



## **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN NOVEL *WE CAST A SHADOW* (2019) BY MAURICE CARLOS RUFFIN**

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### **Abstract**

This study is aimed to seek how far the novel of *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) by Maurice Carlos Ruffin reflected the issues of racial discrimination. Racial discrimination refers to the character who face discrimination through mistreatment and violence that make a great impact in the future. The unnamed character had been through a difficult time since he was a child. This analysis is related to the postcolonial theory proposed by Pieterse and Powell (2016). The use of theory was based on the interpretation in the text and context of the novel. The data was collected from the quotation in the novel. The data collection was in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This research was a descriptive and content analysis study. The result of the study shows that the racial discrimination of African-American character can be seen through violence to African-American and arbitrary Policy on Economic Aspect. In conclusion, in this post-civil rights movement era, African-Americans still face racial discrimination.

**Keywords:** *racial discrimination, the white, the black*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Since 1980, racial and ethnic diversity in the United States has grown considerably. However, equality in this country is still far away from reality. George Floyd's death, while being apprehended by police in the United States, has become a prominent figure in demonstrations demanding justice for African-Americans. In addition, it is the largest protest against racial ownership since 1960-NS.

Racial discrimination is one of the important studies to discuss because racial discrimination still existing in the US even though the civil rights movement outlawed racial discrimination against African Americans and their

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voting rights but racial discrimination still exists today. The novel that the researcher analyse show that African-American characters receive racial discrimination by white in many aspects of their life. This literature review gives evidence about inequality in the US. Through this novel, the researcher show that racial discrimination give an impact on African-Americans. In this study, the racial discrimination in the novel focuses on the character, the unnamed African-American father who is the protagonist character in this novel.

Many writers and researchers had discussed the research about racial discrimination. For example, Pricillia Rahmadhani (2021). Other researchers such as Rofidah Roikhana (2020), Exploring Systemic Racism in Maurice Carlos Ruffin's *We Cast A Shadow*. All of the research above discussed and examined the African-American character on literary text.

The key concept of this study is black Americans and racial discrimination. In literature, racial discrimination can be represented in phrases, sentences and paragraphs. It shows the point of view and tone in the literature view through the narrator or the character in literature text. According to Pieterse and Powell (2016: 30), mentions that racial discrimination is influenced by racism and social structures, racial discrimination is also associated with dominance and oppression. In America White is the dominant race over other races, and that makes them more inclined to do so over other races.

Neville and Pieterse (2009: 159-174), mention racial discrimination has an impact of black Americans life: "Racial discrimination manifests in people of colour being denied access to resources, opportunities and the power to define reality". The quotation explains that above people of color in America face the impact of racial discrimination by being denied access to resources such as school, opportunities, and power in society, they are marginalized in society.

The previous study also discussed the issue of racial discrimination in texts of literature. The thesis demonstrates that in conjunction these works can serve as representatives of a greater framework for understanding racial discrimination, particularly in American literature. The main character shows that he gets mistreatment and violence from white. He also cannot deal with his childhood experience as black.

The previous study show how the main character survive racial discrimination in *We Cast A Shadow* (2019). The two research focus on how survive racial discrimination and systematic racism in *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) Maybe many have discussed this topic in previous novels, but in the context of the novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019), racial discrimination occurs when racial discrimination itself is prohibited. Laws governing the civil rights movement outlawed racial discrimination against African Americans and their voting rights but racial discrimination still existing today.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted by using postcolonial theory by Pieterse and Powell (2016) and using the perspective of postcolonial theory. The data collection is taken as a quotation in the novel *We Cast A Shadow*. The data collection is in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This research is descriptive and content analysis study. The technique of the data analysis in this study is descriptive technique procedures in which the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis.

