

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Research

Discrimination is a dark shadow that still haunts our society, an act that not only offends the values of justice but also undermines social bonds. While the world is increasingly connected and open to diversity, discrimination still manifests in explicit and hidden forms, from racial separation to differences in treatment based on religion, gender, or social status. Despite global efforts to fight for human rights, discrimination challenges us to recognize the importance of human rights. Every form of discrimination hurts individuals and holds back progress and the full potential that a society can achieve. Discrimination is the act of unfair treatment of individuals or groups distinguished by certain characteristics such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or ethnic background. It occurs all over the world and in a variety of social, economic, and political contexts, often to the detriment of minority groups or groups perceived as weak.

Discrimination can take explicit forms, such as social rejection or harassment, through policies or norms that marginalize individuals based on their identity. Albrecht (1954) examines three characterizations of relationship: 1) that society is reflected in literature; 2) that literature has an impact on society; and 3) that literature helps sustain or defend social order, and in effect social control. Although many efforts have been made to address it, inequality and injustice are global challenges at various levels of society due to discrimination.

The history of discrimination in the United States goes back to the colonial era and is full of struggle, pain, and hope for freedom. Slavery was an issue in the US in the 1700s. The forced removal and enslavement of millions of Africans from their land is a dark mark on history. This made freedom and segregation fight with each other. The Civil War ended in 1865, and slavery was ended. Many people thought that Black Americans would have a better future. But this hope didn't last long because of the Jim Crow laws. These laws made it so that Black and white people didn't have the same rights in all parts of life, like at school, at work, and in public places. This bad treatment went on until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. were two people who fought for changes to the law that would end segregation. Racism and inequality are still problems today because of this discrimination.

Author Yaa Gyasi writes about this kind of unfair treatment. Her first book, *Homegoing* (2016), made her famous. This book tells the story of families in Ghana and the United States over the course of three hundred years and how slavery and colonialism affected them. She was born in 1989 in Mampong, Ghana. She came to the US as a child and grew up in Huntsville, Alabama. Her African American heritage has a big impact on her writing. She writes about social justice, culture, identity. People have praised her work for how well she tells stories that are full of detail and life. She won the PEN/Hemingway Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award (John Leonard) in 2017. Gyasi combines history and fiction to show how unfair systems and injustice still hurt people. Her writing tells us why we need to know these things and how the past still affects the present. She is one of the best writers of her time. *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi is not a true story or fact. It is a historical fiction based on the real history of slavery, colonialism, and the effects they had on

generations of African descendants. Yaa Gyasi uses West African and American history, as well as the lives of people who were part of the transatlantic slave trade, to tell a story that takes place over 300 years. The characters and events in the novel are made up, but the historical setting (the Cape Coast fort in Ghana, the slave trade, slavery in America, Jim Crow laws, and the effects on both continents) is real. In other words, *Homegoing* uses history to talk about trauma that affects multiple generations and how historical events affect people and society. However, the story and characters are made up to show a deeper emotional and spiritual journey.

This book talks about discrimination, which is a problem that has been around for a long time and is still going on all over the world. The book talks about how slavery, colonialism, and systemic racism still affect people today and how these things keep happening from one generation to the next in Ghana and the United States. Some characters are treated unfairly because of their skin color, gender, or lack of money. This affects their identity, capabilities, and social interactions within their communities. Gyasi shows how the legacy of injustice affects both personal and group stories, and these stories still have an effect today.

It is important to recognize that discrimination is not merely a historical phenomenon; it is perpetuated through structural and psychological mechanisms. Transgenerational trauma elucidates the transmission of historical traumas, including slavery and colonialism, through familial legacies, parental conduct, and socioeconomic disadvantage. This corresponds with Hirsch's (1997) concept of postmemory, which denotes traumatic memories that are not directly experienced but are instead inherited. The examination of *Homegoing* expands the understanding of discrimination, perceiving it not as a singular occurrence, but as a cumulative process

that shapes a community's identity over time. The significance of this study remains validated today. Racism is still a problem in many parts of the world. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and racism against immigrants in Europe. *Homegoing* teaches us about the history of discrimination and how it relates to problems we have today. Consequently, this research is pertinent to scholarly discourse and to comprehending contemporary humanitarian challenges.

