

Combatting Racial Discrimination Against African Americans in the Film 'Just Mercy'

Siti Maimunah¹

¹Universitas Pamulang

¹Email: maimunah@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is entitled "The Resistance of Racial Discrimination Against Afro-American People in Just Mercy Film". The object of this study is a film entitled Just Mercy (2019), written and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. This film tells the story of how a young attorney who graduated from Harvard Law School named Bryan Stevenson tries to solve the case of Walter McMillian and tries to save him from the death penalty that he will get because of false accusations. The writer focuses on racial discrimination against the black community but mainly Walter McMillian and Bryan Stevenson. The purpose of this study is to explain how racial discrimination occurs to the characters and how they deal with it. Walter McMillian is a black man who is set to get the death penalty for a crime he does not commit. Bryan Stevenson is a young lawyer who helps Walter McMillian to solve his case and uphold justice. In collecting the data, the writer used qualitative methods to find racial discrimination. This study uses the theory of Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (1995) which explains about discrimination and racism. The results of the study show that Afro-American characters receive discrimination in the field of law carried out by the authorities which all of them are white. However, Afro-American characters fight against the discrimination they have experienced until finally they get the justice they have been fighting for.

Keywords: *injustice, law, racial discrimination.*

A. Introduction

Discrimination is the act of treating each individual differently from other individuals because of differences in gender, race, nationality, etc. (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995). People may experience discrimination based on their race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, height or weight, ethnicity or nationality, and physical disability, among other categories. In this modern era, discrimination still happens everywhere and that is one of the reasons why there are still many literary works that represent this issue which aim to build public awareness that in this era, racial discrimination should no longer be carried out because it is very detrimental to people who are discriminated against.

In the years leading up to World War II, racial discrimination was a part of everyday life for many people in the United States. The rights possessed by blacks and whites' people are very significant and that is very detrimental to Afro-American people because they do not have permission to do and have some things that white people have, therefore there is no freedom in their lives.

In relation to this, Delgado and Stefancic (1995) state that:

A few scholars address issues such as housing segregation in terms of both race and class, showing that black poverty is different from almost any other kind. Real estate steering, redlining, and denial of loans and mortgages, especially after the end of World War II, prevented blacks from owning homes, particularly in desirable neighborhoods. (p. 108).

For most African Americans, even the most basic of rights and services are fragmented or denied altogether. To be Afro-American means knowing the limits of freedom and being excluded from the opportunities, equality and justice on which the nation is founded. African-Americans living in the United States cannot be equated with the equality of white people, they seem to have the lowest position among other races, especially White/Caucasians. African-Americans are looked down upon by white people, starting from their education, in school and even in the workplace. People of color have shorter lives than white people because they receive worse medical treatment than people of other races, and have a lower level of education, therefore, so many of them have menial jobs (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995).

On the other hand, white people have a much better life than Afro-American people, in everything, such as education, health insurance, and jobs. They have many privileges that can make their lives easier in achieving what they want and their human right. According to Peggy McIntosh (as cited in Delgado & Stefancic, 1995), white people have many privileges that black people do. They have more than fifty privileges that they can enjoy in their daily life and also can make their life easier, all the privileges they have is because of the color of their skin.

Racial discrimination can be seen in how police officers treat Afro-American people. African-Americans are more likely to be pulled over and get fatally shot. This happens because many people feel threatened by black people, they think that black people will do something evil so they can act as they wish with the excuse of protecting themselves. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1995) the majority of people who are imprisoned are Black and Brown, while the high-ranking professions or prestigious professions are usually owned by white people, such as doctors, surgeons, chief executive officers, etc. This case occurs because of the difference in social inequality between white people and Afro-American people. The education that white people have is higher than Afro-American people, it's also because there are still many people who believe that Afro-American people are a threat to other races, especially Caucasians. This is also because of how people describe the meaning of black and white. White has always been a symbol of purity, goodness, sincerity, and beauty, but black is used as a symbol of evil or something negative, for example, in the word "blackmail" which has the meaning of forcing other people to give something they want in a threatening way, which is a bad deed. The semantics of popular culture frequently equate white with virtue and innocence. On the other hand, black frequently evokes associations with evil and danger because it represents darkness (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995).

