

Racism in "Stella by Starlight": Discrimination Against People of Color

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ABSTRACT

This study is entitled "Racism in Stella by Starlight: Discrimination Against People of Color." This study aims to reveal the issue of racial discrimination done by white people against people of color and analyse how people of color struggle in the face of racism to get their rights. The method used in this study is a qualitative method that presents the analysis in written form. The perspective of Fred L. Pincus (2003) on the types of discrimination is applied to guide this study. Based on the analysis, this study concludes that there are several types of racial discrimination committed by white people against people of color. The types of discrimination towards people of color are distinguished individually, institutionally, and structurally. Individual discrimination describes in the form of physical or verbal and unfair treatment. Institutional and structural discrimination reflects in the separation of schools, churches, habitations, and different facilities. The forms of struggle carried out by people of color are protesting, resisting, educating their children, and protecting their people.

Keywords: *discrimination, individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, people of color, racism*

A. Introduction

Racism is the belief that brings an irrational action and often causes problems. Racism is the act of a group of people who are larger in number, who believe in differences that reject the existence of a particular group because they have differences and consider groups that have differences are lower than their group. Pincus (2003, p. 8) states that racism is an explicit belief system that postulates the superiority of whites based on the inherent biological inferiority of the race of color that refers to ideological racism. The statement above means that racism arises from a race group that dominates, and racism can happen in many places and takes many forms. In this world, there are various kinds of the race which are a group of people with different characteristics both physically and habitually based on the culture that they have or they get in the lineage.

In other words, different racial identities are usually a group classified through a common language, religion, culture, behaviour, and physical traits such as skin color, eyes, hair, and height. Thus, it means that the differences naturally form each race into a group that separates according to the race they belong to, which are creates a majority and minority. The majority group becomes a race that dominates over all things above the minority. According to Desmond and Emirbayer (2009, p. 345) The word dominance reminds us that racism is a symbol of power to classify one group of people as normal and another as abnormal. The explanation above shows that racial domination is a group that considers minority groups to be abnormal. They assume that they can regulate to control minority groups because they are superior and have more power. The separation that determines the different characteristics of a human group becomes abused and gives rise to something that can be considered a wrong action in the form of a term that divides the difference.

Racism carried out by a dominant group of races raises racial problems. Discrimination is a problem that still occurs nowadays, and discrimination is directed by some groups of people because of their color, ethnicity, and national origin. Pincus (2003, p. 2) states that discrimination is defined as a

different treatment between members of one group to the members of other groups. The statement above shows the inequality between one group and another, which can have harmful effects for groups that experience discrimination. Society has its own rules that make people of color always become victims of discrimination from white people. Racial domination still causes discrimination which is a racial issue that has become a social phenomenon that occurs in the modern era, especially about the racial discrimination against people of color who still experience a lot of misfortune because of violence and the rights that are not gain by people of color.

Pincus and Ehrlich (2018, p. 12) find that people of color are broad terms is used to describe "them" members of the minority group in the United States are not white. It means that racial discrimination has even become labelling that sets stereotypes in behaviours against people of color, and this term is one of the things that indirectly snatch the freedom of people of color. The freedom that has not been gain to be equal is still very often experienced by people of color until nowadays. One example is the case experienced by a black African-American person named George Floyd in America in 2020. George Floyd is a black person 46 years old who has lived in Minneapolis for several years. Previously, Floyd worked as a bouncer in Minneapolis. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Floyd was unemployed like any other American. On May 25, Floyd suffered the unfortunate fate he died after being arrested by white police outside a shop in Minneapolis. According to Richardson (2020) the shop owner Mike Abumayyaleh confessed to NBC by saying "*Floyd is a customer of the Cup Food grocery store. He has a friendly face and a kind customer who doesn't make trouble.*" The incident began with Floyd's death when a shop employee reported Floyd to the police, the reports of alleged counterfeit money worth 20 US dollars. The police report was made in the afternoon of May 25, when Floyd bought a pack of cigarettes from Cup Foods. Footage of Floyd's arrest on May 25 shows a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, who has been 44 years since then being charged with murder. Having committed an act that resulted in the losing a person's life, he knelt on Floyd's neck as Floyd face down on the road, knocking him out of breath.

