

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Racism is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people based on their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. The term is also used to refer to institutions and systems in the political, economic, and legal fields that are directly or indirectly involved in the practice of race-based discrimination, or that reinforce racial inequality in various aspects of life such as wealth and income distribution, access to education, health services, civil rights, and other important areas (Smedley, 2024). Racism is a global issue, especially in the United States the country that are believe as a melting pot around the world. Racial inequality towards African American begins in August 1619 with the publication of a diary titled "20 and odd," which details the kidnapping of 20 blacks by the Portuguese and were brought to Jamestown, Virginia. They were sold and made into slavery to the British colonist, the date and the narrative have come to represent the origins of slavery. Because of the event, later Massachusetts become the first British North American Colonial to legalize enslaving African in 1641, and followed by other colonies.

Throughout the 17th century, European settlers in North America relied on the labor of enslaved Africans because it was cheaper and more readily available than

indentured laborers, who were generally poor Europeans. After the 13th amendment was ratified in 1865, the debate over whether slavery was legal in the United States was finally resolved, these views and thoughts provided a precarious position of African – Americans in the United States during and after slavery, during slavery African – Americans are forbidden from learning to read and write. After slavery, some laws were passed to protect the rights of African – Americans, such as the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1871 Rudolph (2005). And the 13th Amendment's passage in early 1865 marked the beginning of Jim Crow laws, Black Codes were stringent local and state rules that specified when, where, and how persons who had been enslaved might work, as well as how much they should be paid. The codes are defined as a series of discriminatory laws enacted in the Southern United States during the Reconstruction Era, mainly in 1865 and 1866 Rust (2023). These laws essentially established a system of legal segregation and white supremacist by limiting freedoms and civil rights of recently freed African Americans. that later removing their right to vote, controlling where they lived and how they traveled, and seizing children for labor. Additionally, Jim Crow Laws grew in scope in the 1880s, although African Americans enjoyed more freedom under them because major Southern cities were not entirely bound to them and this situation lasted until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, During the early 1960s numerous civil rights demonstrations and protest were held, particularly in the south Hansan (2011). Montgomery Bus Boycott are one of the most known demonstrations and stands as a pivotal event in the United States history, in order to effect social change, the Montgomery Bus Boycott highlights the importance of

both individual agency and group activity Moultrie (2009). African – American community are the example of how social injustice happened in the United States, from slavery, to how society reacts to them, and Ku Klux Klan is one of the famous white supremacist groups that has risen that organized to intimidate African – Americans after the civil war. This brought African – American lives inequality to the others, because of what Ku Klux Klan did, the Klan has the primary goal to reestablishment of white supremacy. The Klan target was Black institutions such as schools and churches.

Ava Duvernay's film '*13th*' highlights how the mass prison system in the United States disproportionately affects black communities. The criminal justice system often treats black people more harshly, from arrest to sentencing. Policies such as the 'war on drugs' have also had a major impact on the high incarceration rates among African Americans. Other than that, this film also talks about racial inequality and social injustice towards African – American in the United States. The title was referred to the 13th amendment of U.S. constitutions that talk about abolishing slavery. It also talks about the social injustice through African – American from the authorities, and how African – American have been controlled through systems of racial and social control that create a new form of slavery. And how a system relegated African – Americans to a permanent second-class status. That makes African – Americans community hard to access a good quality job, studies such as a public school, and an unfairness in health service access. Racial inequality and social injustice against black people in the United States is a highly complex issue, with deep roots in the history of slavery and discrimination. Despite

significant progress since the Civil Rights Movement, major challenges remain. The film '13th' by Ava Duvernay helped raise awareness about these issues by showing how the mass prison system and related policies have reinforced racial inequality. The fight for justice and equality continues, fueled by social movements and policy reform efforts.

To illustrate the complicated nature of the 13th amendment, the documentary draws on a wide range of academics, activists, politicians, and others. Although many see the Amendment as a progressive step forward for African Americans, it contains a very complicated clause that states "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States nor in any place subject to their jurisdiction." This clause was "immediately exploited" because slavery was a fundamental component of the Southern economy and because racism and prejudice are ingrained in our society. The four million newly emancipated African Americans were imprisoned indefinitely for crimes like loitering, vagrancy, and other offenses right away.

Additionally, this marked the beginning of "the mythology of black criminality." detailed explanation throughout the film. It was widely believed that African Americans were violent, avaricious, and lacking in intellect. The film included scenes from "*The Birth of a Nation*," the first big-budget film in America. It can be upsetting to witness the overt bigotry and prejudice that is displayed in the film, which is notorious for making Ku Klux Klan members the heroes of the story. Thousands of African Americans were killed in lynch mobs during this period,

many known it as the Jim Crow era, which the film refers to as "another wave of terrorism."

The reason I choose this topic is because it is crucial to understand the roots of racial inequality and the cause of social injustice that have still greatly affected to African – American communities to this day. This analysis has a purpose to show how the racial inequality and social injustice pictured from the early discrimination to this day, through this research I tend to more examine the racial inequality and social injustice against the community revealed in the film through a sociological approach which are Conflict Theory by Karl Marx and Systemic Racial Theory by Joe R. Feagin. Also, the previous studies that I found are only focusing on how the justice law works against African – American communities and the mass incarceration against African – American communities pictured in this film.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How does the film “13th” reflect the continuity of social injustice and racial inequality from slavery to modern society through its narrative structure and documentary elements?
2. What are the underlying historical and structural causes of social injustice and racial inequality towards African – Americans as represented in Ava DuVernay’s “13th”?
3. What is the impact of social injustice and racial inequality on African – American communities as portrayed in Ava DuVernay’s “13th”?

