

## FILM: "RACISM IN FREEDOM WRITERS" INTELLIGENCE AND IMMIGRATION

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discuss racism in the film Freedom Writers (2007). "Racism in Freedom Writers (2007) Film:" is the title of the study. The main focus of "Ethnicity and Immigration" is on the racism in the movie. This study aims to provide an explanation of the racism that is present in the Freedom Writers (2007) film. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study. This study uses scenes and dialogue from the movie Freedom Writers (2007) as its data source. According to the findings of this study, eleven scenes and dialogues from the film Freedom Writers (2007) contain racist content.

**Key words:** Racism, Freedom Writers, Film, Ethnicity

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### INTRODUCTION

In culture, ethnicity is a social group that has a particular meaning (Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020), (Suprayogi et al., 2021) or position due to factors such as language, religion, customs, and so on (Samanik, 2021), (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020b), (Fakhrurozi & Adrian, 2021). A large group of people classified according to race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language (Istiani & Puspita, 2020), (Aguss et al., 2021), or cultural origin (Kuswoyo & Siregar, 2019), (Samanik & Lianasari, 2018), (Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019) or background is referred to as ethnicity, according to (Abidin et al., 2022), (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2021). Skin color, religion, group status (Suprayogi & Eko, 2020), (Sartika & Pranoto, 2021), and other factors all fall under ethnicity (Kardiansyah, 2019b), (Fakhrurozi & Adrian, 2020). Recognition of other people's group characteristics, such as similarity in culture, language, religion, behavior, and biological characteristics, is a sign of ethnic identity (Amelia & Daud, 2020), (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021), (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020a). Racism is behavioral differences (Fakhrurozi et al., 2021), (Rido et al., 2021) and inequalities based on a person's skin color, race, ethnicity, and origin that limit or violate a person's rights and freedoms (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021), (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020b), (Kardiansyah, 2019c). Racism can occur in individuals, groups, or a society (Nurmala Sari & Aminatun, 2021), (Oktaviani et al., 2022). According to (Afrianto & Gulö, 2019), racism is an ideology that is based on discrimination against a person or group of people

(Styawati et al., 2022), (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020b), because their race has even become a political doctrine (Amelia, 2021), (Puspita, 2019). Meanwhile, according to (Afrianto & Restika, 2018) the term racism is often used loosely (Aldino et al., 2021), (Aminatun et al., 2021) and without much consideration to describe the hostility (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021), (Fakhrurozi & Puspita, 2021) and negative feelings of an ethnic group or society towards other groups (Kardiansyah, 2019a), (Asia & Samanik, 2018), as well as the actions resulting from these attitudes (Kuswoyo & Audina, 2020), (Gulö, 2018).

When it comes to the United States of America, it is a federal constitutional republic with 37 states and a federal district (Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021), (Putri & Aminatun, 2021). With a population of 329.256 million people and an area of approximately 3.79 million square miles (or 9.83 million km<sup>2</sup>), America is the fourth largest country in the world and the third largest by population (Sari & Oktaviani, 2021), (Muliyah et al., 2020). It was discovered by Columbus in 1492 (Mandasari, n.d.), (Wahyudin, 2018). One of the world's most multicultural and multiethnic nations is the United States of America (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020a), (Oktavia & Suprayogi, 2021). This is because there has been a lot of global immigration. Because of this, the population of America is racially and ethnically diverse (Samanik, 2018), (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2018). Six official racial groups are recognized by the United States Census: Caucasian Americans (white people), African Americans (black people), Native Americans (Indians), Asian Americans, and Islanders (American Pacific Islanders) (Ahmad et al., 2021), (Candra & Qodriani, 2019). There are also people in the United States who are multiracial and of two or more races (a category known as "other races" that is used in other surveys but is not officially recognized) (MULIYAH et al., 2021), (Choirunnisa & Mandasari, 2021). According to (Oktaviani, 2021), the diverse ethnic composition of the United States is centered on questions of religion, allegiance, and national pride and includes indigenous peoples as well as voluntary and involuntary immigrants (Afrianto & Ma'rifah, 2020), (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). The existence of multiethnicity in the United States, two dominant races were formed, namely, the Caucasian and African-American races which are often referred to as with black and white races (Budiman et al., 2021), (Suprayogi, 2019). With the formation of these two dominant races, giving rise to a different perspective, the white race is considered a great race while the black race is considered a race that is looked down upon (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020a), (Endang Woro Kasih, 2018). Racism and discrimination

are still widespread in America (Journal et al., 2021), (Fithratullah, 2019). As for examples of discrimination in America such as black job seekers who qualified have to apply 15 times to get a job, compared with white job seekers who are only 10 times (Setri & Setiawan, 2020), (Kardiansyah & Qodriani, 2018).

