

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of The Study**

This memoir written by author Bryan Stevenson, tells how this racial discrimination occurs in his real life. He experienced various problems in fighting for African Americans rights. Stevenson, a graduate student from Harvard University, has been through a difficult time since he started college. His first case as a lawyer after he graduated was the case of Walter McMillian. Walter is accused of being the murderer of the case in Alabama City. Nearly seven months after Ronda Morrison's death, police were looking for the killer, but witnesses could not provide a clue as to who the real killer was. Ralph Mayers, who has an extensive criminal record, tried to give fake testimony for redemption. Racial segregation that has occurred in the long history of American society covers almost all aspects of life. African Americans people struggling to convince themselves that they are innocent are not being listened to by the government and the police.

Memoir is a work written by the author based on the realities of life that he experienced. By this, as part of literature, memoir conveys certain values from the author, as stated by Samanik (2018) that the author's perception of world and reality affects the work he expressed. Memoirs have been around for a long time. They have

a certain universal appeal as they allow people to learn from each other and gain insight into new perspectives.

The memoir analyzed in this study raises the issue of social discrimination received by the African Americans race in prison, society and government. The *Just Mercy* memoir has the issue of African Americans being treated unfairly while in prison and prisoners being sentenced to death for illogical reasons. This memoir was released in 2014 and the author is Bryan Stevenson. The story told in this memoir is an original story that he experienced during his time as a lawyer.

Literature can be seen from all aspects of life and also from a social perspective, since a product of literature, namely literary works, come from several cultural contexts in society (Afrianto & Gulö, 2019; Suprayogi, 2019). Through this medium it is hoped that literature students and researchers can easily apply the theory of literary studies to understand human life (Kasih, 2018). Literature can also be related to discussions on social issues. Literature as an important medium must have values including moral values so that a literary work not only entertains its readers but also imparts values and lessons (Amelia, 2020). Literary works can also reflect and enhance social issues and values through research and methodical formulation as in this novel. The social issues framed in the literature refer to issues of social justice, racism and redemption. Literature refers to a collection of published information or materials on a particular area of research or topic, such as books and journal articles of educational value. Meyer (1997) Literature consists of those writings which interpret the meaning of

nature and life in words of charm and power, touched with the personality of the author, in artistic forms of permanent interest. It is because literature also becomes a tool to convey the author's feelings (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2021).

The work of literature sometimes refers to racism issue. Racism is the process by which systems and policies, behaviors and attitudes create unequal opportunities and consequences for people because of their race. It occurs when that prejudice is combined with forces that discriminate, oppress, or limit the rights of others, whether individual or institutional (Fredickson, 2002). Racism in all its forms is a human right that today is not recognized as a fundamental problem to be solved especially in America. Racism in its various forms threatens the lives and rights of millions of people around the world. Although racial discrimination has been declared since the multilateral treaty of 1965 the US government perpetuates and allows racism in favor of immunity and personal racial profiling is common. Despite laws against discrimination and protection of equal rights the US government has clearly failed to protect its citizens from racist behavior.

Discrimination is an unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on something such as race, ethnicity, religion, or other social classes. These actions are usually carried out by the majority group and intimidate minority groups. Racial discrimination is a sensitive issue in society (Hacken, 2012). As God has given rights and freedoms to every human being, the principle of human equality is usually ignored and ignored by some people. Discriminatory treatment is still often found in

society, especially in the Americas, and it is still an interesting issue (Luedtke, 2012). Discrimination based on race, politics, and economics causes problems. America has a diverse history of how human rights are implemented. According to (Logan, 2013) racist incidents in America were caused by history that occurred in the past. The entry of many immigrants from Africa who employed African Americans as slaves to America made this racial discrimination conflict occur.

Based on the definition of discrimination above, discrimination means racial attitudes and unequal treatment of a certain group of people because of race. This makes certain races feel considered superior or inferior because of discrimination and inequality of treatment. A civilian who has not been proven guilty of his actions received a sentence from the police in the form of execution sadistically. This is for example; the discriminatory treatment received by African Americans has been around for a long time and is not a world secret. African Americans people who have received bad treatment not only in social life but from various aspects such as discrimination in schools, and the home environment.

The case of George Floyd in the U.S, which at that time became a hot topic discussed by many people, began to trigger emotions and sympathy from other social communities. The state of Australia protested and questioned the rights that should belong to all people, especially African Americans people. George Floyd, who received the judgment in public in a sadistic way that was inappropriate for the police, is a public figure and received a lot of criticism about the government. According to

a survey conducted, there were still racial discrimination and African American hate in the U.S. (Fano, 2020). Finally, *Just Mercy* memoir was chosen in this study as this memoir was considered delineating racism issues.

## **1.2 Research Question**

According to the background of this research, the writer elaborated this question as to the following question:

How is racial discrimination reflected in *Just Mercy* memoir?

## **1.3 Research Objective**

Based on the formulation above, the objectives of this research are to know racial discrimination reflected in *Just Mercy* memoir.

## **1.4 Use of The Study**

This research is expected to contribute to literary analysis and can provide understanding for the readers, especially for the students of English Literature about sociological analysis in a literary work, especially analyzing racism and discrimination experienced in memoir.

### **1.4.1 Theoretical Use**

Theoretically, the results of this research are expected to provide benefits for literary studies, especially in the case of racial discrimination. In addition, it can provide more understanding about one of America's histories in terms of racial discrimination against African Americans. Readers will better understand the importance of

understanding racism or discrimination, and readers will understand things about discrimination based on race.

#### **1.4.2 Practical Use**

The results of this study can be useful for other research materials. In addition, readers will understand more about the discrimination that happens in society which is an absolute thing important for the people. So readers are expected to be motivated to help others regardless of race and skin color.

#### **1.5 Scope of The Study**

Based on the title of this research, racial Discrimination as reflected in *Just Mercy* memoir by Bryan Stevenson. The object of this research is a novel entitled *Just Mercy*. To evaluate this research, researchers applied sociology approach and Laurensen & Swingewood theories in this research.