



RACIAL DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS N.W.A IN F GARY GRAY'S

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

A FINAL PROJECT

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by himself without taking the results from other research in any university, S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that he did not take the material from other publication or someone else work except for the sources mentioned in references.

Semarang, July 11th 2017

Edo Ramadhan

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*I only got one vision that's for kids in every color, religion that listen. We gotta beat the system, stay the f*ck outta prison. They try to blind our vision but we all God children, we siblings. You my brother you my kin, f*ck the color of your skin.*

---- **A\$AP Rocky, Suddenly**

When the four corners of this cocoon collide, you'll slip through the cracks hopin' that you'll survive. Gather your wit, take a deep look inside. Are you really who they idolize? To pimp a butterfly.

---- **Kendrick Lamar , Wesley's Theory**

My whole life changed when I decided.

---- **Big Sean**

This final project is dedicated to all of my family who let me do whatever I love and to my friends who will be my immortal memories.

APPROVAL
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS N.W.A IN F GARY GRAY'S
STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

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The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfection. Therefore, he will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this thesis better.

Finally, the writer expects that this thesis will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about other's perspective in viewing the world as a whole.

Semarang, July 11 2017

Edo Ramadhan

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ABSTRACT

Straight Outta Compton is a biographical movie of a hip-hop group named N.W.A, which shows the life before, between, and after the existence of the group. This final project deals with prejudice and discrimination which are experienced by N.W.A as a group and some of the members as an individual. The writer uses library research in order to collect the data from books, e-books, movie, journals, articles, and online documents. The aim of this study is to analyze the cause and types of racial discrimination which are addressed to N.W.A as a group and some of the members as an individual in the movie. The result of this study proves that N.W.A becomes the victim of the discrimination performers prejudice so, that they experience explicit, automatic, and statistical racial discrimination.

Keywords : *Straight Outta Compton*, prejudice, racial discrimination

**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS N.W.A IN F GARY GRAY'S
*STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON***

I. INTRODUCTION

United States of America is a nation of nations where each country has its own characteristics. People come to America for several reasons, they who come to America in the first wave are Aristocrat who seeks a better economy, religious men who want to get away from Catholicism in United Kingdom, slaves, indentured servant, prisoners, and Utopians. All of the American come from different places, classes, races, and religion (Whitney, 1991:3-13). Since America becomes a place for everyone from all around the world, it makes America to become a multi-cultural country. One of the ethnics who came is African American.

Historically, African American is imported to the New World as a slave by British and Spanish colonists in the early seventeenth century (Torr, 2002:13-14). Slaves were treated badly. They do not have the right of themselves as a human being. Everyone with black skin is considered as a slave including women and children. Women do not have right of their body, the master could rape her without getting punished by the government (Finkelman, 2012:112). The slaves were traded like an animal and the women also did not have rights of their children. There was no existed law which recognized Blacks as a 'people' in America then, all slaves were 'things' with no rights (2012:129).

Initially, the slaves could not do anything since they were not allowed to speak and were under the threat of getting torture by their master. After hundred of years of slavery, Black people began to create a massive revolution by establishing Black Panther Party in 1966. The killing of Black leader named Malcolm X became a trigger for the Black people to fight for their rights. Black Panther achieved a massive success in their famous ten point programs (Wei, 2004:1). However the triumph of Black Panther Party was not enough for African American people. African Americans also used other medium to express their feelings, one of them is rap or hip-hop music. Dick Hebdige explains the difference between rap hip-hop. He says that rap is music plays by DJ with MC or rapper 'singing' or like talks over a beat while hip-hop is a culture which consists of fashion, language, graffiti, and music (Hebdige, 2004:223). So, rap is the part of hip-hop and it is right if people calls rap as hip-hop. Since DJ Kool Herc's appearance in 1967 at South Bronx, hip-hop continued to grow and increase its popular as the music of African American (Forman, 2004:9). Several projects such as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's *The Message*, *Straight Outta Compton* by N.W.A and the launch of Bad Boy Entertainment in 1993 are the great representation of hip-hop development. Some of many Hip-Hop artists has held an important role not only for the culture but also for the community of African American.