Considering the high resemblance between literature and human nature, this incident occurs in a novel like the one in Angie Thomas' novel *The Hate U Give*. There are many cases that represent racial discrimination that happen in real life, however, not all cases are known by the world. The case of George Floyd is one of the cases that went viral in 2020. George Floyd was a 46 years old Afro-American man who died because he was murdered by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, who knelted on Mr. Floyd's neck and pinned him to the floor

and Floyd's heart stopped while he was being detained due to a mistake he unconsciously committed. However, the police officer did not want to hear a single word come out of Mr. Floyd's mouth, the last sentence that came out of his mouth was "I can't breathe!". The last sentence that came out of his mouth was used as the most famous expression and used by people when protesting asking for justice for his death and also used it to describe what Afro-American people have been feeling, their lives are strangled by white people until they can't get freedom in their life.

In this study, the researcher is interested in analyzing a film entitled *Just Mercy* which was released in 2019 and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. The film is inspired from a book entitled "Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption" written by Bryan Stevenson and published in 2014. "Just Mercy" film tells a story of a young defense attorney, Bryan Stevenson who represents poor people on death row at the W.C. Holman Correctional Facility, Alabama. Bryan tries to help the prisoners and one of his clients is Walter McMillian known as Johnny D, he is accused of being the murderer of an 18 years old white girl. The researcher will try to analyze how racial discrimination occurs in the "Just Mercy" film. *Just Mercy* is a film that pictures about how the injustice experienced by the poor African-American prisoners on death row. Injustice is an action that reflects a discrimination, especially when this action is experienced by a minority group. There have been several studies that analyze the issue of racial discrimination, however, in this study the writer only uses three studies.

The first related study entitled "Racial Discrimination As Seen In *The Help* Film By Tate Taylor" by Noviyana Rusnanila (2019) from UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. This study focuses on analyzing racial discrimination that is experienced by the main characters in a film entitled *The Help*. This study tells about how black maids who work in white people houses and get discriminated against. In this study, the writer analyzes several types of discrimination experienced by the main characters and several levels of racial discrimination. The types of racial discrimination experienced by the maid are divided into two, personal and institutional. In addition, the main character, Aibileen, experiences racial discrimination verbally which occurs when white people use words that offend Aibileen. Then the second level is segregation which occurs everywhere, schools, hospitals, etc. This study also analyzes the causes and impacts of racial discrimination which aims to tell readers how bad the impact is felt by someone who is discriminated against. This study uses descriptive qualitative method and uses a theory entitled "Discrimination comes in many forms" (1996) by Fred, L. Pincus. The result of this study is racial discrimination is explained by the type and level of discrimination. The discrimination experienced by the main characters occurs by verbal and segregation. In the end, the main characters are able to write the story, she publishes the book and it becomes a best seller book that is in great demand by both black and white people.

The last related study entitled "Racial Discrimination Issues As Show By Solomon And Patsey In *12 Years A Slave* Movie" by Julan, Surya & Valiantien (2021) from Mulawaman University. The aim of this study is to analyze the racial discrimination experienced by the main characters. The object used in this study is a film entitled *12 Years A Slave*. In this study they concluded that two characters named Solomon and Patsey experience five types of discriminatory behavior. This study uses descriptive qualitative method and uses Allport's theory about intentional, explicit discrimination (2008). The result of this study is five types of discriminatory behavior experienced by Solomon and Patsey are verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attacks and extermination.

According to the related studies mentioned above, all studies have similarities and differences. The similarities are all studies share the same topic of analyzing racial

discrimination and use the same method, the descriptive qualitative method. Moreover, the first and the third related studies used film as the object for analysis, which is the same as in this study, while the second related study used novel as the object. In contrast, the differences between three related studies above and this study is the theory used. The theory used by the first and second related study is "Discrimination comes in many forms" (1996) by Fred, L. Pincus. The third related study used Allport's theory about intentional, explicit discrimination (2008), this study used "Critical Race Theory: An Introduction" (1995) by Delgado. R & Stefancic. J.

As already mentioned in the background of the study, the writer choose to analyze the issue of racial discrimination in a film that was released in 2019 entitled *Just Mercy*. In this session, the writer explains several theories that are related to this study and used in analyzing a film because there are several different things in analyzing a written literary work and a film. In analyzing a film, not only analyzing the issues in the film but also narrative elements and cinematography.

