

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION THROUGH DIDO AS THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *BELLE* FILM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the discrimination that happened towards Dido as the main female character in *Belle* film. The film tells the story about a mulatto woman who receives racial discrimination in society because of her racial background. This thesis uses Gordon Allport's theory of discrimination in which he explained the types of discrimination are antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. Qualitative research design was employed in conducting this research. The data are taken from dialogues, conversations, narrations, and screenshots that are related to racial discrimination towards Dido. From the five types of discrimination by Allport, there were only three types of discrimination that were happened towards Dido. They were antilocution, avoidance, and discrimination. Discrimination is the most prominent one in this thesis. Hence, it can be assumed when discrimination escalated, it can lead to an extreme action such as physical attack and extermination that happened towards the slave in the film.

Key words: mulatto, racial discrimination, Allport's theory of discrimination, Belle.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi diskriminasi yang terjadi kepada Dido sebagai pemeran utama wanita di film Belle. Film ini bercerita tentang seorang wanita mulatto yang menerima diskriminasi sosial di lingkungan masyarakat dikarenakan latar belakang rasnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori diskriminasi oleh Gordon Allport yang dimana ia menjelaskan jenis-jenis diskriminasi yaitu antilokusi, penghindaran, diskriminasi, serangan fisik, dan terminasi. Desain penelitian kualitatif digunakan dalam melakukan penelitian ini. Data diambil dari dialog, percakapan, narasi, dan screenshot yang terkait dengan diskriminasi ras terhadap Dido. Dari lima jenis diskriminasi oleh Allport, hanya ada tiga jenis diskriminasi yang terjadi kepada Dido. Mereka adalah antilokusi, penghindaran, dan diskriminasi. Diskriminasi adalah yang paling menonjol dalam penelitian ini. Oleh karena itu, dapat diasumsikan ketika diskriminasi meningkat, hal tersebut bisa mengarah kepada tindakan ekstrim seperti penyerangan fisik dan terminasi seperti yang terjadi kepada para budak di dalam film.

Kata kunci: mulatto, diskriminasi ras, teori diskriminasi Allport, Belle

A. INTRODUCTION

According to Marcus and Sollor in the introduction of *New Literary History of America*, literary means not only what is written but what is voiced, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form (24). Based on the statement of Marcus and Sollor regarding the forms of literary works, a film can be interpreted as another form of literary works that depicted daily human life and human behavior or action in society. In literary works, a film can contain various issues such as racial issues, political issues, cultural issues, religious issues, and some other issues. These issues are related to real events in society and always bring disadvantages for a certain minority group. With the presence of literary works, the audience can understand the author's thought and it helps the audience to make or have another opinion based on the society and it will lead to different points of view which can also help the other audiences to think more critically about what is happening around them.

The issue that wants to be discussed by the researcher in this thesis is racism. One of the film that portrays about racism is *Belle* film. *Belle* tells the story of an illegitimate mulatto child (terms for a child born between white people and black people), the daughter of the enslaved African woman and a British Royal Navy officer. Growing up as mulatto, Dido learned the truth that her race in society is always beneath the whites and it explains the unspoken rules that she learned throughout her childhood until now. At first, she felt being a mulatto was awful but eventually, when she met John Davinier and learned about the Zong case, she knew how a colored women like her can do to change the fate of the others colored people, thus it makes her a major figure to abolish slavery in England later.

From the description above, this thesis aims to identify the types of racial discrimination towards Dido when she learned about black people position in society and the treatments she got from white people. By using Allport's discrimination theory, the researcher will identify the types of racial discrimination that happened to Dido in *Belle* film.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Character

Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the **dialogue**— and from what they do—the **action** (Abrams, 32). It means the character is the important element inside the film that is being interpreted by the reader to portray the image through the action and to represent the emotion and moral through the dialogue. The character also represents particular qualities, such as emotional qualities that exist in racial discrimination issues.

2. Theme

According to Boggs & Petrie, theme refers to the unifying central concern of the film, the special focus that unifies the work (20). It means the theme is an idea that is unified inside the film as the main concern that is related to the plot, character, and setting based on the problems and issues that are relevant to the main idea of the film.

