

# THE ROSA PARKS STORY'S DEPICTION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE FILM

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## Abstract

The Rosa Park Story (2002) film's depiction of social inequality between black and white people is the focus of this study. The researcher analyzes the issue in the film using descriptive qualitative and Barthes' Semiotic theory in the study itself. The writer used a number of scenes, dialogue, and camera angles from this movie as a data primer. The researcher deduced from this that black people face three forms of oppression: they are denied access to potable water, they are denied special bus seats, and they are denied the right to vote. As a result, the researcher can draw the conclusion that the film depicts social inequality in the form of a lack of access to public transportation, public facilities, and political power.

**Key words:** social inequality, semiotic study, sociology research, black people's life

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## INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the products of popular culture that can still be interesting to study using a variety of methods (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021), (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021). Film is both entertaining and instructive as a literary work (Asia & Samanik, 2018), (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, 2018). (Amelia & Daud, 2020) is an example of a movie that not only entertains viewers but also teaches them something relevant through its plot. Additionally, according to a number of psychologists, films have a number of positive effects on the audience because of the cognitive ability of humans to see moving images (Puspita, 2021), (Gulö, 2018a). This means that films have a greater impact on audiences (Oktavia & Suprayogi, 2021), particularly in shaping opinions and perceptions (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020a), (Afrianto & Restika, 2018). The knowledge presented in the film shapes opinions and beliefs (Hutauruk & Puspita, 2020), which are then incorporated into the plot, which takes into account the distinct characteristics of each genre (Kuswoyo & Audina, 2020), (Qodriani & Kardiansyah, n.d.). According (Puspita & Amelia, 2020) "The study of film is considered the development of a new form in understanding human life." As a result, analyzing film is not an easy task (Aminatun et al., 2021), (Mandasari & Wahyudin, 2021). Based on this, research on film could touch on basic human life (Lestari & Wahyudin,

2020), (Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019). As for this study, researchers are going to analyze a movie entitled the Rosa park story (2002). The film is directed by Julie Dash and a film script written by Paris qualities (Suprayogi, Pranoto, et al., 2021), (Samanik, 2021). This account takes the setting for 381 days of the bus boycott in Montgomery, from 1955 to 1956 (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020). As for its entry, the film contained a character named Mrs. Rosa Louise Mc Cauly parks, which would provide the perpetrators (Mandasari, n.d.), (Pradana & Suprayogi, 2021). The story is, that Rosa was an ordinary working woman in a conversion company (Aguss et al., 2021), (Suprayogi, Puspita, et al., 2021). She has a husband named park who is concerned about the civil rights struggle for black people in America (Budiman et al., 2021). However, her husband did have skepticism about one of the agencies that were there, which was the one where his wife would work as a volunteer secretary (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020b), (Kuswanto et al., 2020). From there the story moves with a backward-flow flow, as the story in the film is told of Rosa's adult as well as Rosa's past (F. M. Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). However, this film story clearly shows a picture of American life in the early '50s, mainly on black people's civil rights movements, especially Negro people (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020b), (Afrianto & Gulö, 2019). The film ended with a trial accusing Rosa because she refused to give a white citizen a seat (Pratiwi & Fitri, 2021), (Fakhrurozi & Adrian, 2021). Thus, it needs to be pointed out that the film shows that there are differences or inequalities that occur between white people and black people (Suprayogi, Samanik, et al., 2021).

This film tells the story of Rosa's adulthood as well as her past (Mertania & Amelia, 2020). However, the narrative of this film clearly depicts American life in the early 1950s, focusing primarily on the civil rights movements of black people (Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021), (Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020), particularly Negroes (Arpiansah et al., 2021). The movie came to an end with Rosa being tried for refusing to give a white citizen a seat (Pranoto, 2021). As a result, it is necessary to point out that the film demonstrates that white people and black people experience differences or inequalities (Nurmalasari & Samanik, 2018), (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020a). According to (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018), this treatment is consistent with the belief that white people are superior to black people. In the meantime, (Sartika & Pranoto, 2021) define social inequality as citizens' access to a variety of resources, public services, and locations. These resources may include things like food, housing, education, health care, business opportunities, and basic

necessities (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021), (Istiani & Puspita, 2020). There may also be secondary concerns, such as gaining access to public services, exercising one's right to vote, participating in public rights, advancing one's career (Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020), (Gulö, 2018b), and so on. In terms of how we approach the problem, we employ a wide range of lenses, from character psychologists and sociology of character to the writer's influence on the film (Agustina et al., 2021), (Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019). As a result, researchers employed one strategy in the study: sociology of literature. According to (Oktaviani et al., 2020), the sociology approach focuses on how individuals interact with the culture, politics, and economics of their surroundings.

