

## THE PORTRAYAL OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION REFLECTED BY THE AIBILEEN AND SKEETER IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S *THE HELP*

Aisyah Wulandari<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>Idha Nurhamidah S.S., M.Hum

*College Language and Communication Science Sultan Agung Islamic University  
 Semarang, Indonesia*

\*Corresponding Author  
 aisyahwulandari@std.unissula.ac.id

### ABSTRACT

This study analyzed about racial discrimination topic reflected in *The Help* novel by Kathryn Stockett from Aibileen and Skeeter characters. In the past era, black people are the worst. They do not have rights like as white get. The purpose of this study was to show how the racial discrimination happens in Aibileen and her friend as a black help in the white people house.

There are some data from the novel to be analyzed with this topic. They are monologues, dialogues, and narration. Those data use descriptive qualitative technique as the method of analyzing. Collecting the data has some steps, the first is reading the novel, indentifying the data, and the last classifying the data.

This study shows that black people are the worst at that time, there were no one who can help the condition. Racial discrimination is the topic which portrayed by Aibileen and Skeeter character from *The Help* novel by Kathryn Stockett. In the pas era, black people have lot of limitation for their rights. As the result, they only can be a help as their profession for the black women. Aibileen is a black help in the white people house. She gets lot of racial discrimination in that house by her boss. In the other hand, there is Miss Skeeter. She is white people who want to help black people. She wants to change something. In the end of this study, Miss Skeeter can decrease racial discrimination that happen at that time through her book. In addition, she gets lot of bad treatment from her white friend because of her defends to black people.

**Keywords:** Race, Discrimination, Black and white people.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“We face beatings, sexual assault, wrongful arrest, or murder on a daily basis. In lieu of the birthright of equality we are marked from birth with the brand of discriminatory treatment” (Human Rights Watch World Report 1). These words are the distillation of testimony received by Human Rights Watch that reflects the reality of racism as a global ill. Racial contradiction in America becomes the main problem that caused the racial discrimination based on the skin tones.

Though, in terms of the cause racial discrimination about skin color, it happened to the African-American people that in the beginning imported to America to be a servant of white people. Then, they want the freedom and rights equalization as a human not a servant. However, the white people assumed that the black people inappropriate to have the same right with them in region of white people, “In fact, light-skinned people earn more money, complete more years of schooling, live in better

neighborhoods, and marry higher-status people than darker-skinned people of the same race or ethnicity” (qtd. In Hunter 237). Hence, it is clear that black people is being discriminated by white people because of their status.

The white people become the authorities or dominate the black people because most of the American is white people. Whereas, the black people becomes the minorities that have not the power at all. Dealing with the discrimination towards the minority in America, which is the black people, the racial discrimination defined by British Columbia. They explain that “Racial discrimination occurs when someone treats you badly or denies you a benefit, harasses or insults you because of your race, colour, ancestry, or place of origin.” (1). That discrimination puts the black people as the civil that have lower class than the white people, with the result that made them becomes the object of injustice in politic, education, job and many more. Hochschild reveals in her article, as stated:

Dark-skinned blacks in the United States have lower socioeconomic status, more punitive relationships with the criminal justice system, diminished prestige, and less likelihood of holding elective office compared with their lighter counterparts. This phenomenon of “colorism” both occurs within the African American community and is expressed by outsiders, and most blacks are aware of it. Nevertheless, blacks’ perceptions of discrimination, belief that their fates are linked, or attachment to their race almost never vary by skin color. (1)

This all leads to the fate of black people to be treated injustice considering by their history and status in society rather than White people.

That discrimination issue becomes the main topic in this study, where the discrimination happens to the black people that contain the novel *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. *The Help* is one of the novels that raise the issue of racial discrimination as the theme. As racism appears because one side is treated unequal, Benoist says that “Racism is an ideological-scientific system which divides the contemporary human species into sub-species, resulting from separate development and endowed with unequal average aptitudes” (13). Though, this racism will lead to the action while one race, that the black people are being discriminated, and the novel entitled *The Help* reflects this issue.

