

**A REBEL AGAINST SOCIAL SYSTEM IN ERIN GRUWELL'S  
*FREEDOM WRITIER'S* MOVIE; A SOCIOLOGICAL  
APPROACH**



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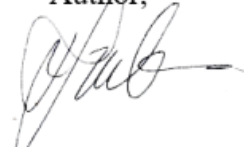
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## **A REBEL AGAINST SOCIAL SYSTEM IN ERIN GRUNWELL'S *FREEDOM WRITERS*'S MOVIE; A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **Abstrak**

Masalah utama dari penelitian ini adalah bagaimana karakter utama memberontak melawan sosial system saat berlangsung program integrasi sekolah di Amerika pada tahun 1990an seperti yang di ceritakan dalam film Freedom Writers. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisa film berdasarkan perspektif sosiologi. Dalam melaksanakan penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan kualitatif studi dimana data utama berasal dari sumber utama yaitu Film Freedom Writers dan data kedua seperti Buku Freedom Writers dan data lain yang berkaitan dengan penelitian. Dalam menganalisa data peneliti menggunakan satu pendekatan. Pendekatan sosiologis digunakan untuk meneliti hubungan antara film dan kondisi sosial masyarakat Amerika pada tahun 1990an. Pendekatan ini di terapkan untuk melaksanakan penelitian yang tepat dan dapat menjawab permasalahan penelitian. Berdasarkan analisis, peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa film Freedom Writers menunjukkan kondisi sosial masyarakat Amerika pada tahun 1990an. Hasil dari penelitian ini juga mengindikasikan bahwa film juga menunjukkan alasan karakter utama memberontak melawan system sosial pada waktu itu dengan tidak mendukung kelas, memberi label siswa sebagai siswa yang tidak berpendidikan atau siswa bermasalah. Dan membuat sekolah hanya sebagai pemenuhan tanggung jawab dimana program integrasi sekolah berjalan. Akhirnya, melalui karakter utama; plot, gaya dan cerita Film Freedom Writers memberikan deskripsi yang jelas tentang memberontak melawan sosial system.

**Keywords:** memberontak, system sosial, masyarakat intgrasi sekolah

### **Abstract**

The major problem of this study is how the major character rebel against social system during the volunteer integration school program in America at 1990s reflected in Freedom Writers Movie. The objectives of the study are to analyze the movie based on the sociological perspective. In conducting this study, the researcher uses qualitative study whose data are based on primary resource, the movie of Freedom Writers and secondary resource, such as Freedom Writers book and other data which deal with the research. In analyzing the data, he applies one approaches. The sociological approach, is used for analyzing the relationship between movie and the social condition of American society in 1990s. These approaches are applied in order to have an appropriate analysis and answer the problem. Based on the analysis, the researcher comes to the conclusions that the Freedom Writers movie showed the social condition of American society in the 1990s. The outcome of this study also affirms that the movie shows the cause of the major character rebel against social system at that time by not supporting the class, labelling students as uneducated or troubled students. And make them to school just to fulfill the responsibility as the integration program run. Finally, through the major character: plot, style and story the Freedom Writers movie gives clear description about rebel against social system.

**Keywords:** rebel, social system, society, school integration

## 1. INTRODUCTION

People are born in the world are undoubtedly related to other person. They cannot live all alone, they need somebody's help beside them. Because of that, people usually live in an environment where people usually live side by side and help each other. The environment is called society. Society means a group of people who live in a certain place and organize certain community. A society is a particular kind of population: it is the largest population whose members share a cultural identity and way of life and interact in patterned ways (Johnson, 1986:17)

Society is also related to human being as the element that creates it. People influence the norms, values and also ceates social system in society. This system appears directly or indirectly by the relationship between one people with another, and it can rule in every side of life whether in doing socialization or doing the daily activities. A social system is a mode of organization of action elements relative to the persistence or ordered processes of change of the interactive patterns of a plurality of individual actors (Parson, 1951:24). Social system means the independence of people, and a boundary between people and its environment. In addition when the characteristics of one part in a system (society) change, all the other parts and the system as whole are affected.

