

Analysis of the Main Character's Resistance to Racism in Theodore Melfi's Hidden Figures Film

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the main character's resistance to racism in Theodore Melfi's film Hidden Figures. This research is a qualitative descriptive study, as a research procedure that can produce descriptive data that can be in the form of written or spoken words from people with observable behavior. Qualitative descriptive research aims to make a systematic, factual, and accurate description, description, or painting of facts and characteristics, as well as the relationship between things being investigated. The techniques in data analysis used in this study are 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) verification. The results obtained describe the existence of racial discrimination and the attitudes of the main character of the film Hidden Figures resistance to discrimination which is divided into 6 parts, namely: 1) Racial Justification, 2) Classification Based on Skin Color in Place Settings, 3) Racism in Facilities General Black/Skin, 4) Unpleasant Treatment and, 5) Promote Equality.

Keywords: *Resistance, Racism, and Hidden Figure Movies*

Introduction

Racism is generally associated with understanding discrimination of ethnicity, religion, race, customs, circles, or physical identity of a person. Racism is a description

that rejects something among citizens who come from or are of different races. In other words, have more abnormalities than usual. So that racism does not continue to grow, we need a movement that can prevent and even eliminate racism. One movement that rejects racism is feminism.

According to Ghassani and Catur (2019), the times, films are used as propaganda tools that can cause social crises in several countries. One of them is the film "Hidden Figures" by Theodore Melfi 2016 which is a biographical drama genre. Set in the 1960s, this film is a story based on the true story of three black women who work at NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration),

Film as a propaganda tool is closely related to efforts to achieve national goals and citizens. It is about thinking that takes into account that a film has great reach, realism, emotional impact, and popularity. Efforts to mix message development with entertainment have long been applied in literature and drama, but the new elements in the film have the advantage of being able to reach large numbers of people in a short time even in rural areas Mc Quail (2011). The film is a dramatic transformation that was originally written in the form of a script as a literary work.

The essence of poetry is a literary work whose language refers to rhythm, as well as the arrangement of lyrics and stanzas, the compositions in the next language are carefully selected and arranged to sharpen people's awareness of experience and generate special responses through the arrangement of sounds, rhythms, and special meanings. (Hawa, H., Sahabuddin, C., & Muthmainnah, M., 2020; Albana et al., 2020; Alek et al., 2020; Haucsa et al., 2020; Santiana et al., 2021)

Films are divided into four types (Ardianto et al., 2007), namely story films, films that contain stories based on modified real stories such as historical films that contain accurate information that contains knowledge that is educational for the audience; news films, films about facts or events that happened; documentaries, the result of the maker's interpretation of reality, and cartoons, which are simply drawn films containing good and evil characters.

Literature is Sanskrit. From the derivative of the verb sas, namely "to teach, to give instructions or instructions, to direct", the word tra has the meaning of indicating means or tools. For this reason, literature is an "instruction book, a manual for teaching tools, or teaching". In simple terms, it can be said that literature is an imaginative thought in the form of language structures and depictions of life or imagery. (Teuw, 1984). Literature is a written work that uses beautiful language and has the sincerity to be different from the language in general and even violates everyday language (Yunus, 2019).

The prose is a literary work whose writing is free and not bound by various rules such as rhyme, diction, rhythm, and others. Etymologically, the word prose comes from the Latin prose which means frankly. The prose is also defined as a literary work used to describe a fact (Lafamane, 2020).

Based on this explanation, the film "Hidden Figures" can be categorized as a story film, because it is based on a true story that occurred in the 1960s, which was modified to make it more interesting without losing its function as a film that contains accurate and medical information for the public. If the film is only used as a storytelling tool without any expressive activity, the film will be limited (Prakoso in Ardyaksa, et al., 2016).

Method

This type of research is a type of qualitative descriptive research. A qualitative descriptive research method is a method used by researchers to find knowledge or theory of research at a certain time. Qualitative research is research that does not use mathematical, statistical, or computer models. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Mukhtar, 2013; Nugrahani, et al., 2014). The data described in this study are pieces of dialogue or scenes in the Hidden Figures film about the fight against racism.

Data collection technique

The data collection technique is a method used to collect data related to research. The data obtained from this research are process and result data. To obtain the data, the technique used is, to read, listen, and take notes.

1. Reading is an activity to gain understanding from a combination of several letters and words.
2. Listening is listening and paying close attention to the source of the data to be studied.
3. Recording/writing is an activity of copying something, both what is heard and spoken by others in the form of written language.

Data analysis technique

The analysis is an activity to research, examine, study, compare existing data and make the necessary interpretations. The analysis is carried out to estimate whether all aspects of learning involved in it are by their capacity. The analysis conducted in this study used descriptive statistical analysis techniques both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials so that they can be easily understood, and the findings can be informed to others (Bogdan in Sugiyono, 2013).