3. Discrimination

Based on Allport (51), discrimination involves denying individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish. It means the equality that humans should

have in their life can be taken away by individuals or groups of people that are more superior, merely because there is a difference between them that made discrimination born to the society. According to Allport in his book “*The Nature of Prejudice*” (14), there are five types of racial discrimination in society:

a. Antilocution

Antilocution is where most people who have prejudices talk about them. With like-minded friends, occasionally with strangers, they may express their antagonism freely. But many people never go beyond this mild degree of antipathetic action (Allport, 14). It means the first type is about hostile comments from the group of the majority to the group of minority and no harm is done beyond this type.

b. Avoidance

Avoidance leads the individual to avoid members of the disliked group, even perhaps at the cost of considerable inconvenience (Allport, 14). In social settings, avoidance can be long-term discrimination for minorities group because it will affect their access to job hunting, health care, and education. In this type, the minority group eventually will withdraw from the society because the burden of discrimination in this type can put the minorities to disadvantage.

c. Discrimination

Discrimination lead person makes detrimental distinction of an active sort. He undertakes to exclude all members of the group in question from certain types of employment, from residential housing, political rights, educational or from some other social privileges (Allport, 14-15). It means on this type the majority group can enforce a law to put the minority group in a disadvantaged situation by actively excluding them to get access to the facilities and infrastructure.

d. Physical Attack

Physical attack is a type where under conditions of heightened emotion prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semi-violence (Allport, 15). It means the racial minorities being attacked physically because of the accumulation of prejudice and to threaten the existence of racial minorities.

e. Extermination

Extermination by lynchings, pogroms, massacres, and the Hitlerian program of genocide mark the ultimate degree of violent expression of prejudice (Allport, 15). It means in this type, extermination is a mass killing action based on prejudice and hostile feeling against racial communities or this activity can be used as a reason to give beneficial effect for the majority group. This is extreme discrimination against racial minorities.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design

The researcher used qualitative research for this thesis. Qualitative research consists of a set interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (Denzin and Lincoln, 43). It means qualitative research using written words to interpret and inform the world about real phenomena that are happened in the world. With qualitative research, the

researcher can understand the subject of the study and can understand the life story or personal experience that are based on the real events that still happen in society.

2. Data and Data Source

The primary data source of this thesis is the *Belle* film directed by Amma Asante in 2013 and the script. The data of this thesis are dialogues, conversations, narrations, and screenshots that are related to racial discrimination towards Dido in *Belle* film. These things will give information about the types of racial discrimination that happened in the film.

3. Data Collection

a. The first step is for the researcher to download the film and find the script of *Belle* film from reliable source.

b. Next, the researcher repeatedly watching and reading the script of *Belle* film and write down the dialogues, conversations, and narrations that are related to the research question.

c. In the final step, the researcher take the screenshots to provide the evidence of discrimination in the film and explain the situation in the figure.

4. Data Analysis

The researcher then analyzed the data with the three steps process for data analysis by Miles and Huberman, such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (10). Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions. Data display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. Conclusion drawing and verification is the final step to analyst the data and to decide what things mean – is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions.

5. Triangulation

In this thesis, the researcher used data triangulation to increase the reliability of the data. There are several sources that the researcher used in this thesis: (1) The Belle film that was directed by Amma Asante in 2013; (2) The script of Belle film that contains the dialogues, narrations, and conversations in the film; (3) The screenshots from Belle film to provide in which scene the types of racial discrimination happened. The use of data triangulation also helps the researcher to provide more comprehensive data that are related to racial discrimination. The researcher used the discrimination theory by Gordon Allport as the main theory and to give an in-depth understanding of this thesis.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

a. Antilocution by Throwing Hostile comments

Antilocution is the first type of discrimination that is portrayed as harmless for the majority group but it will give a different impact on the minority group. This type is known as hostile comments or hates speech towards the minority group. When Lord Mansfield introduced Dido to Lady Ashford and her two sons, she feels repulsed by Dido's presence. This is the scene and conversations she had with her two sons:



Figure.1. Lady Ashford commented on Dido's race with her sons.

Source: Belle (2013) film, duration 00:16:09 – 00:16:14.

