

**RACIAL PREJUDICE TOWARD THE MAIN CHARACTER ‘DON SHIRLEY’ IN
GREEN BOOK FILM**

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, the researcher discusses the racial prejudice in *Green Book* film. The purposes of this thesis are to identify the types of racial prejudice portrayed in Don Shirley’s character and describe how racial prejudice is portrayed in Don Shirley’s character in the film. The data used in this study were words in the forms of narration, conversation, action, and scene related to the portrayal of racial prejudice towards Don Shirley’s character who works as a jazz pianist on his tour in the film. In this thesis, the researcher uses the method of qualitative research and a mimetic approach. Further, the theories that are used in analyzing the data, the researcher uses Sergio Romero’s theory about the types of the racial prejudice of the dominant group and Pickering and Hooper’s theory about character and characterization. The results reveal that Don Shirley experienced all three types of racial prejudice; stereotype, discrimination, and racism. The researcher found there are thirteen data of racial prejudice and the most prominent is discrimination. These are the results representing that Don Shirley’s character is still the object of discrimination despite his social status.

Keywords: racial prejudice, *Green Book*, character.

ABSTRAK

Dalam penelitian ini peneliti membahas tentang prasangka rasial dalam film Green Book. Tujuan dari tesis ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis prasangka rasial yang digambarkan dalam karakter Don Shirley dan mendeskripsikan bagaimana prasangka rasial digambarkan dalam karakter Don Shirley dalam film tersebut. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dan pendekatan mimesis. Selanjutnya, teori yang digunakan dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan teori dari Sergio Romero tentang jenis-jenis prasangka rasial dari kelompok dominan dan teori dari Pickering dan Hooper tentang karakter dan karakterisasi. Hasilnya mengungkapkan bahwa Don Shirley mengalami ketiga jenis prasangka rasial; stereotip, diskriminasi, dan rasisme. Peneliti menemukan ada tiga belas data prasangka rasial dan yang paling menonjol yaitu diskriminasi. Ini adalah hasil yang mewakili karakter Don Shirley yang masih menjadi objek diskriminasi dengan status sosialnya.

Kata Kunci: prasangka rasial, *Green Book*, karakter

A. INTRODUCTION

Literature becomes an important part of human life. Furthermore, when literature is written based on a true story, it gives people understanding. According to Wellek and Warren (22), "Literature is created by ideas of the author. Literature is not just a document of real events or facts. Literature can create its world as a product of the unlimited imagination of the author." Based on the idea, literature is happening in real life or where literature and real-life are going together in the same line. Literature is a work that consists of imaginations or ideas from the writer presented in writing. In other words, literature is work as a result of feelings and thoughts that portray real life. There are kinds of literary works such as novels, films, dramas, poems, and short stories. It considers the issues important to the research. The researcher is interested to analyze a film. In this research, the researcher will analyze the racial prejudice toward the Main Character 'Don Shirley' in the *Green Book* film. The researcher is interested in this film because this story has differences in perspective, negative assumptions, and judgment among characters, and the *Green Book* film is adapted from the guidebook *The Negro Motorist Green Book* by Victor Hugo Green set in 1962.

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Film as literature

According to Midega (5), "film is just like in literature, present actions, images, and words replicating life. Films as literary works also have a stylistic and thematic basis in a realistic presentation of characters and incidents." Similar to other types of literary work, the film is also one of the most effective media used to influence audiences because of its popularity. Critics agree that film is declared the dominant form of visuals in the world because many people watch the film in cinema and television.

2. Character and Characterization

Character is the representation of human traits and it is helpful to build the plot of the story as the content of the film in a moving picture. The character brought the values related to moral, emotional, and appearance (Rosenheim 79).

According to Pickering and Hoepfer (27), there are two kinds of methods of characterization, those are telling and showing. The first to be discussed is telling or can be called indirect characterization. This method will include:

1. Characterization can be done by the use of names. Every character in the story has a name because that name can be a clue in act characterization.
2. Characterization can be displayed through appearance. The viewer makes certain assumptions about them because of their appearance (what a character wears and how he looks), their facial features, dress, physical build, and mannerism.
3. Characterization by the author is the most traditional form of telling, in which the author reveals the characters directly, through some editorial comments, the character's nature, and his personality, also seen from the character's minds based on his thoughts and feelings.
4. Characterization can be achieved through dialogue. The persons or the actor's use of grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and particular dialects in the film.
5. Characterization can be also retrieved through action. There are many actions in the story. Perhaps the best reflections of character are the actor's actions.