In this research, the data were collected from the novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) by Maurice Carlos Ruffin in following procedures: first, Reading the novel *We Cast A Shadow* by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (2019) several times. Second, sorting and collecting the data related to the issue of racial discrimination by the character in the novel *We Cast A Shadow* by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (2019). Third, Identifying the data related to the issue of racial discrimination experienced by the character in *We Cast A Shadow* by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (2019) by racial discrimination in postcolonial theory. Last, analysing the data related to the issues of racial discrimination in the novel *We Cast A Shadow* by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (2019)

This research is descriptive and content analysis study. The technique of the data analysis in this study is descriptive technique procedures in which the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis. This research uses racism theory to reveal the racial discrimination in the novel. The postcolonial theory by Pieterse and Powell (2016) is needed by the researcher to analyse the data.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the issues of racial discrimination in Novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) by Maurice Carlos Ruffin. In this analysis, the racial discrimination refers to the protagonist character. The fictional device, which is used in this analysis, is character. The character is receiving racial discrimination since he was a child. According to the novel, it tells that when the protagonist was a child until him an adult, he was accepting and seeing the racial discrimination to African-American in US. The meaning of the novel can be interpreted as the character accepting racial discrimination.

### 1. Violence to African-American

In literature, African-Americans are often described as a group that has the low intellectual ability under White Americans. This is due to the history of slavery that occurred in America, which still influences the way people see African-Americans today. It can be seen through the following quotation.

*“The memory came rushing back. Uncle Ty and Jacques. Stopped by an officer as they walked home from work. Jacques with an outstanding warrant for not paying court fees on an expired driver's license conviction. Jacques shot in the lung for resisting arrest. Uncle Ty trying mouth-to-mouth but finding only his son's lifeblood. (Ruffin: 84: chapter 11)*

From the quote above, it can reveal black people often get mistreatment in society. The police are supposed to act fairly and protect the people but instead attack the people with weapons. This is shown by the quote above, it can be seen that uncle Ty and his son, who was a black person who committed a traffic violation, were immediately shot and killed, which should have been judged in a good manner and did not need to take someone's life. The existence of racial discrimination, people of colour become the target of oppression and crime by the dominant race (white).

The main character in this novel is representative of African-American nowadays. He receives mistreatment in any situation since he was born as black. This analysis can give the trauma in real life of the protagonist character. The mistreatment that the protagonist gets in the past becomes a hate feeling to be black. He is also seeing how his parents get mistreated in front of him. It can be seen in the quotation below.

*“What's wrong with you?” Mama grimaced, clutched her arm. “This is how you act. Terrorizing your own people?” “You ain't none of mine,” Douglas said. (Ruffin: 208: Chapter 30)*

From the quote above, it can reveal that black has never been considered part of an American citizen. They get different treatment from other races, they are treated unfairly, they get mistreatment not only from ordinary people but also from the police who should be able to act fairly and protect their people. However, this does not apply to Black; they actually get attacks that endanger their safety.

## **2. Arbitrary Policy on Economic Aspect**

One thing that shows the racial discrimination hits the economics' of protagonist character. The family of the protagonist character realizes if African-American cannot equal with White American. It can be seen through the following quotation.

*“Forget that they're not paying you extra for doing it.” Mama cracked several eggs into another bowl. “Why can't one of them do it? And what in the world qualifies you to be the face anyway? Lord knows you don't look like most of them.” (Ruffin: 62: chapter 9)*

From the quote, it can reveal racial discrimination still occurs when this is for black people. The above phenomenon is in accordance with the argument

Neville and Pieterse (2009: 159-174) “Racial discrimination manifests in people of Colour being denied access to resources, opportunities and the power to define reality. This can be seen directly although the main character has good skills as a lawyer, he is also an educated person, but he does not have the same opportunities as white people. In the quote it can be revealed that the mother of the main character already knows that racial discrimination still occurs even though her children work in the scope of educated people, but they still have the thought that black is an inferior race so that they are often treated unfairly because of their racial status as black in America.

Another proof that the main character can show through the following quotation.