The author chose the book "*Homegoing*" as her main work because it deals with important issues like discrimination, identity, history, and social relations. The novel, as a genre, not only tells a story but also builds characters, settings, symbols, and social and cultural issues. The author of "*Homegoing*" can link literary theories to the book's social events, which gives her a more personal and narrative view of themes like injustice and humanity. This helps her learn more about history.

Discrimination is still a big problem in the world. For example, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that came back in the US in 2013 brought attention back to the violence against Black people because of their race. This movement showed not only how police violence happens, but also how the history of slavery and segregation still makes things unfair. The same is true in Europe, where African and Middle Eastern immigrants are looked down upon and not given jobs. Discrimination is not a relic of the past; it persists in various forms today. The selection of the novel "*Homegoing*" for analysis is warranted as it constitutes a transgenerational narrative that extends from the past to the present. "*Homegoing*" is not like "*Beloved*" by Toni Morrison, which is about the personal trauma of slavery, or "*Americanah*" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, which is about the lives of immigrants today. "*Homegoing*" shows how discrimination has changed over time. This study offers a



comprehensive perspective on the enduring nature of discrimination and sheds light on the formation of African diaspora identity throughout an extensive historical context.

Research on African diaspora literature and racial discrimination remains limited even within Indonesia. A significant portion of academic literature research concentrates on Indonesian texts or postcolonial analyses of Dutch colonialism. However, studying works like *Homegoing* can help academics see things from a different angle by showing that discrimination is not limited to one country, but is a common problem that can be seen in many places. This study enhances literary studies in Indonesia, specifically in postcolonial studies, literary sociology, and world literature. Thus, this research argues that *Homegoing* portrays discrimination as an evolving system that transforms across the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from physical and gender-based violence during slavery, to legal and economic oppression in the post-abolition era, and finally to structural and psychological marginalization in the modern period. By examining these shifts through the sociology of literature framework, this study reveals that discrimination is not a singular historical event but a continuous, intergenerational force that shapes identity, restricts social mobility, and sustains the trauma carried by each generation.

The focus of this research lies in the need to understand discrimination not merely as a historical incident but as a continuous, structural, and psychological system that shapes identities across generations. *Homegoing* is a literary work that provides narrative evidence of how racial oppression evolves alongside social, political, and cultural changes, offering insights that conventional historical records often overlook. This study contributes to global scholarly discourse on race, trauma, and diaspora while simultaneously enriching Indonesian literary scholarship, where examinations of

African diaspora literature and systemic discrimination remain limited. By integrating the sociology of literature with contemporary theories of discrimination, this research expands understanding and highlights the importance of literary texts as critical tools for interpreting long-standing human rights issues. Considering the issues discussed above, this research bears the title "Narrating Discrimination Across Ghanaian and African-American Generations In Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (From 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century)".

## 1.2. Identification of Problem

Using a real historical setting, *Homegoing* invites readers to question how discrimination has shaped the identity of African communities around the world and highlights their struggle to break free from the chains of injustice that continue to this day.

In this research, the writer would like to explore the racial discrimination that still exists across generations. This story has a total of 14 chapters, and it is divided into two bloodlines. This research is also going to focus on the racial discrimination happen in one family and the ancestors start from 18<sup>th</sup> century to 20<sup>th</sup> century which is represented by 3 main characters. Therefore, the author uses the theory of Sociology of Literature to find out what forms of discrimination the characters experience and how they get through it.

### 1.3. Review of Related Studies

The writer uses Yaa Gyasi's novel *Homegoing* as the main data for this research. The first study is an article *Critical Discourse Analysis of Ethnic Bias in "Homegoing"* (2023) by Asmaa Khoshmer Azeez, Suhayla Hameed Majeed, and Salam Neamah Hirmiz Hakeem. This article analyzes how ethnic bias is represented and critiqued in Yaa Gyasi's novel *Homegoing*. The authors use a critical discourse analysis approach to reveal patterns of language and narrative that reflect power dynamics and ethnic marginalization in the novel. The book talks about how slavery affected people and societies in the past, as well as how complicated relationships between different ethnic groups are in Africa and the diaspora. This article primarily examines the novel's portrayal of the enduring consequences of discrimination and the formation of ethnic identities within a socio-historical framework. This study enhances understanding of literature concerning social justice and cultural identity.