The changes of the system in society often arise many problems such as social, political, and economic problems. All these problems comes up because of the differences of thinking, ideas and alsı dissatisfaction to the system in the society. The problem can be injustice, racism, and discrimination. One of the disruptive features of this social system is the appearance of class conflict between groups or among insıtutions. It is one of the phenomena in the society, which is again, caused by the differences of way of thought,

The phenomena and problems in society are often depicted by an author in his or her literary works. It could happend because the author has the strong relationship with his or her social life. It cannot be rejected, because the author is the part od the society too. The ides of his or her literary works often comes from the social condition where he or she lives. Literature shows a real life's portrays and real life is social reality (Damonı in Jabrohim, 2001: 162). According to Koesnosoebrotoo (1988:4) literature is not only written to be read for pleasure but also to broaden, deepen, and sharpen the reader's awareness of life. Literature is not only for furnishing entertainment but also for seeing, feeling, and understanding life, human beings, and nature better.

In *Freedom Writers*, Erin Gruwell wants to describe the social system or the social manners of American society especially in Long Beach, California. Erin Gruwell had just gotten her degree and starting her journey in the field of teaching. She landed a job at Woodrow Wilson High. She was thrown into a classroom of students who were labeled "unteachable." These students have experienced violence, drugs, and alcohol first-hand. Every single one of them were exposed to it during their life. Through the major character Erin Gruwell and the students, the author symbolizes as the person who wants to break the social system at that time. At this point, she wants to describe the conflict, that caused by the social system which has huge influence in American society. Based on this consideration the present researcher is interested in analysing it as the object of his study entitled "A Rebel Against Social System in *Erin Gruwell's Freedom Writers: A Sociological Approach*".

In conducting the research, the researcher reviews some theories related to literature, it consists of three elements; sociology of literature, major principles and theoretical application.

### **1.1. Notion of Sociology of Literature**

The sociology of literature is a study of literature based in the sociological perspective to comprehend social phenomenon in a certain period of that are described by the author in his or her literary work. Damono (1984:2) confirm that the sociology of literature is an approach to literature that considers the social aspects of human beings. It means that the literature is studied and analyzed based on the sociological perspective.

In sociology of literature, it is clear that sociology and literature are related to each other. They are instrument to understand the social condition of a community in a certain period of time. Laurenson and Swingewood (1972:11) note that sociology is the scientific study of a man in society, the study of social institutions and social processes. It is also tries to answer the questions about surrounding society, how the existence if society, how society is possible, how it works and how it lasts. Meanwhile literature is social institutions that use language as its medium to reveal the real description of human's life (Damono, 2984:1). Through the literary works, an author tries to fight and change the manner in society and socializes it with a new manner based on his or her idea. It means that an author wants to form a society with a good manner according to his or her idea.

The main point of sociology is an instrument used to digging up the meaning of literature. Sociology studies the relation among the social community, while literary work describes

the social reality in a subject point of view. It means that the literature and sociology have the same opportunity and position to grow and cooperate, both of them influence each other.

### **1.2. Sociology of the Writer**

Dealing with the first principle sociology of the writer, Laurensen and Swingewood (1972:21) hold that sociology of the writer is closely related to the social situation of the writer. It is a study of literature in terms on the social context of authorship. It discusses about the writer's position in the society, writer's ideology, responds toward his or her society and other things that deal with the writer is the creator of a literary work (Damon, 1984:3)

### **1.3. Sociology of the Reader**

The sociology of the reader attempts to trace the ways in which a work of literature is actually received by a particular society at specific historical moments (Laurensen and Swingewood, 1972:21). It studies the reader's responds to the work of literature and how the social message in it influence the readers. Zerrafa in Burns and Burns (1973:13) adds that literary works often seen bound up with particular moments in the history of society.

### **1.4. Sociology of the society**

The socuology of the society deals with the documentary aspects of literature that literature provides a mirror to the certain age (Laurensen and Swingewood, 1973: 13). This shows that literature is rfection of values and feelings in the age when the work was made. The sociology of society view that literature is a reflection of scoial life; it is a mirror to the age. Laurensen and Swingewood (1972:13) argue that literature reflects various facets and social phenomena and probles such as social class structures, class conflicts, family relationships, possibly divorce trends and population composition.

In this chapter, the researcher presents how to conduct the research including research object, approach, data collection, and data analysis.

## **2. METHOD**

According to Latief (2016, p.77), research design has two categories; those are quantitative and qualitative research. Latief (2016) declares that quantitative isa research which uses numerical data. In this research, hypothesis is predicted by the researcher based on the theory. It means that this research has the aim of proving theory (2006). Moreover, qualitative research is conducted in order to learn about human behavior by making the



representation of social and cultural events. This research has complex scheme and detail in giving an understanding to readers. In other words, qualitative research analyzes words and pictures to describe the detailed point of view of something which has been studied (Latief, 2016). Ary (2010) states that descriptive qualitative research is created to gain information related to phenomena that happen.

