

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

When They See Us is a miniseries that tells a true story in 1980 in the United States. This miniseries is created, written, and directed by Ava DuVernay with the aim of presenting the cases of humanity and honor that have been taken.

Ava DuVernay is an American film director, screenwriter, film marketer, and distributor. At the Sundance Film Festival in 2012, DuVernay win the best director award for her second feature film “Middle of Nowhere” and become the first African-American woman to win the award. In film “Selma”, DuVernay becomes the first black female director to be nominated for the Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award for best film.

A miniseries (or mini-series) is a television program that tells a story in a predetermined, limited number of episodes. The term "serial" is used in the United Kingdom and in other Commonwealth nations, though its meaning does not necessarily equate to "miniseries" in its usage. Miniseries is distinguished from an ongoing television series; the latter does not usually have a predetermined number of episodes and may continue for several years. Before the term is coined in the US in the early 1970s, the ongoing episodic form is always called a "serial", just as a novel appearing in episodes in successive editions of magazines or newspapers is called a serial. In Britain, miniseries are often still referred to as serials.

In this study, this miniseries shows about the struggle of five black youths for 25 years for justice. This story has also been made into a documentary film entitled “The Central Park Five” in 2012 directed by Ken Burns. The film win a Peabody Award in 2013 for telling a tragic story about fear, racism, and the mentality.

With the increasing awareness of the importance of representation of minorities in the media, make the story about them are increasingly being

raised on popular platforms. DuVernay is known for her works that raise the issue of racism and discrimination based on skin color taken from a historical perspective, such as the films “Selma” and “13th”. The issue of such injustice is considered important for DuVernay itself to be raised again and again, as on her Twitter account states, “(There) are millions of young people of color who are blamed, judged, and accused on sight.”

The trailer for this miniseries shows a glimpse of the five of them journey as adults and trying to get back to the heart of society and their families, how their lives have changed after being imprisoned on charges they do not commit where innocent black youths were convicted of cases of rape of a white woman that jogging in the park.

This story begins that night on April 19, 1989, into a night that is very tense and unforgettable for those around in the Central Park Area, Manhattan. A group of black youths walking around and making trouble around the park. The police rush to secure several young men who are suspected of being involved in the series of tragic tragedies on that night. But there is nothing more sinister than seeing a white woman lying unconscious in one corner of the park with severe wounds all over her body. The victim is Trisha Meili, who a few hours earlier decide to running to that park. Trisha Meili has to go through 12 days in a coma after the incident. She has recover, but she is severely traumatized and couldn't remember what happens that night. The black youth who come to Central Park for various reasons without committing a crime, from 30 teenagers who are taken to the police station, 5 of them are asked for further information.

Instead of being ask for information, they who do not know each other are forced to confess about what they do to Trisha Meili. They are interrogated for hours without being given food even water and without any parental assistance which should have been their right because they are 14 to 16 years old. They are beaten and threatened to confess their actions in front of the police and given promises to be sent home if they confess about Trisha Meili. Hearing statements from witnesses and matching the timing

of the incident which indicate that there is no possibility of them doing this, the investigators also use their own imaginations for the time incident so that it seem as if it are the young men who has commit the crime against Trisha Meili. The evidence and DNA that there is no match really explains that the five young men are innocent. But because of the cunning of the police and investigators at that time, they are still found guilty. They are force so that the case of the white female runner could be resolve immediately, because the police themselves has difficulty getting information from the victim who lost his memory after incident. They are forced just because they are black teenagers who are stereotype as criminals by Americans and even the world at that time. The five young men are also detained with different terms of detention. They have to bear the brunt of being very young, also suffer the consequences of something they don't do just because they are black teenagers in America. Being a disappointment and also a trauma in itself which of course causes deep wounds because seeing the real injustice practices in front of them at a very young age. Like Antron McCray who has to spend his childhood and has to hold a grudge against his father that he consider to be a part of the case process. In contrast to Kevin Richardson who really loves his family, and should grow up to be a vulnerable man because several years of his life are forced to become an adult before his time in prison without parental assistance. Likewise, Raymond Santana, who have to go through his post-release period, experienced emotional instability and a crisis of self-confidence, which result in leading him to commit other crimes. Korey wise is the only Central Park Five victim to go to adult prison and go through the longest sentence of the four other victims. It must have been very difficult for him to get through his time in prison, even though his location is so far from his hometown.

In 2002, A man named Matias Reyes confess that he has raped Trisha Meili that day and this is confirmed by DNA evidence at a location that matched with Matias Reyes. Although there is no “main criminal” in this miniseries, it is also undeniable that the prosecutor Elizabeth Lederer

and the head of sex crimes at the Manhattan District Attorney's office Linda Fairstein are the two people most responsible for the decision to imprison innocent children. Even when Matias Reyes confesses his actions precisely to Korey Wise entering his 14th year in prison, the two women still make a propaganda that Matias Reyes is one of the members of the Central Park Five who escaped.

So, in this study I use literary criticism approach because the analysis of a literary text through various lenses that highlight authorial stance, purpose, and perspective. For many centuries, literary criticism has been limited to some basic approaches involving historical, moral and biographical perspectives. But during the 20th century, critical approaches have become much more varied due to the huge increase of educated people and their widely diverse reactions to literature. As the meaning of what literature is and can be or should be has changed.

There is sociological / marxist criticism that considers particular aspects of the political content of the text, the author, the historical and socio-cultural context of the work, and the cultural, political, and personal situation of the reader in relationship to the text. These critics tend to focus on the overall themes of the work as they relate to economic class, race, sex, and instances of oppression and/or liberation.

This miniseries makes us understand about the problematic between Latinos and Blacks. In particular, the United States has very low self-esteem towards the police and the system of justice there.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background above, I identify that the police only take one eye off the black youths. They could easily make up the story as if the black youths are guilty just because they couldn't find the real culprit. Meanwhile, the black youth also do not have great power over what is happen at that time. The theme in this film is a reflection of racial injustice towards black teenagers.

1.3. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problem above, I limit the problem of the research with theory and concepts as follows:

1. Through an intrinsic approach: characterization by showing method, setting and plot.
2. Through extrinsic approach which is sociology of literature, and the concept of sociological criticism approach which is included race, racism, racial injustice.

1.4. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the limitation of the problem, the problem in this movie can be formulated to prove the reflection of acts of racial injustice in Ava DuVernay's miniseries "When They See Us", which become the assumption of this research. Therefore, the problems in this research are formulated as follow:

1. How does the racial injustice happened in this Ava DuVernay's miniseries "When They See Us"?
2. Why does the racial injustice happened in this Ava DuVernay's miniseries "When They See Us"?
3. What type of racial injustice happened in Ava DuVernay's miniseries "When They See Us"?

1.5. Objectives of the Research

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the purpose of this research is to prove the excistence of the reflection of acts of racial injustice in Ava DuVernay's miniseries "When They See Us". To achieve this goal, the researcher did several research stages as follows:

1. To analyze how the racial injustice occurs.
2. To analyze why the racial injustice occurs.
3. To find out the type of racial injustice occurs.

1.6. Methods of the Research

In this research, I use a research method with a qualitative method. According to McCusker, K. & Gunaydin, S. (2015), qualitative method are used to answer questions about “What, How, or Why” of a phenomenon that related of my research.

Qualitative research is about immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it, whether at a company meeting, in a community festival, or during an interview. Qualitative researchers purposefully examine and make note of small cues in order to decide how to behave, as well as to make sense of the context and build larger knowledge claims about the culture. (Tracy, 2013, 3)

The phrase qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data, people’s own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. (Taylor et al., 2016, 7)

R.B Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (as cited in Johnson & Christensen, 2014) qualitative research is used to describe what is seen locally and sometimes to come up with or generate new hypotheses and theories. Qualitative is also used when little is known about a topic or phenomenon and when one wants to discover or learn more about it. It is commonly used to understand people’s experiences and to express their perspective.

Based on three definition of qualitative research above, I can conclude that qualitative research is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc.

1.7. Benefit of the Research

Based on methods of the research above, this research is expected to be a contribution to readers who want to know how racial injustice in some place in America is depicted through a film. This research hopefully can be useful, for those who want to understand the racial injustice through the perspective of sociological literary criticism.

1.8. Systematic Organization of the Research

In accordance to the title of the research above, the order of the presentation is written as follows:

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

It consists of the Background of the Problems, Identification of The Problem, the Limitation of the Problems, the Formulation of the Problems, the Objectives of the Research, the Methods of the Research, Benefit of the Research, the Systematic Organization of the Research.

CHAPTER 2 : FRAMEWORK OF THEORIES

It consists of intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, Intrinsic approach includes characterization (indirect methods (showing)), setting and plot. Extrinsic approach applied sociology approach which is sociology of literature, and the concept of sociology literary which including race, racism, and racial injustice.

CHAPTER 3 : THE MINISERIES: “WHEN THEY SEE US” THROUGH INSTRINSIC APPROACH

It consists of point of view, characterization of the characters, plot, and setting of the movie. The concepts above appear in the number of sub-chapters.

CHAPTER 4 : THE ANALYSIS OF RACIAL INJUSTICE IN THE MINISERIES: “WHEN THEY SEE US” THROUGH EXTRINSIC APPROACH

It consists of a brief explanation of this chapter’s content, analysis of the racial injustice in Amerika, setting and plot. The concepts above appear in the number of sub-chapters.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

It consists of an evaluation from the previous chapters and the implication of the evaluated result.

The chapters above are followed by references, scheme of the research, research poster, curriculum vitae, and other required attachment.

