

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

Racism is an one of interesting social issue which has been a long discussion in the field of literature and social studies. Racism happens in many countries especially in countries which have multiple cultures like America. In America racism happened from the 17th century until this present day. According as quoted at Juliana Manasce Horowitz, Anna Brown and Kiana Cox, “More than 150 years after the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, most U.S. adults say the legacy of slavery continues to have an impact on the position of black people in American society today” (2019). Eadyth Crawford is one of the victims of racism in America. As her statement in BBC NEWS article “*Brexit ‘Major Influence’ in Racism and Hate Crime rRse*”, she believes that the victim of racism has lack of support from people around them (2019).

As a persistent phenomenon in a society, racism is an unfair treatment toward other people. It can be said that this is the first time the phenomenon had happened in a society. In European separating people based on their appearances. The phenomenon can be learned through studying a literary work (qtd. in Fajri 1). According to Ethel and Martin (1990), the relationship between Black as minority and White as majority became a crucial issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century especially by the 1870. Black American have been declared citizens with all the right guarantees but the black are ridiculed, rejected, and often left without a clear sense of self. Black Americans have often had to exist to a world where the rules are made by White Americans. This point became increasingly

clearer during the late nineteenth Century, when Blacks began moving from the rural South to Northern cities. The racial action mentioned above is called racism (qtd. in Sanopa, Mac Aditiawarman, and Raflis 44). Historically, the human race has been defined as a population with distinguishable biological characteristics. More often than not, racial prejudice leads one's perception towards race relation. Racial prejudice is known as a moral and social disease. It endangers people all over the world. It is diagnosed by cataloging various symptoms and their manifestations which include fear, separation, hatred, intolerance, segregation, and discrimination.

Social condition that happens above are possible to be reflected in many works of literature, even though it is not always as it seems, it is possible that external factors such as social conditions and history of the people influence literature. In other words events that are caught in a history book or events that leave a deep sensation or trauma might affect literature for the reader (Levin qtd. in Murwantono 137). This phenomenon also happens in America, as we know America is the one of the most diverse countries in the world. It Consists of people who come from various countries. in America many people are immigrants. The fact is that the black population in America is descended from slaves. In 1619 and 1859 they were brought from Africa to America to be sold into slavery. The number of blacks was around 38.9 million (Waters et al. 371). In America black people from Africa are called the first slaves which due to their physical appearance, was treated as less than their White counterparts. In the present day, apparently this image remains. Ghandnoosh gives an example: "Prosecutors are more likely to charge people of color with crimes that carry heavier sentences than whites. Federal prosecutors, for example, are twice as likely to charge

African Americans with offenses that carry mandatory minimum sentences than otherwise-similar whites” (16). It means in America White people think that the Black people were lower. The Black people as known as lower people, they are not equal toward White people, and also criminals. It can be explained as follows.

The African-American received a label indicating prejudice. “Prejudice is grouped into three components. They are a cognitive component, an affective component, and a conative component ”(Dovidio et al. 5). Prejudice reflects disliking other people. It is based on limited knowledge. White people have negative prejudice against white people without knowing the truth. Each group can become the object of prejudice, including African-American or the Black people. However, most black people are victims of prejudice in terms of ethnic, racial, and minority groups. Racial prejudice occurs when Black people get unfavorable treatments from their superior counterparts. Social acceptance towards such bad treatments resulted in persistent slavery. Blacks were sold and forced into the workforce as slaves. In the antebellum period, slavery underpinned the United States economy. It was what dominated politics and ultimately led to war between the north and south. After the Civil War. The legacy of slavery left behind continues to influence American history. It dates back to the Reconstruction era of the twentieth century. After the American Revolution happened. Slavery became an institution in the South. This institution has a place in the world of literature. Literature has created a new and powerful one that is full of suffering and racism. This genre is called slave narrative. Among these narratives, this study tends to shed light on the story of North Solomon, in his twelve years of experience in the world of slavery in the eighteenth century.