Because the object of this research is a film, the researcher also needs other tools to analyze it. Therefore, in addition to the sociology literature approach, the researcher also uses a knife of Semiotics analysis from Barthes which divides the interpretation of the data into two significances, namely denotation, and connotation. Regarding these two terms, in short, the denotation is interpreted as the actual meaning (literal) (Qodriani, 2021), (Endang Woro Kasih, 2018), while the connotation is interpreted as a hidden meaning (non-literal) (Journal et al., 2021), (Fithratullah, 2019). This theory is used by researchers to reveal scenes from the side of the true meaning and the meaning that is hidden or inserted and cannot be read directly (Setri & Setiawan, 2020), (Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020), (Hamzah et al., n.d.). From these two theories, the researcher has one research question, namely: How is the portrayal of social inequality among black and white people occur in *The Rosa Park Story* (2002) film? This question is the main basis for this research. Researchers will conduct research to answer it. Meanwhile, as a research objective, this study aims to show historical fragments that have occurred in America and are related to the civil movements in black society. This issue is still relevant today because there is still racist treatment as a result of social inequality between black and white people.

Therefore, it is hoped that this issue will continue to be discussed and disclosed by researchers and other readers. Considering that this issue is still not widely known by many people and public awareness has not yet been fully formed, the researcher hopes that this research can provide new perspectives and teaching values for the wider community. Humanitarian issues will continue to be discussed and discussed, before finding a solution. However, before reaching the search for solutions, researchers believe, we need awareness and concern that must be grown. Therefore, the researcher took film as the object of

research by considering that film is a product of popular culture that is close to people's lives today. Thus, the wider community can stay away from the objects and issues in this research.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literary sociology as a whole serves as the basis for the research (Suprayogi, 2019), (K. Sari & Pranoto, 2021), (Samanik & Lianasari, 2018). The researcher looks at how the character interacts with the social circumstances that surround him or her. The researcher chooses to focus on the problem of social inequality in American society as the topic of study. This problem refers to boundaries that lead to social inequalities between black people and white people. More specifically, the events depicted in the film *The Rosa Park Story* in the early 1950s form the basis of this issue. The researcher, on the other hand, looks at previous studies that are closely related to these works and issues before continuing research on this topic. Poppy Khairunnisa and Bima Prana Chitra's study, which looked at how the main characters in the movie *Parasite* were affected by social inequality, was the first study that the researchers looked at. The title of the study is "The Influence of Social Inequality on the Character Kim Ki Taek on the *Parasite* Film." Self-reactions to the character's social situation, descriptions of social inequality (Amelia & Dintasi, 2019), (Ngestirosa et al., 2020), (Nababan & Nurmaily, 2021), and social inequalities that shape a moral character are the three main components of the research (Fithratullah, 2021), (Gulö et al., 2021). According to these two researchers, the protagonist was born into a poor family (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021), (Afrianto et al., 2021), which contributed to his social inequality (Samanik, 2018), (Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020) due to his lack of a solid job and adequate education (Qodriani & Wijana, 2021).

Meanwhile, the researcher also saw another study conducted by Kristin Lusiana and Bima Prana Chitra which discussed the picture of social inequality in the film *The Miracle Cell* in 7. In the study, they underlined that the inequality that separates social classes also creates a social sphere in which people from the proletariat cannot show certain things to the bourgeoisie. This study concludes that even though the main characters in the film have physical and social limitations, they continue to live.

Finally, the researcher also reads the research conducted by Nor Holis and Ratna Asmarani which examines the description of the struggle of a black girl named Skeeter in the film

The Help. The research is entitled Skeeter's Struggle for Life Equality of Black Women in The Help Film (2021). The two researchers found that Skeeter's character had difficulties in her struggle to give black people a good life. This is because there is social equality between white and black people. The struggle is also based on his childhood experiences related to the injustice and social inequality that occurred around him. Skeeter does some things that are socially inclined, despite the hardships and challenges she faces. Thus, Skeeter's struggle is more of a struggle for the social life of black people.