Freedom Writers (2007) is a film that depicts racism and discrimination in America. Starting from the experience of Erin Gruwell who became a new teacher at Woodrow Wilson High School, Long Beach, USA. As a white teacher, Erin has to face the fact that she teaches in a multicolored class: there are black children, Latinos to Asians (Ngestirosa et al., 2020), (Nababan & Nurmaily, 2021). On the other hand, Woodrow Wilson High School at that time was in the middle of an area that became an arena of gang violence and racial tension. Cases of riots with a racial background are also no longer something foreign there (Fithratullah, 2021), (Gulö et al., 2021). Implementing the integration policy, Woodrow Wilson High School must accept students from various backgrounds (Kurniawan et al., 2018). The new policy sounds good. This is because students of various races have the same opportunity to study at the school. However, racial tensions in Long Beach made the policy backfire for the high school. As a result, Woodrow Wilson had to be thrown from the ranks of favorite schools in California.

The emergence of many fights that occurred between students due to racial differences made the teachers lose their enthusiasm for teaching. It was in the midst of such a situation that Erin had to start a career as an educator. She was given an assignment by the principal of Woodrow Wilson High School to teach the students of the new batch. This assignment made Erin witness a number of students arguing in class in the early days of her teaching. In fact, when she entered the classroom on the first day, she had already seen the fights between students. The series of events that occurred in class certainly made Erin a little depressed. However, that did not extinguish the fire of her passion for searching for appropriate teaching methods. She was also willing to run two side jobs at once to meet the needs of new books for her students. Erin made this effort in the midst of the lack of assistance from the school.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

1. **Representasi Rasisme Dalam Film *Get Out* (Studi Semiotika Rasisme Dalam Film *Get Out*) - Emerald Surya JR (2019)**

JR (2019) analyzes the representation of racism in the film *Get Out*. This film tells about the experience of a black man named Criss who carries the burden of his ancestral history and is forced to accept modern forms of racism beyond his imagination. The purpose of this research is to represent the forms of racism in the film. The results of this study indicate that there are three forms of representation of racism in the film "*Get Out*". There are black prejudice against whites, discrimination against blacks, and the change in the value of racism against blacks.

**2. Discrimination Towards African-American Women As Portrayed In *Hidden Figures* Film – Regzi Sri Haryanti, Singgih Daru Kuncara, Nita Maya Valiantien (2019)**

Haryanti, Kuncara, and Valiantien (2019) conducted a study by analyzing the discrimination problem in the *Hidden Figures* film. The purpose of this study is to reveal and explain what types of discrimination occur to the character of African-American women and to understand their response to such discrimination. The results of the analysis of this study is that there is discrimination of race/skin color and sex discrimination that occurs in the film. Discrimination in this film is done by white people against African Americans. The results of the analysis also show that initially, the victims responded to discrimination by avoiding the situation, followed by acceptance of discrimination, and ended with verbal confrontation. In the film, the analysis shows that after verbal confrontation, white people no longer discriminate against African Americans based on their race or gender.

## **METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze and discuss the data. Qualitative study is a scientific study process that is more intended to understand human problems in a social context by creating a comprehensive and complex picture presented, reporting detailed views of information sources, and carried out in a natural setting without any any intervention from the writer. Qualitative approach focuses on comprehension, description and narattive analysis

Qualitative analysis is based primarily on a constructivist perspective or a participatory perspective or both involving individual experiences. Qualitative research as “a form of

systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. Real phenomena in communities found in several studies were considered in qualitative analysis. The purpose of qualitative study is to describe, explain, and answer in more detail the problems to be studied by studying as much as possible. The data source in this study is the dialogue in the film *Freedom Writers* (2007) itself. The steps taken by the author in collecting data are watching, reading and understanding the dialogue in the film, analyzing, then making conclusions. Qualitative data consists of words, pictures, clothes, documents, or other non-numeric information”.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Freedom Writers* film was released in 2007, which was directed by Richard LaGravenese. This film is based on a true story. When there was a racial war between gangs in Long Beach, United States that made the children in the region into chaos. At the beginning of the film, we are shown with violence and riots. This is caused by the war between racial gangs. In this study, the author analyze and find data in the form of scenes and dialogues in the film *Freedom Writers* (2007) which contain racism.

