

THE STRUGGLE OF BLACK WOMANS TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION IN THE HIDDEN FIGURE MOVIE: A FEMINISM APPROACH

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Abstrak

Hidden Figures disutradarai oleh Theodore Melfi. Film ini didasarkan pada kisah nyata. Film ini bercerita tentang perjuangan tiga perempuan kulit hitam yang mengalami diskriminasi dan penindasan ketidaksetaraan gender untuk mendapatkan kebebasan dan meraih mimpinya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis indikator perjuangan ketidaksetaraan gender di tempat kerja yang dialami oleh perempuan Afrika-Amerika seperti yang digambarkan dalam film Hidden Figures. Untuk mendukung pembahasan tesis ini, penulis mengumpulkan data dengan menggunakan teori pendekatan feminis dan metode observasi. Penulis memeriksa pemeran utama dalam perjuangan film melawan diskriminasi. Penulis menganalisis feminisme kulit hitam di tempat kerja menggunakan teori George Eliot. Temuan tesis ini menunjukkan bahwa karakter utama film ini mencontohkan feminisme kulit hitam. Pentingnya feminisme kulit hitam dalam meningkatkan kesadaran perempuan kulit hitam dapat menyebabkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kehidupan mereka.

Kata Kunci : African-American women, Diskriminasi, Feminism, Struggle

Abstrak

Hidden Figures was directed by Theodore Melfi. The film is based on a true story. This film tells the story of the struggle of three black women who experience discrimination and oppression of gender inequality to gain freedom and to achieve their dreams. The purpose of this study was to analyze the indicators of gender inequality struggles in the workplace experienced by African-American women as depicted in the film Hidden Figures. To support the discussion of this thesis, the author collected data using feminist approach theory and observation methods. The author examines the main cast in the film's fight against discrimination. The author analyzes black feminism in the workplace using George Eliot's theory. The findings of this thesis suggest that the main character of the film exemplifies black feminism. The importance of black feminism in raising awareness of black women can lead to significant improvements in their lives.

Keywords: African-American women, Discrimination, Feminism, Struggle

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Feist (in Andriza 2017: 6), struggle is a driving force that can lead someone to seek some kind of achievement or advantage that weakens their inferiority complex. It can also be called difficulty in performing certain actions. On the other hand, discrimination is the treatment of minorities by the majority on the basis of differences in ethnicity, race, religion, gender, social status, and origin. In this case, discrimination is commonplace in society, where society tends to discriminate and cling to those who are considered unworthy of life.

Because the film depicts stereotypes that African-American women still experience today as a result of such injustices, the study chose to look at it. There are still women, especially black women, who cannot freely express their talents, continue to accept racial oppression in the women's movement, and those who are sexually oppressed in the black liberation movement, despite the fact that the majority of women today are actively transforming into more independent, intelligent, and modern individuals.

Efforts to eliminate injustices suffered by black women through black feminism (Taylor, 2016). Black feminism emphasizes racism, classism, and sexism, which are seen as root causes of oppression experienced by black women (Collins, 2009).

Hidden Figure is a film directed by Théodore Melfi. There are several reasons why experts analyzed this film because it has a compelling story based on the true story of African-American black women who fought against gender inequality or discrimination, confronted the work environment and convinced people that black women were also entitled to gender. Equation. Using feminist theory, the author tried to find gender equality reflected in Theodore's film "Hidden Figure".

2. METHOD

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. According to Sugiyono (20019: 15) Qualitative research is research that investigates, explores, describes, and explains the traits or characteristics of social influence that cannot be explained, measured, or illustrated by quantitative research. The subject of this study was the Hidden Figure movie. Two types of data sources are required to conduct this research, primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source comes from the movie Hidden Figure, while the secondary data sources for this study are books related to this study, online journals, theses, research papers related to this study. The data is taken from the "saying" of the film Hidden Figure. To analyze the Hidden Figure movie, researchers use feminist research methods and apply them using descriptive analysis including providing several interpretations in the treatment of the film. When analyzing the data, researchers applied the following procedures: watching the Hidden Character Movie, reading the script, identifying the patriarchal culture embodied in the Hidden Figure Movie, viewing and interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Indicators of the struggle for gender inequality *Hidden Figure*

1) Black Women's Courage in Fighting Inequality

The fundamental struggle in this movie is discrimination between whites and blacks, notably in the workplace. When it comes to moving their work forward, black female employees are constantly in difficulties with their "white workers" superiors. Mary Jackson applied for a training program for engineers, and that's when it happened. Mary was then informed by Mrs. Mitchell that she was not qualified for the program since she only had a few degrees, including those in mathematics and physical sciences, which were the same fields of study as the majority of NASA engineers. Mrs. Mitchell reiterated the necessity for NASA to take a University of Virginia advanced extension course. The dialogue below demonstrates the disagreement between Mary and Mrs. Mitchell :

Mrs. Mitchell : NASA doesn't commission females for the Engineer Training Program.