The case triggered various responses, which led to demonstrations for justice that George Floyd and his family had to accept. The support given for George Floyd's death came from several countries, and many people voiced sympathy for Floyd's death through social media. The direct support also gives by American citizens by holding demonstrations in various parts of the city as a form of high tolerance for differences is shown to get justice for the case of George Floyd's death. Finally, after going through several processes due to Floyd's death as a closing chapter in the case that sparked global protests, on June 25. According to Griffith (2021) Derek Chauvin was officially sentenced to prison for the killing of George Floyd 22.5 years. Derek Chauvin was founded guilty of three counts: second-degree murder for kneeling on Floyd's neck, causing Floyd to become breathless and suffocating, second-degree manslaughter, and third-degree murder.

Racial discrimination against people of color not only occurs in real life but is also portrayed in literary work, such as in the novel, poem, short story, and picture book. In this modern era, some authors expressed their experiences, thought, knowledge, or point of view, which they pour into a work depicting an event, such as in the novel entitled *Stella by Starlight* by Sharon M. Draper. The story in the novel tells about racial discrimination against people of color. This story tells about a young African-American girl life with her family in the small town of North Carolina, Bumblebee, America in 1932. As people of color, they were treated very badly by almost all the white people there. Living with the shadow of violence and restrictions, often people of color receive bad treatment from dominant racial individuals or groups, such as differentiated facilities, not getting the rights that white residents get, and other discriminatory treatment obtained from individuals or a small group that has a harmful effect on people of color live. The console and optimistic young girl, Stella, help the adults in her community struggle and sacrifice to give their children a better future. It was then that the dominant race decided that the people of color in North Carolina, Bumblebee America was to be feared.

Therefore, the writer desires to reveal the issue of racial discrimination problems and analyse about the figures who struggle against society's treatment of people of color. The writer decided to discuss this problem because the social issue represented is still relevant nowadays. There are many people out there who are not getting their rights just because of their color or race, and there are also many significant cases that even endanger people of color's lives until this modern era. From here, the writer is interested in completing this study. This study also helps the writer understand more deeply the issue of racial discrimination against people of color.

Several college students have conducted studies on a similar issue with this study that focuses on racial problems. The studies are used as the related studies to support the study until this study is finished conducting. Therefore, the writer found three related studies to support the current study, that is:

The first related study is a thesis was written by Khelly and Syafei (2019) from Universitas Negeri Padang. The study is entitled "Eliminating Segregation in Sharon M. Draper's Novel *Stella by Starlight* (2015)". The study used a novel as the object of the study, the story in the novel talks about African-Americans. They were treated very badly by almost all the white people, and they are struggling to have an equal life with white people. The purpose of this study is to focus on reveal the issue of eliminating segregation. To analyse this study, the writers used qualitative method with the concept of orientalism by Edward Said and the concept of self-determination by Ryan and Deci. The result of the study is to uncover the issue of eliminating segregation by protagonist characters.

The second related study is a journal article was done by Maurilla (2015) from Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta. The study is entitled "Racial Discrimination in Kathryn Stockett's *the Help*". The study used a novel as the object of the study. The story in the novel talks about three African-American women who work as a nannies and housekeepers for white people. The three characters in the novel struggle for their rights because they are treated differently from the white workers in the story. The purpose of this study is to focus on how black people are treated by white people and to explore the impact of racial discrimination by analyse the types of discrimination in the story. To analyse the types of racial discrimination from this study, the writer used qualitative method with the theory by Fred L. Pincus in his book entitled *Reverse Discrimination* (1994). The result of this study is to shows that there are two types of discrimination, that is individual and institutional discrimination.

The third related study is a thesis was written by Pinem (2020) from Universitas Sumatra Utara. The study is entitled "Racial Discrimination Portrayed in Angie Thomas's Novel *the Hate U Give*." This study uses a novel as the object of the study. The story in the novel talks about Starr Carter, a young black girl who lived surrounded by unease because she discriminated against white people, and she is struggling with the situation. The purpose of this study is to focus on revealing how racial discrimination is depicted in the novel and to find out the characteristics of racial discrimination that occur in the story of "*The Hate U Give*" novel by Angie Thomas. To analyse this study, the writer used qualitative method with applying the sociology of literature as the main theory of this study. The result of this study is to shows that there are several characteristics of racial discrimination portrayed in Angie Thomas' novel *The Hate U Give*, such as stereotypes, prejudice, and social rejection.

