

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes a background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significances of the study, and scope and limitation. Each of the points will be discussed as follows.

1.1 Background of the Study

In social life, we often find social problems such as racism against race, ethnicity, religion, social class or other status. Such social problem not only appears in real life but also in literary works. Literary work is a witness of history that can tell the readers the social conditions at the time it was written. A good work is one which can reflect its era (Endraswara, 2004). Literature is not just contains real condition that occurs in the real life but also it can contains the story based on the author imagination because literature can create its own world as a product of unlimited imagination (Wellek & Warren, 1948). Novel is one of the examples of literary works in the form of narrative that aims to entertain the readers.

Racism becomes a problem around the world. It is a global issue that never ends from time to time and occurs in different forms. When the individual is treated unfairly, worse, degraded, disadvantaged, harassed, or bullied because of their race or ethnicity, it is racism. In discussing racism, people talk about race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity include skin color and nationality. Racism can appear in the individual or culture of a workplace; behavior that underpins daily life practices. It still occurs all around the world but most happened in the United States especially for African American people. As stated by Kennedy (2001), that no area in American life is more volatile than the point at which charges of racial injustice interest with the administration of criminal law. From the statement above, it can be concluded that racism becomes big problem for American life

especially for colored people in criminal justice system. In the United States, racism becomes big problem in the twentieth century because the problem spreads and continues to grow in that era.

In the twentieth century, racism happens in the United States. It spreads widely at the time because racism is not illegal. Whites and blacks people are separated and blacks are categorized as second-class societies. As Kennedy (2001) states that at the same time, Blacks are arrested, convicted, and incarcerated at far higher rates than Whites or any other ethnic or racial group. According to Kennedy (2001) conflict of Black-White is placed at center stage because it has been the paradigmatic form of racial conflict in the United States. It happens, because it has generated by far the most law governing race relations in the administration of criminal justice. The statement above depicts how bad racism in that era and shows that racism is unresolved problem because in recent years the racism problems still happens in the United States.

Racism is an unresolved part of history because it still exists in line with the development of time. Racism can exist in different forms. It can happen in social practices or political systems that support injustice practices. It is proven by the occurrence of incidents depicting racism in recent years. In 2020, the world was shocked by the incident of the death of a black American citizen due to his neck was pinned down by a white police using his knee. He was suspected of using counterfeit money to make transactions at the store. This incident sparked mass outrage. The death of a black American sparked a sizable demonstration for five consecutive days. This incident becomes evidence that racism still occurs in the United States in recent years. It happens because the brutality of a white police in the United States. Having black skin in the United States is not a reason to be killed. The brutality of police treatment of defendants because of their race is classified as racial discrimination. As stated by Blumstein (2001), that the interaction between race or minority status and the criminal justice system is a particularly salient aspect of the racial issues in the United States, it also represents one of the crucial issues that must be addressed as the country tries to deal with its racial conflict. The

statement shows that racism not only appears in social practices but also appears in criminal justice system.

Racism can affect the inequalities of the criminal justice system. Some people are accused of crimes because of their race even though they did not commit them. It would be very damaging to the victims because victims were convicted and imprisoned. They had to leave their family, lose his occupation and his reputation was ruined. As Alexander (2005), states that African American people have received the numerous unjust benefits from the government, special laws, and affirmative action. It means that the racism can affect black people and its disfavor the society. However, the racism phenomenon not only appears in real life but also appears in literary works. Literary works are evidence of history that can inform readers how the social conditions at the time when it was written, it can be created because of the social conditions that happened in society. There are a lot of authors that depict racism as the main topic in their literary works, such as *Twelve Years as a Slave* by Solomon Northup (1853), *Another Country* by James Baldwin (1962), and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker (1982).

