

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an introductory paragraph and some of background of the study in analyzing slavery in the script of “12 Years a Slave”, statements of the problem, and objectives of the study, significances of the study, and scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of The study

In the world, every person has a same right. Each of them must not only focus skin’s color, country and tribes. Yet, in fact every person is still judged with biological line that attributed to him or her. They believed that skin’s color can determine individual achievement. It means that a certain race is more superior and has the right for settling others.

The use of color as a term for major social groups, especially whites and black, are automatically created a dangerous of human categories. And then the label of human categories as deeply entrenched is the concept of race on which it rests (Vaughan, 1995:3). The whites considered that they are more superior and discriminate against the black’s races, whereas the black’s race as minority always tried to free and rebel to get a same right. As a result, the whites had an opinion that black races are immoral, stupid, and insurgent and always do violence. The categories that occur in society make appear a new concept named racism. It is strengthened with Paula Rothenberg’s statement (In Rowan Wolf: 2):

Racism involves the subordination of people of color by white people. While individual persons of color may well

discriminate against a white person or another person of color because of their race, this does not qualify as racism according to our definition because that person of color cannot depend upon all the institutions of society to enforce or extend his or her personal dislike. Nor can he or she call upon the force of history to reflect and enforce that prejudice.

The subordination of people by the whites in society became an origin of racism in society. It is caused by racism is often used to explain the phenomena which about differences of people from biological line or discrimination on an ethnic. Discrimination can occur in religion, sex and race. This kind of discrimination had ever happened in the United States of America. In history, racism was a driving force behind states based on racial segregation and submission and slave trade in U.S (Fredrickson: 1988).

In America 1600s, English colonist came to seek their luck by returning home. They planned to compete with the Spanish to get wealthier by forcing and enslaving the native people or import slaves to produce gold and silver. The colony began to import rented servants because of there was no gold and silver they can get. So, the colony discovered a crop, tobacco whose trade would bring them gold and silver. As a result, the colony brings in a slave from Africa to increase production (Smedley, 2007:2).

The history of African-American in America, begin in 1619 with the arrival of first slaves from Africa. The debate over the status of the first Africans to arrive in British North America remains heated, as does the debate over their place in a colonial cultural order. Tendencies and practices were often contradictory and unstable (Dickson, 2001:2). As a result, the existence of African is still questionable. In the US, it is widely and popularly believed that the colonists brought Africans to the New World as slaves from the beginning and that

Europeans were “naturally” prejudiced toward Africans because of their physical characteristics, specifically dark skin (Smedley:3).

As a consequence, the Africans who have different skin's color, language, religion felt inferior, it made them being servants or slaves. It is strengthened with Dickson D. Bruce Jr. statement that “at various times and in various places, Africans in North America faced systems of slavery and freedom that were both oppressive and permeable, often at the same time (2001:1). They worked in plantation. American plantation became powerful marker for indentured Africans. It is strengthened with Matthew Kachur's statement that:

In time, more and more slaves were kidnapped from their homes in Africa and taken to the colonies in chains to cultivate crops on the growing number of Southern plantations. Slaves were also taken to the Northern colonies to be farm workers, household servants, and artisans (2006:7).

One of the films that attracts the attention of the researcher about the form of racism especially slavery is the film entitled “12 Years a Slave”. “12 Years A Slave” is a film has frightened message and also all of the badness slavery's system that happened in United State in the mid-1800s. In this film, a sense of slavery is clearly drawn up and defined through plot, actors or actress, setting and action in the film.

“12 Years a Slave”, a third film that is directed by Steve McQueen and written by John Ridley. The film opened to positive review and become a commercial success with a worldwide box office gross of \$1.747.653 million. “12 Years A Slave” received seven Golden Globe Award nomination (won best drama film) and nine Academy Award nominations including best film, best

supporting actress and best adaptation scenario along with best film in BAFTA. (<http://www.goldenglobes.com/awards>)

“12 Years a Slave”, a biography film that tells about a free African American man who lived in Saratoga Springs, New York. He could write and read, was a skilled violinist and was working as a carpenter. He was kidnapped by whites and become a slave in Louisiana. In this film, the whites always dominate and the black always at the end of one’s rope. “12 Years a Slave” set on 1841, where at the mid-1800s, the black or Nereid’s race oppressed by the white. (Anne Thompson: 2012)

Solomon Northup, a witness of slavery in America at 1860s. Because of his physical matter, Northup worked for 12 years as slave under several masters. He is a freed African – American from New York. He was kidnapped, and sold as a slave. He was shipped to New Orleans, purchased by a planter, and held as a slave for 12 years in the Red River region of Louisiana, mostly in Avoyelles Parish. He remained in slavery until he met a Canadian working on his plantation that helped send a letter to his family in New York, where state law provided for aid to free New York citizens kidnapped into slavery. Family and friends enlisted the aid of the Governor of New York, Washington Hunt, and Northup regained his freedom on January 3, 1853. (Graham Fuller: *Steve Mc Queen’s Twelve Years a Slave set to shine light on Solomon Northup*: 2012)

In this study, the researcher is interested to analyze the script of “12 Years a Slave”. First, the researcher chooses “12 Years A Slave” because it stands out racism and slavery clearly. This film is adapted from a memoir and slave narrative

by Solomon Northup. And then “12 Years a Slave”, a best film in Academy Award.

Second, the researcher also prefers to choose Solomon Northup as main character because of this character is interesting character. Solomon is a freed man that experience slavery. This film also focuses on Solomon’s history, so the researcher automatically analyze Solomon’s problem.

The third, the researcher chooses slavery’s issue. In this film, there are many issues that can be analyzed. However the main issue that is explained briefly is slavery. In a whole of story, slavery always becomes important aspect that builds up the film.

And the last, the researcher only focusses analyze “12 Years A Slave” script. The script does not have long story, so the researcher does not take time to read and easy to understand. Besides that the researcher limits the object of study. The object of this study is the script of “12 Years a Slave”.

1.2 Statements of The Problem

After reading the background of the study above, there are several questions in this study. Those questions can be formulated as follows:

- 1.2.1 How the conflicts suffered by Solomon Northup described in the script of “12 Years A Slave” by John Ridley?
- 1.2.2 How Solomon Northup struggle to against slavery described in the script of “12 Years a Slave” by John Ridley?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

Based on the statement of study above, the objectives of the study are formulated into:

- 1.3.1 To explain the conflict suffered by black people described in the script of “12 Years A Slave” by John Ridley.
- 1.3.2 To describe Solomon Northup struggle to against slavery in the script of “12 Years A Slave” by John Ridley.

1.4 Significances of The Study

There are two types of significance of the study. Those are theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the result of this study is expected to be useful for English Department students who are interested history of Solomon Northup’s slavery in the script of “12 years a slave” by John Ridley.

Practically, the result of the study would be worthy. The reseracher also hopes this thesis can be used by the reader as a reference. This study will be useful for English student and also it can encourage students to study more about the struggle of Solomon Northup rebel racism and slavery in United Stated.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The script “12 Years a Slave” written by John Ridley has a lot of issues which can be analyzed. The researcher prefer to choose literature as an object. However the scope of this thesis is focused on the script of “12 years a slave”. The script of “12 Years a Slave” draws up the condition of slavery in America at 1860s

clearly. So, the researcher chooses the script of “12 years a slave” as the scope of this study.

The limitation of this study is focused on slavery theory and Solomon Northup’s slavery problem. The researcher only explained Solomon Northup’s problem and slavery. The data to support this study are taken from “12 Years a Slave” script written by John Ridley then analyzed Solomon Northup’s struggle in his slavery experience.