Film is a literary work that presents a story by displaying moving images that are usually shown on television or cinema. The origin of the creation of film is when people want to document some important events and document it by taking pictures. According to Barnouw (1993, p. 3) there are many who are interested in making films, one of which is scientists who have an urgent need to document events or actions. Back then, people photographed the ongoing events so that every photograph they got had a difference in each photo because what they photographed was a moving object. Several photos are combined to form a short film. Barnouw (1993, p. 21) explains that the short films that were created had an increase in duration over a period of several years, at first the duration of the short film was only one to two minutes long, but due to improvements in the equipment in filmmaking, the duration is getting longer, to five to ten minutes. In this modern era, the duration of film usually reaches to one hour or even two hours, due to increasingly sophisticated film-making equipment.

Film is one of literary works that is desired by the public, particularly in our modern era where technology is getting more advanced and making it easier for people to see and enjoy films from anywhere. Film and other written literary works like prose, novel, poetry, etc. share similarity called narrative elements, however the difference between all of them is that film has cinematographic elements. There are certain genres of film, science-fiction film, the action picture, the comedy, the romance, the musical, the Western-these are some genres of fictional storytelling cinema. The word "genre" originally came from French and means "kind" or "type" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2006, p. 318). Genres also change over time, as filmmakers invent new twists on old formulas.

There are two types of film, non-fictional and fictional film. A non-fictional film is a film made based on facts or real events experienced by someone. One type of non-fiction film is a documentary film. Bordwell & Thompson (2006) explain that documentary films are one type of films whose contents are factual original events so that they can be trusted because documentary films have evidence of facts in them which are displayed in various ways, such as showing photos, etc. so that the documentary can be trusted. However, there are some documentary films that are made into fiction films, this happens because there is a change in the storyline, the storyline can be added or even reduced and replaced with some scenes that did not actually happen. There are three types of documentaries: compilation films made by assembling images from archival sources, direct-cinema documentaries typically record events that are taking place as they occur, nature documentaries are films centered on scenes from the lives of interesting people.

On the other hand, fictional film presents stories made using the imagination of the creator, the events in the film are not real events. In addition, fictional films create and present the characters, setting of place and time that suit the imagination of the creator (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 341). However, fictional films do not mean completely unrelated to a reality or events that can happen in everyday life, because many fictional films are inspired by someone's daily life. Fiction films are designed and planned and rehearsed and then filmed.

Racism is a belief that is believed that humans are divided into several biologically known races. Race is the difference between a person and people from other races which can be seen from their physical appearance, for example, such as skin color, hair, eye shape and color, etc. These differences are the reason why someone is bullied, exiled, treated badly, because it is believed that these differences can affect the ability of the person. In fact, racism is more than just having a bad impression of a group against other groups, but racism is a way of society to distribute privileges and status to certain groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995, p. 17). Racism is not an easy problem to deal with which can be seen how racism still occurs in everyday life. There are some minority groups who are treated unfairly or unequally to the majority group because of the differences they have, not only that, but racism also has a great effect on their rights or privilege and status. Minority groups usually have fewer rights to speak and their voices are not heard.

According to Junco (2018) there are 4 types of racism: the first type involves humanity's explicit rejection of racial minorities. The second supports formal equality and denies the legitimacy that would reduce racial inequality and enforce policies in racially different ways such as by explicitly stigmatizing members of racially subordinate groups. The third type of racism is a racially harmful act motivated by implicit bias or prejudice. The fourth is racism that occurs by borrowing a philosophical term of art for conscious actions towards better and more sincere judgments.

Racism does not only occur to whites and blacks but also to Asians because Asia is also considered a race. According to Delgado & Stefancic (1995) race is African American, while Asians and Latinos are minority groups who are treated the same as blacks or African Americans. A minority group is a group that contains far fewer members than the majority group and has differences such as race, status, culture, etc. Being in a minority group means having a different human right from the majority group because of their differences and being very vulnerable to discrimination from other groups. Minority group members will have a hard time when they want to take and use their rights and when they are oppressed by the majority group, they will usually just accept it because they know otherwise there will be no point in resisting because there are fewer of them than the majority group. Communities of color experience revocation of rights caused by their status as a minority (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995, p. 115).

Racism is something that still happens very often even until today even though not as often as in the past. However, it does not rule out the possibility that discrimination still occurs every day, it's just that the case is not known to many people so that the case will just disappear because no one cares about it or the society think that racism is a normal thing, and the worst is that some people use racism as a joke. According to Delgado & Stefancic (1995, p. 10) racism is less common today than in the past which can be inferred that racism has been much worse in the past few decades that it is now. This occurs because people are becoming more and more educated, which encourages them to be open-minded and eventually make them able to tolerate one another's differences. However, this does not ensure that racism will never occur again.