The three related studies above have some similarities and differences with this study. The three studies discuss racial problems that happen in the object of the study as the issue of the studies. The three related studies focused on how the struggle faced by the black people that have their own to get equality as humans living in minorities. Another similarity found in the study by Khelly and Syafei (2019), the study using similar object a novel by Sharon M. Draper entitled "*Stella by Starlight*." The study focuses on reveal eliminating segregation by the character in the story. While my study also aims to reveal what types of racial issues that depicted in the novel by using the theory by Fred L. Pincus and the study by Maurilla (2015) using a similar theory by Fred L. Pincus about the types of racial discrimination. Whereas the study by Pinem (2020) using the sociology of literature as the main theory of the study.

The literature review consists of several forms of things containing an understanding that explains the relevant elements, theories, and issues in this study.

Novel is a work that contains a story from the writer's imagination, and it is usually inspired by the experience of the writer itself or in a person's experience. Abrams and Harpham (2012, p. 253) state that novel is a term applied in a work of fiction written in prose that has in common the attribute in a great variety of writing. The novel has several narrative elements, such as plot, setting, character, and point of view. These elements are a necessary part of a novel which is the basis and content that will build and determine the beginning to the end of a story in a literary work.

Racism is a term that arises due to the difference between a group with other groups that create a dominant group that assume they have a higher level they feel that they are superior. As Pincus (2003, p. 8) states racism is an explicit belief system that postulates the superiority of whites based on

the inherent biological inferiority of the race of color that refers to ideological racism. Thus, it means that the differences naturally form each race into a group that separates according to the race they belong to, which creates a majority and minority. The explanation above shows that racial discrimination arises from the existence of beliefs that supported by several aspects that make these beliefs are justified and cause discomfort for races that do not dominate.

Racial discrimination is the problem that arises of racism which is the physical or verbal act of a person or group of people who describe the feeling of dislike because they feel superior to those of the person. Pincus (2003, p. 2), found that there are some types of discrimination, that is individual discrimination, institutional, and structural discrimination. The statement above intends to explain the racism received by minority groups that has various forms. Minorities groups receive some social discrimination from the community, such as discrimination carried out by individuals or even an institution that comes from a group of people who dominate and feel that they have the right to discriminate against a minority group.

The first type of discrimination is individual discrimination. According to Pincus (2003, p. 2), individual discrimination refers to the mannerisms of the individual members from one group of people that are supposed to possess a differential or harmful impact on the individual of another group. It means discrimination comes deeper from one person with own manner. The relationship between humans with their differences will not cause problems if individuals can respect each other's differences.

The second type of discrimination is institutional discrimination. According to Pincus (2003, p. 2), institutional discrimination alludes to the policies of the larger part institution and the behaviour of people who actualize these arrangements and control these institutions that are planning to have a differential or destructive impact on unpowerful groups. According to the statement above, discrimination in institutions arises because of the encouragement from an individual on a large scale, thus forming an effect that is harmful to the minority group.

The last type of discrimination is structural discrimination. According to Pincus (2003, p. 3), structural discrimination alludes to the policies of the larger part institution and the behaviour of people who actualize these arrangements and control these institutions that are planning to be neutral but which have a differential or destructive impact on unpowerful groups. It means that structural discrimination actually only has the purpose of separating which inadvertently has a negative effect on the minority group.

In this study, to reveal the racial discrimination problem against people of color in the novel entitled "*Stella by Starlight*" by Sharon M. Draper, the writer using the theory by Fred L. Pincus in his book entitled *Reverse Discrimination* that discusses some types of discrimination. As Pincus (2003, p. 2) states, the concepts or the definitions of racial problems appear to be uncontroversial. Pincus prefers to discuss some different types of discrimination, such as individual discrimination, institutional, and structural discrimination. Using the concept of theory by Fred L. Pincus can help the writer to identify the racial problems experienced by the character in the novel. The writer chooses the theory by Fred L. Pincus about the types of discrimination to be applied in finding the questions from the statement of the problems in this study.