According to Damono, Literary work is a reflection of the values and conditions of social life. It will influence the author. The author describes society according to his views and ideology. The relationship between literary works and society is based on the author (qtd. in Adawiyah 2015) Therefore, there are a lot of literary works which written by Black people. It took a racism as the topic. For example, it can find in *12 Years A Slave*. *12 Years A Slave* is a movie based on a true story. It was written by Solomon Northup as a narrative bibliography.

In history of America. This is a country is well known as a diverse country. They came from many countries in the world. One of the major issues in American society was slavery and racism. Slavery is a result of social injustice that spreads because of differences in skin color. This created a distinctive wall where Whites are considered superior and Blacks are inferior (Murni 215). Such as a true story that was filmed in *12 Years A Slave*. It tells about the racial prejudice towards the characters. The main character is Solomon Northup. He was sold as a slave by Merrill Brown and Abram Hamilton. They offer him to spend his time to go to vacation. It takes two weeks in Washington. Finally, Solomon was agree. During twelve years, he moved to one master to others. There he also met with his friends as slaves who got bad treatment. Based on the object of the study, the sociological approach called racism became the right theory to explore the characters in *12 Years A Slave* movie.

There are two reasons why the movie is interesting to be analyzed. The first reason the movie is a narrative story. It is written based on the personal experience. He was a freeman, but he must spend his life to be slave during 12 years. So it inspires him to write his story as a literary work. The second reason is his involvement with his slave

friends who dared to oppose his master which has a correlation between each of the characters in the movie and the theory to be discussed in this study. Therefore, based on the background above, the title of this study is: “*The Racial Prejudice towards African-American as reflected in Steve Mcqueen’s 12 Years a Slave (2013).*”

### **B. Problem Formulation**

By developing the previous explanation, this research formulates the problem formulations as follows:

1. How are racial prejudice depicted in Steve Mcqueen’s *12 Years A Slave* Movie?
2. What are the factors causing racial prejudice towards African-American found in Steve Mcqueen’s *12 Years A Slave* Movie?

### **C. Limitation of the Study**

There have been several previous studies related to *12 Years a Slave* movie but mainly about racism in general. The first is “Racism Against African American Slave in Solomon Northup’s *Twelve 12 Years A Slave*” by Robiah Al Adawiyah (2015). The second study was conducted by Muh. Taufik and Hasniar (2016) entitled “Racism in *12 Years A Slave* movie”. The last study by Sarmita Utami Harahap (2017) where she focuses on the racial discrimination in her work: “The Analysis of Racial Discrimination in Solomon Northup’s *12 Years A Slave*”.

In this study, the writer specifies the focus of the study on the racial prejudice in the movie. For the purpose of this study, the writer limits her analysis only on racial prejudice experienced by the characters escaping from the situation of slavery based on *12 Years a Slave* movie.

#### **D. Objectives of the Study**

Based on the explanation above, this final project focuses to find out of following objectives:

1. To explain how racial prejudice is depicted in Steve Mcqueen's *12 Years A Slave* Movie.
2. To identify the factors causing racial prejudice towards African-American found in Steve Mcqueen's *12 Years A Slave* Movie.

#### **E. Significance of the Study**

There are some following expectations from the writer as the result of the study below:

1. This study can give knowledge to the readers. Especially, for the students.
2. This study as references to next researchers who using Racism theory.
3. This study can give positive effects to the readers who want to appreciate and tolerate a difference in race and color in society by reading this research that is correlated with the movie.

#### **F. Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first cahpter is discusses the introduction which consists of six points. They are Background of the Study, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Significance of the Study, and Organization of the Study. The second chapter is discusses the synopsis of *12 Years A Slave* Movie (2013) and Reviews of Related Literature such as; racism, racial prejudice, and factors causing for success on the analyzed object. Chapter three discusses the research method which consists of three points. They are Research, Data Organizing, and Analyzing the Data.

The fourth chapter is Finding and Discussion. Fifth chapter deals with Conclusion and Suggestion.