

**THE RESISTANCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER AGAINST RACISM
IN THE NOVEL *THE HATE U GIVE* BY ANGIE THOMAS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with racism in the novel 'The Hate U Give' written by Angie Thomas. It aims at analyzing racism due to inherent stereotypes that still exist now. The descriptive analysis method is applied in this research to go with intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The writer studies character, conflict, setting, and irony as the intrinsic elements in order to deeply analyze the topic of discussion. As for extrinsic theory, this thesis analyzes racism and how to deal with it, including the forms and effects of racial injustice. In the novel, the main character witnesses her friend killed by the white police officer. She struggles to win justice in fighting racism. The result of this research is that modern racialism, anti-black issues as well as discrimination that still applies now.

Keywords: racism; resistance; justice.

I. BACKGROUND

America is a multicultural country and its citizens come from various parts of the world. Immigrants have been the major contributing factor to its population growth and cultural change in American history. Most of the settlers who came to America in the 17th century was British, but there were also Dutch, Swedish and German in the central region, slaves from Africa, the Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese spread across America. This white race from Europe is mostly Protestant. A fifth of the other population were enslaved Africans. After the revolution, America declared independence on July 4, 1776, even then many faced problems, including slavery.

The sharpest criticism of slavery is not about the behavior of the master towards slaves, rather the slavery that violates the human right to live freely. Finally in 1863 slavery ended after the civil war. In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibited slavery, while the 14th Amendment stated that citizenship and equal legal protection should not be taken away because of race. However, two centuries of slavery left most black families much poorer and less educated than white families.

Black racial identity is constructed in colonial discourse which claims that it is different from whites, but this very difference becomes the source of hegemony to legalize the slavery of black race in the United States. The existence of the institution of slavery later became a very controversial one, not only in the political, social, economic, and historical realms, but also in cultural and literary production in the United States. Racial identity that is displayed through physical

attributes, one of which is skin color, then leads to the concept of ideal attributes, while ethnic identity is displayed through cultural attributes which leads to the distinction of oriental and occidental societies, so that the conception of society is both superior and inferior.

The end of the civil war in America is very important to historical phase of the black race. The end of this war officially ended their period of slavery to them. Gradually many of these black races moved to North America. However, they still experience racial discrimination despite the abolition of slavery that has been proclaimed by the white racial government of the United States. This discrimination occurs in almost all aspects of their lives regardless of several opportunities they had to advance in getting decent education and work.

Realizing that today the world is still gripped by the issue of racism, which in fact has not disappeared. Racism in the history of human struggle had left deep wounds and led to an increasingly hostile, and mutually destructive society. Racism stems from a mental attitude that view themselves as permanently different from others and unbridgeable. These different feelings then encourage racial communities who feel superior to dominate other racial communities. The contestation of racist attitudes is reflected in the form of racial prejudice, labeling or stereotyping other races, and racial discrimination. This phenomenon continues to occur repeatedly when people of different races meet and interact.

In the 1920s, there was an awareness of their identity or identity as an African American group and a pride in themselves. At the same time, the so-called NAACP (National

Association for the Advancement of the Colored People) was formed in New York. This organization was used by intellectuals and ethnic black American leaders to voice their dissatisfaction with the increasing violence experienced by African American groups (Rhodes, 2012: 12). Even though the condition of African-Americans is relatively better now, racism from the white race still exists. A Gallup poll in August 2017 showed six in 10 Americans (61%) stated that racism against black people is still practiced in some form in America. This percentage is up from 51% in 2009¹.

One evidence of racial discrimination is the violence perpetrated by US police personnel against African-Americans. On the eve of the turn of 2009, Oscar Grant had to deal with Oakland police officers for getting into a brawl on the train. One of the policemen managed to arrest the unarmed black man. However, he continued to struggle, as the officer shot him in the back². In 2014 a similar case was witnessed where Michael Brown died as a result of violence perpetrated by police in the United States, this case then triggered protests and made the American public even more furious when the local High Court gave a verdict of innocence to the policeman who shot him. and there are many such cases that went uncovered by the mass media³.