In 1988, there was a hip-hop group named N.W.A (Niggaz With Attitude) in Compton, California. They are five young Black men who brought reality into hip-hop or well-known as 'gangsta' rap or reality rap. Their story is

depicted in the movie entitled *Straight Outta Compton* which is directed by F Gary Gray. *Straight Outta Compton* is biographical movie of hip-hop group named N.W.A. The group consists of Eazy-E, Ice Cube, Dr.Dre, MC Ren, and Yella. The movie begins with the personal life of the three main characters Eazy E, Ice Cube, and Dr.Dre. Eazy-E is a drug dealer while Dre is a DJ and Cube is a student. Dre and Eazy are planning to create a record label of hip-hop which talks about reality. They invite other people to help them in the studio. However, there are no artists who fit on their label called Ruthless. Finally, Eazy E who is the owner of the label raps on the song himself. By surprise, the song called *Boyz n The Hood* goes viral and the song reaches the first chart in a radio for six consecutive weeks. The five men finally form a group called N.W.A and become the number one group in that era. In the process of making their first album, they realize that they should talk about discrimination towards Black People and what really happen in the neighborhood. Finally they release the first album called *Straight Outta Compton* which is quite controversial. One of the most controversial songs is called *Fuck The Police*. They receive a lot of threat from the government and also from the people who think the lyrics are inappropriate. Years passed, the group is not in the comfortable position under the manager, Jerry. He forces the member to sign the contract without lawyer. Ice cube decides to leave the group and does a solo career. Once Cube and N.W.A jump into feud by dropping mockery tracks to each other. Not long after Cube's leaving, Dre decides to quit and create his own record label with Suge Knight. Ruthless is slowly falling since the loss of the two founding fathers. Cube and Dre achieve great

success in their solo careers. After years of break up, they are planning a group reunion. Unfortunately, the reunion has not happened since Eazy is diagnosed of having AIDS. He is unconscious for months and finally dead in the hospital. The writer thinks that *Straight Outta Compton* is a perfect depiction for this study since it shows another scope of racial discrimination in the late 80's and early 90's in the entertainment world.

In order to gather information, the writer uses a library research. The sources that the writer uses are a movie, books, journal, articles and dictionaries. The writer also uses electronic media to find the books and journal which can not be found on printed version.

Straight Outta Compton tells the audience that discrimination towards Black People happens on every aspects of life, not only in politic, office, society but also in entertainment world. This paper will show the writer's analysis on discrimination aspects in *Straight Outta Compton*. The scopes of the study in this paper are prejudice and racial discrimination in *Straight Outta Compton* movie. The aims of this study are to find out if prejudice triggers the act of discrimination and types of racial discrimination that are experienced by N.W.A as a group and some of N.W.A members as an individual.

II. ELEMENTS OF FILM

In this paper, the writer uses a movie as an object of research. Generally people define movie as moving picture that is usually displayed in cinema, television or etc. In the book entitled *Film: From Watching to Seeing*, Christopher

P. Jacob says that movies are creations, records from that era and also aesthetic composition of self-expression (Jacobs, 2001:5). From an older perspective, Rudolf Arnheim simply defines movie as an art creation like music, literature, and painting (Arnheim, 1957:8). The definition of movie by Jacobs and Arnheim is actually similar. By learning from both perspectives, the writer concludes movie as an art creation which represents the history in the plot with a touch of aesthetic composition by the maker.

Pratista says that Movie consists of intrinsic and extrinsic element (Pratista, 2008:25). There are two elements of intrinsic aspects which are narrative, and camera work. Narrative Elements are the basic elements to help us on understanding every aspects of life (Pratista, 2008:33). Narrative element is divided into theme, characters, settings, and conflict (Pratista, 2008:34). According to Pratista, these four elements are the representation of aspects of life in movie. To get a better understanding, the writer will break down each element.

