

BLACK WOMAN POSITION IN NORT AMERERICA MORRISON'S SULA

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Abstract

Sula is a novel written by Toni Morrison. In this research the writer focused on the analysis about black women position described in *Sula* novel. The aim of the research is to find out the position black women in the society in Ohio.

The writer started the research by arranging the theoretical framework and discussing the theory and approach that is used for the analysis. The writer used Socio-Historical approach. Moreover, by applying descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. The data were from dialogues and narrations and the data sources was a novel by Toni Morrison *Sula*.

By the end of this research, the writer was able to find the position of black women in society in Ohio. In finding the position of black women the writer analyzed the racial problems and class discrimination appear in the novel. The writer could conclude the position black women based on the analysis of racial problem and class discrimination, so it clearly shows the position of black women in Ohio society.

Key words: *sula, black women position, racial problem, class discrimination.*

INTRODUCTION

Being minority population in American society, Afro-America encounters various social and political conflicts and discriminations in their life. Discrimination happens toward black people because of the story in the past. The first Afro-American man and women come to America Continent was around 15th century. They migrate from Africa to America to become a slave. It happened after civil war I. Afro-American people as slaves for white people, they work in plantations because at that time, the results of the plantations is larger than the mining's. According to (Adam et al., 2020), Slaves performed all kinds of jobs within the United States of America. They worked on plantations and in the towns or cities at various kinds of occupations whether they were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. The slave labor helped to build the United States into the great country is today (Mittal & Patidar, 2019).

Enslaved African labor was necessary for the survival of European colonial economies in the Americas from the 16th through the 19th centuries. (Sari & Sukmasari, 2018). Based on quotation above, Derousselle states that African slaves have great contribution toward United States development, although they do not have skills. Afro-America at that time works for European colonial because they are immigration from Africa to America as a forced labor. African slaves help European colonial life in United states because they want to improve their living standards. Europeans colonial came to colonize the area just in South America and North America, many Afro-American as a labor in there, man or

women from African they are work as a slaves: Beginning in 1803, a series of laws known as the “Black Laws” was enacted in Ohio, in part to slow black migration. Upon entering the state, any black person was required to post bond for \$500 and file evidence of free status. (www.ohiohistoryhost.org). (Ries, 2011)(Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020) The quotation above shows that discrimination towards Afro-American happened at that time. Afro-Americans are not permitted to work unless they bring documentation of free status from the government since, slavery was illegal, the rights of Blacks are severely limited.

The limitation of rights toward Afro-American is one of the discriminations that Afro-American experienced at that time. However, the discrimination that happened in 19th century or 20th century is different, slavery issue is no longer an issue in that era. Discrimination towards Afro-Americans happen because the Whites think that Afro-American are different from them. The Whites separate their community from black people, because the whites consider Afro-American as lower class people, especially Afro-American women. To be woman; moreover, an Afro-American woman is to suffer disadvantages like racial discrimination. Disadvantages that Afro-American women experience including; different rights in using public facilities for whites and black people. Being Afro-African women make their suffer from racism: Discrimination is unfair treatment and unbalanced done to discriminate against individuals or groups, based on something, usually categorical, or unique attributes, such as those based on race, ethnicity, religion or membership of a particular social classes. (Tuhuteru, 2020). Based on the quotation above, Racism is an act of the dominant majority in relation to the weak minority, so it can be said that the dominant majority behave immoral and undemocratic towards the minority. Furthermore, discriminations also happen when individuals or groups is treated unfairly or badly, because the person is a member of particular group. A person can be discriminated by race, age, sex, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion. In this case, racism towards Afro-American women includes gender, race and sexual racism.

