

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter elaborates some theoretical foundations which support the research. Moreover, these theoretical foundations function as a framework of analysis to reveal the answers of the research questions stated in the previous chapter. Since this study uncovers the issue of racism and anti racism, it is necessary to discuss the power of the whites, racism towards the blacks and the black voices in literary works.

2.1 The Power of the Whites

Simone de Beauvoir, a French existentialist and feminist, examines the connection between racism and power. Beauvoir, who was philosophically inspired by a black writer Robert Wright, sees similarity between racism towards the black in America and feminist interest (Yancy, 2002). She says that black people are the victim of the white's superiority.

Within her works entitled *The Second Sex* (1989) and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1976), Beauvoir comes with a conclusion revealing that whiteness or white supremacy is constructed. The white transforms his or her self into subject and constructs the black “*becomes an object body/self or thing*” (Yancy, 2002). Subject can be defined as a political, personal, ideas and experience of being particular

someone at particular time and place (Fenshan, 2000 as cited in Mansfield, 2000). Thus, subject is significant since it represents one's remarkable and important identity in a society. In other words, the white makes his or her superiority by being a subject.

The whites confirm their superiority status by proposing several facts related to the human's anatomy and socio-political relationship. A very influential artist in 18th century, Johann Joachim Wincklemann, set up a beauty scale of human as found in his sculptures. They portrayed the Greek as the standard of beauty in a juxtaposition of face angel of the black with apes and placed the Greek on the top of this scale (Rattansi, 2009: 27). Moreover, some biologists who are influenced by Darwinian Theory of Evolution argue that the anatomy of a black body is not perfectly developed into human like. Besides, some sociologists believe that crime is more likely to be executed by the blacks than the whites do (Yancy, 2002). By presenting those ideas, the whiteness becomes significant in terms of body as well as social status.

To emphasize their superiority, the whites also create remarkable impression which places them in a binary relationship meaning that the importance of a subject comes from its opposite. Edward Said within his famous work *Orientalism* (1978) asserts that the European and American create a separation by naming themselves as "The Self" and those who aren't as "The Other" (Dobie, 2009). The Self is perceived as the "rational, mature, normal" while The Other is associated with "irrational, depraved, different" (Said, 1978: 40). The relationship between The Self and The

Other is rooted in “a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said, 1978: 5).

In line with Foucault (1982) who says that a superior subject is constructed, Beauvoir adds that “it is not the Other who in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other (Blackness) is posed as such by the One [whiteness] in defining himself as the One” (Beauvoir, as cited in Yancy, 2002). As the result, the whites created themselves as better, or perhaps the best race among the rest. Yancy (2002) restates this phenomenon in an insightful conclusion:

whiteness emerges as a value code deployed by a certain racialized (white) group of people, a value code that delimits what is deemed intelligible, valuable, normal, abnormal, superior, inferior, beautiful, ugly, and so on. Whiteness is not a universal biological essence, but a phenomenon that takes place in *history* at particular times and places. Constituting itself as *the* site of universality and absolute presence, whiteness functions as an epistemological and ontological anchorage.

Those ideas become general knowledge in what Beauvoir calls the “serious world” that is dominated by the white’s perspective of the world (Yancy, 2002). Knowledge, according to Bacon (n.d) as cited in Said (1978: 32), refers to “surveying a civilization from its origin to its prime to its decline”. Knowledge, then, plays its role in identifying the blacks as the inferior one.

Beside knowledge, power also contributes in strengthening the inferiority of the blacks. Power, as Webber argues, is a feature of domination (Sadan, 2004: 35). Thus, the whiteness dominates every aspect in the civilized world, the civilization that is created by the whiteness (Beauvoir, 1989 as cited in Yancy, 2002). Furthermore, to brace its superiority, the power of whiteness becomes productive

meaning that power has an authority to impose someone to do something (Foucault, as cited in Yancy, 2002). In this sense, the white can impose the black to receive the black inferiority.