The second study is an article by Mohamed Adel Mahmoud called "Gender Discrimination Against Women in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2023)." This article examines the portrayal and condemnation of racial prejudice in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. The author utilizes critical discourse analysis to uncover linguistic and narrative patterns that expose power dynamics and ethnic marginalization within the novel. It shows how *Homegoing* shows not only the historical effects of slavery on people and groups, but also the difficulty of getting along with people from different ethnic groups. This article examines how the novel illustrates the legacy of discrimination and the influence of historical and social contexts on ethnic identities.

The third is an article by Mohamed Adel Mahmoud titled "Gender Discrimination against Women in *Homegoing* (2023) by Yaa Gyasi." This essay

examines the portrayal and condemnation of racial prejudice in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. The author employs critical discourse analysis to elucidate the linguistic and narrative patterns that expose power dynamics and ethnic marginalization within the novel. It shows how *Homegoing* shows the effects of slavery on people and groups in the past, as well as how hard it is to live with people of different races. This article examines the novel's portrayal of the legacy of discrimination and the impact of historical and social contexts on ethnic identities.

The third study is an article called "The Systematic Oppression of British Colonizers in Africa: A Lecture on Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2023)" by Anicet Odilon Matongo Nkouka, Alphonse Dorien Makosso, and Dory Theresia M'bakou Yengou. This essay examines the depiction of atrocities perpetrated by British colonizers in Africa as represented in the novel *Homegoing*. The authors demonstrate how the novel underscores the enduring effects of colonialism on African society. This article examines how novels function as historical documents that recount the impacts of colonialism while providing a space for contemplation on the trauma and collective resistance of colonized populations. This article emphasizes the function of literature in decolonizing dominant narratives regarding colonialism through critical analysis.

The next is Barbara Reskin, "The Racial System," *Annual Review of Sociology* (2012). This article examines racial discrimination as a systemic phenomenon, wherein institutions and social practices converge to perpetuate racial inequalities. Reskin contends that racial discrimination transcends individual or institutional actions, constituting a systemic phenomenon characterized by interactions across various domains, including education, employment, housing, and justice. This article stresses that racial discrimination is a multilevel system, where



changes at one level affect changes at other levels. Reskin stresses that to stop the cycle of discrimination and make racial inequalities less severe, we need to work together in a planned and coordinated way.

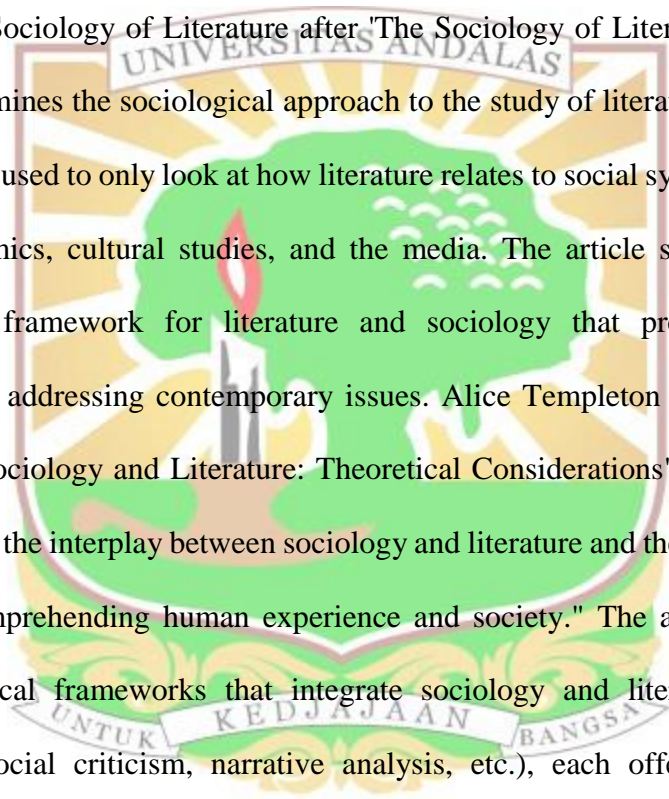
The fifth article, "Discrimination and Implicit Bias in a Racially Unequal Society" (2006), by R. Richard Banks, Jennifer L. Eberhardt, and Lee Ross, looks at how implicit bias keeps racial discrimination going in societies that aren't fair. The authors characterize unconscious bias as prejudices that operate beyond an individual's awareness, influencing their conduct. The article also talks about how hard it is to fight these biases because they are unconscious and how society and stereotypes make them stronger. The purpose of this article is to show how important it is to understand unconscious biases in order to fight racial discrimination and make policies that lessen their effect. In the sixth essay, "A History of Colorism in the United States" (2010),