The recent case that went famous is called BLM (Black Live Matter), BLM is a social movement carried out by the community that aims to fight discrimination and racism such as injustice that has been experienced by black people for many years. They protested which aimed to ask for justice that they had never received. In this case it can be shown that racist people not only show their racist nature through oral but also by their act. Racism can not only hurt them mentally but also hurt them physically. As in the BLM movement which was created because of the brutal treatment of the police which caused the death of several black people which that hurt the victims physically and also hurt the family, friends and community of the victims mentally.

In order to analyze the racial discrimination that exist in “Just Mercy” film, this thesis used a theory entitled *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* theory (1995) by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. This theory explains about racial discrimination and also explains how a person is discriminated against because of many factors such as race and more. This theory explains about how the life of "coloured" people who have different privilege from white people which is extremely similar to the conflict in the “Just Mercy” film, in which Afro-American people are not given the same rights as white people and are unable to receive the justice they deserve due to the color of their skin or race.

The discrimination described by Delgado & Stefancic in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* occurs in “Just Mercy” film. The discrimination that experienced by the main characters in “Just Mercy” film is injustice, they do not get a chance to prove their innocence and even though they try to defend themselves, it will be useless because no one will hear and believe them. As Delgado & Stefancic explained in his book that the prison population is mostly black and brown, this is because black and brown people are always considered dangerous and believed to be more likely to commit crimes than white people.

A theory entitled *Film Art: An Introduction* (2006) by Bordwell & Thompson used in this study to analyze a film and its cinematography such as *mise-en-scene*, camera angles and camera shots. Another theory used in this study is a theory entitled *An Introduction to Literature Fiction, Poetry and Drama* (1961) by Barnet, Burto & Cain to analyze the narrative elements.

B. Method

Qualitative approach applied in this study. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not deal with numbers and statistics but deals with words and meanings. According to Cresswell (1994, p. 1-2), "A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting." Qualitative research is expressed in words that are useful for understanding concepts, thoughts or experiences. Qualitative research is very effective because it can gather deep insights on topics that are not well understood and helps to understand the topic easier. Qualitative focuses on exploring ideas and formulating a theory or hypothesis and analyzing by summarizing, categorizing and interpreting.

Text-based analysis method is used in this study. The method in this study provides an explanation of how racial discrimination and racism occur in black people. This study used descriptive research and qualitative method to define the act of racial discrimination and also racism that occurs in the film entitled *Just Mercy* using *Critical Race Theory* book by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic.

The data the writer used in this study were taken from a film “Just Mercy”, written and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. This film was published on 25th december 2019. This

film tells the issue of racial discrimination experienced by the characters in the film. The writer found nine scenes and dialogues related to the issues being analyzed in this study.

In order to collect all the data needed the writer has conducted several steps, which are follows:

1. Watching and re-watching the film multiple times.
2. Understanding and identifying the issue of racial discrimination exist in the film.
3. Identifying scenes and dialogues that are relevant to the topic of the study and then understanding the narrative and cinematography elements.
4. Collecting the data by taking screenshots of each important and relevant scene. Interpreting every dialogue in the picture that shows racial discrimination.

C. Findings and Discussion

“Just Mercy” is a drama film that was published in 2019. The story in this film was written and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. This film tells the story of how a young attorney who graduated from Harvard Law School named Bryan Stevenson tries to solve the case of Walter McMillian and tries to save him from the death penalty that he will get because of false accusations.

Racial Discrimination Depicted in Just Mercy Film

In every place, environment, even country, there will definitely be differences from one person to another and this cannot be prevented or avoided. One such difference is race. There are several types of races in this world and each race has biological differences that can be seen through physical appearance such as skin color, hair texture, eye color and many more. Those differences invite a lot of conflict in society because there are still many people who cannot accept differences between one another, so that differential racialization occurs, which is a process where the racial differences of a group are used as an excuse to be treated in a way that is very different from majority and can also be referred to as discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995).

Discrimination is the act of treating a person or a group of people in a different way because of the differences that belong to that group. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1999) the differences that can cause discrimination are diverse, religion or belief, gender, national origin and one of them is race. Discrimination has a negative impact on groups that are discriminated against, for example, they are treated worse than the majority group, they are seen as having a lower degree than the majority group and they do not get equal justice with other races so they cannot use human rights, what they have and what they should get. In the film *Just Mercy*, the discrimination received by black people is injustice, which can be seen in how Bryan Stevenson tries to gather all the evidence to solve the case of Walter McMillian, who received the death penalty for a crime he did not commit.

