



**RACISM TOWARD CHINESE PEOPLE IN USA, PICTURED IN *DRAGON:*
THE BRUCE LEE STORY MOVIE**

A FINAL PROJECT

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Submitted by:

Sasa Sasmita

A2B007100

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DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by her without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, March 2012

Sasa Sasmita

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Everything is possible”

(anonymous)

“Think positively is so hard, but it’s so good”

(anonymous)

“You’re original cannot be replaced, after a hurricane comes a rainbow”

(Firework, Katy Perry)

“Everyday I’m shufflin”

(LMFAO, Party Rock Anthem)

This thesis is dedicated to my family,
my boyfriend, and all my friends.

“You’re all my best inspiration, my rhapsody, and my melody.”

APPROVAL

Approved by
Advisor,

Sukarni Suryaningsih. S.S., M. Hum
NIP. 197212231998022001

VALIDATION

Approved by

Strata I Final Project Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On Wednesday, April 3, 2012

Advisor, Reader,

Sukarni Suryaningsih. S.S., M. Hum Hadiyanto, S. S., M. Hum
NIP. 197212231998022001 NIP. 197407252008011013

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The writer realizes that this thesis is still far from the word “perfect”, thus she would like to welcome any criticisms or advices from anyone. Last but not least, she wishes that this thesis will be beneficial to the readers.

Semarang, March 2012

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ABSTRAK

Amerika terdiri dari berbagai macam ras dan etnik yang berasal dari hampir semua negara di dunia sejak terjadinya imigrasi besar-besaran pada abad 17. Hal ini tidak menutup kemungkinan akan terjadinya sikap rasisme antar ras. Salah satu kasus yang cukup kontroversial mengenai rasisme di Amerika adalah sikap rasis terhadap imigran dari Asia, terutama terhadap orang-orang ras Cina yang bermukim di Amerika.

Dalam paper ini penulis menggunakan film *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* sebagai media untuk menganalisis masalah rasisme di Amerika Serikat. Penulis menggunakan metode pendekatan sosiologi sastra untuk menganalisis unsur ekstrinsik film yang akan digunakan untuk membahas masalah rasisme yang dialami oleh orang-orang Cina di Amerika dalam berbagai aspek.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa orang-orang dari ras Cina yang bermukim di Amerika mengalami berbagai masalah yang berhubungan dengan masalah ras, akan tetapi dengan usaha mereka untuk bertahan akhirnya keturunan Cina ini dapat meminimalkan stereotipe orang Amerika terhadap mereka.

Racism toward Chinese People in US, Pictured in *Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story* Movie

I. Introduction

Racism in the United States has been a major issue since the colonial era and the slave era. There are many immigrant groups from different countries that come to America with different motives. There, they should face several problems of race, one of them is racism. “Racism is the belief that characteristics and abilities can be attributed to people simply on the basis of their race and that some racial groups are superior to others” (Shah, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/165/racism>, 1: par.1, 2010). Racism against Asian Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, and other immigration groups is widely controverted. In this paper, writer would like to choose racism toward Chinese people (as a member of Asian American groups) in America reflected in *Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story* movie, as the topic.

In the movie *Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story*, racism against Chinese People is an interesting case to be discussed. The writer wants to explain that racism in America does not only fall upon African American group that was known as “negro” because of their different skin color, but also include the Asian immigrants, especially Chinese people. In this movie, one can see some scenes that support the condition of racism that encounter Chinese people in America and how the Chinese people struggle to survive and try to subvert racism. The writer uses sociological literary approach to analyze the extrinsic aspect of the movie. It explains social condition of society in certain place reflected in a literary work

II. Racism in US

The United States has often been called “a nation of immigrants”. There are varieties of ethnic identities, immigration experiences, and cultural choices that make Americans so complex. This complexity often creates several problems toward immigrants in USA. One of them is a problem of race that is known as ‘racism’. What is the actual meaning of racism? “Racism is the belief that characteristics and abilities can be attributed to people simply on the basis of their race and that some racial groups are superior to others” (Shah, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/165/racism>, 1: par.1, 2010). Racism emerges in all parts of the world. One important case of racism appears in US. It becomes a weapon to fight a certain group of immigrants that comes to US like African, Mexican, and also Asian. In the Pacific States, especially Washington states, racism was primarily directed against the Asian Immigrants.