*But that doesn't change the objective fact that prospects for African Americans have devolved even since my grandparents' time. Black women make 30 cents for every dollar a white man does, and 90 percent of black moms are single mothers. Unemployment among black males is the norm, not the exception, and nine out of ten brothers have done time. And virtually none of us black guys and dolls can vote since felons and the children of felons need a voucher from an upstanding citizen to earn a voting pass. (Jo Jo was mine.) None of that even takes into account the fact that every black person is a de facto enemy of the state. They used to call bringing every able-bodied black male to jail for questioning racial profiling. Now it's called excellent police work. Did I mention that blacks in most major cities live in fenced-in ghettos just like the Tiko? There may be beauty in my blackness and dignity in the struggle of my people, but I won't allow my son to live a life of diminished possibility. (Ruffin: 118: chapter 16)*

From the quote above, it can reveal that racial discrimination against black people has been happening for a long time. The racial discrimination that occurs has an impact on the black economy in America, they do not get a salary that is in accordance with the work they do. This certainly has an impact on the welfare of black families in America. The difficult economy makes the divorce rate for black couples in America increase, coupled with the fact that many black men do not get jobs because of racial discrimination that makes them did not get the same opportunities as white males, they are often arrested to be put in prison just because of their black race. The quote above can also be expressed that black is considered an enemy of America.

Another quotation that can prove the racial discrimination to African-American. It can be seen in the following quotation.

*The Spaniards were appalled at some of the rules in the American Sector. Example: Under the American rules of racial categorization, anybody thought to be less than white lacked legal process to sue based on an injury to their land property rights. So while any of my*

*lighter-skinned ancestors could buy a small plot of land or even a townhouse, if they could afford it, they couldn't do anything against the whims of white men. (Ruffin: 210: Chapter 31)*

From the quote above, it can reveal if America has a system that will clearly harm black. Landowners based on race or lighter skin colour will have control over the land owned by black. Of course, this will be very detrimental to the black race; they do not have the same rights as white even though they are both American citizens. The opportunity given to black even to buy land in America is not the same as white, they can only buy a small piece of land, this is certainly not a natural thing, all citizens should have the same opportunity to own land if they can afford it.

In summary, the racial discrimination that the protagonist accepted makes him struggle to survive in the US. It is difficult to change the reality of inequality in the US nowadays. However, he does not give up proving it, but his family already told him repeatedly about the fact of being black in America. Racial discrimination in this study showed that African Americans were treated unfairly in America.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) by Maurice Carlos Ruffin reflects the issues of racial discrimination. The novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) is the literary work that reveals the issues of how African-American struggle to get a better life in America. The issues of racial discrimination are reflected by unnamed character African-American who is the protagonist in the novel. The way he accepts and sees White American's treatment to African American people make him realize racial discrimination still existing in America.

The main protagonist in the novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) can show African-American can never be equal with White American. Related to the study, the main protagonist gets and sees mistreatment of white to African-American since he was child. The protagonist also showed that his family and his neighbourhood are the victim of racial discrimination in America.

In terms of violence to African-American, African-American still face inequality because of their skin colour. Stereotypes of White had better than Black, still occur in this modern era. Even though nowadays many African-American have more ability, skill, and intellect than White does, it is still difficult to get the same opportunities as white. Black still have limitations to do several things as American citizens.

In terms of racial discrimination on economic aspect, African-American cannot get the same right like White especially in salary. They do not get a salary according to the work they do. This certainly has an impact on the welfare of black families in America. The difficult economy makes the divorce rate for black couples in America increase, coupled with the fact that many black men do not get jobs because of racial discrimination that makes them did not get the same

opportunities as white males, they are often arrested and be put in prison just because of their black race.

In conclusion, the protagonist face racial discrimination since he was child until he is being a father. He has the limitation at his office, because he is African in America. Through the story of him, his mother and his neighbourhood. It can prove if since a long time ago until now African American still facing racial discrimination. The fictional town of Tiko is located in the American South, the location near a suburb in America where people of African-American live. The setting in this novel shows that people who lived in that area cannot do much because the police always supervise them. This study can help other researchers to explore more about the issues of female racial discrimination. It can help the other researcher to see other issues that are contained in the novel *We Cast A Shadow* (2019) by Maurice Carlos Ruffin.

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