### Datum 1:



**Young Eva:** *”In America, a girl can be crowned by a princess for her beauty and grace. But, an Aztec princess is chosen as her blood. To fight for her people, as papi and his father fought against those who say we are less than they are who say we are not equal in beauty and in blessing.”*

In the prologue above, Eva is at the toy store with her father. Eva was actually interested in Barbie doll, but her father gave her boxing gloves and taught Eva how to fight. The reason her father was like that was because he wanted Eva to be on par with everyone else. He also wants his daughter to be able to protect herself from others because of the racial conflict that took place in Long Beach.

**Datum 2:**



**Young Eva:** *"They took my father for retaliation. He was innocent, but they took him because he was respected by my people. They called my people 'A Gang' because we fight for our America."*

Once upon a time, Eva was getting ready to go to school, she was waiting for her father in front of their house. She smiled and greeted her neighbor who was also a Latino. But suddenly, an unknown person passed by in a car and shot her neighbor until death. Eva was surprised. Her father ran out and saved their neighbor but failed. Because of this incident, Eva's father was arrested by the police (White People) because Eva's father was considered responsible because he was highly respected by their group. Eva explains that her father is innocent, but her father was arrested for retaliation.

**Datum 3:**



**Adult Eva:** *"In Long Beach, everything is as calm as it seems. If you're Latin, Asian or Black. You risk being shot if you leave your house."*

In that prologue, Eva is walking with her boyfriend. Then suddenly 2 men got out of the car and chased them. Eva's boyfriend shoots, but someone from the same car shoots Eva's boyfriend first. Eva's boyfriend tells Eva to run.

**Datum 4:**



**Eva:** *"We fight each other over territory. We kill each other out of race, pride and respect."*

In that prologue, we can conclude that violence to murder is common in Long Beach, Los Angeles due to racial differences, pride and respect.

**Datum 5:**



In that scene, some students did not want to mingle with each other. They create groups or associations based on their race.

**Datum 6:**



**Jamal:** *"This whole damn minority room is already filled with people here."*

In the dialogue above, Jamal said this when Ms. G, a new teacher who is calling her students one by one. In that class, it is dominantly filled by black people, where we know

that black people in America are considered a minority. We can assume that Jamal feels like being in the minority is seen as an asshole.

**Datum 7:**



**Marcus:** *"White woman want to teach us about rap."*

In the dialogue above, Marcus speaks thus when Ms. G is talking about 2Pac. He seems to belittle white people because most rappers are black people.

**Datum 8:**



In the scene above, there is a paper with a picture that resembles Jamal with thick lips drawn by Tito, one of the students in that class. It was very clear that he insulted Jamal's race and physique, who is a black person, where most black people have a characteristic that is thick lips.

**Datum 9:**





**Ms. G:** *"So what you're saying is, if Latinos aren't here, or Cambodians, blacks, whites or whoever they are. If they weren't here, things would be better for you guys, don't you think?"*

**Students:** *"Of course it would be better!"*

In the dialogue above, it can be interpreted that they feel their race is the best so that if other races do not exist it will be even better.

**Datum 10:**



**Eva:** *"White people always wanting their respect like they deserve it for free."*

**Eva:** *"It's all about color. Its about people deciding what you deserve, about people wanting what they don't deserve, about whites thinking they run this world no matter what. You see, I hate white people."*

In the dialogue above, we can know that Eva really hates white people. The reason Eva hates white people is because she is traumatized by the police (White People) arresting her innocent father. This trauma made her hate all white people because she thought that white people could do whatever they wanted.

**Datum 11:**



**Victoria:** "When I asked another honors teacher why we don't read more black literature, he said "We don't read black literature because of all the sex, drugs, cussing and fornication!" I thought a simple "It's inappropriate" would have sufficed."

In the dialogue above, Victoria asked Ms. Campbell to change her class from the old class to Ms. G class. She told Ms. Campbell that teachers treat her like a Rosetta stone to African Americans. Victoria also explained that in her class they never read about black literature because the teacher assumed that all black literature was only about gender, drugs, sex, swearing and obscenity. We can see how a teacher (White People) can be so racist to his students in class.

## CONCLUSION

The author discovers numerous racist scenes in *Freedom Writers* (2007) after analyzing and discussing the film's issues. In this film, White People, Black People, Latinos, and Cambodians are the four predominant racial groups mentioned. Students at this school continue to experience and feel the hatred that is the root of this racism.

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