Results

Hidden Figures is a Hollywood film based on a true story that tells the story of the struggle of three black women in fighting discrimination, especially racial discrimination in the United States. The film adapted from the non-fiction book Margit Lee Shetterly and directed by Theodore Melfi with a duration of 126 minutes 43 seconds was released on a limited basis on December 25, 2016, which was then on January 6, 2017, before being widely screened on theaters in the United States. The film then made it into the list of the top ten best films of 2016 and won several prestigious awards. The Hidden Figures rating on Rotten Tomatoes reached 93%, while the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) gave it a score of 7.8/10. In the film, the researcher finds several examples of acts of discrimination as well as the efforts and attitudes of the three main characters in responding to and fighting these acts of discrimination, as contained in the data that the researchers found in this study.

Plot (Storyline)

In 1961 in Hampton Virginia there was a little girl named Katherine. He has extraordinary mathematical abilities until he gets a scholarship to continue his education. As an adult, he worked as a track counter at NASA. Katherine has two female friends named Dorothy and Mary whom both work at NASA. All three of them have expertise in their field. But unfortunately, even though Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary

have extraordinary expertise in their respective fields, they get different treatment because they are a minority group, namely the black group. Racial discrimination was blatant but that didn't stop Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary from giving up until they were finally able to prove in their respective offices that they could. Katherine Goble with her geometric calculations, Dorothy Vaughan was a mathematician and supervisor, and Mary Jackson was also a mathematician and engineer. The table below will explain the forms of racism discrimination against black minorities.

Discussion

Scenes of Racism and Forms of Resistance to Racism in the Hidden Figures Movie: Katherine Goble

Katherine Goble, which is shown at the beginning of the film, since she was still in elementary school, Katherine is a child who is a genius who can solve difficult problems, which are not found in children her age. Because of her intelligence, Katherine finally got a scholarship to continue her education. As an adult, Katherine worked at NASA as a clerk at the West Area space agency. Katherine also got an opportunity when the space workgroup needed a qualified mathematician. The vacancy was triggered by the presence of Russia, which at that time became a rival to the United States in the struggle for outer space, which was the first successful launch to orbit the earth.

As a result of Russia's success in orbiting the earth, the United States government has become more aggressive in ordering NASA to work so that it can orbit the earth as quickly as Russia at that time. That's why in the end the aerospace working group still needed a good mathematician in addition to manpower assistance, and Katherine was the one. Dorothy, who is also Katherine's friend who served as supervisor, then appointed Katherine, because Dorothy knew about Katherine's ability in the calculation. Eventually, Katherine became the first female mathematician to join the working group. However, being the first woman was not easy for Katherine.

This made her experience and feel discriminated against in the workgroup because Katherine was a minority. For example, in the space workgroup building, the glass that Katherine used to drink was different from the glass for the white employee, and the toilet Katherine as a black person was using was different from the toilet used by the white employee. However, who would have thought that Katherine chose to stay afloat, doing all her work for the mission she was running, namely helping NASA with the space program.

Persisting with discrimination in her workgroup was an attempt by Katherine to challenge and confront discrimination itself, and to convince NASA that minorities are the same as the majority. Her persistent efforts made her succeed in proving to NASA as the first and only black woman, by successfully bringing John Glenn (Astronaut) to orbit the earth.

Katherine's character's resistance began to appear in:

Scene 1 time 16:22-16:52, when Mitchell is escorting Katherine to her new study, telling Katherine that no black has ever been able to work in the room before her and again warning Katherine not to embarrass Mitchell after joining the study. When Katherine first entered the study, one of the white employees immediately gave her a trash can because she thought that Katherine was the officer in charge of picking up trash in the room at that time. Because of this treatment, Katherine, who had just joined the working group, immediately tried to give an explanation and a little resistance, that

she was not an officer in charge of picking up trash, but the employee immediately left her and returned to her desk without paying attention to Katherine's words.

Scene 2 time duration 1:01:15-1:01:43, were at that time Harrison, who is Katherine's boss, was looking for Katherine because she didn't see her at her desk during work hours. Katherine, who had just entered the room drenched in the rain, was immediately asked by Harrison where she had been. Katherine replied as it happened that she came from the toilet because there was no toilet for her in her study. Harrison who seemed not to believe it answered Katherine's words by saying "To the damned toilet. What do you mean there is no toilet for you here? 45 minutes per day?". Hearing Harrison's words, Katherine started to get angry and then explained about all the discrimination she had experienced, and because of the discrimination, she had to walk almost a kilometer just to go to the toilet and comfort herself. Katherine's anger witnessed by all the white employees in her study caused a moment of silence, then Katherine said defensively "So sorry if I have to go to the toilet several times a day" and left her study.