French and Raven (1959) as cited in Podsakoff and Schriesheim (1985) identify five forms of power that is found in the power of whiteness. They are expert power, reward power, referent power, coercive power, and legitimate power. Expert power comes from one's knowledge and expertise. Reward power is a right given to someone who did something tangible in positive as well as negative deed. Meanwhile, referent power derives from the one's affiliation with a group. Coercive power exists when treat or force is used to get somebody else obedient. Legitimate power exists when one possesses authority and uses it to force another to do something.

However, power comes into being if only it puts in actions towards a free subject (Foucault, 1982). In addition, Foucault states that:

Relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future.

(1982)

Foucault, for instance, believes that slavery is not about power domination and control once the slaves are chained and have limited mobility action, nor does it exist in animal since it does not possess capacities to volition (Foucault, 1982). In

other words, power only prevails in human beings since they have desire to live on their own feet and have right to gain freedom. Yancy (2002) adds that the whites get their power from freedom. Freedom refers to “ability to choose from a range of possibilities, in different ways of behavior” (Sadan, 2004). Thus, once the freedom is gained, a person can do whatever they want and defines its equality. This idea, then, relates to the white’s effort to keep the inferiority of the black by restricting the black’s contribution and power in the society.

For Foucault, the discussion of power involves the talk about resistance because to define power means to identify resistance as well. In his book, *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (1979), Foucault proposes “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1976 as cited in Hartmann, 2003). Power conducts resistance since “resistance to power draws its means of struggle, and even its actual social position, from the existing form of power” (Sadan, 2004: 60).

In line with Foucault, Gaventa (1980) as cited in Sadan (2004) also concerns about resistance in power. Power presents inequality that gives those who have power a chance to control, or in some extent, to impose the powerless to do something (Sadan, 2004: 40). Moreover, Sadan adds, the powerlessness and inequality are dangerous for the power holders because the powerlessness will struggle for the equality. For Hartman (2003), struggle constitutes any “creative traversing of the

field of possible action.” Thus, struggle against power can take any forms as long as it is the opposition of the power domination in order to gain equality.

Knowledge and power are exercised by the white to normalize the process and the result of constructing the black as inferior (Said, 1978: 31). Within its power, the white diminishes the fact that all men are born equal and none is superior, that the black body/self is constructed. Furthermore, it could not help but imposes the blacks to believe in their given inferiority.

The situation is sustained for years by the white in order to maintain his or her power. The reason is obvious that is to construct white’s superiority and places the blacks as the inferior ones. The whites sustain the gap towards the blacks by calling the adult black female and male as “girl”, “boy”, or just plain “nigger”. This nameless is dehumanized because the whites refuse to admit the blacks as part of the society. Furthermore, it also affirms their superiority and safety (Jaynes, 2005: 80).

Taken together, since whiteness is constructed instead of given, then, it means that the superiority of any races can be created and imposed. The white’s attempt to maintain the black inferiority shows that none is superior. As the power holder the whites have strength to impose what they want and what they try to construct. However, the power of the white comes with acceptance and refusal in the society which will be discussed further in chapter 4.

2.2 Racism towards the Blacks

Though black enslavement was abolished during the American Civil War, these colored people are not automatically free. Their ways to gain equality in a unified America were so long and hard. Being slaves and/or labors for years made them trapped in poverty. As the result, blacks have “fewer good homes, less wealth, and a weaker sense of economic security” than the whites do (Glasgow, 2009). These conditions, then, rationalized the racism towards the blacks.

Some theorist defines racism as an ideology dealing with prejudice and belief rising unjust and unequal practices and structures. Others see racism as the economic stratification that rationalized privilege (Omi and Winant, as cited in Gracia, 1999). Meanwhile, Essed (1990, as cited in Berman and Paradies, 2010), believes that racism attaches inferiority to a racial group and uses it to justify the unequal treatment to them. In other words, racism is associated to prejudice, privilege, an unequal treatment towards a racial group of people which cause inequality.