The act of discrimination in this film begins when Walter McMillian is on his way home to his house and is stopped by a group of police. One of the officers named Tom Tate come up to Walter and asks him a few questions.



From *Just Mercy* [02:40], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

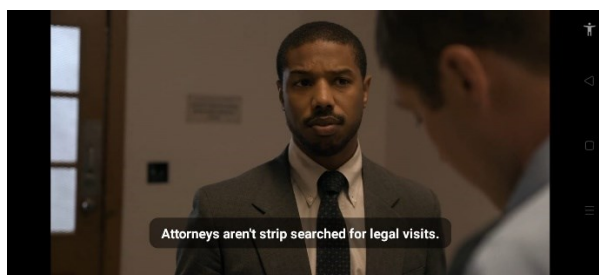
The data above is a scene where Walter McMillian is stopped by a group of police before he gets arrested and taken to be put in jail because of a murder charge that he did not commit. This is supported by the statement said by the officer, he says, "That must be pretty nice. Free to run up and down the road wherever you want to, whenever you want to in this fancy truck" [Cretton, 2019, 02:40-02:46]. Walter McMillian is confused by what the officer is saying, so the officer continues, "Cause after what you done, I'm looking for any excuse to get this over with right here, right now" [Cretton, 2019, 03:17-03:22].

The situation above shows that the officer accused Walter of being Ronda Marrison's murderer, which can be seen from what the officer said, '*Cause after what you done*,'. The officer believes that Walter is the one who killed Ronda Marrison although there is no strong evidence to support this accusation. Walter tries to defend himself because he does not feel he has ever committed a crime, Walter says, "Sir, I ain't did nothing and I think y'all got the wrong person" [Cretton, 2019, 03:25-03:27]. However, the officer does not listen to and cares about Walter's defense and calls other police officers to help him arrest Walter by force.

Based on the data above, it can be found that there is an act of prejudice that committed by the officer against Walter. Prejudice is an action of judgment that is carried out by someone or a group to another person or another group without knowing the truth first (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). This can be seen by how the officers do not listen to the explanations of Walter McMillian and immediately do what they think is right without knowing the truth first.

The scene uses a medium close-up to capture both characters from the chest up. Over-the-shoulder shot is used to capture the officer's expression from behind the shoulder of Walter so that Walter's face is not visible but only his shoulders and focuses on the policeman's expression which shows an unfriendly expression and shows anger. Moreover, besides capturing both characters, this scene also captures the surrounding for context. This scene uses dim lighting which is useful to show the setting of time, this is happening at night and dim lighting also builds a tense atmosphere between the two characters.

Bryan Stevenson is an attorney who graduated from Harvard and comes from Sussex County, Delaware to Alabama to help people on death row, Walter McMillian is one of his clients. Bryan tries to solve Walter's case by proving his innocence and giving Walter the justice, he deserves. However, during this process the state and the authorities complicate the process. Bryan is being treated unfairly and differently from other attorneys by the guard when he visited the W.C Holman Correctional Facility to meet with some of his clients. Before meeting with his client, the guard has to go through Bryan's files and asks Bryan a few questions.



From *Just Mercy* [16:00], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

The data above is when the guard asks Bryan to be searched and Bryan says that lawyers should not be searched for a legal visit, but the guard replies, “You ain’t gonna visit shit unless you getting in that room and strip.” [Cretton, 2019, 16:04 – 16:09]. In his statement, the guard does not care about what Bryan said and he also ignores the existing rules, which is by not searching an attorney. However, the guard still wants Bryan to be searched if he wants to see his clients. In this situation Bryan does not offer any resistance but follows the guard's orders.

The situation above shows that there is a discrimination by a white person against Afro-American. The guard treated Bryan differently from other attorneys and he has to do something he should not do because it is unnecessary. However, in response to this, Bryan just accepts it and follows the officer's orders. The response given by Bryan to the guard can also be concluded that in the situation above explains that most people who are discriminated against by others cannot do anything even defend themselves and choose to remain silent to avoid problems that they might get.