The first element in narrative aspect is theme (Pratista, 2008:34).. Theme is the main ideas that created by reiteration of technical and lexical during a film (Monaco, 2000:35). If the movie tells about a couple love life, the theme is romance and when the movie shows the journey of someone life, the theme is biography even there is a love life of the character. This situation happens because the main idea or the purpose of the story is telling the character whole life not only the love life. The second element is character. James L Potter explains the definition characters which he says that characters are basic elements in literature so that they get such a substantial attention. If critics talk about characters, they

mean the figure in the work of literary (Potter, 1967:170). There are two types of characters which are major and minor. Major character is the main figure who create the story line while minor character is the supporting figure who help the major to create the story (1967:176-177). The major character holds a really important role in movie as there will be no story without character. The third element in narrative is setting. Based on Pratista, setting is the whole background along with all the attributes (2008:62). Setting is not only a place where the story takes place but also the setting of time and social environment. Setting must create a great depiction to support the story. When it comes to slavery era in America, the scene has to show South side country architecture, atmosphere, and others in order to make it as realistic as possible. The last element in narrative is conflict. According to Perrine, “conflict is a clash of action, desire, ideas, or goods in the plot of a story or drama” (1988:1408). Conflict usually happens between major character with other characters or element in his own nature. To conclude, the writer thinks that a conflict is a moment when the character faces everything that force him or her to react.

The second element of intrinsic is cinematic element. Pratista states “Cinematic aspects are the technical aspects on creating film” (2008:1). Cinematic elements consist of cinematography, sound, and *mise-en-scene* (Bordwell, 2008:120). Cinematography is a elements that is related with audiovisual technical in a film (2008:162). Cinematography is an element which relates to visual. Cinematography consists of shot angle and camera distance. Shot angle is a position of the scene is taking. The Shot angle consist of straight on, high, and

low angle. The camera distance is the length of camera takes a shot. Camera distance consists of extreme long, long, medium long, medium, medium close up, close up, and extreme close up (2008:190). The second element in cinematography is sound. The sound is the element which can be perceived through hearing sense. Sound consists of dialogue and music (2008:170). So sound is the element that relates to audio or hearing. The last cinematic element is *mise-en-scene* which deals with everything in front of the camera including setting, costumes and make up, lighting, and staging (2008:112). *Mise-en-scene* creates each scene in the movie to be more proper. Moreover, *mise-en-scene* has the strength to surpass the real conception (2008:113). In other words, *mise-en-scene* makes the purpose of entertainment will be a lot better.

III. PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination does not occur offhand. There are several factors that create possibility of discrimination acts. The most common factor is prejudice that exists in the society. Prejudice is a believed build upon amiss and inalterable conception which might be sensed or expressed and also could be addressed to a whole community, or individual since he or she is a part of that community (Fishbein, 2002:3). Fishbien explained that there are three extent of prejudice which are cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimension. The cognitive dimension is fundamental belief of a person towards group of people or individual as a part of particular group (2002:3). It might also calls as a human 'nature'. The phase of cognitive dimension is usually obtained by the parents, family, or environment. The next extent is the affective dimension. The affective dimension

deals with person feeling to react (2002:3). In this phase, a person reacts to other's attitude based on his or her fundamental belief. The last phase is called behavioral dimension. In this extent, people beliefs are connected with desire to behave in some ways. In other words behavioral dimension happens because of desire that is tempting a person to act and might lead him or her to perform discrimination (2002:4). In this paper, the writer focuses on one type of discrimination which is racial discrimination.