Another method is characterization by telling or can be called direct characterization. It consists of the dramatic method of telling, in which the character's dialogue and actions reveal

themselves directly. Telling gives the viewers the facts that happen in the show. (Pickering and Hoepfer 27)

3. Racial Prejudice

Racial prejudice consists of negative beliefs, behaviors, and judgments toward a person or a group based on their perceived race and or ethnicity (Barkan & Cohn 743). The oppressions of the race to a classification system that gives advantages and social preferences to groups at near the top, and poverty or depreciation for all others below, makes race an objectionable theme.

It makes us control our beliefs and attitudes toward other people and how we behave, see ourselves, and with whom we interact. For a long time, we see people's values based on physical appearance such as skin colors, eye features, including the size and shape of noses (Kang & Inzzlicht 357). It makes us think logically that people of the dominant group taking advantage of such a social arrangement would not object to their privilege, would deny this reality, and or rely on narratives that obfuscate this reality (Romero 238). There are three types of racial prejudice according to Sergio Romero and the issues that would possibly happen in the film. The three types of racial prejudice are explained below:

1. Stereotypes

Stereotypes are notions attached to narrow expectations about how a group member should act or think. They may be positive but are often negative. For example, a treatment toward other groups such as members of a dominant racial group suggests that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy (Romero 238).

2. Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of people based on prejudice. It is based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices to addressing this set of social problems (Romero 238).

3. Racism

Racism is a belief that presents the unfair treatment of a racial group and its members for their alleged inferiority. it is the most influential kind of prejudice used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow dominant or subordinate to others; it is also a set of actions used by superior to disadvantage inferior (Romero 238).

4. Synopsis of *Green Book* film

The story begins with Tony, a caretaker of Copacabana, a nightclub in New York City who lost his job because the club he worked for was closed for two months for renovations. Meet Don Shirley, a famous black pianist who is looking for a driver to accompany his eight-week tour of the Deep South. Since then, Tony has worked for Don Shirley and they started the tour guided by The Negro Motorist Green Book, a book used by black people of African and American to find safe places.

Their trip was not good, many things happened during the tour. In addition to different skin colors, Don Shirley and Tony also have opposite attitudes. Don Shirley comes with a calm demeanor while Tony, on the other hand, has a rude and rash attitude. Inevitably, they experienced many misunderstandings.

During the tour, Don Shirley often received unpleasant treatment from white people. The person who always protects and defends him is Tony. Starting from their friendship, Tony managed to change his behavior for the better. They beat each other's egos and understand each

other's differences not only that, but Shirley also teaches Tony to write poetry and send letters to his family.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

a. Research Design

Qualitative research is a loosely claimed category of research designs, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory data in the form of descriptive like field notes, recordings, videotapes, and pictures or films (Creswell 24).

b. Data and Data Sources

The data source of this thesis is the *Green Book* film by Peter J. Farrelly published in 2018. The data is narrations, conversations, actions, and scenes that lead to racial prejudice portrayed toward the main character in the film.

c. Data Collection

The data collection is using the library research method. The materials are taken from libraries and internet sites. Here are the steps of collecting data:

1. The researcher downloaded the *Green Book* film by Peter J. Farrelly from <https://yts.mx> and took the film subtitle from <https://subscene.com>.
2. The researcher watched the film repeatedly and comprehensively to find data that exist in *Green Book* film and articles in the cyber data as many as possible which show problems of racial prejudice.
3. The researcher read the script and marked on, the scenes, narrations, dialogues, and actions that are related to the racial prejudice issues. The researcher is going to mark any important statements for making easier in the data analyzing process for the research.

d. Data Analysis

In the data analysis, the researcher uses the steps of analysis by Miles and Huberman (27). They define analysis with three flows of activity. Those are (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, and (3) Conclusion drawing. The explanation of these steps are shown below:

1. Data reduction is the process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data from writing notes. The first step is that the researcher watched intensely the film and the script to identify the prejudices portrayed in the film. Then the researcher took notes of narration, conversation, action, and scene among the character. To analyze the prejudices, the researcher sees how characters around respond and react toward the main character in the film. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed what kind of prejudices were reflected in the film.
2. Data display, in this process the researcher, analyzed the data that concern with the data analysis to conclude. The researcher selected and displayed the data that found negative prejudices toward the main character that happened in the film.
3. For the last step, the researcher concluded from the results of the analysis before answering the research questions. In this step, the researcher evaluated to make sure that the negative prejudices that include the existence of racial prejudice theoretically. In short, the researcher concluded what is that negative prejudices portrayed. As with all data, analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding.