Racial Discrimination in 60th century lift up the simply example of a racial discrimination issue, that is racial discrimination which done by the housewife living in Jackson (the capital city of Mississippi) to their housemaids that they are black people. At that time, the black people are still reputed as the people that have lower class than the white people. Most of the people that work as the servant of white people are the black people women. In this novel a women of the whites named Skeeter get inspiration from the struggle of the blacks’ housemaids. Those housemaids raise white children and devoted their life to serve the whites. However, they still get discrimination from their employer in fact they cannot use the same toilet with their employer because the black people reputed as spreaders of disease. Connect with blacks maid, Skeeter also have a black maid that raise her from she was young. That is why, Skeeter moved to help the black maids share their good or bad experiences during they do their job as the

housemaid of the white people into a book titled *The Help*. So that they can tell their experience and feelings while becomes a housemaid of white people to the society of white people.

## **2. METHOD**

### **A. Type of Research**

Descriptive qualitative is used in this study as the type of research. This study applied of description in order to answer the problem formulation. The description came from the form of the data as narration, dialogues, monologues, and etc. As stated by Miles and Huberman, “qualitative data is usually in the form of words rather than numbers. The qualitative data are sources of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable context of words, sentences, utterances and dialogues” (45). In other word, it can be said that qualitative data deals with the meaning from the form of the data through descriptions and explanations.

### **B. Data Organizing**

#### **B.1. Data Collecting Method**

There are some steps in collecting the data; which later on, those data will be analyzed with some points that relate with the study. The steps are:

##### **a. Reading the novel**

This is the first step of collecting the data. The first step was reading the novel of *The Help* by Kathryn Stocket. In order to gain deep understanding, it need several times to read and reread the novel.

##### **b. Identifying the data**

The second step deals with identifying the data. After reading the novel, the next step tried to find the form of the data that will be analyzed with some theories that relate with the topic of the study. The form of data came from the sentences, phrases, dialogues, monologues, prologues and etc. In order to find the form of the data, it deals with the underlining the data, giving code or sign, and etc.

##### **c. Classifying the data**

This next step is classifying the data. To support this study, classifying the data deal with a table that called appendix. This table provided from of the data, pages, comments and also references.

##### **d. Reducing the data**

To focus on answer the problem formulation, relevant techniques are used; which is reducing the data means try to find the best out from many data. As a result there were some forms of the data which are not used. The significant of this reducing the data was to reduce the data from bigger to the smaller number.

### **C. Types of the Data**

In this study, types of the data are classified into two types. The first one is primary data. It means the main data. And the second is secondary data. Secondary data means supporting data.

- a. Primary data as the main data came from the object of this study. It is the novel by Kathryn Stockett entitled *The Help*. The data from the novel were sentences, dialogues, monologues, and etc that will be analyzed with theory that relate with the topic.
- b. Secondary data means supporting data. The data came from books, journals, articles, essays, and etc that related with the topic of this study.

#### **D. Analyzing the Data**

The last step of this study is analyzing the data. The data that came from the sentences, dialogues, monologues and etc will be analyzed based on the current theory. Those data would be in the appendices in the end of this study. The analyzed data would employ a descriptive technique.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Racial Discrimination Reflected in *The Help* Novel**

Black and white people often define as a real issue that appear in the past era. There is lot of discrimination that black people get based on their skin tone. This is like an irony; they live together with big separation. There is lot of rules that black people cannot violate. This issue can be found on the novel of Kathryn Stockett entitled *The Help*.

“Hilly raises her voice about three octaves higher when she talks to colored people. Elizabeth smiles like she’s talking to a child, although certainly not her own. I am starting to notice things,” (Stockett 157). In the past era, there is big separation based on human race. Black people define as the minority. They always get unlucky condition. It portrays in the Hilly character, she always treats the black people differently. She believes that they are different. They are not as beautiful as white, they are not as clever as white, they are not appropriate to get nice treatment from the white. One of the racism from Hilly is she always raises her voice higher when she talks to the black. It shows that Hilly sees the black people as a bad, dumb, and poor creature.

It is related to one of the statement of Benoist, UNESCO claims racism as theory about racial or ethnical group. It talks about the superiority and also inferiority. It may give the benefit for the majority to treats the minority differently. This theory sets that the majority can get some right to become superior in order to make separation between majority and minority based on their race. On the other hand, this separation reflects to the injustice. For instance, the majority can dominate and eliminate the minority (13).