In the book entitled *Measuring Racial Discrimination*, Rebecca M. Blank states that racial discrimination is composed by two components which are differential treatment based on racial and caused a bad effect for one racial group and differential treatment besides racial factor that still caused a bad effect for one racial group (Blank, 2004:39). In the first component, Blank explains that racial discrimination addresses to the people based on race. For example, an African American man applies for a position in a company. He is a well-experience worker, smart student in college with 3.9 GPA, great person with good attitude. The point is he is the best among others applicants. However, the company rejects him because one unfair reason, he is Black. Blank states that differential treatment besides racial yet might cause disadvantages towards one racial group also becomes the component of racial discrimination (2004:40). It means when there is a differential treatment of something that is not race but the relationship is still quite tightly with one particular racial group. One of the most obvious examples of the second component is culture.

There are three types of racial discrimination, based on Rebecca M. Blank; they are explicit, automatic, and statistical discrimination. The explicit discrimination is “articulated the sequential steps by which an individual behaves negatively toward members of another racial group: verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attack, and extermination” (2004:56). In other words, explicit discrimination is a type of discrimination that is expressed consciously with intention. The explicit discrimination is performed through non-verbal and verbal antagonism and through racial evasion and rejection of several opportunities based on race. The second type of racial discrimination is automatic. Blank describes automatic discrimination as a “phenomenon of unconscious beliefs and associations that affect the attitudes and behaviors of members of the in-group toward members of the out-group” (2004:58–59). Automatic discrimination is the contradiction of explicit discrimination. In automatic discrimination, a person expresses the act of discrimination unconsciously with almost no intention. Automatic discrimination turns out to be subtle discrimination such as slight verbal unfriendliness. The last type of racial discrimination is statistical discrimination. Statistical discrimination happens when people who are usually decision makers generalize an individual to create a decision by judging on their race and characteristics (2004:61). Statistical discrimination disadvantages an individual because he or she may adopt or create behaviors to show that he or she is different with their averages group. An individual of particular group is disadvantaged because the decision maker does not focus on the individual capabilities.

IV. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS N.W.A IN F GARY GRAY'S *STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON*

IV.1 Explicit Discrimination

In *Straight Outta Compton* Movie, the viewers will be shown several explicit racial discrimination acts which are experienced by N.W.A as a group and some members of N.W.A as an individual. The first explicit discrimination act happens in the night at the neighborhood of Ice Cube's house. Cube is holding some vinyl records and books while makes his way to get back home after visiting his friend's house (picture 1). LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) is interrogating everyone who is at the street. Ice Cube who does not know anything also joins other African American men to getting interrogation.



Picture 1

Straight Outta Compton : 00.15.49



Picture 2

Straight Outta Compton : 00.10.00



Picture 3

Straight Outta Compton : 00:16:28

The cop who checks Ice Cube's entire body is insisting that Cube is hiding drugs by saying "Where do you get the fuckin' rocks homeboy?" and Cube replies "Not everybody's slangin' 'dope, man" (*Straight Outta Compton* , 00:16:46 – 00:16:49). From this conversation, it is right to say that the cop has behavioral prejudice towards Ice Cube based on Fishbein's theory. It says that behavioral prejudice is "the desire (of fundamental beliefs) that is tempting a person to act and might lead him or her to perform discrimination" (2002:3–4). The cop insists his false beliefs about all of African American are drug dealers by ignoring the fact that Ice Cube is just an ordinary student who does not deal with drugs (picture 2). Moreover, the cop's prejudice towards Ice Cube leads him to perform discrimination act.

The first discrimination act happens when the cops start using verbal antagonism. According to Blank, verbal antagonism "includes casual racial slurs and disparaging racial comments, either in or out of the target's presence" (2004:57). It happens when Ice Cube's parents who come over, try to defend Cube and the other guy. Her mother feels anxious and tries to tell the police that her son does not do anything wrong. Nevertheless the cop berates and threatens her by saying "Lady, I'm telling you. You get back inside or I promise you, I will ruin your fuckin' 'night!" (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:16:19–00:16:24). Ice Cube who wants to defend his mother also receives verbal antagonism. Cube says "hey you ain't gotta talk to my mom like that!" and the cop who holds him replies "shut

the fuck up! Motherfuckin' nigger!" (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:16:24 – 00:16:30) (picture 3). The explicit discrimination act is so obvious because the cops threaten Cube's mother using harm word which is 'fuck'. The discrimination act is getting more obvious when the cop uses a word 'nigger' towards Ice Cube which is a form of racial slurs.



