

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of The Research

American history deals with racial discrimination in many aspects of life, which is also portrayed in their literature. Racial discrimination also becomes an essential theme in some works, right from the beginning of this nation. The term racial discrimination means mistreating someone based on their race. Racial discriminatory behavior can arise from conscious or unconscious attitudes that place a person lower based on their race. Blank, Dabady, and Citro in their *Measuring Racial Discrimination*, states that racial discrimination is a condition when a person is treated less favorably or not given the same opportunities because of their race (2004, p.55). In sociological terms, racial discrimination in society is caused by the stigma that develops in the community towards a specific racial group. It means that racial discrimination is no longer an individual problem. Still, it is a social problem with a broader scope.

Racial discrimination against black people was ingrained in American society. Tracing back to American history, black people have been victims of discrimination by white people. Feagin & Vera, in the book *White Racism: The Basic*, said that black Americans had been defined as racially different by white groups for several centuries based on specific physical characteristics, such as skin color and hair type, presume to be unchangeable (1995, p.114). This statement emphasizes that racial discrimination is maintained continuously in America. It means that racial discrimination had happened a long time ago, mainly because of segregation called Jim Crow Law. Jim Crow made separated blacks and whites, which white people got more easiness in their life. However, the Civil Rights Movement is encouraged to eliminate forms of racial

discrimination in 1960 legally. However, in practice, racial discrimination against black American people still exists. Justice and difficulty, which always cover black American people, happened until today.

These days, police killings of black Americans have occurred countless times in the United States. On May 28, 2020, *The New York Times* informed George Floyd, a black American civilian. A white American policeman killed him. In the article *The New York Times*, Hill et al. explained that Floyd was killed by white policemen who moaned in pain and admitted that he was having trouble breathing. A white policeman pressed his neck with his knee. This phenomenon is indeed a problem for Americans who live today. This condition led to the black people's movement to reject this action called the *Black Lives Matter* movement.

A contemporary activist who talks about the racial discrimination issue in America is Shaun King. He is an American activist and writer who lives in Brooklyn. King focuses on civil rights, human rights, and racial justice. Besides, he also stood on the *Black Lives Matter* movement. This movement spoke explicitly about human dignity for African-Americans. King has also written several articles on social inequality, police brutality, and racial relations in America since 2014. As a human rights activist, King is trying to expose systematic oppression and how to fight injustice. He also helps us see how racism is not dead and forgotten until now.

In literature, Toni Morrison is also an important figure who talks about racism and discrimination. She is an African-American woman writer. All her works speak a lot about race, class, and discrimination. Her most famous work is *The Bluest Eye* (1970). This novel talk about racial discrimination issue in the twentieth century in America which discusses the conflict of black Americans family is due to social discrimination. Through *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison describes feelings that might arise from

experiencing racism, such as anger, hatred, and so on. She uses this novel as a protest against the negative stereotypes. First, she fought for black women rights and legal protection. Second, rising the role of black Americans family. In addition, she also opposing the doctrine of education literacy which claimed that white people had a more better education than black people. Many responded to the novel because it traced the racism still exists in America. It means racism and discrimination are serious problems that other writers always discuss in literary work.

A novel that contains racial discrimination against black American people is Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*. This novel tells about separate living between black people and white people in America. Black people's life is depicted with insufficient facilities in Garden Heights. Meanwhile, white people's life is depicted with good facilities in Williamson. The author chose to highlight social fractures. This novel also shows the tragic story of Khalil's death, a black teenager. White police killed Khalil with no gun, and no criminals noted. This tragic story describes how black people represent a racial minority in America.

Angie Thomas is an African-American woman writer. Thomas was born in Jackson, Mississippi, America. She is a former teen rapper whose greatest accomplishment was an article about her in *Right-On Magazine* with a picture included in 2003. Some of her names used as a rapper were Young Short-A and Da Lil 'Lady Pimp'ress. *The Hate U Give* is her first novel. This novel reached number 1 on the New York Times bestseller list for Young Adult, which hardcover books on March 9, 2017. She got some of the awards that she obtained. They are awarded a Walter Grant from the We Needed Diverse Books organization in 2015. She got William C. Morris Award for *The Hate U Give* in 2018. She also got Michael L. Printz Award for *The Hate U Give* in 2018. Coretta Scott King Award for *The Hate U Give*.