Nowadays there are still many authors describing racism as the main topic in their literary works; Tayari Jones is one of them, a black American female novelist and professor at Emory University. Jones's works are an interesting work. In her writing, she always tells about family, relationships; fractured relationships, between parents and their children, married couples with using black people as the main character in her literary works. Her novel entitled *An American Marriage* (2018) is the fourth novel, the novel becomes an international bestseller and gets many awards. In 2018, the novel was chosen for Oprah's Book Club 2.0. The novel also won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2019 etc. This book was popular at the time because President Barack Obama included *An American Marriage* on his summer reading list in 2018. He said in his blog that the novel tells about a moving portrayal of the effects of a wrongful conviction on a young African-American couple. Based on the statement above, this novel is classified as popular book and it becomes interesting to analyze.

In this study, the writer focuses on racism issues portrayed in *An American Marriage* novel by Tayari Jones. The novel tells about the story of a young African-American married couple, Roy and Celestial, who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Their lives are shattered when the husband, Roy, is accused and imprisoned for a crime that he did not commit. In the courtroom, Roy is arrested and sentenced to around twelve years for a crime. It depicts how the inequality practices in the criminal justice system because the race. This novel also tells about love, triangle love, the impact of racism, family, relationships, an artist's career, and inequalities. Therefore, this novel is very interesting to analyze.

In addition, the racism issue has been analyzed by some researchers in several novels and the source of data of this study also has been analyzed by some researchers in different topics. *An American Marriage* novel is classified as a new novel so it is still rare to analyze the novel. There are some researchers who analyze this novel. The first researcher is Widi Ambarwati (2019), who writes a thesis entitled *An Analysis of Prejudice in Tayari Jones's An American Marriage*. The study just focuses on prejudice topic in the novel. The second researcher is Caroline Y Erue, who writes a journal article entitled *A Black Feminist Consciousness in Silver Sparrow and An American Marriage by Tayari Jones*. This journal article analyses about black feminism presented in the novel and it also gives information about African American women fall victims to the trifold oppressions of race, class, and gender. However, *An American Marriage* novel has not been analyzed by another researcher on racism topic. In this study, the writer focuses on racism issues and the impact of the inequalities of the criminal justice system in *An American Marriage* by using critical race theory. The third researcher is Robiah Al Adawiyah (2015) who writes a thesis entitled *Racism against African American Slave in Solomon Northup's Twelve Years as a Slave*. Her study analyzes racism in the novel entitled *Twelve Years as a Slave* by Solomon Northup using a sociological approach. The fourth researcher is Ahmad Ghozi (2008), who writes a thesis entitled *Racism in James Mc Bride's Miracle at St Anna*. He analyzes racism and discrimination as the form of rejection of different races by using genetic

structuralism. The fifth research found in a journal article which is conducted by Evi Milatul Ulya et al, entitled *A Study on Racism in Louanne Johnson's Dangerous Minds Using Richard Delgado's and Jean Stefancic's Critical race Theory*. They analyse the forms of racism by using critical race theory.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, there are two statements of research questions that can be analyzed, those are:

1. What forms of racism are portrayed in Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage*?
2. How does the main character struggle to free from incarceration presented in Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives are arranged based on the research questions, this study aims to:

1. To find out the form of racism portrayed in Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage*
2. To reveal the process of the main character struggle to free from incarceration presented in Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage*

1.4 Significances of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to be theoretically and practically useful:

Theoretically, this study can add the theoretical knowledge to the readers about the forms of racism. The writer hopes that it can be a contribution in literary study, which is related to analysis of racism.

Practically, the writer expects that this study can be used as a reference in academic studies for further study which analyzes the same topic or same theory. This study also can be useful for the readers to get information about the racism of African American people and the impact of racism on the inequalities of the criminal justice system. Moreover, this study can also make us aware about how to treat people without their race because in general we are all the same.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is about finding the racism form of African American people, the inequalities of the criminal justice system, and how the main character struggle to free from incarceration portrayed in Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage* with applying Critical Race Theory by Delgado and Stefancic to analyze the novel. As the limitation of this study, the writer concerns with the utterances and narrations of the main characters that refer to the racism issues and the struggle of the main character to free from incarceration. Furthermore, this study limits to the narrator's words and utterances of the main characters, Celestial, Roy, and Andre which relate to the statement of the questions.