

## SEGREGATION TOWARD BLACK AMERICANS AS CONSEQUENCE OF RACISM IN *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* BY HARPER LEE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper, entitled Segregation Toward Black Americans as Consequence of Racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee discusses racism that reflected in the novel, focusing on the segregation for Black people. At the beginning Black people is an enslaved person for White people. Racism sees that the reality and entity of a person based on the anatomical factors from a particular ethnic. Racism does not value someone based on the intellectual matters. Racism defines, values, and views people only based on the racial affiliation. Racism can cause negative impacts for the victim who receives the treatment. The treatment of racism also can be affecting the psychology of the victim. Racism in the United States of America cause many negative sides. One of the negative sides is segregation. The White people believe that segregation is the correct way to live with Black people. From the slavery it become segregation. To analyse this novel, the writer using Abrams' mimetic theory. Mimetic theory is the most ancient theory of all. Mimetic came from the word *mimesis* in the Ancient Greek term. The meaning of *mimesis* is imitation or representation. The result of the analysis, shows there are three levels of racism, structural racism, personally mediated racism, and internalized racism, also segregation toward Black people.

Keywords: Racism, segregation, Black people, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, mimetic theory.

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### INTRODUCTION

According to Perrine (1974), there are two types of fiction: escape literature and interpretive literature. Escape literature is the type of fiction that has the purpose of entertaining the reader. Interpretive literature is the type of fiction that has a purpose of giving the reader(s) enlightenment in their life. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is interpretive literature because Harper Lee takes her reader to understand there is a racism story based on American history.

According to Daughtry (2019), colorblindness is the most effective way to fight against racism, especially in the United States. Based on two hundred twenty-two participants, colorblindness influences people to act against racism in the United States. Back in time, people do not understand the concept of colorblindness. We can examine it in literary works. One of the literary works that present racism as the main topic is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* represented an example of racism in the United States, especially racism toward Black People. Harper Lee wrote it based on American history. The novel was first published in 1960. *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize for the fiction category in 1961 (Pulitzer, 2021). Harper Lee was an American novelist. Her father noticed that Lee loved writing. Thus, her father gave a typewriter to her (Shields, 2008, p. 29).

At first, the writer thought that *To Kill a Mockingbird* was a novel about the reason(s) why people should not kill a certain species of bird, the mockingbird. The writer was amazed by the story. It was a plot twist; the novel was not about it at all. The title was related to the main content of the novel. The author, Harper Lee, created a perspective that could relate the title to the content.

Through the novel, Harper Lee portrays racism in America, especially around 1933 to 1935 (Lee, 1960). The conflict between white and black people is the main focus of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. White people tend to see themselves as superior and black people as inferior. The white people's perspective creates a huge gap between them. In the novel, white people think that black people will never win the trial. Black people always lose. This kind of treatment is an example of racism.

Generally, racism is directed toward the minority. Racism is a social phenomenon that happens in the society. In the novel, black people struggle to get their normal life as human beings in the Southern America. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is based on the American history of racism toward black people in Southern America.

Racism is a doctrine that one race or ethnicity is higher than others in social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Solomos & Back, 1996, p. 27). Racism sees that reality and entity of a person based on the anatomical factors from a particular ethnicity. Racism is not valuing someone based on intellectual matters.

Minority ethnic will obtain different kind of racism. Racism itself can be defined into three levels. Svetaz (2018) states that a theoretical framework for racism describes it on three levels:

1. Structural racism (also called Institutional) is the differential access to goods, services, and opportunities based on race. It manifests as inherited disadvantage when discriminatory policies become integrated into organizations.
2. Personally mediated racism occurs when prejudice results in discrimination. Racist behaviors can be intentional, unintentional, acts of commission, and/or acts of omission.
3. Internalized racism is acceptance by members of stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth.

Racism can cause negative impacts for the victim who receives the treatment. The treatment of racism also can be affecting the psychology of the victim. The negative effects of racism treatment can cause two range of impacts "minor" to "major". Minor impact, for example: insecure, thus making the victim feel uncomfortable being in the community and isolating himself from society. The major impact, such as: mental breakdown, anxiety, and commit suicide.

Segregation is one of the many consequences of racism. Segregation separates residential, education, medical treatment, job, and transportation for Black people from White people. White people believe that segregation is the correct way to live with Black people. White people were starting to have the same opinion that White people could do the right for Black people. Nonetheless, Black people cannot have the same or equal power as White people (EJI staffs, 2018, p. 10-11).

