



**PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM
REFLECTED IN FILM *12 YEARS A SLAVE***

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
For S-1 Degree in American Cultural Studies
In English Department, Faculty of Humanities
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PRONOUNCEMENT

I state truthfully that this final project entitled “Personal and Institutional Reflected in film *12 Years A Slave*” is arranged by herself without any part is taken from other researches works in S-1, S-2, S-3, and Diploma degree of any university. Furthermore, I ascertain that the material is not taken from another thesis or someone’s work except for the reference which is mentioned in the references.

Semarang, July 18 2021

Iga Dwikustiani Putri

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today.

- H Jackson Brown, Jr.-

Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear.

-George Addair-

I will study and get ready, and perhaps my chance will come.

– Abraham Lincoln-

I proudly dedicated this project to my beloved family and to the reader.

APPROVAL

**PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM REFLECTED IN FILM 12 YEARS A
SLAVE**

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I realize this final project is far from the perfection, hence I will be glad if there are any suggestion, constructive comment and criticism for this writing. Finally, I wish that this writing can be useful for those who are searching for information and perspective.

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Iga Dwikustiani Putri

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ABSTRACT

Racism happened all the time. What happened to *12 Years A Slave* tells us about slavery and racism in America. Black people were sold, kidnapped and deprived from their freedom. Solomon Northup as The Black who had freedom paper but still kidnapped and sold also had racism things from The White in *12 Years A Slave* film. This research aims to analyse the type of Racism reflected in the movie. This research use theory of Personal Racism and Institutional Racism by analysing the script and the movie. The result shows in this movie tells there are several types of Racism and about the Freedom Paper.

Keywords: *Racism, 12 Years A Slave, a Film character, the Freedom Paper*

1. Background of Study

Racism is an endless matter. It starts a long time ago which is a very common thing. Racism is an attitude that arises in oneself to do unfairly things against other races, based on skin colour. Until today when government made a laws to stop racism, the data still prove that there are still many acts of racism at this time. It is same as the situation which happened in the *12 Years A Slave* a film which tell the world of slavery that occurred in America. Although racism has to be banned but in some parts of America in fact the number of slavery and racism increased in the 1800s. In America, a lot of black people were kidnapped and deprived of their liberty to become a slave and not treated as human beings in general. But in the middle of the harsh conditions at that time, the black people were still struggling to get their rights to be able to live a normal and free life like people in general

Racism is very dangerous for the ecipient of destructive behaviour and also for the one who create that act themselves. Racism acts to denigrate the target by denying it's identity, this can destroy a culture by the division of groups politically, socially and economically in a country (Samovar et al, 2010: 187-2011)

The origin of the term race is known around the year 1600. The one who says at the time there was a person who put forward the idea of human differentiation based on categories and characteristics, as well as skin color, is Francois Bernier. Because the physical, humans in the world have to be separated

by 4 groups, Black, White, Yellow, and Red. A figure told the race as a something which refers to biological and physical features is Charles Darwin, as it showed in the film *12 Years A Slave* which is a lots of scene that show a racism and slavery, but slavery comes when the white people think that black race is known as a strong people and they are poor, it was upside down with white. White people is the rich one and they had everything but not with a strong body, so they treated black badly and they did a racism.

Differences based on skin color make their races favor their own race. Darwin's theory made the whole acts for justify one race to dominate another. The race that feels they are a superior would suppress the other race. In film *12 Years A Slave*, Solomon Northup is a Black free man , but he was kidnapped and treated not as a human being with white people.

A Film is a portrait of the community in which it was made. The film always records reality that grows and develops in society, and later projecting it onto the screen (Sobur, 2003: 127). The film is not only a means or medium of entertainment for people, but often films also become our means to learn and understand the things that have happened many years ago which is raised through film media such as history and biography.

12 Years A Slave is a 2013 United States-Great Britain epic historical drama film which is adapted from a 1853 memoir of the same name about Solomon Northup, an independent Negro life in New York who was kidnapped in Washington, D.C. in 1841 and sold as a slave. The White gave him a new name

“Platt” , he works in a plantation in the state of Louisiana for twelve years before being released. The first edition of Northup's memoirs, edited by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon in 1968, has been carefully traced and confirmed for accuracy.

Black people are considered to be an a lower caste than white people. Various methods have been used to get rid of black people, including torturing and killing them. In this film white people are shown as cruel people, but white people also act as heroes and saviors.

In this study, researchers collected the data from watching the movie *12 Years A Slave*. This study is aimed at seeing how the Personal and Institutional Racism is displayed in the United States, in the film *12 Years A Slave*.

2. Theoretical Framework

Robert Blauner describes racism as a tendency for people who are categorized as different cultures in terms of their physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair color, facial texture, and eye shape (Lustig dan Koester, 2003: 157-158). Dalmas Taylor offers a related approach which focuses on the behavioral component of racism. And he explains two types of racism (Neubeck,2001:86) :

2.1 Personal Racism

Personal racism occurs when a compilation of individuals (or small groups of individuals) has a suspicious attitude and or is involved in discriminatory interactions. Manifestation of Personal Racism is an individual stereotype on the basis of alleged racial differences, insulting names and references, discriminatory evaluations during interpersonal contact, challenges, and acts of violence against group members becoming inferior races.