Based on that fact, the writer would like to explain about racism by analyzing the film “*Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story*”. The writer observes that there are many conditions of racism toward Chinese people as Asian Immigrants in USA pictured in this movie.

III. Racism in *Dragon: the Bruce Lee Story* Movie

1. Racism in Work Field

The first case emerges when Bruce works at the Chinese restaurant in America. The story begins with a condition that one of the female workers at the restaurant takes an interest in Bruce. When the two speak and laugh together at the restaurant the next day, an older chef becomes jealous and attacks Bruce with a meat cleaver (pic 1).

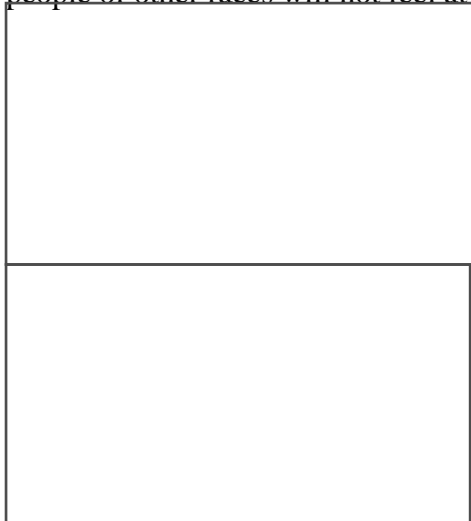
The older chef: You son of a bitch, you grab my girl!

Bruce: (Silent, and then he has a fight with the angry chef)

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 00: 26: 11-14)

The other workers also put out the fire and throw Bruce into the back alley. Several of the workers head out after Bruce, armed with more meat cleavers (pic 2).

The case indicates that racism can exist in organization or environment, especially in work field, “This is the idea that an organization or an environment might be racist because its implicit, unconscious structures were devised for the use and comfort of white people, with the result that people of other races will not feel at home in such setting” (O’ Connell, 2000: 5).



Picture 1
00: 26: 10

Picture 2
00: 26: 28

2. Racism in Education

The second condition emerges when Bruce is in a university. Upon enrolling in a university, Bruce faces racial intolerance from fellow students. One of the students there, challenges Bruce to set up a fighting (pic 3). It also states that racism exists in environment that make someone feel homeless when he stays in another place (O’ Connell, 2000: 5).

American man: You think I’m happy to see you in my gym?

Bruce Lee: Don’t touch me

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 00: 32: 33-37)

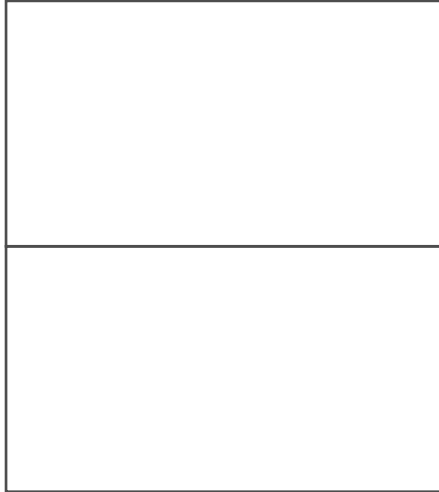
The American man also calls Bruce, “Chink”, disrespectful name for “Chinese”, and all of his friends shout to fight Bruce that is not their “kind” (pic 4).

American man: come on, touch me, chink, come on.

American students: hit him, Joe.

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 00: 32: 45-50)

Then, they fight on a big mat of the gym, Bruce takes the fight easily and defeat Joe, the American man, and some of his friends that also take a part on the fight. Finally, he can get the respect of the student there and they ask Bruce to teach them his fighting style.