From the reasons above, the writer is interested in analysing racism and segregation, which are reflected in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The writer chooses the mimetic theory for analyzing the novel because the writer considers a story in the novel to be a reflection of reality, also that racism and segregation cannot be separated from reality, i.e., American history. Mimetic theory is the most ancient theory of all. Mimetic came from the word *mimesis* in the Ancient Greek term. The meaning of *mimesis* is imitation or representation. The mimetic theory is analyzing the literary work by finding the correlation between a literary work as literature and the reality as the true event (Abrams, 1999, p. 51). Imitation means that literary work is a reflection

of the reality in the society. An author writes down their idea based on the reality or their experience in life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method for this paper is descriptive qualitative. Nassaji (2015) states that descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. According to Leavy, “qualitative researchers buried themselves in their handwritten field notes, interview transcripts, or other documents” (2014, p. 36). The primary data resource of this research is *To Kill a Mockingbird* written by Harper Lee (1960). The book has 376 pages and consists of two parts. The writer will quote the sentences and paragraphs related to the analysis. The secondary data resource is from books, journals, articles, and online websites related to this research. At the first step, the writer read the novel. After that, the writer is collecting the data from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by making highlight in the text. After collecting data, the writer transcribes it into text form to analyze it furthermore. The writer reread the novel to make sure the data is complete and relevant with the objectives. The final step is that the writer classifies and interprets the excerpts to get the findings based on the objectives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Racism**

*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee talks about racism in Maycomb County, Alabama. Black people accept racism from White people that cause many problems in society. In the novel, the main problem is when Atticus as attorney is defending a Black man, Tom Robinson. Nonetheless, many White people do not agree he is defending a Black man. Tom Robinson is accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a White girl. There is no evidence suspecting Tom has done it. After the jurors makes verdict that Tom is guilty, Atticus’s family receive several terrors from Bob Ewell, Mayella’s father. He tries to kill Scout and Jem in Halloween night. Nonetheless, they can be

saved by Boo Radley, a man who is supposed to be the most dangerous person in society.

Harper Lee is clearly given direct descriptions about racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* novel. They are three levels of racism, structural racism, personally mediated racism, and internalized racism. In this subchapter, the evidences will be described below:

#### *Structural Racism*

Structural racism (also called Institutional) is the differential access to goods, services, and opportunities based on race. It manifests as inherited disadvantage when discriminatory policies become integrated into organizations. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* novel there are several structural racism can be discovered.

People in Maycomb County mostly cannot accept any differences in their society. White people are dominant. Majority people in Maycomb County is White people. They think that they have power to organize the society. Most of the White people hate Black people, only because they appearance are different from White people. The writer finds in the narration and dialogue between Scout and Jem.

The Negroes, having waited for the white people to go upstairs, began to come in. "Whoa now, just a minute," said a club member, holding up his walking stick. "Just don't start up them there stairs yet awhile."

The club began its stiff-jointed climb and ran into Dill and Jem on their way down looking for me. They squeezed past and Jem called, "Scout, come on, there ain't a seat left. We'll hafta stand up."

"Looka there, now," he said irritably, as the black people surged upstairs. The old men ahead of them would take most of the standing room. We were out of luck and it was my fault, Jem informed me. We stood miserably by the wall.

(Lee, 1960, p. 218-219)

During the trial, racism toward Black people is obvious. Black people cannot enter the court room until all the White people enter the room. The White people can control and take over the society in Maycomb County. White people are people in majority, which means a large number of the society in Maycomb County.

Black people are guilty, that is the only thing White people think. The law in Maycomb County stand on White people side. The law is not fair between White and Black people.

The sheriff hadn't the heart to put him in jail alongside Negroes, so Boo was locked in the courthouse basement.

(Lee, 1960, p. 14)

As it is being narrated. The sheriff could not bear to put a White man in jail alongside Black man even though he did something that breaking the law. If Boo is a Black man, he will be in jail already but because he is a White man, his punishment change. He was locked in the courthouse basement.

The action refers to racism in law. How police treat White man is totally different from Black man.

The courthouse square was covered with picnic parties sitting on newspapers, washing down biscuit and syrup with warm milk from fruit jars. Some people were gnawing on cold chicken and cold fried pork chops. The more affluent chased their food with drugstore Coca-Cola in bulb-shaped soda glasses. Greasy-faced children popped-the-whip through the crowd, and babies lunched at their mothers' breasts.

In a far corner of the square, the Negroes sat quietly in the sun, dining on sardines, crackers, and the more vivid flavors of Nehi Cola. Mr. Dolphus Raymond sat with them.

(Lee, 1960, p. 214)

In the court there are two side of the place to sit. The allocation is unfair, White people get the best supply during the trial and Black people do not get the same in the court.

There is no secret that in the trial Black people always lose. Black people will not win any case against the White people. Defending a Black man is something that vain.

".....There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads—they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life."

(Lee, 1960, p. 214)

The findings of structural racism above are justifying Fremon statement that a set of written and unwritten rules governed relations between whites and blacks in the South. These were intended to keep a black person in his or her place—in a social position below that of a white person (2014, p. 25).