1.3. Research Aims

1. This study aims to analyze how “13th” reflects the continuity of racial oppression through its narrative structure and documentary techniques.
2. This study aims to examine the historical and structural cause of social injustice and racial inequality towards African – Americans as pictured in “13th”
3. This study aims to explore how “13th” portrays the long-term impact of racial oppression of African – Americans communities.

1.4. Scope of the Study

In this research thesis, the analysis is limited to exploring how the film reflects the development and persistence of social injustice and racial inequality toward African-Americans from the post-slavery era to the modern period. The scope of this research is divided into two main aspects: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic aspect focuses on narrative structure and documentary elements. The extrinsic aspect covers the historical and structural causes and impacts of racial oppression as portrayed in the film.

1.5. Previous Studies

I found several studies which brought up the same object 13th, and despite of the lack of research on the object I find other similar studies, the first study is a journal article from Twidwell (2017) entitled *The Power of the Documentary: Examining the Effectiveness of Ava DuVernay’s 13th* this study explain that the director exploration of the mass incarceration crisis that facing black men, the topic was started with The United States, which has 5% of the world’s population, is home to nearly 25% of all convicts worldwide. Additionally, the percentage of

black people in the United States population is roughly 13.2%, but there was a stark disparity of 37% of the prison population. That made an indicative of what is the largest wrong done to African – American communities in the United States.

The second study is a journal article entitled *When The Hidden Injustices Are Brought to Light: A review of 13th* by Vincent Stierman (2017) the study exposes that the film's seamless connection is one of its strongest points. Other documentaries I've seen tend to become disjointed or lose focus at times. *13th*, on the other hand, weaves together unique blend of statistics, historical news clips, and expert commentary. Nothing feels out of place, and each aspect perfectly complements the others. This results in an impressive build-up that culminates in a persuasive and potent conclusion.

The third study is a thesis entitled *Representation of Racism in Dear White People Film* by Zul Karno Ra'is (2018) this study aims to explain how racism is portrayed in the film and how the main black character fights back against it. Because of this, racism is represented in this thesis through housing regulations that give white students larger apartments than black students. Black students attempt to resist racism by attempting to negotiate the creation of a random housing regulation that would make everything equal for both white and black students, but in the end, the black students still face regulations, and the main character, a white student, employs a variety of strategies to prevent the regulations from occurring.

The fourth study is a journal article entitled *The Reflection of Racism Towards African American in Selma Movie* by Rahmatillah. Y., Kuncara D. S., & Nasrullah (2020) this research aims to find the level of racism experienced by African

American in *Selma*. According to the study, there are three different levels of racism that are depicted in the film: internalized racism, personally mediated racism, and institutionalized racism. The black characters in the film have been impacted by racism on all levels, both positively and negatively.

1.6. Research Method

1.6.1. Data and Sources of Data

The data that I will use in this research are the main and secondary data, Ajayi (2023:2) explain that the main data are refers to the first-hand data gathered by the researcher himself, while secondary data means data collected by someone else earlier. The main data are taken from the film *13th*, in a form of scenes and dialogues from the film. Moreover, the secondary data that will be used to support the primary data in this research are taken from books, articles contained in the internet sites that related to the research topic.

1.6.2. Method of Data Collection

The method that will writer use in this research is qualitative method, Creswell & Poth (2014) explain that qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It is made up of a variety of material and interpretative techniques such as memo, recordings, photos, conservations, interviews, and representations.

To collect the data, I will be following several steps:

1. Watching and observing the film “*13th*”

2. Taking notes from the dialogue and scenes that are usable for analyzing the research question

1.6.3. Research Approach

As the topic discussed in this research, I will use the sociological approach such as Conflict Theory by Karl Marx, and Systemic Racism Theory by Joe R. Feagin to analyze the data. The sociological approach itself is a theory that set of interrelated propositions or principles designed to answer a question in a particular phenomenon, which can help to explain the social world Witte (1941). Each theory has a function to depth-analyze how structures of power and wealth in American society have created and perpetuated racial inequality, also to understand how racism is embedded in society towards African – American community in the film.

1.7. Organization Writing

To create systematic writing, the writing outline arranged as follows:

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter consist of the background study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the previous studies, the scope of the studies, and the research method.

CHAPTER II INTRINSIC THERORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the intrinsic theories that related to the study topic. It consists of the explanation of narrative elements in films, intrinsic elements, and documentary film elements.

CHAPTER III EXTRINSIC THERORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the extrinsic theories that related to the study topic. It consists of the explanation of social injustice, Jim crow law, 13th Amendment exception clause, modern slavery, racial inequality.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter consist of finding and discussion of the data. It shows how the history of social injustice and racial inequality are shown in the film.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, it presents a persuasive summarize of the thesis, the previous chapters' concept, findings, and discussion.