

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Racism is a society issues which faced in many countries in the world time to time. Most of the citizen in many countries, especially in America gets sensitive issue about racism. The leader of the Cuban Revolusion Fidel Castro (2001) stated that “This (racism) is a very serious problem in the United States”. America is a develop country with for about 323.1 million population consist of black and white people. As we know that, one of the main problems in America is about racism between black people and white people. Racism appears because of negative attitudes and thought to other races which is considered inferior. According to Hoyt (2012: 225) states that racism is the belief that all members of a purported race processes characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race. Someone can claim that other races are inferior because of their different color, language and the faith of particular race. It is determines the quality of culture and individuals to classify a race into a superior or inferior.

The impact of racism may occur in education and in the court. The report from U.S. Department of Education (in Nittle, Nadra: 2018) states that black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers, even they in preschoolers. According to the study published in Psychological Science indicates that it triggered by prejudices of white people who believe and perceive that black boys as threatening at just 5 years old, then associating them with adjectives such as violent, dangerous, hostile and aggressive (APS,2016 in Nittle, Nadra: 2018, para. 7). The issue of racism not only becomes the attention of sociologist and political science, but also becomes the attention of the authors in literary world, one of them is Jodi Picoult. She carries racism as an issue in her novel.

Jodi Lynn Picoult is an American author who was born on May 19 1966, in Long Island, New York until her family moved to New Hampshire when she was an adolescent. Picoult wrote her first novel *Song of the Humpback Whale* (1992) when she studied in the creative writing at Princeton University, where she obtained her bachelor's degree. She also gets her master's degree in education from Harvard University. She lives in Hanover, New Hampshire with her married man Timothy Warren van Leer and her three children: Samantha, Kyle, and Jake. Jodi Picoult is an internationally bestselling author of literary fiction and some of her novel also to be number one on the Australian and New Zealand fiction bestseller list.

In 2003, Picoult was awarded by *the New England Bookseller Award* for fiction. During 25 years, she also received many awards in the literary work, like a *Waterstone's Author of the Year in the UK*, *the Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award*, *an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association*, *the Book Browse Diamond Award for novel of the year*, *a Vermont Green Mountain Book Award* and among others. Therefore, she is an amazing author who has written over twenty four novels that includes *Perfect Match* (2002), *My Sister's Keeper* (2004), *Sing You Home* (2011), *Lone Wolf* (2012), *The Storyteller* (2013), *Leaving Time* (2014), *Small Great Things* (2016). Some of those literary works have been made into film, like *My Sister's Keeper* which was made into film in 2009, *The Pact* was made into film in 2002. Her latest novel *Small Great Things* is being adapted to film and it will be produced by Marc Platt (*La La Land*) and Adam Siegel.

One of Jodi Picoult is novels that clearly describes racism is *Small Great Things*. She takes racism issue to describe people in the environment especially in New York City who face racist problem in their life. The obstinacy of African-American people in struggle for their rights as a part of society is the main reason why she wrote the novel. In addition, Jodi Picoult wants to convey that racism is not just a prejudice that leads to discrimination, but racism is an

amount of damages that received by African-American people and benefits for white people to achieve success.

Small Great Things novel tells about an African-American nurse named Ruth Jefferson. She had been working in the Mercy-West Heaven hospital for twenty years especially in a labor and delivery nurse. Ruth has a small family, include her son named Edison who will continue his study to the college. Her husband was died in Afghanistan in his army mission. In the family of her mother Ruth had an elder sister named Adisa and a mother who was old enough but she still works as a maid in white people's house.

In the hospital, Ruth took a good care of her patients and always got along with her patients even with a small chat. She also constructed the relationship between nurses and patients so, they could be familiar. There were rarely any patients who had a problem with their colors. But there was a time when, a patient who had a problem with African-American nurse in the hospital. The parents were white supremacists and did not want Ruth, who is African-American to touch their child. It was Turk Baeur and his wife named Britany who came to Mercy-West Heaven hospital as parents of a patient, because his wife would give birth to their first child. After their child was born they gave him name Davis. In the beginning of labor to completion of Davis birth was treated by Lucille. It was still after that, the nursing Davis was transferred to Ruth. Then the parents of Davis did not want Ruth to touch their child. The hospital complied and Ruth was replaced by Corinne.