Sula is clearly a story about racism, even at the opening sentences, the author states that the whites farmers give a land to black farmers, and promise them a freedom. The piece of land is also given as an exchange for their daily chores. This land is situated in Medallion, Ohio. However, the offer is actually a trap to make black people develop the town. After the town has developed, the whites take over the land. The entire book revolves around two friends, Sula and Nel. Morrison even indicates that their friendship is the most important relationship in their lives.(Muzakkir & Botutihe, 2020) The story of this novel is about a black girl named Sula, she is a mature and a determined woman, especially when she faces adversity distrust and even hatred from her community in which she lives. In this novel the character of Sula is presented as a domineering female. Her intention in life is to be a free person. She refuses to take any responsibility in marriage. On the other land, Nel is a conventional lady, because her mother is also traditional lady. Sula and Nel are different from each other, but they keep their friendship. Sula is impulsive, daring, and independent. Meanwhile, Nel is obedient. She does what is expected from her. Unfortunately, even though the girls are closely bonded in their childhood, they are not really truthful with one another in their adulthood. Even though they seem to need one another, they betray each other. Sula sleeps with Nel’s husband and breaks up the marriage and Nel refuses to tell Sula that she is responsible for the death of Chicken Little. The two women are separated and mature according to their beliefs. In this case, Sula acts out her evil nature, while Nel is the picture of goodness and propriety. However, when Sula is dying, Nel visits her, not out of friendship, but because she sees herself as such a good

person. Amazingly, from her deathbed, Sula shows self-realization. She tells Nel not to be so sure of her own goodness. Many years later, Nel comes to terms with the truth of Sula's statement, spoken from her deathbed, she also realizes significance her friendship with Sula.

This novel tells the struggles of womanhood as faced by African-American women within their own community and also white community. Morrison introduces several characters inside the novel to challenge the reader to differentiate between good and evil. The characters are Chicken Little, Tar Baby, Eva, Helena, Jude, Shadrack, Plump and others. As an Afro-American female writer, Morrison offers not only insight and context from an African American point of view, but also gives a detail perspective of life, love, and community in the eyes of a Black woman. Particularly, when Sula, the female protagonist of Morrison's novel is away from home and trying to make a living by traveling around and associating with white communities. (Liu et al., 2020), (Fitri & Qodriani, 2016), (Sasalia & Sari, 2020) Although the possibilities of having equality and independency for Afro-American women in America have expanded since the publication of *Sula* in 1973, the novel reminds the readers of a time when discrimination towards these women happened. The women's liberation movement combats sexual discrimination and gains legal, economic, vocational, educational, and social rights as well as opportunities for Afro-American. They can be equal to the men. It is important for these women, and clearly important for Morrison, that the history of this struggle and the stories of these women are not be forgotten. For that reason, the writer interests to analyze the novel. The writer analysis Afro-American community especially Afro-American women position in the story and the reason why Afro-American women at that time get discrimination from white community. (Lennon, 2008), (Afrianto & Ma'rifah, 2020)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-Historical Approach

To analyze the events which are reflected in literature, the writer employs socio-historical approach as the theory to analyze data. Socio-historical must be used by the writer in doing analysis and that the result of the analysis focuses more in the aspect to the topic that wants to be analyzed. Hence in this thesis the writer applies socio-historical approach to analyze Toni Morrison novel entitle *Sula*. (Indriyanto et al., 2017)

According to (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2021) socio-historical approach emphasizes the history of literary work with the history of social. It means that there is relationship between literary work and the historical of social event. Morrison's novel *Sula* reveals the discrimination towards black women in 19th century, it happens in the past, so it can be categorized as part of history. Moreover, Yudoyono states that literary work reveals of social life and it can be analyzed from many ways. It means by analyzing *Sula*, the researcher can correlate the topic with social event in the past time (Indriyanto et al., 2017).

At the same point (Adam et al., 2020) states that socio-historical approach is an approach which applied in identifying the social, cultural, political, religious and historical dynamics that are embodied. This definition also refers to social and history, it is clear that social condition happens in the past can be analyzed by using this (Febrian & Fadly, 2021), (Booch et al., 1998). It means analyzing literary work can be using socio-historical

approach because this novel is one of the genres of literature that contains socio-historical fact. Therefore, this approach is employed in this analysis to dig out the issue of the topic discussed.

Racial Problems of Afro-American Women

In *Sula*, racism is happen in the society in Ohio. As Afro-American they get bad behave from the dominant majority in their society which is the whites, especially for women. Eventhough the whites women in the second position also, but because they are still in whites community so their position higher than black women.

Racism is a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others, a policy, system of government, etc., based upon or fostering such a doctrine; discrimination; hatred or intolerance of another race or other races. (Charlotte, 2001:1)

Based on the quotation above, it means the Afro-American get discrimination because the whites give doctrine for blacks society that they are cannot have the same position like the whites, and the whites society is more superior, because of the differentiate between the whites and the blacks. Discrimination is an act from racism itself. On the other hand, the treatment of group of the people toward subordinate group(PUSPANINGRUM, 2012),(Choi et al., 2015).