Based on these three studies, this study was written to complement research with similar issues or themes. This research will complement Kristin and Poppy's research in terms of describing the unfair life in certain societies, especially social inequality, and how the people in it can be affected. From that influence, this research is close to the research conducted by Nur and Ratna, which underscores the struggle of one black citizen triggered by the injustice they experience. Thus, this research will reveal a picture of social inequality along with what things affect the character as a representation of injustice in the real world.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. This method is a method that describes and analyzes phenomena, events, social activities, beliefs, views, and thoughts both individually and in groups. In addition, this study also used a qualitative approach that focuses on comprehension, description and narrative analysis. In its application, the researcher also uses Barthes' Semiotics theory to analyze the scene data taken in this study. With these theories and methods, the researcher first watched the film The Rosa Park Story to the end, then marked and took scenes that contained important things related to the issues the researchers raised, then explained them in the discussion section. That way, the main data that the researchers took in this study came from a series of fragments in the film, including camera angle, dialogue, narrative, music, and so on in the film The Rosa Park Story. Meanwhile, for secondary data, the researcher draws from books, articles, and other writings related to films and the issues that the researcher will discuss.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study found several findings related to the picture of social inequality between black and white communities in the United States. The picture is shown in the scenes in the film

The Rosa Park Story. The image relates to a public service that cannot be used by everyone, regardless of whether they are black or white. In fact, public services are an important buffer for people's lives in America. However, the situation at that time still showed the existence of social inequalities that made black people distinguished, restricted and oppressed both subtly and roughly. The following is a complete description of these social inequality scenes:

### **Black People Are Prohibited from Accessing Drinking Water**

Minute 21:45 - 22:35



One of the public services that exist in parks in the United States is a drinking water faucet. This drinking water is provided by the government for residents who want to wash their faces, wash their hands, or drink the water directly. In the picture below, it can be seen that young Rosa is prohibited from accessing the drinking water service. He and his friends are described as being chased away by white men. In fact, when the man had finished drinking, he allowed his dog to drink the same water. Meanwhile, Rosa and her friends are not allowed.

The denotation of the scene indicates that there are restrictions related to race or skin color that prevent certain citizens from accessing the public services provided. Meanwhile, the connotation of this scene indicates that the self-esteem of black citizens is lower than that of other citizens. In fact, the depiction of a man who allows his dog to drink drinking water becomes a symbol that black people's self-esteem is lower than animals. This indicates that at that time, black people were not considered as human beings with dignity that deserved to be respected and appreciated. They are excluded and become marginalized citizens who

are not treated properly. From this scene, it is clear that they are considered unequal because they cannot access water services freely.

### **Black People Have Special Seats on Buses**

Minute 27:19 - 27:38



Another social inequality depicted in this film relates to the service between buses. At that time, buses became an important means of transportation in the United States, especially in the city of Alabama. The bus is also important transportation for Rosa's character. As depicted in this scene. The denotation of the scene depicts the character of Rosa who comes home late at night and is about to board the bus. It was raining heavily that night, so he waited for the bus. However, when he entered the bus, he sat in a seat that he shouldn't have. The bus driver kicked Rosa out and asked her to get off the bus, Rosa moved from her seat, then moved to the seat in front. As she sat there, one of the passengers refused to be near Rosa, because of the color of her skin. At the climax, the driver drove Rosa again. He asks her to get off the bus. After he got off, Rosa's umbrella got stuck in the car door, but the driver kept driving and damaged Rosa's umbrella. Rosa came home soaking wet.

Meanwhile, the connotation of this scene depicts that Rosa as a black citizen becomes a victim of discrimination from white citizens. As described in the bus, the seats are assigned according to their skin type. It can be understood that black citizens are still differentiated, their lives are set aside, and their access to public services is also restricted. In addition, this scene emphasizes that they are not equal to the majority of Americans (white people). Their lives are limited not only to access to public services but also to receive racial treatment from other citizens. This scene illustrates that they are not valued as equal human beings.

## Black people have difficulty getting the right to vote

Minute 41:20 - 42:46



Another form of social inequality is in the following scene. The denotation of this scene depicts the story of Rosa who wants to register as a voter in the general election. Before voting, Rosa first filled out a list of questions as a prerequisite as a potential voter. The officer asked him to fill out a list of questions related to general knowledge of America. The question relates primarily to the knowledge of the identity and politics of the United States government. However, Rosa did not pass the first try, she failed to take the test. Another day, he returned to take the same test, and he failed again. Rosa realized that she was deliberately not passed, so she did not give up. Moreover, he was disappointed after seeing white people easily get a chance when registering at the same counter. Thus, from the connotation point of view, this scene illustrates that black people still experience different treatment regarding their civil rights. They are still seen as “the others”, others, marginalized, whose rights are not considered by the majority of people in America. This makes it difficult for them to fulfill their rights.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher comes to the conclusion that The Rosa Park Story depicts social inequality between white and black people. Social inequality can be broken down into three categories: Black people have a hard time getting the right to vote, they can't drink water, and they have to sit in special places on buses. These three factors emphasize that black people continue to be subjected to racial discrimination as a result of social inequality. Their freedom of movement is restricted, their self-worth is diminished, and their rights are not taken into account. The civil rights movement that took place in the early 1950s was sparked by this.



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