Furthermore, she got Waterstones Children's Book Prize in *The Hate U Give* in 2018. *The Hate U Give* novel is also adapted into a movie directed by George Tillman Jr. and released on October 19, 2018. For Thomas, what she presents in her work reflects black people's social conditions in America. The existence of black people as a minority is often the target of police brutality.

There are several reasons why I want to do this research. First, this novel is interesting to discuss because the topic is related to the current phenomena. The race difference should show more tolerance. However, in the practice, it is still not realized in America. White people always adhere to intense racist values so that many black people are disadvantaged. This novel also shows that racial discrimination touches black American people and is still difficult for equal rights and equal opportunities. She depicts racial discrimination harms black American people in education and working aspects and lack of legal protection. The racial discrimination issue has become an important topic to discuss because some black American people are discriminated against, especially police brutality.

Second, the author of this novel depicts racial discrimination against black American people with a struggle impressively. We know that education is the key for everyone to get a better life. The author shows black American people struggle to get a good education like white people to do. I also want to undermine the reader's perception that not all black American people are presented as criminals and drug dealers in the novel. In fighting racial discrimination, black American people struggle to create good work to survive in their environment. This novel also highlights the struggles of black American people against police brutality and the American legal system. Considered a racial minority, black American people are less protected under the law. It is interesting because there is a struggle called a justice movement. A justice movement is a form of

protest by black American people against the legal system that does not provide justice. Based on the explanation above, I would like to entitle this research, "**The Portrait of Racial Discrimination Against Black American People in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give.***"

## 1.2. Identification of the Problem

As the author of this novel, Angie Thomas is a black American who also struggles against racism in America. She uses literary work as a tool to depict the social condition of black American people in America. She describes how difficult black American people to get justice. An article in *The Guardian* stated, "Thomas growing up poor in the predominantly black Georgetown neighbourhood of Jackson, Mississippi" (2017). *The Hate U Give* is influenced by her own experiences, in which she grew up witnessing drug dealing and gun crime in her environment. Racial discrimination is the main issue in the novel.

*The Hate U Give* novel follows how Thomas tries to raise the conflict between blacks and whites in America as a black American writer. First, I want to discuss the kind of racial discrimination against black American people in the novel. Here, Thomas reveals four types of racial discrimination experienced by black American people in their environment, Garden Heights; no access to a good education, no access to good work, police brutality, the act of discrimination and the tragedy of murder, and lack of legal protection. From the cases above, I can see that black American people disadvantage in their social life.

Second, I found that black Americans' form of racial discrimination has put them in a low position. These conditions make it difficult for black Americans to get equal rights and equal opportunities. The final issue is how Thomas speaks out loudly about racial discrimination against black people in American literature. One of them is

police brutality that never stopped oppress black American people. In this case, racial discrimination against black American people makes them suffer systematically. Interestingly, in *The Hate U Give*, Thomas points out the struggle to make a justice movement and the law's absence to protect black American people in Garden heights. In other words, Thomas believes that as a black American writer, she can use literary work as a tool to protest against justice.

### 1.3. Review of Related Studies

In this sub-chapter, I will focus on several previous researchers who have researched racial discrimination issues. They are Ratri, Irawati, Widiana, Nasution, Maurilla, and Wiecek. Each of the earlier researchers has done the same study and with different jobs. Research studies can be categorized into three major themes based on the research focus as a reference. The first theme will discuss the research study on how Thomas represented black American people in her novel. The second theme focuses on research related to racial discrimination in literature with a sociological perspective. Moreover, the last theme is the focus on the issue of racial discrimination in America.

The first theme is coming from Ratri and Irawati. These two researchers discussed how Angie Thomas described black American people in *The Hate U Give*. In her article entitled *racism Reflected in The Hate U Give (2017) By Angie Thomas: A Critical Race Theory (2019)*, Ratri indicated five forms of racism against black people, namely everyday discrimination, material determinism, social construction, differential racism, and intersectionality. She thought that racism had oppressed black people in everyday life. As emerged, a mindset that labeled black people as bad, evil, violent, and criminal. She uses the critical race theory by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001). The advantage of this article is that Ratri also discusses racism that focuses on black people's lives. However, in this article, Ratri does not discuss in its entirety that racism oppresses

black people is systemic racism. The same line with Ratri, Irawati's findings of the struggle of black people against discrimination. In her article entitled *The Struggle of Black People to Avoid Stereotypes in Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give* (2018), Irawati depicts racism toward black people has always become a social problem in America. This thesis has shown how racism has an impact, such as oppression and black people's death, that it affects black people's psychology. Different from Ratri and Irawati, in my study research, I focus on discuss racial discrimination against black American people by using sociology of literature proposed by Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson which discussed the social condition of black American people in *The Hate U Give*. Also, I use systemic racism by Feagin's theory to reveal how systemic racism was ingrained and oppressed black people in America.