According to the explanation above, the research design used in this research is descriptive qualitative. It is because the researcher wants to observe the main character who want to rebel against the social system. Hence, the data were presented in descriptive form. Best and Kahn (2006) propose a definition of descriptive research as “the process of disciplining inquiry through the gathering and analysis of empirical data, and each attempt to develop knowledge.” It means that descriptive qualitative is observing and proving each empirical data by explaining each resource.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Social Aspect**

In the 1992, gang violence dan racial tension in America reached the highest level of all time, especially in Long Beach California. The society divide themselves into Latin, Black, or Asia. This racial classification also depicted in Freedom Writer Movie through all the character involved. Through all the characters the writer tried to explore the racial classification in the movie. Racial classification caused them to fight each other in order to maintain the territory, pride and dignity.

#### **3.2. Economic Aspect**

America is a modern and welfare country where people commonly life in a good life. The United States economy at the end of the 20th century was experiencing a period of economic calm wherein prices were stable, unemployment fell to its lowest level in 30 years, the stock market boomed and the government posted a budget surplus.

Technological innovations and a rapidly globalizing market contributed to the economic boom near the end of the 90s, but many other factors including presidential policy, foreign affairs, and domestic innovations and foreign supply and demand needs affected the rise of the American economy. Industrialization, technological development, and the growing size and complexity of organizations; rapid growth in healthcare, education, and social services; and the expanded role of government all contributed to the increase. The condition above is mentioned in the movie Freedom Writers. Freedom

Writers movie mentions several occupations related to the institutions such as principal, head department, teacher, and architect.

### **3.3. Political Aspect**

School integration was started before the mid-20th century in the USA. US government tried hard cut down the race-based segregation because it was surely in opposite to the national constitution that says “All people are created equal”. School integration was seen as an effective method to unite the American Society. Public and private schools had to accept students of all races in order to eliminate the segregation and supporting unity in US society.

### **3.4. Cultural Aspect**

American Culture in the 1990s focuses on the dramatic cultural transformations of the last decade of the millennium. Lodged between the fall of Communism and the outbreak of the War on Terror, the 1990s was witness to America's expanding influence across the world but also a period of anxiety and social conflict. National traumas such as the Los Angeles riots, the Oklahoma City bombing and the impeachment of President Clinton.

### **3.5. Religious Aspect**

In the 1990s Americans continued to identify themselves by their religious belief. As in past decades, Protestants and Catholics dominated the religious landscape; Jews remained a small but influential minority; increasing, but still small, numbers of Americans identified themselves as Buddhists, Muslims, or Hindus. Though there was some evidence that people overreported their attendance at religious services, overall levels of participation were largely unchanged from previous decades. About 40 percent of Americans consistently reported attending religious services on a regular basis, a number virtually unchanged since the 1960s. More than 95 percent identified themselves as believing in God.

After analyzing Freedom Writers movie the present researcher concludes that Freedom Writers movie concerns about the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects of American society in the twentieth century. In addition it also wants to portray Erin Gruwell the main character at that time did not agree with the social system of the Woodrow Wilson High School.

In the social aspect it is depicted that society of American in 1990s was influenced by the rapid changing of modernization. This brought some changes in the morality and caused race segregation in the society. Race segregation is divided based on their skin; Black, White, Latino, Asian etc. Each of them fights for their little America. Segregation

is the separation of the facilities and services in society; education, housing, healthcare, transportation and also employment. The term is commonly used to separate the majority ethnics with the minority ethnics. Whites dominates the majority ethnics then followed by African American then other ethnics such as Asian, Latino etc. The separation also refers to the prohibition of interracial marriage. It is also conducted in the armed force of America; white unit led by white, black unit led by black. Segregation declines rapidly in 1960s until 1970s but it appears to be increase in 1990s. The practice of segregation has led into racial tension among them. People defend their own kind in order to stand their ground. There is no right or wrong, what matter is to protect “the family”.