B. Method

The approach of this study is used the qualitative method as the data that were taken from the novel and analysed by identifying the data. The qualitative method examines the research of this thesis that is used to increase a better understanding of the reason, motivations, and opinion of the research. As Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge (2009, p. 7) states, qualitative research intends to help people understand the social world in which people live in terms of developing explanations of social phenomena and relating to social aspects of our world. It means that qualitative is the method to help people complete their understanding of human behaviour and social phenomena that happen around people. Thus, the writer could help by this approach to completed the study. The data of this study were taken from the novel by Sharon M. Draper entitled *Stella by Starlight* (2015). The data from this study were taken from several narrative elements contained in the novel such as plot, setting, character, point of view, and theme that concern in discusses the types of racial discrimination as the issue of this study.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Racism in *Stella by Starlight*

Racial discrimination usually comes from individuals or race groups that dominate. Violence and oppression have become inherent to African-American than white people in America, where African-American or called as people of color have always seen as a lower race and white people more powerful. This perception is in line with Fred L. Pincus's view of discrimination. According to Pincus, discrimination is an action that builds by groups that dominate and have more power. Thus, people of color are less powerful as a racial minority. In his concept, he discusses "Different types of discrimination" (Pincus F. L., 2003, p. 2). Pincus states that racial discrimination is separate in the form of individual, institutional, and structural discrimination which classifies the forms of discrimination by white people against African-American.

Individual, institutional, and structural discrimination are the actions of white people individually or in groups that limit each individual from a minority race to get the freedom of their rights as citizens. Therefore, this chapter explains how forms of discrimination, life, and struggles of African-American are implied through the characters in the novel *Stella by Starlight* (2015) by Sharon M. Draper that illustrates the differences in life between white people and African-American. The act of discrimination triggers divisions between one racial group and another, and creates different freedom and right between African-American and white 1819 people. This problem is revealed based on the treatments, facilities, and social conditions shown from the narration and dialogue in *Stella by Starlight* novel.

1.1 Individual Discrimination: Physical Action, Verbal Action, and Unfair Treatment

African-American experience individual discrimination, as seen in *Stella by Starlight*, done by white people in the story. There are several acts as forms of individual discrimination present by Dr. Packard in *Stella by Starlight*. Starting from Stella's experience when her mother and she get nasty treatment from white people named Dr. Packard. She tells her experience to her friend with show that her feeling is so hurt, and this incident makes a lousy impression on Stella's life. She tells Tony, "He pushed my mom away—she almost fell—and then he reached down and whomped me as hard as he could" (Draper, 2015, p. 19). The experience through by Stella above shows how Stella and her mother, as African-American treated by white people. Dr. Packard is a white person, a figure known as a person who has power through white people in Bumblebee. No matter how young this girl is when she makes a mistake with him, and no matter how small her mistake, he will retaliate without even thinking about forgives. This action implies that Dr. Packard's treatment of Stella and her mother is part of a physical action that reflects his hatred of African-American in the form of individual discrimination. This phenomenon describes how individual discrimination reflects individual actions of group members that have a harmful effect on the members of other groups (Pincus F. L., 2003, p. 2). As a result, the 20 members of a minority group must always be careful of their actions, whereas minority groups always blame for everything.

Dr. Packard shows the hatred against African-American in the form of physical and verbal. Stella also gets verbal abuse from Dr. Packard. It shows in the words of Dr. Packard that should not be out of his mouth that is not appropriate for a child of Stella's age. As Stella continues her story to Tony, she tells while imagining her fear of Dr. Packard, "Then he called me stupid and careless and some other stuff I'm not gonna repeat, and he walked away" (Draper, 2015, p. 19). The words issued by Dr. Packard show how he hates African-American, and this describes that he can do anything against people of color character in the story. The response he gives is intemperate because it should be a mistake that may be very forgivable if a white person like himself does it. It also implies that his treatment and words hurt Stella and her mother, which are painful and unforgettable for Stella.

1.2 Institutional and Structural Discrimination: The Separation of Schools, Churches, Habitations, and Different Facilities

The existence of separation and boundaries is clearly describe in the narration contains in the *Stella by Starlight* novel. The beginning of the story mentions the separation between white people and African-American, or called as people of color. "Folks on Stella's side of town worked as maids and cooks, janitors and sharecropping farmers. A few lucky men got jobs at the lumber mill, the only real industry in town" (Draper, 2015, p. 5). This implies that the residences between African-American and white people are separate, and the occupation hold by people of color where Stella lives at the time largely as a maid. This indirectly describes that people of color are still not free because most of them

still work under white people's command. This seems to reflect the shadow of slavery of African-American still exists in different form. The separation also shows when African-American have a limitation to work in the companies. The quotation above also shows that there are still a few men of color who are lucky because they can still get a job in a reputable company in Bumblebee, and this also shows the difficulties they experience because it only mentions one company that can accept people of color to work in it. This implies that it is difficult for them to get a proper job because they have a limitation as African-American, and from the quotation above, it can conclude that most African-American in the country are middle to lower class because they do not have a decent job.