The next day, as a newborn baby, Davis took a circumcision surgery with the help of Ruth. The surgery was done and Ruth who did not have any business was selected to keep Davis in the surgery room alone. A few minutes later, the baby went into cardiac distress while, Ruth was alone in the nursery. Ruth hesitated before performing CPR to the baby, because in her mind she thought that she should obey the orders or disobey it. But, in the end even though she did CPR, Davis still died.

Ruth was jailed for being accused for the murder of Davis. One week later, Ruth was taken to the court and given the right to defend herself with a defense lawyer at her side. Kennedy McQuarrie was a white public defender who took her case. As the trial moved forward, they shared the racial discrimination perspective from each other sides to win the justice. Many events and impression which is eventually changed the way of perspective and mindset of both of them. Time to time they could understand each other feelings and they already faced the court.

In a literary work, the work of the novel that is produced by author does not always correspond with the hope of all readers, as well as this novel. There are positive and negative responses. The first negative response has been taken from Tianna. She said that she hated this novel and claimed that how terrible this book. She hates it so much but she also even finish it. She does not think that she has ever rolled her eyes this much while reading a book. The same as Tianna, Mary Jo states that she almost stopped reading *Small Great Things* novel, the subject matter bothered her so much. She also said that luckily, she pushed on as she came to realise that it was supposed to be disturbing. Racism is disturbing and we need to become uncomfortable with it. Praise again to Jodi Picoult for making us face another social issue and challenging us to deal with it.

The other readers who give positive response are from Tanya and Kayla. Tanya said that outstanding for *Small Great Things* novel. This novel is one of novels that is educating, jarring and inspirational. Compliment for Jodi for taking on the topic of racism and open her eyes to things that she was not aware of. She most definitely was schooled, and she also said that "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way". The second positive response comes from Kayla Shawley. She claims that *Small Great Things* novel was an amazing novel. This novel really opened her eyes to issues that she hadn't previously thought long and hard. While, she cannot say that she particularly relate to any of the specific characters, the novel was still a wonderful to read.

Jodi Picoult is a great writer of making a wonderful way from different point of view.

There are two reasons why the researcher is interested in studying this novel. First, this novel gives a lot of knowledge about how to take care a new mother and newborn baby. Many baby birth cases in this novel makes the writer knows something new about how to treat a mother who will give birth and how to nurse for a newborn baby. Therefore, the knowledge that researcher did not get in the school, she received from this novel. Although not much, but it is enough to provide the basic knowledge about how to nurse them. Second, are the characters or characterization in the novel. There is an interesting character as like Ruth Jeferson. She is a strong and courageous woman, fighting for her equality right. She also proves that as a black people she deserves to get justice in the court. Moreover, in her job as a nurse she gives a good service to her patients.

Based on the data above, the researcher analyze *Small Great Things* novel by using sociological of literature entitled **AGAINST RACISM IN JODI PICOULT'S *SMALL GREAT THINGS* NOVEL (2016): SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.**

B. Problem Statement

Based on the background of study, the researcher has formed the problem on this study in three research questions, as follows:

1. What indicates racism in the novel?
2. How is racism depicted in the novel?
3. Why did the Jodi Picoult address racism in the novel?

C. Objectives of the Study

Dealing with problem statements above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify racism that applied in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel.
2. To describe how racism is depicted in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel.

3. To find out Jodi Picoult exposed racism that applied in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel.

D. Limitation of the Study

The research needs a limitation of the problem. The limitation of the research problem is aims to the issues of the research are not too broad so, the researcher can focus on the research problem. The problem in this study was limited in analyzing racism in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel.

E. Significance of the Study

The researcher expects this research will give some benefits as follow:

- a. Theoretical Benefit

Theoretical benefit related to this research, the researcher expects that this research can be used as a reference for the other researcher who wants to conduct research about racism in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel.

- b. Practical Benefit

The researcher expects that this research will give benefits in the form of information, especially for Department of English Education Students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

F. Research Paper Organization

The research paper organization of this research is as follow: Chapter I is introduction, it consists of background of the study, limitation of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, significance of the study, research paper organization and novelty. Chapter II is literature review, it consists of previous study and underlying theory. Chapter III is research method, it consists of type of the study, object of the study, type of data and data source, method of collecting data, technique of analyzing data. Chapter VI is finding and discussion. Chapter V provides the conclusion of the research. The last of this research is bibliography.

G. Novelty

Based on the research that will be studied, the researchers will provide something new in the research and different from previous researchers. In this study researchers will examine racism in America. While, the object of the study is Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things* novel. This research use sociology of literature. The researchers will reveal racism that exist in the novel and make it an issue that will be examined.