In the 1990s in order to put down the practice of segregation at the public basis, government issued school integration program in public or private school. This program hopes reduce segregation at school. Commonly public schools and private schools are separated between races. White school is for the whites. Black school is only for the black. Since the integration program legally issued, schools are for all the race. But still this program caused problems; students still bring their habit to school. Even at school, they group themselves into groups based on their race. Moreover, school authorities refuse to give support and provide facilities to the students such as books. Students became the person whom are guilty of the problem happened in the society. Erin Gruwell is one of teacher that fight the system which has built years at Woodrow Wilson High School. She breaks the rule to give great education in her class. School refuses to give books, she bought them free. She directly meets board of education district to make her program runs well. She unites the students of all race. She brings new hope for all her students.

Economic aspects also gives contribution to the plot of the movie. America in 1990s is modern society. Technology is rapidly changing from the analog into the digital era. New innovations and improvements in existing innovations opened the door for improvements in the standard of living among American consumers. Many firms grew large by taking advantage of economies of scale and better communication to run nationwide operations. Concentration in these industries raised fears of monopoly that would drive prices higher and output lower, but many of these firms were cutting costs so fast that trends were towards lower price and more output in these industries. Many workers shared the success of these large firms, which typically offered the highest wages in the world. Freedom Writer movie mention some jobs related to the education institution like headmaster, department

head, board of education institution, teacher and only mention a few about other occupation such as; architect, law and employee of a company.

War, scandal, political reform, terrorism, and civil rights marked the 1990s. Trials during the decade further divided Americans, especially along racial lines. The trial of four white Los Angeles police officers in the beating of African American motorist Rodney King ended in a not-guilty verdict that sparked a vicious riot in south central Los Angeles. In what many labeled the "trial of the century," former football star O. J. Simpson was found not guilty in the murders of his former wife and her male friend. While many African Americans celebrated the verdict, many white Americans sat stunned, believing Simpson committed the murders. Related to the political aspects of education, Freedom Writers movie showing the integration program at school. This program issued by the government in order to reduce the race tension and gang violation in the society or we can call them segregation. The racial tension in 1990s appears to increase during this year. So government thinks that this is the best way to reduce segregation start from the school society.

Through all the characters especially Erin Gruwell, the movie wants to describe that students of integration program is troubled teenagers. They are gang members, drug dealers, rude and uneducated teenagers. All those are labelled to them.

Mostly people in America was Christian and Roman catholic. The minorities are the Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhist. In 1990s is the era that youth Americans lost their religious believe. Many of them also declare themselves as the none believers. This caused many critics for the parents about their failure to educated their children about religion. Drugs addiction may cause the problem. They are everywhere so teenagers can get it easily just like buying soda in a seven eleven store. The reduction of safety in society also plays important role; they think religious believe cannot protect them from being shot when they are outside. Some international issue on also has big influence for this change. Beside of that many activists actively to offer new life style; gays, lesbians, pagans and abortionist so that America become secular.

In addition, through the movie, through the major character Erin Gruwell, wants to criticize the social system of society in the 1990s. Society divided by their race; black, white, Asian, and Latino. They fight for their territory and respect.

In clonclusion, from the explanation above, it can be seen from the social analysis elements of the movies are matched with the main idea from sociological approach.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the proceeding chapters, the writer concludes that there is a relationship between the internal and external elements of the novel. The social analysis of *Freedom Writers* movie reflect American social reality in 1990s. Furthermore, some American aspect of life including social, politic, economy, culture, religion, also depicted in the movie.

The sociological analysis in this study indicates that the emergence of social, politic, economy, culture, religion and social system reflects the social condition of America in 1990s. The major character of *Freedom Writers Movie* show her attempts to rebel against the social system, with her different view Gruwell is critical of the race segregation. The volunteer integration program at the Woodrow Wilson High School had led the contradiction between the teachers. The students divide into two grades; the honored scholarship and the undereducated students. The undereducated students are labelled as the troubled teenagers and cannot be educated. Erin Gruwell from the beginning enroll as a teacher at Woodrow Wilson High School because its integration program. She doesn't underestimate students' ability. She believes they become troubled students at school because school don't support and give them opportunity to learn something new. School only runs the class only for wasting their time until they big enough to be legal on the street. Gruwell wants to change the paradigm. She tries hard to give the student what should they get in the class. She gives them new books, trip, dinner, even inviting the writer of the Anne Frank Book Mrs. Miep Gies.

Gruwell's class soon make great influence to the student's life. They slowly leave streets, guns, drugs and become stronger. Gruwell decide to spread their stories all over the world by writing their story in a book *Freedom Writers*.

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