This is because racism causes violence that is motivated by sentiment towards race, besides that people with non-white races also face stereotypes that identify them with criminal behavior so that they then become targets of policies made by the government to limit them. Black race is associated with violence, crime, and other bad images, so that black Americans are seen as the group who disturbs the order and security of Americans.

They have been waging a long war against racism, involving the southern and northern regions, the Union against the Confederation, who reject slavery and enforce slavery. Martin Luther King Jr., an activist and pastor from an African-American group, gave a speech on August 28, 1963. In his speech, King, spoke about unemployment, racial issues, and social justice. King, also advocated for civil rights, equality

between whites and colors, and the repeal of laws and policies based on segregation of race⁴. After a long and winding process the struggle paid off. An African-American was elected president of the United States. Barack Obama is seen as the crystallization of the civil rights

There are many forms to speak against the injustices caused by a government system, such as a literary work in the form of a novel. An American writer, namely Angie Thomas, born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, wrote her first novel on the theme of racism in America with the novel entitled *The Hate U Give*, published in 2017. This novel talks about a black girl, Starr Carter, sixteen years old, living between two different worlds. She was born and raised in a slum but attended a prestigious high school on the outskirts of the city where she lived. The balance of the two worlds that she desperately maintained, fell apart when she became the only witness to the shooting tragedy of his friend Khalil by a white policeman. Khalil's death made headlines. They called the young man a thug, a drug dealer, and even a gang member. Massive demonstrations filled the streets in Khalil's name. Everyone wants to know what actually happened when Khalil was killed.

The novel '*The Hate U Give*' highlights an issue that is sensitive but also very important. One of which is about people's lives in a region full of gangsters and drug dealers. The novel *The Hate U Give* has a touching story that is experienced by its residents. Social issues related to the black race cannot be denied as they continue till this day. Discrimination and different treatment just because of skin color are also still common. Regarding the life of a minority community, respecting differences, upholding justice, making peace with justice, and also about humanity are the critical points why this research was conducted.

The issue of racism in the novel *The Hate U Give* written by Angie Thomas can be said to be an issue of racism that occurred in the modern context in the United States around the 2000s, and it still exists, although not openly. Sniderman (1991: 423) explains that racism has not disappeared, but has been replaced by a new form of racism that is hegemonic, implicit, covert, and as if it is not racist. Racial prejudice and discrimination are no longer freely and explicitly stated. Because, if prejudice and discrimination are stated openly, it will be contrary to legal issues and the law forbids it.

¹ Tonny Firman, -Kanye West dan Amnesia Sejarah Perbudakan Kulit Hitam, diakses dari <https://tirto.id/kanye-west-dan-amnesia-sejarah-perbudakan-kulit-hitam-cJW2> pada 13 Juli 2019.

² Sam Levin, -Officer punched Oscar grant and lied about facts in 2009 killing, records show, diakses dari <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/02/officer-punched-oscar-grant-and-lied-about-facts-in-2009-killing-records-show> pada tanggal 28 Juli 2019.

³ Michael McLaughlin, -The Dynamic History of BlackLivesMatter Explained, diakses dari http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/history-black-lives-matter-us_56d0a3b0e4b0871f60eb4af5 pada tanggal 29 Juli 2019.

⁴ Faisal Irfani, -4 April 1968 Sejarah Pidato Martin Luther King yang Dorong AS Hapus Rasisme, diakses dari <https://tirto.id/sejarah-pidato-martin-luther-king-yang-dorong-as-hapus-rasisme-cvrX> pada tanggal 13 Juli 2019.

II. METHOD AND RESEARCH

This research was analyzed using qualitative research. According to Adi Tryono in Jabrohim (2003: 23), the research method was carried out through several stages, namely the planning stage, the implementation stage, and the reporting stage. While the technique used in this research is library research using primary data, namely the novel *The Hate U Give* and secondary data from theoretical books, scientific journals, and articles related to the topic that the author has chosen, namely the main character's resistance to racism.