Picture 4

Straight Outta Compton : 00.16.50



Picture 5

Straight Outta Compton : 00.16.07

The second explicit discrimination act happens when Ice Cube and other African American guys receive physical attack. Blank states that performing physical attacks based on racial is a form of overt or explicit discrimination (2002:58). The act of discrimination happens since the first time the police hold the interrogation. Ice Cube who comes out from his friend's house is directly joining the other guy for interrogation without clear basis. The policeman roughly steers Cube's body to the hood of police car. The police also tell Cube to interlock his finger by force. Cube is really in pain as can be seen from his expression (picture 4). Not only Ice Cube, there is another person who is pushed to the hood which is hot but the policeman does not care about it. The cop says "you need to stay the fuck down" and the man replies "man, this hood is fuckin 'hot" (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:16:07) (picture 5). The physical attacks by the police are

forms of explicit discrimination acts. Ice Cube and other African American men who are not guilty are treated roughly. In fact, they do not even resist. These physical attacks are classified as explicit discrimination acts as Blank explains that this type of hate crime is a result of prejudice which most likely disadvantages the target (2002:58).

These acts of verbal antagonism and physical attacks in *Straight Outta Compton* are categorized as explicit discrimination, as it is explained by Blank, Explicit discrimination is “articulated the sequential steps by which an individual behaves negatively toward members of another racial group: verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attack, and extermination” (2004:56).

IV.2 Automatic Discrimination

The second type of racial discrimination that will be analyzed is automatic discrimination. Blank describes automatic discrimination as a “phenomenon of unconscious beliefs and associations that affect the attitudes and behaviors of members of the in-group toward members of the out-group” (2004:58–59). In this context, the discrimination act does not happen because of racial reason directly, yet it is still called racial discrimination. As it is explained by Blank, the second component of racial discrimination is differential treatment besides racial yet might cause disadvantages towards one racial group also becomes the component of racial discrimination (2004:40). The discrimination is addressed to the culture of young African American culture which is rap music or hip-hop. Smith in his book entitled *Equality and Discrimination – Reconciling Theory and Law* says

that “Everything that anyone does, or believes, is ‘cultural’ in the broad sense of the word...” (2011:97). Mickey Hess in the journal called *Critical Studies in Media Communication* says that “Hip-hop’s imperatives of authenticity are tied to its representations of African-American Identity” (2005:372). It can be concluded that rap music or hip-hop as the African American identity becomes the part of their culture.



Picture 6
Straight Outta Compton : 00.17:41



Picture 7
Straight Outta Compton : 00.20:27

Automatic discrimination is performed by Lonzo. He is the owner of recording studio where Dre records a song and he also the owner of the Doo-Too’s night club where Dre plays as a DJ (Disc Jockey). The first discrimination happens when Dre does not obey Lonzo to not playing rap music in his club. Lonzo calls Dre right after the performance ended. Lonzo says “what, you trying to start a riot up in here?” (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:20:43). Based on Blank, automatic discrimination is caused by primitive anxiety and fear in their brain including negative stereotypic (2004:59). Lonzo worries because he knows that most of the visitors of his club are gang members and the lyrics of the song is quite provocative (picture 6). However he is ignoring the fact that the crowd loves

Ice Cube and Dr. Dre performance (picture 7). Lonzo's prejudice about rap music unconsciously leads him to perform automatic discrimination.

In advanced from the scene before, Lonzo continues his act of automatic discrimination. It happens when Dre asks his opinion about a song that he was recorded with Eazy-E.