The scene uses a medium close-up to capture the character from the chest up. Over-the-shoulder shot is used in this scene because this scene is captured from behind another character's so that it focuses on Bryan's expression which shows confusion while looking at the guard, this is also supported by Bryan's slightly wrinkled eyebrows which explains his confusion, in this scene it also can be seen that the guard is a white man. Medium close-ups also capture the environment which shows them in a room and the lighting is made clear which is obtained from the lights that are right above the characters. There is a door with a glass behind the character and it shows a bright light giving an explanation of the time setting.

Bryan is reading Walter's files and keeps trying to dig up the truth until he finally feels that Walter is not the one who killed Ronda Marrison and he tells Eva what he thinks. “I don’t think McMillian did it.” [Cretton, 2019, 26:31]. The statement above is his belief that Walter is not the killer, he said that after he read all the files on Myres' testimony.



From *Just Mercy* [26:35], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

The data above is when Bryan is talking to Eva about the Walter case because Bryan found that the jury decided on the death penalty for Walter based only on the testimony of

one person, namely Ralph Myres. In addition, the testimony given by Myres is illogical. Bryan explains;

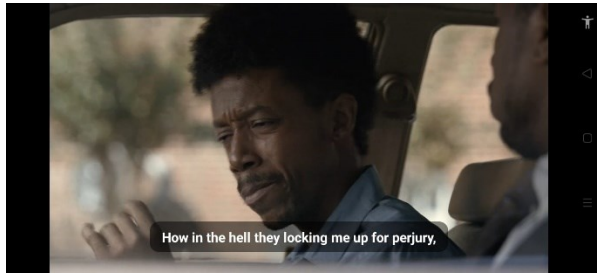
“In his statement, he said Johnny D approached him at a car wash and forced him at gunpoint to drive to Jackson Cleaners because his arm hurt. When they get there, Johnny D tells him to wait in the truck while he goes inside, and while he’s waiting for his kidnapper, he doesn’t run, he doesn’t go to the police, instead, he drives to the liquor store for cigarettes, and then comes back to the crime scene.” [Cretton, 2019, 26:47-27:10].

From the explanation Bryan told Eva about the testimony given by Myres, makes Eva think there must be something wrong with this case. Bryan and Eva agree that there must be more evidence. The data above explains how easy it is for the jury to sentence Walter, a black person, without further researching the truth. The authorities close the case instead of finding out any other truths, then make an innocent Afro-American as a suspect. Punishments can be obtained by them easily based on the testimony of one person and the fact is that the state can accept testimony that cannot be proven true. This is an act of discrimination perpetrated by the authorities against the Walter case because the state and society easily believed that Walter is Ronda Morrison's killer because he is an Afro-American man, just as Eva has said, “and the guy that he says did it happens to be a black man from a poor community that no one would think twice about.” [Cretton, 2019, 27:55-28:02].

The situation above explains that the authorities and society believe Myres' false testimony regarding the murderer of Ronda Morrison without looking for other evidence. In order to find more evidence, Bryan goes to meet Tommy Chapman, a district attorney for Monroe County who used to be a public defender, to asks for his support. However, Mr. Chapman refuses even though Bryan had made it clear that there is something wrong with Myres' first testimony, Mr. Chapman says, “I already know what happened.” [Cretton, 2019, 30:05-30:07]. In his statement it can be concluded that Mr. Chapman believes Myres' testimony without caring if it is false or true statement because what is important to him and his community is that they have found out who killed Ronda Marrison and they choose Walter, a black man, as the murderer of a white young woman.

This scene uses long shot to capture both of the characters from head to toes. The long shot also shows the surrounding of the characters which can be used to show the setting of the place and also the time, this scene is taken in a room in Eva's residence and it can be seen that there are papers on the table showing the two characters is discussing what is written on the paper, which is the testimonies of Myres. Apart from that, there is a window and it shows light from outside which shows this scene took place in the morning. Apart from that, over-the-shoulder is also used in this scene where the picture is taken from behind Eva so that it does not show her face and focuses on Bryan's expression. The lighting in this scene is natural which is obtained from sunlight through the windows beside and also behind Bryan.

In the process of gathering more evidence, Darnell Houston, he is a friend of Walter's son, John, as well as a witness that the second witness testimony is Bill Hooks, who claims to have seen Walter's truck in the crime scene the morning of the murder is a lie. This can be proven by Darnell's statement which says, “He made the whole thing up. ‘cause I was with him. We was working at the shop together.” [Cretton, 2019, 38:58-39:06]. For his testimony, Bryan asks Darnell to help with Walter's case, although he is initially hesitant, in the end he agrees to testify. However, because of his testimony, Darnell got into trouble. He is accused and arrested because authorities think Darnell has made a false statement.