The planning stage consists of the formulation of the problem, an introduction, and the preparation of a research design. If the planning stage has been completed then it is followed by the implementation stage. In the implementation stage, the activities include data collection, grouping and analysis. The next stage, the reporting stage, is filled with the activities of the author and the duplication of research results so that they can be read, known, and used by others who need them.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The injustice described in this novel indicates racism because white people are still considered to be superior. In the book *Racism: documentation of international documents on racism* by Jusuf & Srivanto (2001: 15) racism is a belief that humans can be differentiated into various races and members of one race will be inferior to other races. Usually, this kind of behavior grows on the awareness that he belongs to a race that is superior to other races.

Starr Carter is the main character in Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give*, who voices justice for his friend Khalil. Starr is also the only witness of the death of Khalil who was killed by the white policeman officer Brian. Starr Carter decided to speak out to eliminate the racism against black race, especially of his close aide Khalil.

As stated by Liliweri (2005: 201) that prejudice is an attitude, thought, and belief that is owned by everyone. The black race has transformed the prejudice and inferiority of black people into courage and struggle. One form of inter-ethnic / racial prejudice is stereotyping.

Verddeber (1986) argues that stereotypes are attitudes, even characters, that a person has to judge other people's characteristics, negative or positive traits, based solely on that person's membership in a particular group. Starr's father,

Maverick Carter provides an example by giving the case if a similar situation, namely when someone was killed by a policeman, befell a white boy from a developed area, the effect would be different.

Hall in Barker (2016: 363) puts the conception of resistance not as an established quality or action but relational and conjecturally or based on alternating progress and setbacks. Resistance is not viewed singly and universally, that is, an action that applies across time; but built by a series of specific meanings at that time, particular place and social relations.

For Bennet in Barker, (2016: 363), resistance is basically a defensive relationship with cultural power adapted by subordinate social forces. In the context of cultural studies, it is described as an action as resistance not about truth or falsehood but about benefits and values. Resistance to systems originating from subordinate groups requires strength and unity from these groups to adopt biased policies.

Based on the data found seven forms of resistance by Starr. First, Starr appears as a witness and is interrogated by detectives. Second, Starr failed to include himself for the fake protests that took place at his school, but the protests were not due to voice justice for Khalil but to be able to skip lessons. Third, Starr came to the prosecutor's office. Fourth, Starr created a new Tumblr on behalf of Khalil and posted photos of Khalil. Fifth, Starr attended an interview with a news anchor. Sixth, Starr distributed leaflets on the streets and assisted with Just Us for Justice. Seventh, Starr attended as a witness in court. Finally, Starr takes to the streets and protests with his friends.

In an effort to speak out for justice, Starr is not alone, he is supported by his family, friends, and black racial groups. In the end, Officer Brian, the policeman who killed Khalil was considered a staff of the state apparatus who had the right to protect his life. This establishes a double standard regarding the meaning of crime. Apparatus staff cannot be punished, but Khalil can be considered a criminal because he is not a threat.

The United States has actually implemented double standards since its inception as a country (Bellah, 1985: 30) and is also known as the country of paradox (Fischer, 2008: 363-372; Ryan JE, 2009: 9; Hasday, 2007: 5). This means that, on the one hand, the United States builds the foundation of its country on the principles of democracy and social equality, but on the other hand it creates prejudice and discrimination in its

society. This fact then gave birth to controversy in the social and cultural realities that occurred in America.

IV. CONCLUSION

The black racial group's intent to remain silent overcomes doubt and leads to one simple action followed by another. The black racial group realized that there was no easy way to bring in a societal change. However, the intention to show the world that they could not stand still was stronger than their doubts. Not keeping quiet is a kind of simple action, but one simple act can also make a difference.

Therefore, the black racial group held a great gesture to show that they were not weak. This movement also received attention by some white races who also helped them to fight this unjust system. Starr Carter realized that resistance was important to many people. In short, it can be concluded that this novel is a close plot that has a sad ending, because Starr's resistance to voice justice for Khalil could not materialize.

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