Class Discrimination of Afro-American

Class discrimination is also known as classism, is discrimination on the basis of social class. It includes individual attitudes, behaviour and practices that are set up to benefit for upper class at the expense of the lower class and to keep the position as higher position in the society(Kurniadi, Y U., 2020). Afro-American women in their society have different class from the whites. It makes Afro-American women position is under society in there. (Adam et al., 2020) The whites make an ideology to the Afro-American they are in lower class but the whites in upper class.

Categorization of groups of people into upper and lower strata, into superior and inferior, is done by those who require such categorization to maintain their power, prevent others from obtaining an equal share of resources, and sustain the myth of superiority. (Gabreya, 2003:2)

From the quotation above, it means that for keep their position in the society the dominant majority divides the class become upper and lower, superior and inferior for prevent their position, so society in the lower or inferior position will not the same treatment like the dominant majority get. (Suwarni & Handayani, 2021)This is happen in the novel when Helene and nel want to go to Nel grandmother they get discrimination in the train. Between the whites and black people chairs are separated, they cannot join each other.

METHOD

In chapter four, the writer will analyze data find to the answer of the questions stated in the research question. Reading the data, the novel written by Toni Morrison entitled *Sula* published in New York on March 1973. The writer tries to understand yhe whole story to

know the content. Finding the suitable topic is Black Women Position In North America Morrison's *Sula*. Reading the books in library and browsing from the internet and collecting them to support the data source in investigating the problem that was arranged. Selecting and underlining the data. There are dialogues and narration in the novel which can prove the topic chosen by the writer. Categorizing and arranging the quotation from dialogues and narrations from black women position based on the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Afro-American Position As Lower Class People in Ohio

Class discrimination is individual attitude and behavioral of prejudice towards a social class such as lower class, middle class, high class. Class discrimination mainly affect the lower class people. Based on Gabreya to categorize group of society based on inferior or superior and lower or upper. It means in society there are 2 class discrimination lower and upper. Lower class has influenced by the superiority of upper class. As has been explained previously, Afro-Americans are in lower class position in Ohio. This shows when Helene and her daughter want to go to Nel grandmother that sick in the Medallion. This discrimination happen in the train.

Even at that they made a mistake. Helene and her daughter entered a coach peopled by some twenty white man and women. Rather than go back and down the three wooden steps again, Helene decided to spare herself some embarrassment and walk on through to the colored car. (Morrison, 1973:20)

This shows the different facilities from the transportation in Ohio. In the train, the whites sit in the special room; meanwhile, the blacks sit in outside room. This position discriminate black society. Helene tries to come and sit in the same room as the white has. The words colored car is intended for Afro-American people. It means that there is a separation position between black women and the white society. The room that Helene is about to enter with Nel is made only for "colored skin". In this case, the room is for Afro-American only. Meanwhile, Helene has brighter skin compares to other Afro-American. Therefore, she is not allowed to enter the room.

As they opened the door marked COLORED ONLY, they saw a white conductor coming toward them. it was a chilly day but a light skim of sweat glistened on the woman's face as she and the little girl struggled to hold the door open, hang on to their luggage and enter all at once. The conductor let his eyes travel over the pale yellow women and then stuck his little finger into his ear, jiggling it free of wax. "What you think you doin', gal?" (Morrison, 1973:20)

This quotation shows that there is a different treatment between the whites and the blacks even from the use of public transportation, in this case, the train. Helene and Nel enter the place that some black men and women sit, but the conductor rejects Helene and Nel. The conductor wants Helene and Nel to move. This shows the discrimination of Afro-American in the society. During their trip to Helene's grandmother's house, Helene and Nel experienced fearful thing. It is when there are twenty white men and women sit in a coach, but Helene walks on through to the colored car. As a black woman they cannot sit there, although there is a marked COLORED ONLY, the conductor wants Helene and Nel

to move in front of a wooden seat. Colored women separated in this situation because the whites do not want the same position with the blacks especially for black women. This shows the whites get different treatment in public facilities:

So soon. So soon. She hadn't even begun the trip back. Back to her grandmother's house in the city where the red shutters glowed, and already she had been called "gal." All the old vulnerabilities, all the old fears of being somehow flawed gathered in her stomach and made her hands tremble. She had heard only that one word; it dangled above her wide-brimmed hat, which had slipped, in her exertion, from its carefully leveled placement and was now tilted in a bit of a jaunt over her eye. (Morrison, 1973:20)

Helene already tries to change her appearance, but she is still rejected in there. When the conductor comes to Helene, Helene remembers the old fears that the society do to her and her family. Helene is mother as a whore in her society, so this "gal" word make her feel afraid.