Mary : That position is available to any qualified applicant.

Mrs. Mitchell : Right. Except, you don't have the educational requirements.

Mary : I have a bachelor's degree in mathematics and physical science. It's the same as most engineers around here.

Mrs. Mitchell : We now require advanced extension courses through the University of Virginia. It's in the employee handbook. In addendum. In case you haven't read it.

Mary : Every time we have a chance to get ahead, they move the finish line.

Mrs. Mitchell : I just follow the rules around here and I expect everyone who works for me to follow them as well. There are no special circumstances for everyone. You all should be thankful you have jobs at all.

One of these characters, Katherine, had to travel more than 30 minutes to "lighten up" on the next structure as the discrimination persisted. He carried his own kettle that said "colored" when he first joined the task force for white folks. Mary, a different character, was first turned down for the title, but when she found a fault with the experimental space capsule's heat shield, it was taken into account. The only workplace prejudice they encounter is at NASA, including racial and gender discrimination.

Dorothy, like Khaterine and Mary, had to overcome many challenges to become a supervisor. The first person to turn down Dorothy's application to oversee an IBM machine was Mrs. Mitchell, her boss. But Dorothy doesn't give up on achieving her goals. He began by reading manuals on how to operate an IBM computer. He diligently kept at the IBM system until he could use it correctly. He will be able to prove his supremacy to those who are paid to operate IBM equipment at last.



Figure 1. Dorothy learns how IBM machine works

2) The Woman's Struggle

In NASA, it's challenging for African-American women to develop their careers. There is also a strata of employment that requires engineers to be men. Due to this layer, African-American women in particular receive unequal treatment at work. African-American women's job advancement will be hampered by NASA.



Figure 2. Mary fights for her right to become an engineer

Despite the fact that he was capable and qualified to apply for the position of engineer, NASA modified the specifications. This alteration was made to prevent Mary from becoming a NASA engineer. In the face of such unfair treatment, Mary did not remain mute. He battled the employment stratification by demonstrating to everyone that he could be an engineer.

NASA has established a requirement for workers who want to become engineers to take rigorous extension courses at the University of Virginia or Hampton School. This condition made it difficult for Mary, an African-American female worker, to apply for engineering positions because the two universities were different institutions where a woman of color could not just attend an all-white school. Mary petitioned the court in order to attend an advanced extension course at one of the two colleges. He spoke up in front of the judge to fight for his right as a worker to become an engineer at NASA. It is clear from the conversation between Mary and the judge.

Court clerk : Mary Jackson. Petition to attend courses at Hampton High School.

Mary : Good morning, Your Honor.

Judge : Hampton High School is a white school, Mrs. Jackson.

Mary : Yes, Your Honor. I'm aware of that. Virginia, still a segregated state. Regardless of what the federal government says, regardless of what the Supreme Court says, our law is the law.

Mary : Your Honor, if I may. I believe that there are special circumstances to be considered.

Judge : What would warrant a colored woman attending a white school?

Mary : May I approach your bench, sir? (then, Mary is allowed to approach judge's bench) Your Honor, you of all people should understand the importance of being first.

Judge : How's that Mrs. Jackson?

Mary : You were the first in your family to serve in the Armed Forces U.S. Navy. The first to attend university. George Mason. And the first state judge to be recommissioned by three consecutive governors.

Judge : You've done some research.

Mary : Yes, sir.

Judge : What's the point?

Mary : The point is Your Honor, no Negro woman in the state of Virginia have ever attended an all-white high school. It's unheard of.

Judge : Yeah, unheard of.

Mary : And before Alan Shepard sat on top of a rocket, no other American had ever touched space. And now, he will forever be remembered as the U.S. Navy man from New Hampshire, the first to touch the stars. And I sir, I plan on being an engineer at

NASA, but I can't do that without taking them classes at that all-white school. And I can't change the color of my skin. So I have no choice but to be the first. Which I can't do that without you, sir. Your Honor, out of all the cases you're gonna hear today, which one is gonna matter 100 years from now? Which one is gonna make you the first?