Scene 3 time duration 1:13:53-1:13:27), where Katherine is chasing Paul who will attend Glenn's launch meeting while giving a paper the results of the calculations she has done for Glenn's launch. Handing it over, Katherine also conveyed her wish to Paul that she wanted a jump on Glenn's track. Hearing this, Paul, who felt that Katherine had done whatever she wanted, made him ask Katherine again about what Katherine had asked as if Paul didn't believe it. Hearing their debate, Harrison who was right in front of them immediately turned around and approached them and asked if there was a problem. Katherine, who had done the calculations to conclude that she should give a jump on Glenn's track, immediately conveyed her opinion and desire to Harrison. Harrison initially intended to refuse because he thought that Katherine had gone a bit too far, but Katherine instead gave a statement that made Harrison consider it, saying that he could do it. Harrison who knows Katherine's abilities finally agrees even though he runs it through Paul.

Scene 4 time duration 1:18:38-1:18:46, When Katherine again tries to persuade Paul to attend the briefing related to Glenn's launch, but Paul refuses because the briefing is a closed briefing and also the briefing is only attended by all white people. Katherine, eager to attend the meeting on Glenn's behalf at the launch, didn't want to sit still and reassured Paul that they hadn't found the exact count as the launch was only two weeks away. Harrison, who heard this and acknowledged Katherine's ability, made him ask Paul why Katherine could not attend the briefing and Paul replied as it happened that the briefing was closed and attended by only whites. Katherine, who heard Paul's answer to Harrison, then put up a mild resistance by saying that she seemed to be the best in the calculations in the working group. Knowing what Katherine was capable of, Harrison also allowed Katherine to attend the meeting and be one of the speakers at the meeting.

Dorothy Vaughan

Dorothy Vaughan is a black woman who is a friend of Katherine and also works as a supervisor or supervisor in the West area. In addition to the same mission as Katherine, which is to help NASA in the space program, Dorothy also has a goal of becoming a permanent supervisor at NASA. This position has not yet been obtained permanently due to RAS discrimination. Like Katherine, Dorothy chooses to stick around and keep on doing her job for the first mission, while trying to find other ways to fulfill her dream of being a permanent supervisor. Because of his programming skills, one day

NASA allowed him to run IBM. Dorothy, who managed to bring her friends from the West Computing Group, was able to run IBM well, until finally Dorothy Vaughan managed to get the position permanently and was appointed head of the programming section of the Analysis and Computing Division, which is one of the divisions created by NASA and is no longer segregated. because of skin color.

Dorothy's character's resistance began to appear in:

Scene 1 time duration 46:25-46:37 begins when Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary are heading to the cafeteria during break time and Dorothy is starting to talk about IBM who has just arrived at NASA. Dorothy had thought that the existence of this sophisticated machine would make the minority unemployed because NASA would no longer employ them. Hearing this, Katherine, who didn't want it, began to question what they should do to prevent this. Confidently, Dorothy answered and invited her two friends to prevent this bad thing from happening by doing the best they could, to fulfill their mission amid the discrimination they experienced, which was to help NASA to bring astronauts to orbit successfully.

Scene 2, time 49:43-49:52, begins when Dorothy is in the library looking for a book, then runs into a white woman. Due to such thick discrimination, it seems that the place of blacks and whites has been separated. The white woman who saw Dorothy looking for books in the white section immediately asked what Dorothy was doing in that place. Hearing the woman's question, Dorothy replied as she did, that she was looking for a book. Hearing Dorothy's answer, the woman again gave an unpleasant word by saying "we don't want any trouble here". Hearing those words, Dorothy, who realized that she too had the right to look for books in that section, finally replied to the woman's words with a tone of resistance and confidence that she was looking for a book that she did not find the book in the black section, then Dorothy kept going. continued to search for the book he needed regardless of the woman's words.

Scene 3 is 50:27-50:47, starting when Dorothy and her two children are on a bus. Dorothy was seen explaining to her two children about the events they had just experienced in the library. Dorothy tried to explain to her two children that what they had just seen in the library was not true. According to him, if you act right, then you are right. Then seen in the next scene, when he was about to take a book out of his bag, one of his children immediately asked him about the book. It seemed that Dorothy had taken it from the library earlier. Hearing her son questioning her like that, Dorothy again gave an answer and understood, that she had paid taxes and the book was included in the tax, therefore she had the right if she wanted to use the book from the library for her benefit.

Scene 4 time duration 1:26:56-1:28:41, begins when Mitchell meets and informs Dorothy that he has a new assignment. But when Dorothy clarifies, Mitchell is seen telling her that the position is only temporary. Then the next scene shows Dorothy asking again about her friends in the West Computing Group, but Katherine again explains that only Dorothy is accepted at that place, other workers in the Computing Group will only work according to the orders. Hearing this, Dorothy immediately refused unless Dorothy brought her colleagues from the black workroom. Recognizing Dorothy's proficient skills with programming cards, NASA finally let IBM run by black employees from the West Computing Group.

