

**RACIAL INJUSTICE REFLECTED IN HAPER LEE'S *GO SET A  
WATCHMAN* NOVEL (2015): A MARXIST CRITICISM**



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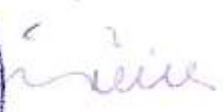
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## **RACIAL INJUSTICE REFLECTED IN HAPER LEE'S *GO SET A WATCHMAN* NOVEL (2015): A MARXIST CRITICISM**

### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine racial injustice in *Go Set a Watchman* novel by Harper Lee. This issue raised due to the dominance racial group and racial differences between white and black. Racial injustice which happens can occur in the aspects of social life, Social conditions prevailing in the *Go Set a Watchman* novel is a racial injustice committed by whites against blacks. The objectives of the study are to describe how racial injustice is reflected in Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* novel and to explain the causes of racial injustice in Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* novel. The data are taken from the words, sentences and dialogues in *Go Set a Watchman* novel. The data are collected by reading, remarking and separating the words, sentences and dialogues in the novel. This research uses Marxist Criticism and the theory of marxist by Antonio Gramsci.

The result of the study shows that racial injustice that occurs in *Go Set a Watchman* novel by Harper Lee happened in three aspects, there are 1) injustice in economic life, 2) injustice in political life, and 3) injustice in legal process. The causes of racial injustice in Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* novel happened in four aspects, there are racial prejudice, slavery, disparagement, dominance and power.

**Keyword :** Racial Injustice, Marxist Criticism

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi ketidakadilan ras yang ada dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* karya Harper Lee. Masalah ini diangkat karena kelompok ras yang dominan dan perbedaan ras antara kulit putih dan kulit hitam. Ketidakadilan ras terjadi karena adanya perbedaan status sosial, kondisi sosial yang terjadi dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* adalah ketidakadilan ras yang dilakukan kulit putih terhadap kulit hitam. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana ketidakadilan ras terjadi dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* karya Harper Lee, dan untuk menjelaskan penyebab terjadinya ketidakadilan ras dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* karya Harper Lee. Data diambil dari kata-kata, kalimat-kalimat dan dialog-dialog dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman*. Data diambil dengan membaca, menandai dan mengelompokkan kata-kata, kalimat-kalimat dan dialog-dialog dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman*. Analisis penelitian ini menggunakan kritis Marxist dan teori pendekatan Marxist oleh Antonio Gramsci.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ketidakadilan ras dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* terjadi pada empat aspek, yaitu ketidakadilan dalam aspek ekonomi, ketidakadilan dalam aspek politik dan ketidakadilan dalam proses hukum. Penyebab ketidakadilan ras dalam novel *Go Set a Watchman* terjadi karena empat aspek yaitu prasangka ras, perbudakan, peremehan, kekuasaan dan kekuatan.

**Kata Kunci :** Ketidakadilan Ras, Kritik Marxist.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social life and social classes among humans are different. The existence of social classes in society is evidenced by the presence of the suppression of inter-group differences in social class. Social class differences are caused by different races, for example, the white and black race. The race of a type of humans is as seen in their appearances such as skin color, hair color, the shape of the nose, and eyes (Smedley, 2005). Meanwhile, based on the sociological aspect the forms of racism are economics, law, culture, behavior, customs, and the treatment of fellow human beings.

Racial differences greatly affect the treatment of those who feel superior, one of which is the racial injustice that occurs among humans. Racial injustice is when people are denied rights based on their race or racial background. Racial injustice in America is indicated by unfair law and legal process to black people. Blacks are not allowed to vote for presidents and express public opinion. This shows that the voting system in America is based on race (Simpson and Yinger, 1985). Blacks do not have rights to vote in the electoral process because their race is black.

The researcher would like to examine the racial injustice that occurred in the United States and a legal ruling that granted the court against Blacks, therefore the researcher chose the *Go Set a Watchman* novel as an object of the research. Lee (2013) wrote *Go Set a Watchman* novel based on the social conditions prevailing in the United States in the 19th century.

Based on the condition that occurs in the *Go Set a Watchman* novel the researcher decides to use a Marxist Criticism to research and analyze this novel. Marxist Criticism starts with a conviction that art's relations to social classes are vitally important and that the investigation of these relationships may organize and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art.

The researcher is going to study the social circumstances that occurred in America in the mid-1960s with Marxist Criticism. This study uses a Marxist theory focusing on the hegemony by Antonio Gramsci, the social situation is racial injustice between white and black people. Thus the researcher write

aresearch entitled: **RACIAL INJUSTICE REFLECTED IN HAPER LEE'S  
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## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study the writes uses *Go Set A Watchman* novel (2015) which is written by Harper Lee as the object of the research. The data sources are divided into two, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source of this study is *Go Set A Watchman* novel (2015) by Harper Lee which is published in 2015. The secondary data sources are taken from the other data sources which are related to the research such as some books, all information around *Go Set A Watchman* novel, and other relevant resources that support the analysis.