Picture 3
00: 32: 33

Picture 4
00: 32: 49

3. Racism in Personal Life

The third condition emerges when Linda introduces Bruce as her boyfriend to her mother. Her mother does not agree if Bruce, a Chinese man, has a relationship with her daughter. She said that an American woman should get an American man too. It is their tradition, and other traditions are not allowed entering it. She is making a judgment or assumption about someone or something before having enough knowledge to be able to do so with guaranteed accuracy (pic 5). This condition is closely related to the term “prejudice” which is a part of racism phenomenon. **“Prejudice** has to do with the inflexible and irrational attitudes and opinions held by members of one group about another. Being prejudiced usually means having preconceived beliefs about groups of people or cultural practices” (http://www.cliffnotes.com/study_guide/Prejudice-and-Discrimination.topicArticleId-26957,articleId-26886.html, 1: Par. 1).

Linda’s mother: you’re an American citizen. You’re not really an American.

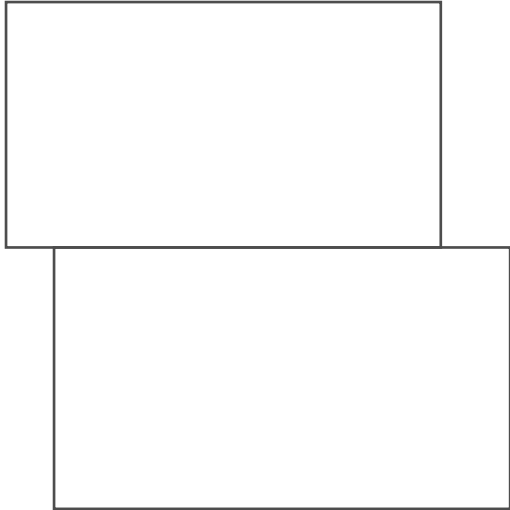
Bruce: (silent) and go out from their home.

Linda’s mother: I can’t allow it, I’m sorry but I can’t allow it, Linda

Linda: It’s not up to you mom. (Then she runs outside and go with Bruce)

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 00: 51: 20-59)

Then, Bruce and Linda decide to go away from Linda’s mother house (pic 6). However, their relationship is proven to be a stabilizer and motivator for the volatile Lee although their romance provokes both parental and social disdain.



Picture 5
00: 51: 20

Picture 6
00: 52: 32

4. Racism in Environment

All races in the world has a liability assuming that their tradition is the most right one among other races, it also applies in the hand of Chinese people. They assume that only Chinese people have a good morality. That way of thinking makes the racial antagonism in this film becomes confusing. This condition pictured on a scene where Bruce Lee opens a martial arts training school named The Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute (taken from his real name, Lee Jun Fan) in Seattle, that stress out a practical, flexible, quick, and efficient motion (pic 7). He trains not only Chinese people, but also all the people from different races that make some other Chinese martial arts schools have a dispute with Bruce (pic 8). Bruce is accused of opposing Chinese tradition, and he becomes angry. He will teach whoever wants to learn *gwailo*, a part of Chinese tradition.

Chinese man: you have been charged with violating the martial arts code, we've had several complains from wu zuolin and wong jack man and many others. You've been teaching the gwailo. This must stop.

Bruce: I'll teach whoever wants to learn!

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 00: 55: 43-56)

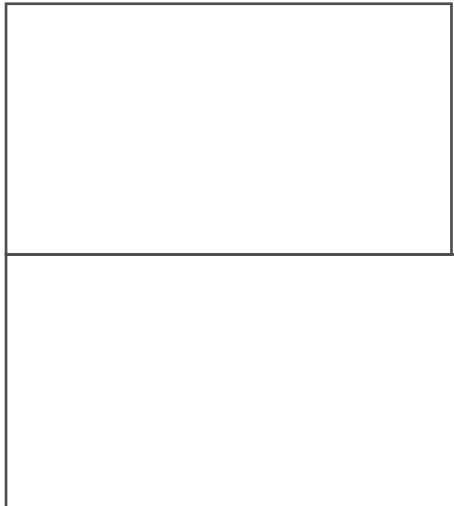




Picture 7
00: 45: 46

Picture 8
00: 55: 51

He still wants to train non-Chinese people and finally, the other Chinese men set up a fight with Johnny Sun (pic 9). Bruce wins the fight, but Sun delivers a cheap shot and Bruce ends up with a back injury (pic 10).