The second theme is coming from Widyana, Nasution, and Maurilla. In her thesis entitled *An Analysis of Discrimination Racism in "Invisible Man" Novel by Ralph Ellison, Using Sociological Literature* (2006). Widyana discussed the more racial history of African-Americans, racial discrimination, and the life experienced by black people. She uses the theory of sociological literature by Hippolyte Taine. This study explored and gave a picture of social conditions, discrimination, and pressure experienced by blacks African-American. From this thesis, I will understand the racism that occurrence in African-American society in the twentieth century.

In the same discussion by Widyana and Nasution, Maurilla also talks about racial discrimination in literature. In her thesis entitled *Racial Discrimination Portrayed in Flannery O'connor's Short Stories: a Good Man is Hard To Find, and Everything That Rises Must Converge* (2017), Nasution portrayed racial discrimination issue in short stories. She explained that stereotypes and prejudice have divided people from the culture and group. Racial prejudice is shown more through words and actions and tends

to lead to acts of discrimination. Racial prejudice is influenced by a past where blacks were lower than whites. Maurilla, in her article, entitled *racial Discrimination in Kathryn Stockett's The Help* (2015). She talks about the racial discrimination that African-American maids experience through characters named Aibileen and Minny. She excluded racial discrimination by white employers against black maids. She presents the social conditions of South American society in the 1960s and uses a sociological approach. That is, other researchers have widely discussed the issue of racial discrimination in literature. In other words, the issue of racial discrimination is essential for readers to discuss.

The last theme is by Wiecek entitled *Structural Racism and the Law in America Today: An Introduction* (2011). Wiecek mentions there are two manifestations of racism; traditional racism and structural racism. He mentioned legal discrimination in the Jim Crow, Ku Klux Klan variety, and structural racism as institutional racism. In traditional racism, he assumes that racist acts can be both conscious and deliberate. The conventional legal model of discrimination focuses on individuals with nasty attitudes. Structural racism can have an effect and burden on some racial groups, which results in segregation, poverty, and rejection. This article can help me to investigate the forms of structural racism in America. I believe it deals with the research topic that I will discuss regarding the racial discrimination that has oppressed black Americans. There is a tendency that racial discrimination is rooted in traditional racism and extends to structural racism forms. Thus, this article helps me to get some information about the racial discrimination issue in America today.

Based on all the studies above, I can see many discussions from many researchers talking about racial discrimination issues. It means that the issue of racial discrimination is an interesting topic to discuss. The number of findings that discuss how racism and



America are two things that can not be separated since long ago. Where people still adhere to strong racist values in America. Scholars have talked about racial discrimination against black characters, the impact of racial discrimination toward black people in everyday life, traced traditional racism, and structural racism inherited from America itself. Therefore, I will combine all of these research studies into one discussion. I will examine how Thomas describes the racial discrimination that oppresses black Americans and can present a struggle to combat it.

#### 1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study discuss how the author of this novel portrays the kind of racial discrimination. This research focuses on the impact of racial discrimination which put black American social into harmful, including to get a good education, to access good work, and in legal protection by analyzing the social condition from the characters and dialogues in the novel then elaborate them. The study's goal is to analyze the struggle of black American people against racial discrimination as portrayed in the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

The portrayal of racial discrimination against black American people in *The Hate U Give* will make a beneficial contribution to students who wish to learn more about this issue from a theoretical perspective. This study's results can enrich readers' insights about the problem of racial discrimination that occurs in America, as reflected in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*.

#### 1.5. Research Questions

This research will answer the questions:

1. How does Angie Thomas portray racial discrimination against black American people in *The Hate U Give*?

2. How does Angie Thomas depict black American people's struggle against racial discrimination in *The Hate U Give*?

### 1.6. The Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

1. To reveal the way Angie Thomas portrays racial discrimination against black American people in *The Hate U Give*
2. To discover how does Angie Thomas depicts black American people's struggle against racial discrimination in *The Hate U Give*