Furthermore, Dinesh D'Shouza (1996) suggests several steps in understanding racism. He proposes that:

In order to be racist, you must first believe in the existence of biologically distinguishable groups or races. Second, you must rank these races in terms of superiority and inferiority. Third, you must hold these rankings to be intrinsic or innate. Finally, you typically seek to use them as the basis for discrimination, segregation, or the denial of rights extended to other human beings.

D'Shouza's idea shows that the most fundamental thing of racism is the belief of the race distinction. At this point, the discussion of race distinction belief is fruitless for some writers. They believe that human beings are biologically similar and different skin color does not have anything to do with one's superiority (Garcia, 1999).

Another definition of racism comes from Gordon. Gordon (1989 as cited in Garcia, 1999) asserts that racism is a "self-deceiving choice" to believe that one race is superior. In his perspective, being racist is an option. This decision comes from what Gordon calls "bad faith" which derives from race distinction or unreasonable reasons of hatred.

Gordon's work has influenced Garcia in defining what constitute racism. For Garcia, the theorists' ideas about racism above are all basically come from disregard or ill will. Racial ideology, prejudice, privilege, and discrimination exist because of the hatred in one's heart (Glasgow, 2009). Within his work, *Moral Concept of Racism* (1999), Garcia discusses a new concept of racism, The Volitional Concept, which identifies racism as ill will. He writes:

racism, in its root, consists in racial dis-regard or even ill-will. Hate, ill-will, is, at least, the core of the phenomenon. A morally lesser, but still grave, related form of racism consists in racially based or racially informed disregard – that is, an indifference to another's welfare on account of the racial group to which that person is assigned.

By referring racism as a choice, Garcia insists that hatred leads to the decision of being racist. Yet, Garcia's idea is viewed too general and incomplete

because hatred is related to one's psychology (Faucher and Machery, 2009). However, Garcia himself does not emphasize his concept in psychoanalytic study. He argues that his Volitional Concept of Racism (VAR) is more related to antipathy because VAR consists of desires, preferences, choices, and affective states (Garcia, 2011).

Since racism derives from disregard, then the racist actions will be hostile and disrespect (Glasgow, 2009). Those racist actions are reflected in stereotypes, attitudes, and or discrimination (Berman and Paradies, 2010). Yet, within the research, the disrespect actions towards the blacks are only classified into two forms that are prejudice and discrimination because stereotype is categorized as a form of prejudice (Rosado, 2012).

By examining a book by Ali Rattansi, *Racism, a Very Short Introduction* (2007: 15), the racist stereotyping and prejudice towards the blacks can be traced. Since the middle age, the Christian believes that Canaan, Noah's grandson, who is cursed and be a burnt evil as the ancestor of the Africans. The story develops in the white society in some ways that associated the blackness as evil which rationalizes the enslavement. Immanuel Kant (1764) as cited in Rattansi (2007: 25) claims "this fellow was quite black . . . a clear proof that what he said was stupid."

Kant's idea above shows that he believes that the skin color is related to one's inferiority. However, Kant's statement is opposed with Rosado (2012) who states that

"color is neutral; it is the mind that gives it meaning." Thus, when the relation of skin color and one's inferiority is drawn, then, changing the skin color is the only solution to be superior. The point is not the skin color; it is the systems that perpetrate the prejudice (Rosado, 2012).

The stereotyping and prejudice were sustained at the time of slavery, even after the abolition of slavery in America. The blacks face discrimination that limits them in almost every part of life (Jones, 2005: 80). For instance, there were separated public services, schools and housings. In the southern part of America, the condition was even worse. Its government devised the Black Codes in 1860s which proscribed the freedom of the blacks. They lost their voting right so that the blacks do not have any representative in the congress (Jaynes, 2005: 127). The reason behind those racist actions is the whites' fear of losing their power. By creating the idea of prejudice and representing it in a form of discrimination, the power of the white can be maintained.

Similar to power that brings resistance, racism also encourages some anti-racism movements as a reaction to abolish the racism. Rosa Parks shows her anti-racism effort when she refuses to move backward in a public bus for a white in December 1, 1955 (Carson, 2005: 167). As the consequence, she is arrested by the police. Moreover, Carson also states that Rosa Parks's issue persuades a bigger movement leading to stop racism in America. There was also Martin Luther King Jr., who becomes a leader of the Civil Right Movement that concerns about desegregation (Carson, 2005).