Picture 9
00: 59: 03

Picture 10
01: 03: 12

In the hospital, the doctor who handles Bruce Lee said that he cannot kick anymore. Bruce Lee becomes hopeless and frustrated. He feels that he will lose his future. Nevertheless, Linda Emery, as a good wife, always supports him and makes sure that doctors could be wrong (pic 11)

Linda: See this notebook? Looks like the ones we had in school, right? Wrong, this is your future

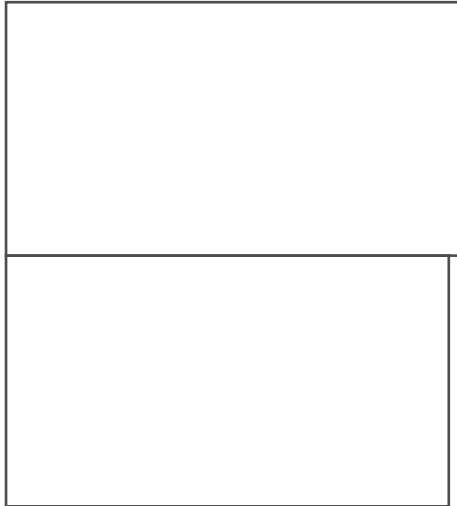
Bruce: I don't have any more future!

Linda: Sure, you do!

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 01: 06: 42-52)

She is so faithful accompanying Bruce Lee in the hospital. Moreover when Bruce Lee could not

do everything, Linda helps him to write a book containing points of *Jeet Kune Do* theory created by Bruce Lee, and finally that book can be finished well (pic 12).



Picture 11
01: 06: 52

Picture 12
01: 08: 09

Bruce's condition is getting better and better. Finally, he recovers from his injury, but he is suggested by the doctor not to push himself too hard when he practices *kungfu*.

The next condition happens when Bruce Lee shows a 60 second demonstration of his new fighting style. At that time, all the audiences are Americans. They laugh, disdain a Chinese-man in front of them (pic 13).

Bruce: I'll need someone to prove it on. I'll beat any man in this room in 60 seconds!

Audiences: What? (Laughing)

(Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, 01: 16: 05-18)

Evidently, Bruce Lee is challenged by Johnny Sun again. Johnny Sun appears to have the upper hand in the first half of the match but Bruce recovers and ends up kicking Sun over the top rope (pic 14). Finally, Bruce Lee becomes the winner. All the Americans are surprised by his action that can beat his rival less than 60 second (pic 15). Bruce Lee's victory could break stigma about racism, a respect to Chinese people rises up. After the match, Bruce meets Bill Krieger and they come up with the Green Hornet TV show.





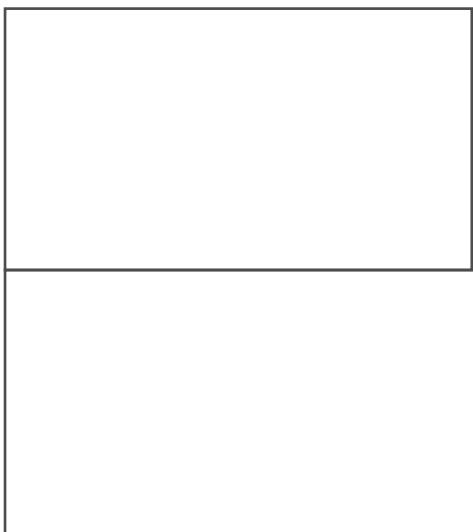
Picture 13
01: 15: 20



Picture 15
01: 20: 22

Picture 14
01: 20: 19

After that event, Bruce Lee becomes famous. His name is well-known among Americans even all the people in the world. His family life is much better since he decides to enter the entertainment world by playing in several films. All starts when Bruce meets Bill Krieger and they come up with the *Green Hornet* TV show (pic 16). Bruce lee agrees and decides to come to Hollywood in 1966 (pic 17).



