

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

In the 1940, it was famous as discrimination period in America. Actually, not only in 1940 but also until now the slavery and discrimination are still happening in the world. This case still happened to black people, where white people thought black people were bad, stupid, and ugly people which were only suitable as assistant or a slave. Nowadays, everyone in this world has the rights for life without distinction of gender, tribe, or culture since today is the modern era that everyone has the rights to choose or define their lives without any kinds existence of racism like slavery, discrimination, oppression, or violence.

Actually, there are a lot of discussions about discrimination and the writer feels interested in analyzing this topic because the discrimination case is still happening until now on in another part of world. According to Theodorson and Theodorson state that “discrimination is the unequal treatment of individual or groups on the basis of some usually categories, attribute, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, or social class membership” discrimination is a treatment unfairly from white people to black people that usually white people discriminate based on their age, race, gender, religion, etc.(115-116)

Discrimination is an unfair treatment through certain group of people caused by different characteristic, tribe, race, gender, religion, politics, or others. At that time, discrimination commonly happened in United States and it is still happening now since majority of white people who lead the companies that the black people work for them and they are treated badly by the white people itself and this kind of action is considered as discrimination because white people

black people differently than them. In 1940, Richard Wright, an Afro-American novelist, published his works to society its a novel titled *Native Son* that tells about discrimination in 1930s to black people.

In the other hand, Richard Wright was a famous Afro-American novelist and short-story writer in United State. He was born on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1908 in Roxie, Mississippi, United States and he was passed away on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1960 in Paris, French at age the of 52 years old. During his lifetime, Richard Wright he lived in discriminated circumstance then he expressed it through his literary work. Moreover, he became the first Afro-American writers who protest how white people treat black people which is reflected on his *Native Son* novel. *Native Son* novel was the first novel of Richard Wright, published in 1940. After being published, this novel became one of the bestseller novel which was sold 250 thousand copies in three weeks of publication and also become the first African-American book selected by the Book of the Month Club. Then, this novel also succeeded to explain the social conditions racial imposed on African-Americans by the dominant that is white society in United States.

(<https://www.biography.com>)

According to <https://study.com> *Native Son* takes place during the 1930s in the Black Belt of Chicago. The Black Belt itself was the region of south side Chicago where mostly the society were black people that get slavery by white people. Many black people lived in overcrowded, unsanitary, one-bedroom apartments with an increased threat of disease. In the 1930s, there was also severe racial discrimination and segregation in America. Then, there were limited opportunities for work and education for blacks in America. It was very difficult to get a decent job, especially if we were black people. *Native Son* novel tells about Bigger Thomas, a 20 year-old boy who lived in the poverty on Chicago's South Side, as the protagonist character. Moreover, at that time Bigger had a job interview and his mom wanted him to take that opportunity and he got the job as driver in Mr. Dalton's family. In his first workday, he drove Mr. Dalton's daughter to the college but she asked him to pick her to her boyfriend's house first and to not tell to her parents about that.

Then, when arrived in Mary's boyfriend house, they all get drunk and Bigger picked Mary to home and carried her to her room upstairs. Suddenly, Mary's mom came in to check on her but Bigger got scared that she would find him there so, he put a pillow over Mary's face to shut her up. Then, he realized that he had killed her and because he was afraid that someone know what he had done to Mary, then he cut Mary's head and burned everything in the furnace and he did that things also because of his hate to white people.

After that, he made the lose of Mary became a kidnapping case, it became a big story in the newspaper but nobody thought that Bigger could be the kidnapper because he was only a stupid black guy, but after few days, Bessie, Bigger's girlfriend, found Mary's bones in the furnace and

she knew the truth of Mary's loss. Bigger felt afraid that she would tell what actually happened so he killed Bessie too to hide his criminal case but finally he was arrested. Suddenly, Jan, Mary's boyfriend, met Boris Max, a communist lawyer, to defend Bigger but at the end, Bigger confessed his fault in murdering Bessie and Mary and got sentenced to the electric chair. Then, at the end Bigger died.

Besides that, *Native Son* novel has adapted into an Argentinian film created by Pierre Chenal and into a drama created by Orson Welles. In the other hand, the case that raises in *Native Son* novel is about a protest through the treatment of white people to black people. Therefore, this novel tells about author's experience as reflected in Max Boris character. At that time, he joined in the Communist Party as the Communist's Party lawyer.

Then, the writer chooses *Native Son* novel to be analyzed because of there are discrimination issues inside the novel and discrimination issues are one of the discussions in English literature study, so as the student of English literature this discussion was chosen by the writer as the topic of this research. Then, from this novel the writer expected to help other researchers that would like to have the same topic of discussion. This novel is the first novel of Richard Wright and this novel has a theme which tells about a protest of white's treatment to black people that have a point as a discrimination, even though this novel tells about that kind of issue but this novel still can be a bestseller. Furthermore, the writer would like to give knowledge about the discrimination itself and also would like to give more information about discrimination in order to prevent misunderstanding about discrimination since in this modern era, all kinds of discrimination still happen in society.

## **1.2 Research Question**

How is the existence of discrimination toward black people as seen in Richard Wright's *Native Son*?

## **1.3 Objective**

To reveal the existence of discrimination toward black people as seen in Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

## **1.4 The Use of the Study**

### **1.4.1 Theoretical Uses**

From the background of the study, this research is expected to enhance the reader's knowledge. Therefore, it will increase the reader's knowledge to comprehend about literature and become one of the references for the one who is interested to discuss about discrimination.

### **1.4.2 Practically Uses**

The writer would like to deliver this research as the contribution to the readers who need information about discrimination. Then, by this research the discrimination issue in the society will reduce than before.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

To answer the research question, the writer needs to emphasize its scope and limitations. This study focuses on the existence of social, economic, and political discrimination and also about

types of discrimination such as direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimization toward black people as seen in *Native Son* novel by Richard Wright that published in 1940.