### *Personally Mediated Racism*

Personally mediated racism occurs when prejudice results in discrimination. Racist behaviors can be intentional, unintentional, acts of commission, and/or acts of omission.

Black people receive personally mediated racism in the novel. Bad action is always directed to Black people, even though there is no one know exactly who did that.

Mr. Nathan Radley was standing inside his gate, a shotgun broken across his arm. Atticus was standing beside Miss Maudie and Miss Stephanie Crawford. Miss Rachel and Mr. Avery were near by. None of them saw us come up. We eased in beside Miss Maudie, who looked around. "Where were you all, didn't you hear the commotion?" "What happened?" asked Jem. "Mr. Radley shot at a Negro in his collard patch." "Oh. Did he hit him?" "No," said Miss Stephanie. "Shot in the air. Scared him pale, though. Says if anybody sees a white nigger around, that's the one. Says he's got the other barrel waitin' for the next sound he hears in that patch, an' next time he won't aim high, be it dog, nigger, or – Jem Finch!"

(Lee, 1960, p. 72)

From the excerpt above, White people believe that every bad action in Maycomb County must be done by Black people. Even though there is no evidence of it, White people tend to blame Black people and assume they are guilty.

The following findings is relevant to the statement separate but equal (Fremon, 2014, p. 35). The statement should be deciphered that Black people have the same right with White people. Yet, the reality is far from it. White people basically think that they are superior and should not be in the same level with Black people.

### *Internalized Racism*

Internalized racism is acceptance by members of stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth. Racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* mostly because of their skin color. Black people tend to be scapegoat for any bad actions. People in Maycomb County will not tolerate Black people if they have done mistake. Even though, there is no evidence that can sentence they are guilty. The entire family of the Black people will be affected. As seen in the excerpt below:

"Sin and squalor – what was that, Gertrude?" Mrs. Merriweather turned on her chimes for the lady sitting beside her. "Oh that. Well, I always say forgive and forget, forgive and forget. Thing that church ought to do is help her lead a Christian life for those children from here on out. Some of the men ought to go out there and tell that preacher to encourage her."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Merriweather," I interrupted, "are you all talking about Mayella Ewell?"

"May –? No, child. That darky's wife. Tom's wife, Tom –" "Robinson, ma'am."

Mrs. Merriweather turned back to her neighbor. "There's one thing I truly believe, Gertrude," she continued, "but some people just don't see it my way. If we just let them know we forgive 'em, that we've forgotten it, then this whole thing'll blow over."

(Lee, 1960, p. 309-310)

The excerpt is about women who talk about Helen, Tom Robinson's wife. Nonetheless, Ewell's alibi cannot be proven, some of White people still think that Tom Robinson is guilty. White people believe that Black people must be guilty and cannot win a case in the trial. The fact which shows to the audience during the trial does not change their perception about Tom Robinson.

### Segregation

Racism is emerging social problems in society. Racism creates a gap between majority and minority, majority tend to step away from everything that related to minority. Majority will think that they are superior and minority are inferior. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, White people are the majority in Maycomb County society. White people only interact with White people, and the Black people do it too. As an example, Calpurnia, Jessy, Sophie, and the other Black people are not getting a job as an employee in Maycomb. They cannot freely access public facilities.

"Jem," I asked, "what's a mixed child?"

"Half white, half colored. You've seen 'em, Scout. You know that red-kinky-headed one that delivers for the drugstore. He's half white. They're really sad."

"Sad, how come?"

"They don't belong anywhere. Colored folks won't have 'em because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em 'cause they're colored, so they're just in-betweens, don't belong anywhere... "

(Lee, 1960, p. 215)

If a White man marries a Black woman or the opposite, it will be ashamed. Jem said that the children of White and Black people were called mixed children. They will



not welcome in White community nor Black community. No one in Maycomb County wants to break the rules. They will face the consequence if they break the rules.

The parents of White children mostly forbid their children to come near or get along with Black children. They believe that it will bring a bad influence to the children.

I told him in detail about our trip to church with Calpurnia. Atticus seemed to enjoy it, but Aunt Alexandra, who was sitting in a corner quietly sewing, put down her embroidery and stared at us.

"You all were coming back from Calpurnia's church that Sunday?"

Jem said, "Yessum, she took us."

I remembered something. "Yessum, and she promised me I could come out to her house some afternoon. Atticus. I'll go next Sunday if it's all right, can I? Cal said she'd come get me if you were off in the car."

"You may not."

Aunt Alexandra said it.....