From *Just Mercy* [52:25], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

The data above is a scene where Darnell is in Bryan's car and they are in the prison parking lot. Darnell got arrested when he was working in front of his boss because of his testify about Bill Hook's statement. Darnell says, "How in the hell they locking me up for perjury, if alls I did was saying the truth, hmm" [Cretton, 2019, 52:25-52:30]. In this statement it can be concluded that although everyone has the right to speak and testify, the testimony given by a black person is not heard and accepted. It does not matter if the testimony is true or false, the authorities will still consider it is wrong even if the testimony is true. Then Darnell continues, "I knew I shouldn't have signed that paper, man. Shouldn't have listened to you." [Cretton, 2019, 52:25-52:34]. That statement shows Darnell's regret for giving testimony to help Walter, and Darnell already knew that his testimony would not be accepted easily by them, as can be seen from, 'I know I shouldn't have signed that paper.'. Apart from regret, Darnell also shows his anger because his testimony is considered as perjury.

The Main Characters Deal with Racial Discrimination in *Just Mercy*

There are many different ways to deal with a problem which makes everyone do a different way when they deal with the problems they have. As is the case with the characters in the film *Just Mercy* who have different ways of dealing with the discrimination they receive from society.

Walter McMillian is a character who gets discrimination against by the society, he is accused and goes to jail for almost six years and gets the death penalty because he is accused of being a suspect in the murder of a white girl, Ronda Morrison. The belief that Walter has in himself that he is not a murderer so he tries to seek help by hiring attorneys to help him reveal the truth. Walter realizes that he is a black man that comes from a poor community until in the end, Walter accepts the situation he is in after running out of money because he is unable to hire an attorney anymore.



From *Just Mercy* [01:49:50], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

The data above is a scene where Bryan visits to meet Walter after the trial that Bryan filed at the Baldwin County Courthouse so that Walter can get a new trial and Ralph Myres tells his testimony. At the trial Myres admitted that all of his testimonies are false, but the

court said that no perjury was found in his testimony so that Walter is set to receive the death penalty. This makes Walter finally accept his fate because it makes him think that this is a dead end and he cannot do anything about it. "These fools gonna do what they gonna do. But if they take me to that chair tonight, I'm going out smiling. 'Cause I got my truth back." [Cretton, 2019, 01:49:38-01:49:57]. In that statement, it shows Walter resignation and realize that there is no way out in this case and he is hopeless. Walter just needs to wait for when his death penalty will be set. *'I'm going out smiling. 'Cause I got my truth back.'* That statement is a strong proof that Walter can finally accept everything that will happen as long as the society finally knows the truth in the Ronda Morrison murder case, the society knows that Walter is not Ronda Morrison's killer and he is innocent.

From the situation above, it can be concluded that there is a feeling of joy because at least the public knows the truth in the Ronda Morrison murder case and there is a sense of resignation that Walter feels so that in dealing with the discrimination case that he experienced, which shows that black people do not have the same power as white people, Walter chooses to accept his fate because he knows that no matter how much effort he has to prove that he is innocent, he will still be considered guilty and will still get the punishment that has been determined by the jury. This is also supported by when Walter says, "when you're guilty from the moment you born." [Cretton, 2019, 21:47-21:50].

The data above use medium close-up at eye angle which capture the character from the head to his shoulders which focuses on Walter's expression, he is smiling at Bryan, which illustrates that he has given up but feels happy at the same time because at least the society knows the truth. The lighting uses in this scene is made clear; the left side of Walter's face looks darker than the right due to the light coming into the room through the window.

If Walter deals with the discrimination he experienced by accepting it gracefully because he does not have the power to fight back, then it is the opposite with Bryan Stevenson. He is a young black attorney who is trying to help Walter McMillian. He deals with the injustice that Walter gets by keep looking for more evidence that hidden by the authorities and keeps asking to get a new trial to give Walter justice that he deserves. The final trial does not end as expected by Bryan, Walter is still sentenced to death. However, Bryan does not stop there, he uses his power and privilege as an attorney to get justice.



From *Just Mercy* [01:51:00], by Destin Daniel Cretton (Director) 2019.