D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. FINDINGS

1.1 Stereotype

In this film, the stereotype of racial prejudice is shown by Lip's words toward Don Shirley.

| Conversation Time 51:26-51:36 | |
|--|---|
| Lip: | This might be the best Kentuckyfried chicken I ever had. But I guess it's fresher down here, right? |
| Don Shirley: | I don't think I've ever met anyone with your appetite. |
| Lip: | No, I bought the bucket so you could have some |
| Don Shirley: | I've never had fried chicken in my life |
| Lip: | Who you bullshittin'? you people love the fried chicken, the grits, the colored greens...I love it, too. The negro cooks used to make it when I was in the army. |
| Don Shirley: | You have a very narrow assessment of me, Tony. |
| Lip: | Yeah, I'm good, right? |

From the incident above, they are driving in Kentucky areas. Lip stopped at Kentucky fried chicken restaurant to get some. Lip has bought a bucket of fried chickens. Lip offers Don Shirley to taste one of the fried chickens but Don Shirley refuses and says "I've never had fried chicken in my life". Lip through insults Don Shirley by saying "who you bullshittin? you people love the fried chicken, the grits, the colored greens...I love it, too. the negro cooks used to make it when I was in the army" Lip and Don Shirley are arguing in the car. Based on the conversation. The racial prejudice is shown by Lip's words towards Don Shirley when he gave a speech in the car. It means this data is using showing characterization. It indicates that Lip has narrow expectations toward Don Shirley. He proves that Don Shirley must like the fried chicken because the negro cooks used to make it when he was in the army.

1.2 Discrimination

In this film, the discrimination of racial prejudice is shown by Lip's friend toward Don Shirley.

| Conversation Time 01:17:08- 01:17:18 | |
|---|--|
| Dominic (in Italian): | Who's the eggplant? |
| Lip (in Italian): | I'm working for him |
| Dominic (in Italian): | What'd you lose a bet?, What's wrong with you? You need work, you come to me! I'll always find work for you. Matter of fact, I can use you this week. Gotta hit a few joints, straighten some people out--you'll make some real money. |

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Lip (in Italian): | I'm making money. |
|--------------------------|-------------------|

The racial prejudice is shown by Dominic's words toward Don Shirley when he gave a speech in the lobby. It means this data is using showing characterization. He debased the physical appearance of Don Shirley. Based on the scene when Dominic and his friend met Lip and were surprised at Lip because he was with Don Shirley who wear a neat shirt, suit, and tie, Based on the conversation Dominic asks lip "who's the eggplant?" and disregard Don Shirley. This is a form of racial prejudice in which he did an unfair treatment that addressed Don Shirley. They wondered why lip would want with black Don Shirley. The situation reflected the antipathy toward Don Shirley.

1.3 Racism

Racism of racial prejudice in this film is also shown by the committee's words toward Don Shirley

| Conversation Time 01:40:45- 01:40:55 | |
|---|--|
| Graham Kindell: | Everything all right? |
| Lip: | No, it's not all right. Dr. Shirley's being told he can't eat here. |
| Graham Kindell: | I apologize, but these are... longstanding traditions. I'm sure you understand. |

Based on the conversation above, racial prejudice is shown in Graham Kindell's words toward Don Shirley. It means this data is using showing characterization. Graham Kindell ban Don Shirley to eat in the dining room which was filled with white customers. He says to Don Shirley "I apologize, but these are longstanding traditions. I'm sure you understand". Based on the conversation, it indicates that white has a belief system that has no privilege like whites.

2. DISCUSSION

After the researcher finished analyzing the data, the researcher found that all types of racial prejudice by Sergio Romero's theory exist toward Don Shirley's character in the film. In Sergio Romero's theory of racial prejudice, Don Shirley managed to complete the three types of racial prejudice that consist of stereotype, discrimination, and racism. The characterization theory uses all the ways to explain Don Shirley's character such as action and dialogue. The racial prejudice that happened to Don Shirley is because, in 60s America, black people consider in the lower class. But his profile does not show the regular black people. In this film, Don Shirley is described in a very different way in the way he looks, his occupation, and his status. But that does not mean, he could not be free from racial

prejudice. Even more, he was mocked because Don Shirley is different from mostly his people. American people think that Don Shirley should be inferior. The other characters could not get racial prejudice because they are superior. White people think they are the majority that has the privilege and are in the upper class.

E. CONCLUSION

After analyzing types of racial prejudice toward main character Don Shirley in the *Green Book* film. The researcher concluded that the types of racial prejudice addressed in Don Shirley's character in green book film are stereotypes, discrimination, and racism. It is presented by the dominant group's expectation, unfair treatment, and a belief system that maintains the unequal treatment toward Don Shirley's character.

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