Judge : Only the night classes, Mrs. Jackson.

According to the discourse, Mary makes all effort to argue for her right to attend Hampton High School, which is the advanced extension courses location for engineer requirements at NASA. Mary had done some study on the judge in order to persuade him that African-American women have the same right to an education as White people.

3) Discrimination in *Hidden Figure*

It is tough for African-American workers to grow in their careers. Dorothy Vaughn also feels this way. Although Dorothy is qualified for a supervisory position in one of NASA's work divisions, she will not be hired since she is a Black woman. Even though this is deemed racial discrimination, black female workers are powerless to intervene because it is a workplace norm that black workers advance slowly.



Figure 3. Dorothy is surrender

When Dorothy Vaughn asks Mrs. Mitchell for a supervisor job, she demonstrates passive resistance against racial discrimination in the workplace. Mrs. Mitchell then responded that she is unable to apply for the post because she is a Black woman. Dorothy is disappointed by the discrimination, but she has little recourse and must accept her situation.

Dorothy : Mrs Mitchell. If I could, my application for supervisor, ma'am. I was just wondering if they're still considering me for that position.

Mrs. Mitchell : Yes. Well, the official word is no. They're not assigning a permanent supervisor for the colored people.

Dorothy : May I ask why?

Mrs. Mitchell : I don't know why. I didn't ask why.

Dorothy : We need a supervisor, ma'am. We haven't had one since Miss Jansen got sick. It's been almost a year.

Mrs. Mitchell : Things are working just fine as is.

Dorothy : I'm doing the work of a supervisor.

Mrs. Mitchell : Well, that's NASA for you. Fast with rocket ship, slow with advancement

Inequality facilities among other workers are also widespread for black workers. In fact, black workers are provided with distinct facilities in practically every area of the job, including office buildings, lavatories, canteens, and so on. Workplace guidelines require African-American employees to use colored bathrooms and canteens. They were unable to use the white restrooms at all. This would impede their job if black staff were required to utilize colored toilets located in separate office buildings, as not every NASA office building had colored toilets.



Figure 4. Katherine has to run to colored toilet

Even though Katherine is usually the one to speak up when she experiences discrimination, there are times when she will opt for passive resistance in the face of it. He wouldn't feel burdened by segregation and would opt to respect the rules at NASA by disregarding it. He must rush to the office of the West Computing Group, which supplies bathrooms for him, while the office of the Space Task Group where he works does not. The office of the Space Task Group is located half a mile away from the Western Computing Group. There isn't a bathroom, Katherine informed Mr. Harrison. This building and none of the buildings outside West don't have any colored bathrooms.

Despite the clear discrimination Katherine faces at NASA, she prefers to concentrate on her work. She tries to contain her feelings as much as possible when dealing with job discrimination. She continues doing it despite finding it annoying and returns to her work.

3.1.2 Gender inequality portrayed in *Hidden Figure*

A theme is a subject that is specific to the story but universal (it can happen and apply everywhere). The writer examines the concept of hardship in this *Hidden Figure* movie.

Fighting for a better life in the future is similar to honing your current skills. Mary aspired to work as a NASA engineer. With that, he started attending school in Hampton to become an engineer. Giving yourself a big shift for the better in the future is crucial. The ability to sustain and enhance performance in order to achieve goals and earn positive recognition from others is an added asset in the workplace.

Hidden Figure is an American film about the struggle of African-American women who face double injustice. The struggle of three African-American women, Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Johnson, and Mary Jackson, to realize the American dream is a major topic in this film. Despite facing racial and sexual prejudice, they continue to strive for better lives and equal rights by pursuing their careers and families.

Maintain an optimistic attitude in all aspects of your life, especially when coping with adversities. Because the problem is so large, not all difficulties must be met with undesirable attitudes such as laziness and even the severity of those who commit suicide. There must be a solution, no matter how big the situation is. The author depicts Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy confronting a challenge they face, namely the treatment of prejudice, by demonstrating that they can combat every discrimination received via their remarkable abilities and competence. Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy face all forms of discrimination in their environment and workplace with serenity.