#### **The Portrayal of Racial Discrimination in Every Setting Reflected on the Novel *The Help***

## A. Education

Racial discrimination is defined as about majority and minority. There is lot of privilege that majority get. The majority put their self as the best one. The minority cannot get right like as them, even for education.

But Miss Hilly shaking her head. “Aibileen, you wouldn’t want to go to a school full of white people, would you?”

“No, Ma’am” I mumble. “Not a school full of a just white people. But where the colored and the white folks is together” Answer Aibileen.

Hilly and Miss Leefolt look at me. I look back down at the kids.

“But Aibileen”—Miss Hilly smile real cold—“colored people and white people just so.... *different.*” she wrinkle up her nose.

I feel my lip curling. A course we different! Everybody knows colored people and white ain’t the same. But we still just people! Shoot, I even been hearing Jesus had colored skin living out there in the desert. I press my lips together. (Stockett 186)

As the majority, white people always get many privileges. They can get everything that black cannot get. White people can get the best of everything, and the black people only can get the rest. In case of education, white people believe that they cannot get lesson in a same place. This is because; they are different. They have different level of cleverness. As the result, according to the white, the black people are not appropriate to get lesson in the same place with white. As portrays in the Hilly and Aibileen conversation, Hilly wants to say that Aibileen cannot get education in the white school. Aibileen only can get the education on the same place with her race.

Hunter also emphasized because of the group separations based on the race, it puts white people at the lucky condition. They have privileges that black people cannot posses. The white people have the right for good position in the government, economy, and also educational aspects. It is quite different from the black. They cannot have those rights because of their condition (240).

## B. Public Facility

### B.1 Health Facility

In the past era, there are many rules for black and white. Meanwhile, it is not written, everybody must know about those rules.

I read through four of the twenty-five pages, mesmerized by how many laws exist to separate us. Negroes and white are not allowed to share water fountains, movie houses, public restrooms, ballparks, phone booths, circus shows. Negroes cannot use the same pharmacy or buy postage stamps at the same windows as me. I think about Constantine, the time my family took her to Memphis with us and the highway had mostly washed out, but we had to drive straight on through because we knew the hotels wouldn’t let her in. I think about how no one in the car

would come out and say it. We all know about these laws, we live here, but we don't talk about them. This is the first time I've ever seen them written down.

Lunch counters, the stage fair, pool tables, hospitals. Number forty seven I have to read twice, for its irony. (Stockett 173)

There is a lot of racial discrimination in many places. Even in the health facility, black and white have their own health facility. They have different place. As stated by Skeeter in the novel, there are a lot of rules for black people. It mentions that black people always have their place. They cannot use the white people facilities. Meanwhile it is a hospital, an urgent condition, they have rules, and black cannot use the white hospital. On the other hand, the hospital crew also will refuse the black people patient. They will have reason to avoid them this is because, they believe they are different. It will cause bad effect if they share their hospital with the black.

As mentioned by Vidal, in the case of health facility, there will be many interactions. They are the interactions that come from every people from different culture or even race. The society believes that when the black people or the minority use the same health facility with the white, it will give bad effect for that health facility. In order to solve this condition, the supervisor will try to direct the black client to go to another health facility. They do this with the reason that they do not have good experience on their health problem. It happen implicitly (12).

## **B.2 Market facility**

Rules will not consider whether it is an urgent or not. What happens in hospitals is also does in markets.

I push open the metal door, get a cart, and put Mae Mobley up front, stick her legs through the holes. Long as I got my uniform on, I'm allowed to shop in this Jitney. I miss the old days, when you just walk out to Fortification Street and there be the farmers with they wheelbarrows calling out, "Sweet potatoes, butter beans, okra. Fresh cream, buttermilk, yellow cheese, eggs." But the Jitney ain't so bad. Least they got the good air-condition. (Stockett 100)

Even in market, black and white people have their place. Their race portrays different level of everything. Black people cannot use the white market facility. Like as in this evident, Aibileen can use the white market when she wears the uniform as a help, and she brings Mae Mobley. It is in order to show that she is there because of the white people. It shows that racial discrimination happens everywhere.

Smith and Fincham pointed that, the racial discrimination in the market not only happen for the adult black people, but also it is happen to the children. There are a lot of reports from the black children. They report that become the victim of racism in the store. They are treated differently with the white children. People are not respecting the black children as good as the others. They also become the object of insult (2).