Mary Jackson

Mary Jackson is one of the black women who is also a friend of Katherine Goble and Dorothy Vaughan. In addition to having the same first mission as her two friends, Katherine and Dorothy, Mary also has her dream, which is to become a technician and

engineer at NASA. However, to be able to realize these ideals, Mary must first graduate from a white higher education. This was impossible for Mary because white schools were only for whites while Mary was a black woman. But these requirements are not something that makes Mary have to stop fighting for her ideals.

Mary, who realized that skin color should not be a barrier for her to achieve her goals, and not to mention the ability and level of education that had qualified her to become an engineer at NASA made her not give up. Mary's desire and the discrimination that occurred simultaneously made her have to oppose and fight everything that makes race a reason for limiting the rights of every black individual. Finally, Mary who was so persistent in her goals, with the efforts she made, made her succeed in realizing her dreams.

Mary's character's resistance began to appear in:

Scene 1 time 33:41-33:57, when Mary and her husband Levi Jackson are in an open field. Levi and Mary are arguing because Levi warned his wife that aspiring to become an engineer at NASA is not possible for dark skin. But Mary who heard these words denied it and fought against this thought and opposed her husband by saying "Stop quoting your slogan to me. There is more than one way to achieve something".

Scene 2 time duration is 38:19-38:27, when Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary are lined up in the field. NASA, which at that time held a welcoming ceremony for the arrival of several prospective astronauts to be launched. Dorothy who saw the prospective candidate made herself praise him. Hearing the compliment, Mary did not want to lose and immediately praised the astronaut candidate by responding to Dorothy's words and saying "And good looks must be a requirement too". Dorothy, who heard Mary's praise and saw Mary say it while looking at the future astronaut, answered her again in a serious but joking tone by saying "How can you ogling those white men". Then Mary answered him again with words that made Dorothy smile by saying "That's an equal right. I have the right to look at all skin colors.

Scene 3, time 46:44-46:57, begins when Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary are sitting in the cafeteria during break time. Mitchell suddenly came while handing a document to Mary who is known to aspire to become an engineer at NASA. The document turned out to be a document containing new requirements for prospective engineers graduating from black schools. Handing over the document, Mitchell explained that NASA doesn't allow women in engineering programs, especially since Mary is a black citizen. Mary, who heard this, immediately responded by saying "The position is available to all qualified applicants". Hearing Mary's answer, Mitchell seemed not to want to lose and returned to answer Mary's words, but Mary also did not want to lose and continued to give a sentence of resistance to Mitchell by saying "I have a bachelor's degree in mathematics and physics, which is the same as most engineers here".

Scene 4 time duration is 1:10:39-1:13:06 when Mary comes to attend the hearing for permission to join the engineer training program at a white school (Hampton High School). Mary is the only black suitor made it difficult for her to get the permit. When Mary had just entered the courtroom, the judge in front of her immediately gave her an unpleasant question by saying "What justifies black women coming to white schools?". Hearing this question, made Mary ask for permission to approach the judge, and Mary's awareness that black should not be a hindrance to her, made her state to the judge which made the judge have to think about it, that there are special circumstances that must be considered. After a very long debate, Mary was finally able to convince the

judge, and seen in the final scene, the judge gave her permission to attend an engineer training program at a white school even though she did it through night classes.

Research on the Hidden Figures film has been studied by several people, one of them is Muhammad Azhar, Department of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta with the title Semiotic Analysis of the Meaning of Racism in the Hidden Figures Film, in which the research focuses on analysis semiotics, namely finding the meanings contained in every racism scene in the Hidden Figures film. Muhammad Azhar's research is certainly different from this research because this research focuses on describing how the three main characters carry out resistance, especially in acts of racist discrimination.

This study explores how the forms of resistance of the three figures through six aspects of the problem, namely; 1) Racist Justification, 2) Classification Based on Skin Color in Place Settings, 3) Racism in Public Facilities, Black/White, 5) Unpleasant Treatment, 6) Voicing for Equality.

Conclusion

Based on the research results of the Analysis of the Main Character's Resistance to Racism in Theodore Melfi's Hidden Figures Film, the author can conclude that the Hidden Figures film is a documentary film in which this film is based on true stories that present many issues of racial discrimination, where the majority oppress minorities, as well as the efforts of the three main characters in opposing or against such discrimination. The type of research used to describe the forms of resistance of the main character to racism in the film Hidden Figures is a type of qualitative descriptive research, namely research that can produce descriptive data that can be in the form of written or spoken words from people with observable behavior. . Qualitative descriptive research aims to make a systematic, factual and accurate description, description or painting of facts and characteristics, as well as the relationship between things being investigated.

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