2.2 Institutional Racism

Institutional Racism is racism in institutions that involve special treatment given to minority communities. Racist institutions draw attention that groups such as Native Americans, African-Americans, Latino-Americans and Asian-Americans often find themselves victims of the routine work of the organizational structure. Unlike forms of Personal Racism, this racism occurs through day-to-day and year-to-year operations of large-scale institutions which are often difficult to detect without investigation (Neubeck, 1997: 269-277)

2.3 Freedom Paper

Freedom papers is documents that claimed free status of Blacks. This document is very important because “free people of color” lived with fearless of being kidnapped and sold into a slave. In *12 Years A Slave*, the police just show to the master who owned a slave to free them. With the Freedom Paper, the black people can fight back free because sometimes the white people do not know if the black people are free or not.

3. Research Method

In completing this research, researchers used qualitative descriptive methods. This method is implemented by describing the data and analyzing it, in relation to the focus of the analysis. According to Bodgan and Biklein (2003: 110),

qualitative research can be used either as a primary strategy for data collection, or as it relates to observation, data analysis or other techniques. Researchers are trying to analyze this research descriptively that emphasizes on Racism in particular the types of Personal and Institutional Racism in the film “*12 Years a Slave*”. In this research, the writer would be focusing on the type of racism in this film and discussed about Freedom Paper.

4. Discussion

4.1 Personal Racism

In this screenshot and as we can see on the script which shows a white says a words with calling a Blacks their races “Niggas” and we can find a racism, The white talk to the black with words “ Yo fresh Niggas” with showing hot to cut the plants. The white is stand by himself but he is brave to said like that in a lot of blacks. And the white only told the blacks to do a lot of things. Personal Racism.

Personal Racism can be showed if there are some people with a certain race say a racist thing to another race, as we can seen in this script which is showed in this conversation.



Picture 1 (00:01:12)

12 Years A Slave

The White talked to Solomon and others

There are a lot of example of Personal Racism in *12 Years A Slave*, there are some picture which shows the black people got a lot of Personal Racism. The white do that to the black people usually in everyday life.

In this screenshot show racism that Solomon Northup woke up from his stupor after drinking a glass of alcohol given by Hamilton and Brown with his hands and feet chained like a wild animal. He was locked up in the dark room without any blankets or even food. In this film there are no Whites treated like this. For Solomon Northup it can categorized as a Personal Racism. In that era, whites treated black like this, chained their hands, chained their legs, and sometimes Blacks got no food untill they dead is a common things. In *12 Years A Slave*, not only man who got chained up, but also woman.



Picture 2 (00:11:58)

12 Years A Slave

Solomon Northup both his hands and legs is chained

Racism showed not only just how do they react to blacks, but also the words that they said to Blacks and not only white man who do racism, the white woman also do this things. In this scene showed that the white threatened Solomon, if Solomon not do as the white said, he would be flogged 100 times. And it was Personal Racism.



Picture 3 (01:03:19)

12 Years A Slave

Epps wife talked to Solomon

The example of Individual racism is very much in 12 Years a Slave the next example is as we can see on the dialogue :

Tibeats: “Yah black bastard! Yah goddman black bastard!”

As we can see on this dialogue, besides calling slaves “bastard” and then adding black words, why words “Black” is a symbol of racism because Black is the color of the skin and it means that the color of blacks became the lowest human being at that time. It is an example for Personal Racism.

4.2 Institutional Racism

In this scene, Institutional Racism showed when Mr. Bass talks to Epps about the Right to have a Nigger as shown in the conversation :

Epps : “What right? I bought ‘em, I paid for ‘em.”

Bass : “Of course you did, the law says you have the right to hold a nigger, but begging the law’s pardon.. it lies. Is everything right because the law allows it? Suppose they’d pass a law taking away your liberty and making you a slave?”



Picture 4 (01:43:33)

12 Years A Slave

Bass and Epps talked about the right to hold a nigger

Bass talked about the law’s and the Right to hold a nigger, it can conclude that Government passed the regulation to hold a nigger and make them a slave.

4.3 Freedom Paper

In *12 Years A Slave* showed us some scene that the police hold some freedom paper, and also on the dialogue, some actors talked about tha freedom paper. Not all Blacks had this freedom paper until Slavery is deleted on this whole world for real. For the example that they said about freedom paper, here is the dialogue :

White Master : “Whatever paper you hold about his freedom, it don't mean naught. He is my nigger - and I will have my day in court, sir. As God as my witness, I will have my day in court. Take 'em!”

So in this script said that “Whatever paper you hold about his freedom...” i can conclude that a pieces of paper which Sheriff and Mr. Parker is a Freedom Paper. Solomon said that he had his own Free Paper which is a document that declare of his freedom. Showed in this dialogue :

Solomon Northup talk to Mister Bass “.. Then i ask you, i begg, would you write my friends on the north, acquainting them of my situation, and beseeching them to forward “Free Papers”.

4.4 Racism

In the beginning of this movie showed that there are a lots of blacks on the field and there was 1 white man said “ Yo fresh Niggas” . Used of “special name” for certain races like in this scene specially words “Niggas” means “Negro” means “Blacks” is Racist things.

5. Conclusion

In this movie, Personal and Institutional Racism reflected in film *12 Years A Slave*. The scene showed Racism as a habit, because no law’s to not to do Racism and Slavery at that time. Although a lots of Personal Racism in this film, one of Institutional Racism can be found in scene conversation between Bass & Epps talked about the Right of Negro.

As America in 19th century was divided in to two parts, north and south, the American people have different opinion about slavery. Given that the south is plantation area, they need slaves as workers on their plantation. Bad treatment to slave can be seen here. They treat their slaves like animal, no justice for the slaves, because slave is just a master’s property. As we can seen in this movie, a lots of Personal Racism than Institutional Racism, in this movie showed us how

White(Master) treated Blacks(Slave) badly as a Slave and Racist. Slavery is a form of racist exposure.

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