### C. Labor and Job

Black and white must be separated. It is a rule that everybody should know. For example is about profession. Black people always be minority, they cannot get a profession as white people. Black people are treated to be minority since they are child.

“Rule number One of working for a white lady, Minny: it is nobody’s business. You keep your nose out of your White Lady’s problem, you don’t go crying to her with yours- you can’t pay the light bill? Your feet are too wanted to hear it. And when Miss White Lady catches her man with the lady next door, you keep out of it, you hear me?

Rule number Two: don’t you ever let that White Lady find you sitting in her toilet. I don’t care if you’ve got to go so bad it’s coming out back for the help, you find yourself a time when she’s not there in a bathroom she doesn’t use.

Rule Number Three— when you’re cooking white people’s food, you taste it with a different spoon. You put that spoon to your mouth, think nobody’s looking, put it back in the pot, might as well throw it out.

Rule number Four: you use the same cup, same fork, and same plate every day. Keep it in a separate cupboard and tell that white woman that’s the one you’ll use from here on out.

Rule number Five: you eat in the kitchen.

Rule number Six: you don’t hit on her children. White people like to me? No ass-mouthing.” Said Minny’s mother.

“mama, I know—.” Answered little Minny. (Stockett 38-39)

Racial discrimination puts black people in the bad condition. They cannot do as much as white. This is because; the privileges are only for the white. In many places and aspects, they always are victims of racial discrimination. In the case of labor and job, like as stated in this evident, black people do not have chance as well as white. As the minority, this novel shows that black women cannot stand for good job. They are preparing for a help as their mother. This is because; their race cannot have job like as white race. That is why; young black women are preparing for a help as portray in the little Minny when she is 14 years old.

On the journal of Avery, Volpone, and Holmes stated that racial discrimination also happen in the labor and job aspect, especially for the workplace. There are lots of unfair rules. For the example is when the black has bigger chance to be penalized than their white people. And it can be said, the black employees will get much of racial discrimination during their work (12).

### D. Society Rules

White can get everything that they want as a majority. Black people cannot do like as they want as minority. Black people must understand about the position and follow the rules based on their skintone.

“I read some a that back in school, but I didn’t get to finish.” She keeps marking, stopping to think which one she wants next.

“You want a book by...Sigmund Freud?” asked Miss Skeeter

“Oh, people crazy” She nods.

“Aibileen, how long you have you been wanting to ask me this? If I’d check these books out for you?” Said Miss Skeeter.

“A while.” She rugs. “I guess I’s afraid to mention it.”

“Did you... think I’d say no?” Asked Miss Skeeter

“These in white rules. I don’t know which ones you following and which ones you ain’t.” Answered Aibileen.

We look at each other a second. “I’m tired of the rules,” I say. (Stockett 154-155)

There are a lot of society rules about racial discrimination in the past era, it can be written or not. Everybody knows that. One of the unwritten society rules is asking help. Because of their race, they cannot ask for to white people. They have to follow the rules if they do not want to get worse effect. They have to realize their certain line based on their race. That is why; they cannot ask a help to white people. It portrays in this evidence, Aibileen does not ask for help to Miss Skeeter as a white. She knows about the rules, she does not want to get into a big problem.

Sawrikar and Katz state as the majority, white people can have good power based on their race. They have big intervention in the civilization. Society pointed that; their high power cannot be modified (88).

### **E. Regulation**

Black is often defined as bad. They do not deserve to get privileges. Although it is about their safety, no one care. The white safety is more important than black.

“Things ain’t never gone change in this town, Aibileen. We living in hell, we *trapped*. Our *kids* is trapped.”

Radio man get loud again, say, “...policeman everywhere, blocking the road. Mayor Thompson is expected to hold a press conference shortly—“

I choke then. The tears roll down. It’s all them white peoples that breaks me; standing around the colored neighborhood. White peoples with guns, pointed at colored peoples. Cause who gone protect our peoples? Ain’t no colored policemen. (Stockett 196)

Because of the racial discrimination, the regulation puts black people as the unlucky race. They have to pass a lot of hard time. Black people have to realize their position and follow the rules. If there is something wrong that done by the black people, they will get bad effect. This is an evident which happens when there is a man who died because of white people. The man is a black. He shot by a gun. The condition is totally



discriminating the black. This is because; actually they know the white people who shot the black man, but, they do nothing. White policeman try to save their race. On the other hand, there is no black policeman who tries save their race. It is really show that black people are only the minority because of their race. Even for black policeman, they could not do anything to save their race.