The data above is a scene where Bryan is at the residence of Walter McMillian and informs all members of Walter's family and his community that he will give all his evidence to the State Supreme Court in Montgomery so that the district court can give Walter a new trial. Brian says "We're preparing a motion to submit our evidence to the State Supreme Court in Montgomery." [Cretton, 2019, 01:50:55-01:51:00]. From this statement it can be interpreted that even though he lost at the previous trial, he does not give up and keeps trying to find other ways so that Walter can get another trial. It can be concluded that Bryan really wants to help Walter and provide justice for him and all black people.

Bryan gets a new trial because of his tenacity so he can fight back for the justice that Walter and all black people deserve to get. Brian says “If we say we’re committed to equal justice under law to protecting the rights of citizen, regardless of wealth, race, or status, then we have to end this nightmare for Walter McMillian and his family.” [Cretton, 2019, 02:00:25-02:00:40]. This statement clarifies that everyone has the right to get justice without exception. Bryan asks the jury to dismiss this case because all the evidence Bryan has obtained proved that Walter is innocent. Bryan's tenacity paid off, Walter is finally released from his death sentence and is able to return to his family and live a normal life again.

Medium shot at eye angle is used in this scene which captures the characters from the head to their waist. The medium shot is useful for showing the characters expressions and the environment around the characters, which in this scene shows that Bryan is in a room full of people. It can be seen that the man sitting next to him and one behind Bryan is looking at him while listening to what Bryan is saying and this shows that what Bryan is saying is important. The lighting uses in this scene is made clear on Bryan and the man next to him, however, the lighting behind Bryan is dim but the character's expression is still visible.

D. Conclusion

This study analyzed the issue of racial discrimination in a film entitled *Just Mercy* which was published in 2019. The film *Just Mercy* contain the issue of racial discrimination against black people in the United States. Walter McMillian is one of the characters in *Just Mercy* film who gets discriminated against by the society by not getting justice that everyone should get without exception and also being treated differently.

Walter McMillian did not get justice from the state, he was accused of being a killer of a white girl and he had to spend almost six years of his life in prison and get the death penalty. The injustice that Walter received is shown through how the jury immediately sentenced him to death without any prior trial and the authorities hide a lot of important evidence. Bryan Stevenson as a lawyer who handles the case always tries to collect more evidence to prove that his client is innocent. The authorities made things difficult for him along the way, but that didn't stop him.

The main characters in *Just Mercy* film have different ways of dealing with the discrimination they experience. Walter McMillian, who has been in prison for almost six years, feels that he has no choice but to accept his fate and wait for his execution because he knows that no matter how hard he tries, the jury, the state, and society will still think he is guilty. On the other hand, Bryan Stevenson, the attorney who handles Walter’s case is finally able to prove that Walter is innocent. His hard work paid off until finally he is able to give justice to all people from the black community because everyone deserves justice regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.

E. References

- Barnet, S., Burto, W., & Cain, W. (1961). *An introduction to literature: fiction, poetry, drama* (15th ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Barnouw, E. (1993). *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

- World Mysteries. (2011, February 18). *How many major races are there in the world?*. <http://blog.world-mysteries.com/science/how-many-major-races-are-there-in-the-world/>
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2008). *Film art: An Introduction*. (8th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York University Press.
- Filippo, C, S. *What Are the Different Kinds of Camera Angles and Shots in Film?*. <https://www.polarprofilters.com/blogs/polarpro/filmmaking-101-types-of-camera-shots-and-angles>
- Hajian, S., & Domingo-Ferrer, J. (2013). *A Methodology for Direct and Indirect Discrimination Prevention in Data Mining*. 25(7), 1445-1459. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/TKDE.2012.72>
- Julan, S & Valiantien. (2021). *Racial Discrimination Issues As Shown by Solomon and Patsey in 12 Years A Slave Movie*. Universitas Mulawaman.
- Junco, E. (2018). *Four Types of Racism*, (62-81). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199487837.003.0004>
- Narayan, S. (2008). *Racial discrimination in Fiji*. 12 (1), 68-75. <http://www.paclii.org/journals/fJSPL/vol12no1/pdf/narayan.pdf>
- Rizky, A. (2020). *The Struggle Of African-Americans Against Racial Discrimination In Angie Thomas 'The Hate U Give'*. Universitas Sanata Harma
- Rusnanila, N. (2019). *Racial Discrimination As Seen In The Help Film By Tate Taylor*. UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin