

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Discrimination is not a new thing in society. This action is shaped by some negative actions like intolerance, labeling, and discrimination against certain groups conducted by other groups of people. Said (1979) stated this attitude is caused by a sense of "superior", they assume that their race is the finest race than the existing minority races. Even though this problem isn't as big as what happened during the colonial era, it cannot be said that discrimination cannot be found nowadays. We still can find this action happens all over the world, but the practice of it is often found and discussed in America, especially during the 90s. At that time many "Negroes" or also called Black People brought to America to be slaves.

The discussion of discrimination will never end because there will always be people who judge the value of a person or a group based on some aspects like gender, race, or religion. There are many examples of discrimination happen around. Don't need to go too far, it even happened in Indonesia, the discrimination came from unscrupulous officials at Malang and Surabaya against Papuan students. They are accused of something they did not do, so they can be judged. They are considered inferior because they have a darker skin color, Lukas

Enembe the Governor of Papua spoke up and expressed his sadness by saying "we are not a monkey, we are humans." (Widhana, 2019). Another example came from a well-known figure Oprah Winfrey, the queen of the country's talk show. In the cast press conference for "Lee Daniels' The Butler" Oprah shared a bit of her childhood journey related to discrimination. She mentioned how difficult it was for her family to get a job because they came from Black Community. "I am the daughter of a maid and my grandmother was a maid and her mother was a maid and her mother was a slave." Winfrey said (2013). In other words their greatest opportunity was just to become a helper in white family who were willing to accept and employ them.

Discourse on discrimination will certainly be related to the concept of post colonialism. According to Gayatri Spivak (1999), Post-colonial is a study that concentrates on the representation of colonized or colonial problems and sometimes refers to the production of colonialism or imperialism in the past or by suggesting it in the future. Postcolonialism is related to many aspects, but one of postcolonialism theories that can be used to discuss issues related to discrimination towards Black Women is by using the concept from Patricia Hill Collins theory. Collins wrote a book called *Black Feminist Thought* in 1990. In her book, in his book, Collins examines the injustices and various forms of oppression experienced by Black Women they have encountered throughout history. According to Collins (1991) Black feminist thought is a critical social

theory that includes a collection of knowledge and a series of institutional practices that actively address central questions faced by black women in the U.S.

Just like Oprah, as a woman of color, she tried to voice her thought too by discussing how and why this black feminism happened and got ended like this. She explained about the oppressions that black women faced in the US, and then she gathered some true stories and experiences experienced by Black Women, she also did not forget to include her own experience. How is the reality of "Black woman's" life, a form of oppression they got because of the difference between Black and White Women, and how is the history of colored women, especially in the United States. Patricia Hill Collins brought those kinds of phenomena to be discussed in her book "Black Feminist Thought". She put a big hope through this book so that this book can help more people to understand oppression toward those colored communities that they face even until now.

In the book *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins explains two main concepts at the Black Feminist level. The first concept is known as Woman Oppression. Women oppression discusses the forms of oppression which are divided into several parts, they are Matrix of domination and Controlling images. The Matrix of Domination refers to how intersections of oppression are structurally organized, which explains the way structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression (Collins, 1991). Meanwhile, Controlling Images according to Collins

(1991) focuses on negative stereotypical representations and images of black women.

Besides getting oppressed, black women have the potential to do resistance. When there is oppression, there'll be a form of resistance too. Collins also explained the concepts that triggered black feminists to do resistance that against various oppressions. The concepts of resistance include Self-definition. Collins (1991) describes the process of Self-definition as a "journey from internalized expression to the 'free mind'" in order to emphasize its significance in the formation of the collective consciousness of black women.

Although colonialism has ended, slavery has been abolished, and the recognition of black and white rights has been declared, the dichotomy between blacks and whites continues and is an endless issue in America. This is reflected in a novel written by Kathryn Stockett entitled "The Help". Inspired by various forms of oppression and injustice experienced by blacks, Kathryn Stockett packed them into the form of a novel. She voiced the story of what colored helper had been deal with daily that not many people know about so that this novel could spread awareness to many people to act fairly without differentiated anything. In an interview after the publication of the novel "The Help", Kathryn Stockett (2010) shared that "The Help" novel had been rejected by publishers around 60 times. Previously, Stockett had never published a book. Since this was her first novel, she didn't want to give up, she kept on trying until finally a year after the interview, in August 2011 the novel The Help has sold five million copies and

lasted for more than 100 weeks on the bestseller list in The New York Times. It is not stopped there, two years after it was published, this novel was then packaged and filmed by Tate Taylor to make it easier to enjoy and reach out to many people. The film won many 80 kinds of awards from 120 nominations, such as "Best Adapted Screenplay-Black Film Critics Circle" (2011), "Best Movie about Women-Women Film Critics Circle" (2011), and "Ensemble of the Year - Hollywood Film Festival" (2011).

The novel "The Help" talked about how the Whites behave towards their colored helper during the early 1960s. Black helpers experienced inhuman oppression through words and label made by the housewife that the researcher can relate from this novel with the theory that Patricia Hill Collins has mentioned on her book. During that time, the White show their superiority over the minority which they saw as inferior. The White see themselves and consider that their culture is way higher than others which quite make sense from them because the minority (especially the blacks) back then can only end up work as a helper. The White feels that they're superior and categorize The Black as a race that is uncivilized and disgusting.