Brown explains that regulations in the society put black people in unlucky condition. Black people realize that they are victims of racial discrimination in many places (1492).

As a black, they are educated to realize their condition. They cannot get everything they want. They must accept every rules and regulations for their live without complain. They must accept them as being the minority.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

There is lot of background that put black as the minority. It starts from the myth. A long time ago, black often define as the symbol of denial, death and relate with a night. Night is the symbol of darkness. That darkness reflects to the symbol of depression, gloom, and another bad thing. On the other hand, bad also often define as the symbol of sin. As the result, they should be on the bottom of the hierarchy. As the effect they should be treated differently from the white. The black should accept every effect from this condition. As the result, there are lot of discrimination for the black and put them on the bad condition. As portrayed on the novel of Kathryn Stockett entitled *The Help*, there are 3 major characters that reflect racial discrimination at that era. Both of them are the black. They are Aibileen and Minny who work as help for the white family. They got lot of discrimination from their job. The society does not allow black people use same facilities with the white. They cannot get education from the same school, they should have their own hospital and market, they do not have the same chance to be success as much as white people, the help cannot use the same toilet with the white an etc. There is lot of racial discrimination that happens based on this novel at that era. That racial discrimination always put the black as victim. There is no one who wants to help the black because it is too dangerous.

It shows that racial discrimination is the phenomenon that happens in the past era. There is lot of racial discrimination that put black as the victim. Black people have lot of discrimination in every setting of their life. Black children cannot get education as good as the black. Black people cannot go to the same shop with white; they have different hospital, and also orphanage for black and white, and many more. Black people cannot do anything, they can only accept it. This is because; it will be dangerous if they against their condition at that time. This is irony, they can live together, but the majority treats the minority differently.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Alhamdulillahirobbil'alamin, in the name of Allah, I would like to express my gratitude to Allah SWT whose greatest love has always given me the best of everything. Sholawat and salam to our Prophet Muhammad SAW who has brought us to the better life. And also my best advisors Mrs. Idha Nurhamidah, S.S., M.Hum, who always give

the best of everything for me to finish this final project. Thank you very much from my deepest heart for your kindness, time, guidance, motivation, and everything.

## REFERENCES

- Benoist, Alain de. What it Racism?. *Telos* 114 (1999) : 11-48. Web. 10 Nov 2017.
- Brown, Dorothy A. Fighting Racism in the Twenty-First Century. *Washington and Lee Law Review* 6.4 (2004) : 1485-1499. Web. 1 May 2018.
- “Human Rights in British Columbia: Racial Discrimination.” *BC Human Rights Clinic. BRITISH COLUMBIA*. Web. 8 Nov 2017
- Hunter, Margaret. The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality. *Sociology Compass* (2007): 237–254. Web. 13 Nov 2017.
- Sawrikar, Pooja and Ilan Katz. “Only White People can be Racist”: What does Power have to with Prejudice?. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal* 2.1 (2010) : 80-98. Web. 1 May 2018.
- Smith, Shardé McNeil and Frank Fincham. Racial Discrimination Experiences Among Black Youth: A PersonCentered Approach. *Journal of Black Psychology* (2015) : 1-20. Web. 1 May 2018.
- Hochschild JL, Weaver V. [The Skin Color Paradox and the American Racial Order](#). *Social Forces* (2007) : 643-670. Web. 10 Nov 2017.
- Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*. Rev. Ed. England: Penguin Books, 2009. Print.
- Vidal, Sherry. Racism: A Literature Review of Its Definition and Existence in Work Settings. *The Southwest Educational Research Association* (1996) : 1-16. Web. 28 April 2018.
- Avery, Derek R. Sabrina D. Volpone, and Oscar Holmes IV. Racial discrimination in organizations. *The Oxford Handbook of Workplace Discrimination (Forthcoming)* (2015) : 1-26. Web. 21 Feb 2019.
- Miles, H.B., and A.M. Huberman. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks California. 1994.