The technique of collecting data uses the library research. The techniques of collecting data for doing this study are as follows; a) Reading *Go Set a Watchman* novel carefully and understanding the contents of the novel, b) Reading some books to determine theory, information and data used to research, c) Browsing to the internet to get information related to the object of the study, d) Finding the social condition based on the novel, e) Taking notes of important information and data obtained from primary and secondary data sources, f) Remaking the dialog based on the issues, g) Separating the part of data based on the classification.

To analyze this novel, the researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method, this research is using descriptive method and analysis qualitative methods based the theory and the facts that occurred.

## **3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

After analyzing the novel, the writer finds some findings as follows:

### **3.1 Injustice in Economic Life**

Social conditions in *Go Set a Watchman* novel by Harper Lee reflect the condition of the United States at that time, Lee (2013) wrote a novel based on the economic condition in 1960's in United States, the economic

development of the United States is getting better with the many people work as an employee in a company or institution owned by government, a lot of business in United States were done by cooperation with other countries in the world, thus make the economic of United States get better.

In this novel the feeling of superiority in the Economic life is showed by Alexandra's expression, she was Jean Louise's aunt. Superiority by Alexandra showed when she talked with Jean Louise.

*“Calm down, miss “Alexandra’s voice was cold. “Jean Louise, nobody in Maycomb goes to see Negroes anymore,.....” (p.166)*

The dialogue showed by Alexandra, she judges that black people are shiftless, it means that blacks are lazy. Alexandra argues that white people have better jobs and quality than black people.

Racial injustice in economic life in this novel comes from white people, how white people feel that they have better jobs than black people; they also think that black people have lower quality and not competence to get jobs like white people. In this novel, white people think that black people have a lower economic life than white people.

### 3.2 Injustice in Political Life

Injustice in political aspects in America was shown by the limiting political activities. Many states in the South and North America not permit blacks to vote; in many places have continued to limit participants in the electoral process. Racial injustice in political life concerns in the participant of black people for electoral process such as vote a president. White people feel that black people are criminals and they have the different right to life in the country.

The racial injustice in the political process showed the superiority and the dialogue between Atticus Finch and Jean Louise in this novel showed the current state of their country.

*“Do right?”*

*“Yes, sir. Give ‘ema chance.”*

*“The Negroes? You don’t think they have a chance?”*

*“Why, no sir.”*

*“What’s to prevent any Negro from going where he pleases in this country and finding what he wants?” (p. 241-242*

Negroes are not given the opportunity to express their opinions and their rights as a state like whites. Negroes have different rights because their skin is black.

According to Blummer (1953), the fear of dominant racial group is the apprehension that the subordinate racial group will threaten the position of the dominant racial group. Feeling of fear that subordinate racial group is shown by Atticus Finch toward black people when he talked about electoral process with Jean Louise.

*“There’s no point in being profane. Think this over Abbott County, across the river, is in bad trouble.....*

*“What makes you so sure?”*

*“Honey,” he said. “Use your head. When they vote, they vote in blocs.” (p.243)*

The subordinate racial group showed Atticus to black people when he talked about the legal process with Jean Louise. Negroes are not allowed in choosing the president, Blacks are minority and no have effect on American politics. He says that if blacks people have to vote, he is sure that blacks people vote the blocks, because there will be black people in the government

### 3.3 Injustice in Legal Process

The injustice towards black is higher in the legal process when blacks commit in the violent crimes against whites. Black and white have not treated equally under the law especially in the United States (Pearson, 2007, p.148). A legal process in this novel is shown when Atticus Finch spoke to his daughter Jean Louise Finch that nigger will remain lost in the proceedings, judges in the country are whites, and many whites as bribes to the judge to decide a case.

*“They’re mostly in Birmingham and places like that, but circuit by circuit they watch and wait, just for some felony committed by a Negro against a white person—you’d be surprised how quick they find out—in they come and.....”. (p.149)*

White people have the power to determine the legal process, while blacks will only accept the decision of a judge. This is injustice obtained blacks in the *Go Set a Watchman* novel in a legal process. In the legal process, negro was discriminated, if white people make mistakes, they get mild penalty, but when blacks make mistakes or crimes, they were receive severe punishment. When Negroes get legal process in court, the Negroes will lose because it has no legal force and not have power as whites.

### 3.4 Racial Prejudice

The occurrence of racial injustice toward blacks in America was done by whites. According to Baron & Byrne (1991), this situation can be categorized as an attitude of prejudice (usually negative) to members of a group based solely on their membership in a group.