The Afro-American Women as Subordinate Position In Ohio Society

Here, in Ohio society Afro-American live in second position, because the role in Ohio at that time explains that women must act like women, they cannot act like man. Women as wives, mother, and children, means that the Afro-American women do not have superior power in society. Sexual discrimination is also appears at that time as one of the reasons why black women become the subordinate people. The subordinate position is black women's position in Ohio society. Black women cannot sleep with whites man, but it is different with black man, black man can sleep with whites women and it happens to whites man also, they can sleep with black women. Although black women in Ohio want to break the roles, but they cannot do anything.

Nel and Jude have get married and they cannot wait to have sex. This scene represents a more traditional view of sex, assume that they have not slept together yet, hence the eagerness, and it offers a stark contrast to the images of sex we see in the Peace household, even they are interested each other.

You think I don't know what your life is like just because I ain't living it? I know what every colored woman in this country is doing.' 'What's that?' 'Dying., Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world. (Morrison, 1973:143)

On her deathbed Sula expresses to Nel her thoughts about the accepted lifestyles and positions of women in Medallion. Although Nel thinks Sula should have settled down and had children, Sula takes in pride in her decision not to conform. She says that everyone is dying, but considers her route to death to be nobler than any of her peers.

They moved toward the ice-cream parlor like tightrope walkers, as thrilled by the possibility of a slip as by the maintenance of tension and balance. (Morrison, 1973:49)

The girls are twelve years old when they start walking past the men in front of Edna Finch's Mellow House, and they are experiencing the first stages of sexual awakening. They know they should not like the stares and comments they get, and they are careful to maintain the appearance of propriety, but the mere prospect of sex excites them. Here Sula and Nel although they are still twelve years old, get the sexual treatment from the way men in Ohio look at them as adult women.

CONCLUSION

This research concerns dominantly about Racial Problems and Class discrimination seen from the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison was published in 1973. Based on research question mentioned in the first chapter. How is black women position in North America portrayed in Morrison's *Sula*, therefore in this chapter, the writer tries to make a conclusion of what have been discussed, in order this research is much easier to understand (Samsudin et al., 2019) (Lina & Setiyanto, 2021). After doing the analysis, the writer concludes that there are 33 data found and categorized as black women position. Black women position in a novel could be found by analyzing racial problems and class discrimination. In the first discussion, the writer sees how the novel can describe the position of black women (Mertania & Amelia, 2020), (Amelia, 2016), (Ariyanti & Iswardani, 2020). Society in Ohio is part of black society life. The condition in Ohio is full of racism. As black society they get some discrimination from the superior majority or the whites. Racism here is reflected to the society in Ohio, especially for black women. Black women as second position as subordinate group. The black society gets discriminated toward their daily life, they get different facilities like the whites get in public transportation, that as one of the examples black society gets discriminated (Choi et al., 2015). Racial problems happen because there is racism in the society. Racism is a doctrine from the superior power for the black society that they cannot get the same power as the superior get. (Papuangan, 2018) Here in Ohio society, the whites have the full power in the society. They give an ideology to the black society that they are in lower position because their ancestors came to the United States as slaves, here as the big reason the whites discriminate the black society. Class discrimination is also known as classism, discrimination based on the basis of social class (Heri Kuswoyo & Wahyudin, 2017). As lower class society, black society must have different treatment in Ohio society. They cannot use the same facilities that the whites get, this shows the class differentiation based on skin color. Based on the result of analysis it can be concluded that black women position described in Ohio society in the novel *Sula* (Fauzi, 2015). The position is The Afro-American position as lower people in Ohio and the position is The Afro-American Women position portrayed as subordinate position in Ohio (Adam et al., 2020).

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