Lady Ashford : **Good Lord – the negro!** She really is...
James Ashford : (quietly disturbed) ... **a lady.**
Oliver : **Capital!**
Lady Ashford : **I hadn't expected her to look so ... black.**
Oliver : **Mamaa, did you not listen to the rumours when you were spreading them?**

The conversations above portray's Lady Ashford repulsive words towards Dido in the drawing room. Moreover, there is a comment of displeasure from her oldest son, James Ashford, that was being disturbed with the way Dido's act as a noble lady which in his opinion colored people is inappropriate to stand as a noble or mingled with the noble society.

b. Avoidance Because Racial Background

In this type, when the intensity of prejudice rose to be discrimination when the majority group intentionally avoided the minority group because they see the minority group as strange or foreign to them. When Elizabeth trying to impress James with her piano skill, Lady Ashford noticed her other son, Oliver, interested with Dido. Hence, Lady Ashford quietly moves to sit behind her son and she whispered:



Figure.4. Lady Ashford told Oliver that she does not want to see a mulatto running around her house.

Source: Belle (2013) film, duration 00:18:19 – 00:18:29.

Lady Ashford : **You will refrain from any intercourse with the negress.** Lord and Lady Mansfield may find it fascinating to have a lady Mulatto running around their household, **but I will not have one running around mine!**

The dialogue that spoken by Lady Ashford is the evidence of avoidance. She forbid Oliver to have Dido as his potential wife. she warned Oliver to stay away from Dido and to not make a contact with her because her prejudice against colored. This act of avoidance that Lady Ashford told Oliver is her way to isolate Dido from entering English society because her race does not allow her to have a high position at that time.

c. Discrimination by Giving Rules for The Blacks

This is the type when a group of the minority is discriminated against by denying them to have an access to educations, jobs, and opportunities. Thus, preventing the minority group to have the same equal access as the majority group is an act to harm the minority group or a person. Lady Mary with Dido and Elizabeth are in the Ladies Parlour when Lady Mary mentioned to them that tonight they will receive visitors. Hearing that, Dido and Elizabeth became excited. They began to plan what dress they should wear for dinner and the hair accesorics that can bring up their appearance, but Lady Mary looking at Dido and said:



Figure.9. Lady Mary tell Dido that she cannot join dinner with them.

Source: Belle (2013) film, duration 00:12:09 – 00:12:15.

Elizabeth : May we wear the new silks?

Dido : I will do your hair, Bette. Oh say we may wear them, Aunt Mary.

Lady Mary : **You will not be dining with us, Dido.**

The room falls silent and the girls' energy is killed.

Dido : (hurt) Yes of course. But I may join after dinner, may I not?

Lady Mary : **Yes. Such are the rules, and you know them well.**

There is a rule stated at that time colored people are not allowed to eat together at the same dining table as the whites because their position in the society always below the whites. This is proof that discrimination brought harm to Dido by preventing her to gain an opportunity to have dinner together with her family and the visitors.

2. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, it was revealed that two types of discrimination could not be found, the two types are physical attack and extermination. The act of physical attack happened towards the black slave in the *Zong* ship when the captain neglected their need for a clean environment and decent food. Meanwhile, the act of extermination when the ship's captain killed the slaves intentionally by drowning them in the sea to get insurance money. There is no evidence of dialogues, conversation, or narration that can provide evidence of physical attack towards Dido as the female main character, yet these two types were experienced by other characters in the film.

The reason Dido did not receive the last two types of racial discrimination because she was raised by the Mansfield family who are a nobility in England. By accepting a mulatto into a noble family no one can do physical harms to her, thus it can be said that Dido had been fortunate to get raised as a lady and not as a slave like the other colored people. . This research can prove the theory of racial discrimination not only can be applied to non-verbal action, but when discrimination escalated, it can lead to an extreme action such as extermination in the film. In the end, Lord Mansfield revealed the act of killing slaves to gain the fortune is illegitimate thus he rejected the ship's owner's claim for the insurance. Later, his decision in the court that time became the starting point for slave abolishment in England.

E. CONCLUSION

The researcher analyzes the study with Allport's theory and found the 5 forms of discrimination that happened in the film. The first act of antilocution, avoidance, and discrimination happened around Dido. The rest of the physical attack and extermination happened to the slaves in the *Zong* case. Dido did not receive the last two types of racial discrimination because she was fortunate to be raised by the nobility. This theory can be done with a support explanation of the character and theme in the film. By the end of the film, Dido became a major figure that help the abolishment of slaves in England later.

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