Another difference describes the clear separation of boundaries and inequalities between white people and African-American in the story. As shown in the narration, "The school for white children ... had a football team and was known around the state for its academic and sports successes. They even had their own library" (Draper, 2015, p. 34). This shows that the schools of white people and African-American are separated. The school buildings are separated, and the various facilities between the two schools are distinguished. White children can enjoy complete facilities in their schools that children of color cannot. Indirectly this describes one of the things that can hinder the achievement of African-American who cannot explore or develop their talents because of the unavailability of facilities that support their activities at school. This also implies the impact of structural discrimination occur in the story that becomes the pieces of evidence of why the achievements of white people can be superior to African-American. "Jim Crow segregation is a clear example of institutional discrimination" (Pincus F. L., 2003, p. 2). Jim Crow laws are local state laws in South Africa before the early 1990s. Segregation in the policy of apartheid. This law has the statement "separate but equal." It depicts in *Stella by Starlight* novel the separation of schools based on the color of their skin does not show equality at all. In fact, the facilities obtain for white people are always better than the facilities of African-American. For example, there are different facilities between Stella's school and the white people there. In the white school, the facilities are equipped with a library and a running track, while in people of color school is not.

2. The Struggle Against Racism to Acquire Human Rights in *Stella by Starlight*

African-American struggle to face acts of racism that aims to get their right from white people. After analyzing the lives of the characters of African-American in *Stella by Starlight* who experience discrimination from white people, the last discussion of this chapter is about the struggle of African-American to face racism from white people. The characters of African-American do several things to defend themselves from racism: protest or resist for equality rights, educate their children, and protect their people. Stella and African-American around her have experiences many unpleasant incidents or treatments that happen to herself or the African-American in her society. As people of color, they were always treated very differently in every way by white people. The facilities they cannot get, the violence they often experience, and the freedom they do not have, suggest that their lives are far from independent. This part describes how they can face and fight for their rights as African-American the equality of rights as much as white people have.

The struggles of African-American with clearly depict in *Stella by Starlight* novel. When African-American flock to the presidential election and ignore the risks, they can get from white people. They walk with the same goal, to fight for their rights as people of color who also have the right to choose who their president is. They continue to walk while sing a song, pleading to relieve their fear. "Gonna keep on walkin', keep on talkin' Marching up to freedom land" (Draper, 2015, p. 232). The part of the lyrics singing by African-American while they are on their way to the presidential election, with the tense atmosphere of them singing the song to accompany them to the election site. This song describes the situation around African-American who are fights for their rights without hesitation even though they are overshadowed by worry. However, they still dare to fight together to get their rights.

D. Conclusion

After analysing the racial discrimination issue in a novel entitled *Stella by Starlight* (2015), several acts of racism are found in the novel. The act of racism in this story describes the white people's treatment against African-American or people of color in the sphere of individuals or groups. The act

of racial discrimination in this story also occurs in an enormous scope. Namely, the separation applies by the policies of institutions in the structural term that support or control by individual or group from the white people group as the dominant race. It means that individual, institutional, and structural discrimination are white people's actions individually or in groups that restrict each individual from a racial minority to get their freedom of rights as citizens, which have a differentiate or harmful impact on the racial minority as a race that have less power.

However, in this novel, there are also several acts of African-American who struggle to get their rights against discrimination from white people. People of color in this story not only surrender to the situation, but they dare to face white people's treatment. It shows from the acts done by African-American when they face various discrimination treatments from white people. When African-American get unpleasant treatment from white people, they defend themselves by protesting or resisting. African-American in this story also educate their children to be brave and believe in their rights. People of color's struggle against discrimination is also reflected when African-American in this story tries to protect people around them from the dangerous things that white people can do.

This study discusses the issue of racial discrimination in a novel about the treatment of white people towards people of color. The analysis in this study focuses on how racial issues depicted through the treatment of white people reveal various forms of racial discrimination experienced by African-American in *Stella by Starlight* (2015), which also reveals the struggles of African-American in facing racism to get their rights. The readers or students interested in discussing a similar topic or object of this study advise studying many theories from another expert to express racial issues in other forms in the story. Racial segregation is another issue that contains in this novel. The suggestion intends as an additional deeper understanding of racial issues. Hopefully, the readers or students can comprehend the content of this study to enrich the reader's insight on the racial discrimination issue. Hopefully, this study will have a beneficial and positive impact on the readers.

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