Picture 16
01: 21: 37

Picture 17
01: 21: 48

In Hollywood Bruce Lee must encounter various obstacles from Europeans, because at that time the issue of race still exists and serves several obstacles in Hollywood entertainment world. Although in some films Bruce Lee's acting is always praised, he never becomes the main actor. Bruce Lee does not give up, he tries to make a scenario entitled "*The Silent Flute*". However, it is refused by Warner Brothers. Moreover, when he expresses his disappointment to his close friend, he gets a disappointing answer. In Hollywood he just wastes his time, he should get back to Hong Kong and makes a Film there, because he will not be a movie star in Hollywood. Be a Hollywood superstar is Bruce Lee's ambition, but it is useless, because he is slapped by racist sentiments malignancy in US. Finally, Bruce Lee decides to go back to Hong Kong, he realizes that in US, it is extremely difficult for the Asian star, especially Chinese people to be popular. It is great, when Bruce Lee is back to Hong Kong, people give an unexpected response to his film. They welcome him so well. His first film entitled "*The Big Boss*" is the best-selling film in Hong Kong (pic 18). Moreover, Hong Kong people are jostling, snatching the ticket to watch the film (pic 19).

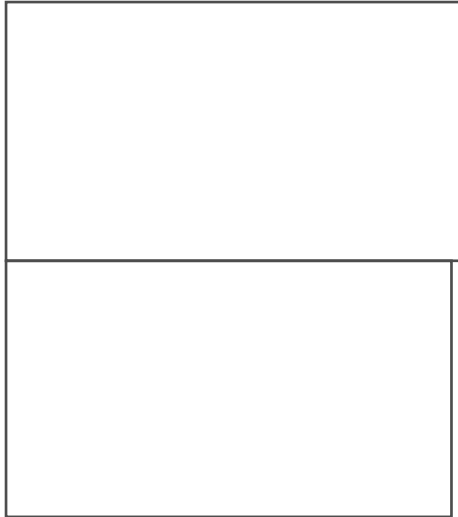


Picture 18
01: 40: 46

Picture 19
01: 43: 33

The success of Bruce Lee's acting can beat Hollywood movies that always lead the box office, and the name of Bruce Lee is more famous in the world. The Western people, that always underestimate the Eastern, now realize that there are still so many things that can be learned from the parts of the world that is considered strange. The tendency is continuing until now. They think that spiritual wisdoms can be gained from many places in Asia.

Unfortunately, Bruce Lee's career stops when he works his last film entitled "*The Game of Death*" (pic 20). He blows up his last breath while his film is unfinished, and until now the cause of his death is still a mystery. The last, he can be seen through his acting in the final shot of *Enter the Dragon*, with a voice-over by his wife informing us of his death before the movie is released (Pic 21). However, Bruce Lee becomes a person who gives an endless inspiration for many people. There is no a doubt that Bruce Lee becomes a figure who subverts American racism against Chinese people.



Picture 20
01: 57: 38

Picture 21
01: 57: 57

IV. Conclusion

From the beginning of the story entitled *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*, readers are served by the story of traditional Chinese tradition of a small family in Hong Kong. Bruce Lee, the main actor, begins his adventure in USA known as 'Superpower Country' with the complexity of ethnic identities, immigration experiences, and cultural choices. There, he faces so many troubles with Europeans and with Chinese that settle in USA.

Based on the explanation in previous part of this paper, it can drawn some conclusions that racism emerges in work field, education, personal life, and environment. Finally, the story ends with the victory of Bruce Lee that can break the stigma of racism and he can be a successful Chinese-man in USA. Race is not a valid way to classify people. People should avoid a false understanding of race, so the stigma of race can be minimalized.

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