Dorothy, with the help of her father's understanding of the Supervisor, was able to work with NASA's most valuable calculator, the IBM, while Katherine used her intelligence on geometry analysis for NASA rocket crossings. Mary also used her engineering knowledge to help build the Mercury 7 rocket. Thus, having intelligence that is applied to many people will be more beneficial than simply retaining it in one's mind. As a result, intelligence will rise in level as a result of knowledge gained and improved intelligence-based problem solutions.

The Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, which influences the story's plot, is a minor theme of the film. When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, it began. The United States, in this case the NASA group, are then prompted to follow suit. The movie's modest love motif is another. The love lives of the characters are shown in this film. The movie's love triangle also produces other types of conflict, like gender discrimination. Because black men still believe that black women cannot hold an equal status to others in all fields, there is gender prejudice in this film.

3.1.3 Gender Inequality in *Hidden Figure*

Theodore Melfi is the director of the movie "Hidden Figures," which was released in 2016. The film tells the true story of three African-American women - Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson - who worked at NASA and played pivotal roles in the early years of the U.S. space program. Throughout the film, viewers witness the three main characters grappling with various forms of discrimination and inequality. Katherine Johnson, played by Taraji P. Henson, faces barriers in her work as a brilliant mathematician and struggles to be recognized and respected for her contributions.

By showcasing these women's struggles and triumphs, Melfi aims to bring attention to the historical gender inequality and racial segregation prevalent in the workforce and the significant contributions of women, particularly women of color, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Melfi's decision to discuss gender inequality in "Hidden Figures" is a way to honor the legacy of these remarkable women and emphasize the need for continued progress in promoting diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of society, including the entertainment industry.

3.2 Discussion

In this chapter based on research that has been done by researchers will explain and answer questions from the previous chapter. Researchers will discuss how gender discrimination is reflected in the movie and how the struggle for justice is depicted in the movie. Like a school separated between whites and blacks. This was reinforced when Mary Jackson received an offer to become a NASA engineer, but she had to go to Hampton University, where the school was exclusively for white males. Like a school separated between whites and blacks.

This was reinforced when Mary Jackson Set in the 1961s, the film features various acts of discrimination against black people. Not stopping there, this film also shows the struggle of black

people who demanded equalization of rights that year. In the 1960s, it was difficult for blacks to find work, due to World War II and men choosing to serve in the military, eventually NASA was short of manpower and opened opportunities for female workers who had a bachelor's degree in mathematics.

The type of feminism contained in this movie is about how acts of discrimination committed against women have also been experienced since the 17th and 18th centuries. The presence of the French and American revolutions inspired his gaze to see the position of women in relation to men. Since a long time ago, women have been discriminated against for various reasons. One of them is because of skin color, as reflected in the movie *Hidden Figures*. Black women who are employed as "computers" and do not receive justice in their work because of their skin color and identity as women.

Based on the data above, and if related to feminism described in the previous chapter by researchers, it can be stated that gender equality occurs by several aspects when two or more characters interact with each other, such as differences in skin color, race, class, sexual tendencies, age, religion, educational attainment, occupation, marital status, health conditions and so on.

4. CLOSING

Because of their own experiences, black women who develop dual consciousness become natural warriors who prepare them for "self-empowerment" and "self-reliance" as their foundation for surviving in the culture in which they live (Wallace 286).

As for Katherine, she wouldn't have had the opportunity to show off her computation skills to influential NASA personnel, who entrusted her with doing calculations for her next project, Apollo 11 to the moon and space shuttle, if she hadn't been aware that her work was being taken for granted and that it was blatantly unfair to prevent her from attending Pentagon briefings simply because she was a woman.

Dorothy, on the other hand, used her 'petty crime' of stealing books from the public library to teach herself and her colleagues about IBM and its Fortran programming language. Dorothy and the other color computers can now run IBM; otherwise, they will be stuck as color computers until the division is dismantled because NASA no longer requires them.

In contrast to white female characters like Mitchell, who try to "fit in" by harboring the same prejudices against black women as white men, rather than assisting them as sisters, *Hidden Figures*

portrays black female characters as people who dare to fight discrimination and step forward to achieve what they want, similar to Putnam's argument. It's crucial to draw attention to the fact that all the persons who act as their bullies make a similar statement, such as Mitchell telling Dorothy "Everything is fine as it is" when she asserts her right to a supervisor's education and pay.

This investigation demonstrates that dual consciousness is an essential component of black women battling for the injustices they face as a result of the numerous hazards they face. Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy understood they couldn't fight injustice by relying on others who shared their inferior status as black males or white women.

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