In *Go Set a Watchman* novel, racial prejudice is shown by Atticus when he argued statement with Jean Louise Finch.

*“They are all trying to tell me in some weird, echoing way that it’s all on account of the Negroes....” (p.168)*

Atticus’s racial prejudice conducted in blacks made him hesitate to help blacks in the trial, Atticus assumes blacks can not be trusted and not liable to do anything. Bad thoughts about blacks are ingrained in the soul of white come from prejudices doing by whites against blacks, it about racial discrimination and racial injustice that occurred in the United States.

### 3.5 Slavery

The white people of the South defended slavery not only for basis of economic necessity but more of a deep devotion to the white supremacy (Cincotta, 2004, p.168). The majority of employers treat her slave to dehumanize the slave as a human can live independently and qualify.

In *Go Set a Watchman* Novel, the feeling of enslave is shown by Alexandra, she argues about black people, her name is Calpurnia.

Alexandra felt that whites are dominant in doing any activity in her country. Whites are ruling in all respects on Negroes.

*“Marry Webster’s Sarah’s carried a card for years—so ’severy bodys cook in this town. When Calpurnia left I simply couldn’t be bothered with another one, not for just Atticus and me. Keeping a nigger happy these days is like catering like a king—” (p.167)*

Alexandra felt that Calpurnia was not satisfied with the goodness and the opportunity that has been given by the family of Atticus. He accused Calpurnia was not happy to be a maid in the Atticus’s house, because Atticus is a white people. Alexandra felt that blacks can not work properly; blacks did not use the opportunity given to work. Only blacks can make it difficult and hinder the work of others.

### 3.6 Disparagement

Despising others are influenced by social status, social status would make people feel more powerful. Whites are always denigrating and disparaging blacks in various aspects, in his emotional development, blacks become inferior to whites treated blacks unfairly and discriminated against blacks.

In *Go Set a Watchman* Novel white people felt that Negro is low of politic and legal process. The statement expressed by Atticus to Henry after they finished the trial in court.

*“Good Lord, I didn’t get mad with the Court because of the Negroes. Negroes slapped the brief on the bench, all right, but that wasn’t what made me furious.....—” (p.243)*

In the rule of law, blacks are not considered important and underrated by the court, the black is always low in the eyes of the law and the courts, many white police officer who arrested black because of a small mistake. Underestimate of blacks in law making blacks accept racial injustice in the legal process.

### 3.7 Dominance and Power

In *Go Set a Watchman* novel by Harper Lee, the white people feel the dominance and power that makes them always right and invincible. Victims of the dominance and power of the white is black people. Blacks are under the control of whites, dominance and power in all aspects controlled by whites, so blacks always gets unfair treatment and discrimination in the United States.

White's superiority in an economic aspect, it is showed by explanation of Jean Louis's uncle to Jean Louise.

*"They were never destroyed. They were ground into the dirt and up the propped. Up propped Tobacco Road, and up propped the ugliest....."* (p.196)

The power that whites make blacks into minority and hard to improve their lives. Black difficult to get a better job and improves their economic condition. In an economic aspect, black people can not be equal to whites, as most blacks are poor, lazy, and do not have a good job.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The result of the study shows that racial injustice that occurs in *Go Set a Watchman* novel by Harper Lee happened in three aspects, there are injustice in economic life, injustice in political life and injustice in legal process. The causes of racial injustice in Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* novel happened in four aspects, there are racial prejudice, slavery, disparagement, dominance and power.

In the economic life, blacks are victims of injustice by whites, blacks tend to be poor, black population of the United States dominates the poverty statistics, the income derived blacks bit and cause they are poor. Blacks have no savings and wealth as whites. Many blacks are unemployed and do not work.

In the political life, the injustice aspects were showed by the limit political activities. Many states in the South and the North America do not let blacks to

vote; in many places have continued to limit participants in the electoral process.

In the legal process, blacks are very discriminated, if white people make mistakes, then his penalty mild, but blacks make mistakes or crimes, then they will receive severe punishment. Whites see that blacks always involves themselves in criminal cases.

Causes of racial injustice in 1960s Southern America are four aspect, first is racial prejudice by whites againts blacks in all aspects, the second is slavery, slavery occurs in blacks as white power in America in the 1960s, slavery happened with the history of the arrival blacks in America, blacks were forced to come to America to be employed without paid, the third is disparagement, whites regarded blacks inferior in every field, in economics, politics, employment, education and social status, whites feel that the whites in power and the highest in all aspects in the United States. The last is dominance and power, white people feel the dominance and power that makes them always right and invincible, blacks are under the control of whites, dominance and power in all aspects controlled by whites, so blacks always gets unfair treatment and discrimination in the United States.

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