The anti racism can also appear in “the construction of a positive project about the kind of society in which people can live together in harmony and mutual respect” and can be any opposite of racism (Anthias and Lloyd 2002, as cited in Berman and Paradies, 2010). For instance, when racism is reflected in disrespect, then the anti racism comes with the respectful attitudes toward the blacks.

2.3 Black Voices in Literary Works

Black literature has become an authentic fact of resistance to get a juxtaposition that has been dreamt by the blacks in America for years. Since the ante-bellum period, for example, hundreds slave narrative were published. The objective of this publication is obvious, that is to show America the life of the black society under white supremacy.

As the works of the marginalized ones, black literature has been “charged over the years by white critics with being nothing more than social protest... or a literature without technique, style, or innovation” (Early, 2005: 219). Some black writers prove them wrong since their works are well appreciated as canonical work. They are Frederick Douglass (known as the most valuable writer in African-American literary experts), Richard Wright, Toni Morrison (the first black American who received the Nobel Prize for literature) and many others.

The main theme presented by the black writers is racism which leaves bitterness for the blacks. They face an idealism believing that their darker skin color

turns into a ravine that marginalized them from America. For instance, Sugiharti (n.d) in her research of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes* (1970), states that the white becomes the standard of beauty. It is represented by a white little actress Shirley Temple whose eyes are adorably blue. By the media, her beauty is exposed and imposed and it starts to influence the black's concept of beauty. They adore blue eyes to be seen as beautiful woman. This concept also makes a black woman, Geraldine, believes in the line between the black and the white and thinks that "niggers were dirty and loud" (Morrison, 1970: 6). The ideas about beauty can be classified as the white's effort to construct universality so that those who are not akin to them feel inferior. Yet, other characters such as Claudia and Freida love their black skin which indicates a resistance to the white's oppression and power.

The ideology of black inferiority also influences discrimination towards the blacks as presented in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940). Wright's story has called Beauvoir, a French Feminist, to comment on this unjust condition (Yancy, 2002). She remarks on the main character's story:

Bigger Thomas... feels with bitterness at the dawn of his life is this definitive inferiority, this accursed alterity, which is written in the color of his skin: he sees airplanes flying by and he knows that because he is black the sky is forbidden to him.

Discrimination has also set the black citizens of Bottom in *Sula* (1973) by Toni Morrison are marginalized and snared in poverty. The tunnel project in Bottom brings a new hope for the citizens to help them pursue a better life and it turns out that

the project only hires the whites. And the fall of the tunnel symbolically makes the Bottom's fellows realize that:

Just as Plum lives with drug-induced hallucinations, so too the residents of the Bottom live under economic illusions. They have faith that racism will soon be over and economic prosperity will follow despite numbers of broken promises before. The deaths caused by the collapse force the people of the Bottom back into reality. Racism exists and will not die.

(Snyder, n.d)

Yet, Yancy (2002) in his research proposes that the racist treatment experienced by the blacks makes them realize that they are as worth as the white does. In Frederick Douglass's novel *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* published in 1845, its main character, Douglass, realizes that he is the victim of racism in the white world. He wants to get out of the slavery, and this belief leads him to fight against his white master, Covey. Douglass's decision to fight the white shows that the whites and their power "is not an objective, hypostatized *thing*, but a performative choice that sustains white hegemony" (Yancy, 2002). Furthermore, another instance of resistance is also shown by Douglass's mother who takes a long and risky journey to see her son. It is the love that belies the inferiority of the blacks (Yancy, 2002).

Moreover, the instances above only reveal the blacks searching for freedom and juxtaposition. Some present the slaves fight against their white masters because of the pain that they cannot endure anymore. *The Help* reconstructs the resistance

against white's power and black racism through the anti racism which is shown by the whites and the blacks.