(Lee, 1960, p. 181)

Scout asks Atticus to accompany her go to Calpurnia's house, Aunt Alexandra directly forbid her. She knows is not a good thing for Scout to go to Calpurnia's house. Black people cannot live in the same neighborhood with White people. White people segregate their residence from Black people. Black people cannot have a vantage point in Maycomb County.

The segregation in Maycomb County not only in the Black people residential but also in the location of Black people's church. Black people doing a worship every Sunday in the church. Ironically, it is located in the same place where White men gambling during weekdays, which is disrespectful.

First Purchase African M.E. Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill tracks. It was an ancient paint-peeled frame building, the only church in Maycomb with a steeple and bell, called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves. Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays. The churchyard was brick-hard clay, as was the cemetery beside it. If someone died during a dry spell, the body was covered with chunks of ice until rain softened the earth. A few graves in the cemetery were marked with crumbling tombstones; newer ones were outlined with brightly colored glass and broken Coca-Cola bottles. Lightning rods guarding some graves "The churchyard was brick-hard clay, as was the cemetery beside it. If someone died during a dry spell, the body was covered with chunks of ice until rain softened the earth. A few graves in the cemetery were marked with crumbling tombstones; newer ones were outlined with brightly colored glass and broken Coca-Cola bottles.

Lightning rods guarding some graves denoted dead who rested uneasily; stumps of burned-out candles stood at the heads of infant graves. It was a happy cemetery.

(Lee, 1960, p. 157)

The Black people's church is far from worthy. The Black people is treated horribly in Maycomb County society. White people do not want to be equal with Black people. White people believe that they are superior and Black people are inferior because of their skin tone. They should not have same position with White people.

The warm bittersweet smell of clean Negro welcomed us as we entered the churchyard—Hearts of Love hairdressing mingled with asafoetida, snuff, Hoyt's Cologne, Brown's Mule, peppermint, and lilac talcum.

When they saw Jem and me with Calpurnia, the men stepped back and took off their hats; the women crossed their arms at their waists, weekday gestures of respectful attention. They parted and made a small pathway to the church door for us. Calpurnia walked between Jem and me, responding to the greetings of her brightly clad neighbors.

(Lee, 1960, p. 157-158)

Nonetheless, Scout and Jem still receive a warm welcome from Black people's congregation in the Calpurnia's church. Black people do not put them in danger. They welcome Scout and Jem without any disgustingly look, except one, a woman named Lula.

"I felt Calpurnia's hand dig into my shoulder. "What you want, Lula?" she asked, in tones I had never heard her use. She spoke quietly, contemptuously. "I wants to know why you bringin' white chillun to nigger church." "They's my comp'ny," said Calpurnia. Again I thought her voice strange: she was talking like the rest of them.

"Yeah, an' I reckon you's comp'ny at the Finch house durin' the week." A murmur ran through the crowd. "Don't you fret," Calpurnia whispered to me, but the roses on her hat trembled indignantly.

When Lula came up the pathway toward us Calpurnia said, "Stop right there, nigger."

Lula stopped, but she said, "You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here—they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?"

Calpurnia said, "It's the same God, ain't it?"

Jem said, "Let's go home, Cal, they don't want us here —"

(Lee, 1960, p. 158)

Lula disagrees with Calpurnia idea. She does not think White children can come to their church. Lula is hurting by the fact that White people can go to Black people's church but Black people do not allow to enter White people's church. Black

people have limited access in the court. There is an unwritten law that make Black people cannot go to upstairs of the courtroom before all White people sit down.

The Negroes, having waited for the white people to go upstairs, began to come in. "Whoa now, just a minute," said a club member, holding up his walking stick. "Just don't start up them there stairs yet awhile."

(Lee, 1960, p. 218)

Black people must wait for White people before they can go upstairs. Black people cannot sit down in the same balcony with White people. Segregation happens in many social aspects in Maycomb County society. According to Henslin (2007), segregation is internal colonialism, because the government restricts the part of people in their country to get the similar public facilities with the others. The government does not allow certain people to get their right in their own country. The government treats their certain citizen unfairly, because they cannot get the same right in their country.

## CONCLUSION

There are three types of racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, structural racism, personally mediated racism, and internalized racism. One of the negative effects of racism is segregation. The most frequent racism found in the novel is structural racism. Structural racism is the differential access to goods, services, and opportunities based on race. It manifests as inherited disadvantage when discriminatory policies become integrated into organizations. In the other word, government involved in the racism not against it.

The most noticeable example is the trial of Tom Robinson. In the court, Black audience cannot sit down before all Whites sit down. The jurors sentence Tom Robinson guilty even though there is no evidence to proof it. There is no way that Black people will win against White people. Black people must be guilty if they have case against White people.

Segregation as the consequence of racism become the most frequent findings. Segregation that Black people receive from White people cannot be change that time because the government support and do not take an action to prevent it. Black people do not have the same right with White people.

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