The issue regarding the treatment of oppression that Aibileen and Minny who are two of the many black helpers in the novel "The Help" can be seen from the treatment of housewives who are their employers. They are many he gets discriminatory treatment through bad words and actions. This is not only their

first experience but quite often. Here some examples of quotes where some White say where Black women get inappropriate treatment is:

“All these houses they’re building without maid’s quarters? It’s just plain dangerous. Everybody knows they carry different kinds of diseases than we do. I double.” –Hilly, (2009)

“A bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. I’ve even notified the surgeon general of Mississippi to see if he’ll endorse the idea. I pass.” –Hilly, (2009)

From the statement above, it showed that the whites take that as a usual opinion to be discussed, and as the bosses of those colored helper it is normal for them to concern about that kind of stuff. So, not only considered to be inferior because the helpers are from the poorer community, they are even considered to carry a different and more dangerous disease just because of their different skin color. Those are related in line with Collin's theory about the concept of the Matrix of Domination. The statements "carry different kinds of diseases" and "A bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help" that stated by Hilly as white Americans are indicate the existence of a matrix of domination.

Not only discussing oppression experienced by the Black Women, the help novel also represents a resistance effort made by the characters Aibileen and Minny in the novel *The Help* by Stockett. Resistance occurred after they finally realized that they had to get justice. This is reflected in the quotes:

“I don’t care about eating at a counter with white people. What I care about is, if in ten years, a white lady will call my girls dirty and accuse them of stealing the silver.” –Minny, (2009)

“Time to write to ever person in Jackson the truth about you. Plenty a time and the paper is free.” –Aibileen, (2009)

The statement shows that Minny and Aibileen finally gained awareness and dared to fight even though they had to end up in prison. Because for them, the freedom of their children would be a major contribution they could make for the change of their community. This form of resistance is also mentioned in Colins Theory called Self-defining in Resistance. Statements that Minny and Aibileen said refer to the point where they won't care with what it'll take as long as they got justice. This shows their Form of Resistance as discussed in Black Feminist thought.

Research on black feminism has become focus that discussed more. The development of the concept of black feminist theory also continues to be a discourse in various scientific papers in the form of journals and dissertations. Scopus indexed journal that discusses the issue of black feminists in the novel written by Trace (Trace, 1991) with the title Dark Goddesses: Black Feminist Theology in Morrison's "Beloved". Trace uses the concept of Black Feminist Theology by describing data from the novel "Beloved" and connecting with the theory. The results of Trace's research say the focus of the theory he uses refers to the feminist and black unconscious branches. This journal really inspired researchers because they both wrote about the issue of black feminists in the novel. The difference in this research lies in the experts of the theory and the data source used.

The second journal was written by Dan (2006) who analyzes the use of language that violates feminism in Modern Malay Novels that use Feminism and Linguistic Theory by Deborah Cameron. The results of the research show that Feminist criticisms of the language of modern Malay novels are found in the article, and this relates to verbal practices expressing political indifference to how women and sex and their sexuality can be represented. This journal is a reference for researchers because they both discuss the Feminist issue. The difference in this research lies in the focus of feminist theory which refers to all women and the data source used.

From the various identification problems that have been described in the previous paragraph, the researcher takes the focus of the theme in this study. The research theme in this study is about oppression and resistance towards black women in the help novel by Kathryn Stockett: feminist approach. This study uses the concept of post-colonialist feminist Black theory introduced by Collins in his book, *Black Feminist Thought*. There are two specific limitations chosen by researchers in this study; the first relates to the forms of oppressions toward black women, the second relates to the forms of resistance that Black Women have taken against the oppression that they can. This research proposal uses a qualitative method as a basis so that the study is conducted in the form of literature studies based online and offline that support the theme of this research study.

1.2. Identification of the Research

Based on the background of the research described above, the researcher found several problems, they are:

1. The phenomenon of racism toward the black women in the 19 century.
2. Black women get some oppression and injustice behavior by the Whites people.
3. The issue of oppression reflected in the assumptions made by The White such as low-rate society, uneducated, and can't have the same level as the White.
4. Black women have the potential to put up a fight against the oppression they get by publicizing all their experiences being Maid.

1.3. Limitation of the Research

After the problem can be identified, the researcher limited it to two main problems, which became:

1. The issue of oppression reflected in the assumptions made by The White such as low-rate society, uneducated, and can't have the same level as the White.
2. Black women have the potential to put up a fight against the oppression they get by publicizing all their experiences being Maid.

1.4. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the identification and limitations of the above problems, it can be formulated as:

1. What kind of oppression toward black women reflected in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett?
2. What form of resistance to the oppression experienced by the black women appear in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett?

1.5. Objective of the Research

The benefits related to the formulation of this research are:

1. To find out the kind oppression toward black women that reflected in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett.
2. To find out the form of resistance to the oppression experienced by the black women that appears in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett.

1.6. Significance of the Research

This research consisted of two significances which are theoretical and practical significance.

1. Theoretical Significance

This study aims to make the readers able to know and understand the essence of the theory of oppression toward the black, especially black women brought by Patricia Hill Collins. It is also hoped that the reader will be able to find out whether oppression related to the theory described earlier is reflected in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett or not. This Research is expected to be more useful as a source of teaching and learning for feminist approaches, and be

an effective way of achieving social equality especially the oppression experienced and faced by black women as helpers.

2. Practical Significance

This research is intended to be useful for those who read it, especially for English students who have interest in analyzing the oppression on feminism which still consider the color of women skin. Hopefully this work would help the students as a guide for examining Patricia Hill Collins's theory of feminism which the topic is concentrated to oppression and inequality.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

Black Feminist: Encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U.S. (Collins, 1991)

Oppression : An injustice action, practiced by people or group toward other people. (Rahma et al., 2017)

Resistance : An action or a movement in opposition to something. (Finchett-Maddock, 2017)