Lonzo : "Sound like some waste-of-time shit to me. Look, trust me, this shit ain't gonna work, alright? You ain't gonna get no radio play with that shit right there... Y'all need to wrap this shit up too. Cause I need you to get back on that slow jam that we talked about. This whole reality of rap shit y'all trying to do. Talkin' about low-riders and jail, nobody wanna hear that shit. Now you need to get back in there and work on that slow jam that we worked on. And I'm serious"

(Straight Outta Compton, 00:33:22 – 00:33:45).

He thinks that people will never like reality rap that N.W.A is working on. According to Blank, the outcome of automatic discrimination seems quite different. It is more to favor in-group than disadvantages the others (2004:60). Lonzo's treatment towards rap music is actually does not impact the music or the group since the group reaches their success not long after this conversation. The treatment gives more advantages to the other music besides rap music because it gets more chances to be played at Lonzo's club. Therefore, Lonzo's treatment towards rap music is categorized as automatic discrimination.

IV.3 Statistical Discrimination

The last type of racial discrimination is statistical discrimination. Statistical discrimination happens when people who are usually decision makers generalize an individual to create a decision by judging on their race and characteristics (2004:61). The statistical discrimination happens when N.W.A is performing in their first show at Skateland on 1988 (picture 8). The show is organized by their manager named Jerry Heller who met Eazy-E at vinyl record factory. Jerry tells N.W.A to do their best since he invites several record labels owner to the show. N.W.A performs on the stage while Jerry is watching with three men from different record labels. The first man straightly leaves the show after he hears the lyrics that are too vulgar which sounds “if you girl kneel down and suck my dick” (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:42:16). Right after that, Jerry has a little conversation with the other one.



Picture 8

Straight Outta Compton : 00.39.22



Picture 9

Straight Outta Compton : 00.42.39

Jerry asks the label owner his opinion about N.W.A, the man says “Jerry, you’re my friend but Compton? I don’t think so. Queens, maybe. Listen if you find the next Bon Jovi, call me, okay?” (*Straight Outta Compton*, 00:44:04-

00:44:15). According to Blank, statistical discrimination disadvantages an individual because he or she may adopt or create behaviors to show that he or she is different with their averages group (2004:62-63). With or without realizing the record label owner is discriminating N.W.A. He compares N.W.A to Bon Jovi which is quite unfair since Compton does not have musician who has a big name in the world not even in USA before 1988. On the other side, there are several successful musicians from Queens who are The Ramones, Simon & Garfunkel, Louis Armstrong and several others. It is unfair for N.W.A since they are the first group who play reality rap music among any other music genre. The record label owner does not see the fact that the crowd loves the show (picture 9). Blank also states that an individual of particular group is disadvantaged because the decision maker does not focus on the individual capabilities (2004:63). The record label owner thinks that reality rap will not sell in music market like any other rap artist or music. He is obviously performing statistical discrimination by looking N.W.A as the part of 80's hip-hop not on N.W.A capabilities alone.

V. CONCLUSION

Straight Outta Compton is a biographical movie of hip-hop group named N.W.A. The movie tells the viewers about the life before, while, and after of N.W.A members. The movie shows how is the struggle of being an African American in the late 80's and early 90's. *Straight Outta Compton* wants to show the world that discrimination happened in that era.

There are three types of racial of racial discrimination that exists in *Straight Outta Compton* which are explicit, automatic, and statistical discrimination. Explicit discrimination acts happen when a cop uses verbal antagonism towards Ice Cube and his mother. The cop also performs physical attack towards Ice Cube and another African American man. Automatic discrimination happens when Lonzo discredits rap music without giving real disadvantages for N.W.A and rap music itself. The last type of racial discrimination, statistical, happens when one of the label compares N.W.A to other artists. He also looks N.W.A as a part of 80's hip-hop not N.W.A alone. To conclude, the racial discrimination acts happen because of behavioral dimension prejudice from the discrimination act performers.

This final project contains several explicit content including vulgar language, violence imagery, and potrayal of dangerous or harmful activities. Therefore the reader is must be at least 17 years old.

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