The next is an article by Ronald E. Hall called "An historical analysis of skin color discrimination in America" (2010). He wrote: This article talks about how skin color has been a reason for discrimination in the US and how different skin tones have affected people's social and economic status. Hall starts with slavery, when people were treated unfairly because of the color of their skin. She then talks about how these effects are still felt today in schools, workplaces, and race relations.

Karen A. Hegtvedt wrote the next article, "Teaching the Sociology of Literature through Literature" (1991). This review demonstrates how literature, specifically "*Homegoing*," can facilitate the teaching and comprehension of sociological concepts such as discrimination, injustice, and social change. Hegtvedt contends that literature "humanizes" abstract theories, enabling students to observe

tangible instances of discrimination and inequality. Hegtvedt's approach to teaching sociology through literature suggests that "*Homegoing*" can be regarded as sociological literature, demonstrating discrimination through the emotions and intergenerational relationships it depicts. Both examples show that literature does more than tell stories; it also shows social truths by looking at how discrimination affects people and society.

The next is written by James F. English an article called "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Sociology of Literature after 'The Sociology of Literature'" in 2010. This article examines the sociological approach to the study of literature. In English, this field, which used to only look at how literature relates to social systems, now also looks at economics, cultural studies, and the media. The article suggests a more comprehensive framework for literature and sociology that preserves literary sociology while addressing contemporary issues. Alice Templeton and Stephen B. Groce wrote "Sociology and Literature: Theoretical Considerations" in 1990. "This article examines the interplay between sociology and literature and their collaborative potential in comprehending human experience and society." The authors examine various theoretical frameworks that integrate sociology and literature (such as structuralism, social criticism, narrative analysis, etc.), each offering a distinct perspective on how literature critiques society. They contend that literature both mirrors society and shapes it, revealing power dynamics, class conflicts, and identity formation. Templeton and Groce are arguing for an interdisciplinary field that combines the best parts of both fields to study what it means to be human.



#### 1.4. Research Question

- 1.4.1. How does *Homegoing* represents forms of discrimination experienced by Ghanaian people during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Transatlantic Slave Trade?
- 1.4.2. How are African-American characters in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century experience slavery-based and racial discrimination in *Homegoing*?
- 1.4.3. How does *Homegoing* critique the continuation of systemic discrimination forced by African-American descendants during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?

#### 1.5. Scope of The Research

The scope of this research will address discrimination in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, focusing on the impact of racial, social, and gender discrimination on the lives of characters over generations. The research will explore how experiences of discrimination in the two main locations, Ghana and the United States, shape the identities, relationships, and life choices of the characters who come from the two lineages of Effia and Esi.

#### 1.6. Objective of The Research

The purpose of this research is to analyze the representation of discrimination in Yaa Gyasi's novel *Homegoing*, as well as its impact on characters of two different lineages. By exploring the evolution of discrimination from the era of slavery to the modern era, this research also aims to understand the role of historical trauma and existing inequalities and how the characters in *Homegoing* attempt to overcome and confront the injustices they experience.