column. Then, she asked permission to Elizabeth for talking to Aibileen. After the bridge game, Skeeter apologizes to Aibileen about the bathroom talk.

2) The Middle

The conflict began when the sky was cloudy and the rain was fall. Minny Jackson is black woman who work for Hilly Holbrook, she is Aibileen’s best friend. Minny fired by Hilly because Minny used toilet in home. The toilets for color people are different. Skeeter scores a job at the Jackson Journal written for Miss Myrna’s column, a column about housework and relationships, two things she knows nothing about. With Elizabeth's reluctant permission, Skeeter met Aibileen to get answers from the question’s readers that send in. Skeeter learned about Aibileen's son who was died but she still taken care to babies. This is inspiring Skeeter to try to convince the local maids to be interviewed for a book that will show their points of view.

3) The Ending

Skeeter had finished writing the book. It was entitled The Help book. Not only had many copied but also many people are interested to read the book. The Help book was sold well. It was provide income for women who told their stories in it. Minny Jackson has a lifetime position with the Footes and
has moved out of Jackson to Canton, near the Footes' home. Skeeter got a letter. The letter was from senior editor of Harper and Row Publishing, Miss Stein. Miss Stein offers a position in Harper and Row to Skeeter. She hopes that Skeeter would to follow her in the Editorial Department as a Junior Editor Harper and Row Publishing in New York. Finally, Elizabeth fired Aibileen. After saying good bye with Mae Mobley, Aibileen went out from Elizabeth’s house.

2. Feminist Analysis
   a. Basic principle of feminism
      1) Woman’s Position

      Tate Taylor shows woman’s position in this movie is as employer and domestic worker. Being white woman, she is employer. Meanwhile being black woman, she is domestic worker. By this film, the director describes the job of being black woman. Being black woman has to do all of the house work, including cooking, washing, shopping grocery and keeping the white family’s children.

      Aibileen: I work for the Leefolts from eight to four. Six days a week. I make 95 cent an hour. That comes to $182 every month. I do all the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, and grocery shopping. But mostly, I take care of baby girl. (The Help, 2011, 00:03:08)

      2) Woman’s Role

      According to this film, the director shows the role of being white woman and being black woman. The white woman built different toilet for her domestic worker which located in the out door. The white woman believes that black woman will carry different diseases for her family.

      Hilly: If Aibileen uses the guest bath, I’m sure she uses yours too.
      Elizabeth: She does not.
      Hilly: Wouldn’t you rather them take their business outside?
      Skeeter: Have you all seen the cover of live this week? Jackie’s never looked more regal.
Hilly: Till Raleigh every penny he spends on a colored’s bathroom. He’ll get back in spades when y’l sell. It’s just plan dangerous. They carry different diseases than we do.

Elizabeth: Pass.

Hilly: That’s why I’ve drafted the Home Health Sanitation Initiative.

Skeeter: The what?

Hilly: A disease preventative bill. That requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. It’s been endorsed by the White Citizen Council.

Skeeter: Maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly.

Hilly: You ought not to joke about the colored situation. I’ll do whatever it takes to protect our children. (The Help, 2011, 00:15:08)

3) Woman’s Right

The white woman and black woman have different right. The director describes the black woman has not equal right with white woman. The black woman could not send her children to school because her economic life is lower than white woman. Black woman has not enough money to sent her children to school.

Yule May Davis: Miss Hilly, I want to ask you and Mr. William something. My twin boys graduated from high school, both on the honor roll. Me and my husband, we been saving for years to send them to Tougaloo. We were short about $75 on one of the tuitions.

Hilly’s husband: Whoo! I am late. I gotta get going. See you tonight honey.

Hilly: Ok. Go on.

Yule May Davis: Well, nor we’re… faced with having to choose which son can go if we don’t come up with the money. Would you to consider giving us a loan? I’d work every day for free till it was paid off.

Hilly: That’s not working for free. That’s paying off a debt.

Yule May Davis: Yes, ma’am.

Hilly: As a Christian, I’m doing you a favor. See, God don’t give charity to those who are well and able. You need to come up with this money on your own. Ok?

Yule May Davis: Yes, ma’am. (The Help, 2011, 00:46:19)

4) Woman’s Participation

The woman’s participation must be appreciated. The woman’s participation will show their ability. By proving
woman’s capability and capacity she can express her own ability and experienced in all public life.

Presenter: Now it’s time for the baked goods. Ouh, yummy...yummy... The highest bid in baked goods goes to Minny Jackson’s chocolate pie. Congratulations… (The Help, 2011, 01:43:46)

b. Feminist Issue

1) Race Theory
   a) Physical Feature

   The black people have different ways for walking on foot. It can be seen from the ways near The Jackson Journal building. There is a way that written ‘colored entrance’. It means that the way was for the black people. It was clear that how the racial discrimination shown in the Jackson, Mississippi.

   b) Social Class

   Tate Taylor describes the discrimination of race by showing the differences of light skin between white people and black people. The effects of the discrimination are the black people poorer and have lower class than white people. Almost all of black people work as domestic worker. Meanwhile white people can work everything they wanted.

2) Gender Theory

   a) Feminity and Feminism

   By this movie, the director describes the ability of woman. Woman shows her capability and capacity, thus she can express her own ability and experienced in all public life. Woman proves that she can survive before finding out a husband.

   b) Masculinities
Masculinity may be rooted in social class, but class is a matter of birth and breeding, of what one is, not of one achieves, its highest good is the nation. Minny Jackson has lower class than Hilly Holbrook. She wants to show that she has braveness to put her shit in the cake which she has made for Hilly.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the previous analysis, the study will be concludes as follows. First, based on the structural elements analysis of the movie, the director wants to deliver the message that everyone has their civil right to get their own life. In delivering message, Tate Taylor presents the major character by Eugenia Skeeter Phelan. She is white woman who had graduate from the University of Mississippi. After she comes back to her house, her mother urged that she has to get married but she chooses to reach her dream as writer. The director successes direct the structural element of the movie into good unity so that the movie can be enjoyed by the viewer.

The theme of The Help movie is "the reality of being black woman is hard to experience". The director presents the white people and black people to act the characterization. The difference of light skin make black woman has to do all of the house work, include cooking, washing, shopping grocery and keeping the white family’s children. Although do all of the house work white people still argue that black people carry different disease for white people. So that, the white people built up special toilet for their domestic worker which located in the out door.

Second, based on the feminist analysis, Tate Taylor reflects the discrimination of race and gender by representing feminist issue in this movie. Tate Taylor describes the discrimination of race by showing the differences of light skin between white people and black people. The effects of the discrimination are the black people poorer and have lower class than white people. Almost all of black people are work as domestic worker. Meanwhile white people can work everything they wanted. By the dream of
Skeeter Phelan who wants to write a book about the real life of domestic workers, the director changes the assumption of discrimination. Everyone have their potential and equal opportunity to achieve the goals of life.

Another side, the director shows the relationship between domestic workers and their employer. The domestic workers were raised white babies. They knew how to get babies sleeping, stop crying and going to the toilet before their mama went out of the bed in the morning. It was made the domestic worker near with their babies. Such as Skeeter Phelan who near with her maid, Constantine. She went to Constantine’s house to remember her childhood which raised by Constantine. Not only Skeeter Phelan but also Mae Mobley is very near with Aibileen. Mobley said that Aibileen was her real mama.
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