# RESISTANCE TOWARD DOMINATION OF RACIAL DIFFERENCE IDEOLOGY IN JACQUELINE WOODSON'S NOVELS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article was a result of the library research which was conducted by using Gramscian hegemony theory and ideology concept by Thompson. The media analized was the three novels by Jacqueline Woodson, they were Maizon at Blue Hill (MBH), If You Come Softly (IYCS), and Lena. The analysis of ideology used language, continued by the process of resitance, and finaly ideology negotiation. The result of the research shows that there are five resistance forms toward domination and ideology dissemination of racial differences in Jacqueline Woodson's novels, they are (1) moderation, (2) pretention, (3) devaluation, (4) respectful resignation, and (5) rejection.*

*Keywords: racial difference, elemination ideology, hegemony*

## INTRODUCTION

Many literary works take racial difference issues as the central theme that are written by white authors and black authors in their novels, poetries, or dramas. These literary works portray racism as the main causes of domination and discrimination in the society. The theme of racism unites white and black author to write the same issue on racial difference and its impacts. This kind of literary work can be categorized into black writing. Endraswara (2013) has stated that black writing is a kind of literary work that emphasizes on the issue of ethnicity and race, as well as revealing the culture of the certain race which is oppressed by other races.

Racism is racial difference problematic that impact is inseparable from modernity. Zamudio (2006) has said that racism lives along two dimensions, traditional racism and liberal racism. It developed further in modern times with the huge migrations, the extension of trading relationships, the industrialization of Western society and colonization. Furthermore, Mignolo (2008) has found that a heterogeneous race is mapping the emergence of the racial matrix, the modern colonial world, and the foundation of the capitalist economy. That is why the theme of racial difference still becomes the interesting issues in popular literary work nowadays.

One of the American popular authors who concerned to write on racial difference issues in her novel is Jacqueline Woodson. Her works become popular and best seller in

America. Parker (2011) has said that popular culture is simply culture which is widely favored and liked by many people. Moreover, Woodson's works can be categorized into literary series that narrate the issue of racism and racial difference in modern era. Furthermore, her novels also personalize the experience the racial difference in American society, so it becomes good stories to be enjoyed by the big number of readers. Crowe (2003) has found that good stories, whether they are fiction or nonfiction that helps personalize the experience of others. These stories can make historical fact seems real and immediate. Racism still becomes a problem in the modern era because it is supported by the certain ideologies. It is in line with what Mayerson (2010) has reported that popular fiction, in general, is often assumed under the umbrella of popular culture and propose the certain ideology.

As an ideology discourse, literature plays the important role as a caretaker of social unity block, as a unity guard among the social powers which are actually contradictory. Faruk (2010) has said that at the same time ideology also functions as a collective action battlefield of subordinate classes to counter-hegemony. As a unification movement, the opposition movement belongs to political action, an attempt of subordinate classes to reject the ideological elements from outside.

Meanwhile, Gramsci (1976) has stated that ideology dictates the whole flavor, moral tradition, religious and political principles, and social relation, especially in the

intellectual and moral meaning. In this case, the state oppresses the people. The oppression is not only physical oppression or economic domination but also a variety of media and aspects of social life including art, sciences, and the other cultural elements.

Most of the dominations are caused by racial difference factor. Moodod (2002) has found that race has scientific validity linked to social value whereas racism is the belief of racial superiority enforcing occurrences of racial discrimination and attack. Racism reflects in the form of racial prejudice, labeling, and stereotype toward the other races and racial domination.

The domination of certain race has changed into hegemony, a way of life and thought, which are dominant in which a concept of reality is disseminated toward people either institutionally or individually. Hall (2000) has reported that since African-American contrasts with the Euro-American norm, it is vilified in the subjective view of guilt. Therefore, for abolishing the influence of hegemony, it needs counter-hegemony, awareness including social, cultural, political, economic, and also cognitive aspects of oppression that is caused by hegemony. It happens because of the critical of the minority. Frankel (2009) has reported that one can assume that the more new immigrants interact with majority groups, the more they will become critical of minority or racial others. It is in line with Egan (2002) who finds that when a group of people is faced with both social and environmental subordination, they are the victims of environmental injustice.

Based on previous explanation, the research question of this study is formulated as follow; how is the resistance and negotiation of ideology about racial differences in the novels of Jacqueline Woodson.

## METHODS

The research is conducted by using Gramscian hegemony theory and the concept of ideology proposed by Thompson. There are three novels of Jacqueline Woodson as the source of research data; they are *Maizon at Blue Hill* (MBH), *If You Come Softly* (IYCS), and *Lena*.

The analysis of ideology fundamentally starts from language as language belongs to the basic medium of interpretation which tends to defend relation of domination. Shelby (2003) has said that ideology refers to how meaning serves in particular circumstances to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical or it can be called relations of dominations. Based on that Shelby's concept, it can be understood that discussing language also means discussing ways to act. The ways of act contain ideology power forms; even the simplest utterances belong to a form of intervention containing ideology in the world. Language is not only a communication instrument or knowledge but also an authority instrument. Through language, someone will attempt to be understood, trusted, obeyed, respected, and distinguished from others. The forms of the power infiltrate into the meaning. Factors of contextual act and interaction are also concerned in finding the contestation and negotiation of the ideology.

Thompson (1984) has stated that an ideology study could not be separated from the identification of contextual act and interaction where agents show their desire, situation, realization of action and speech in specific context. The expressed acts are showed by the agents in the specific time and setting. Then, the way is studying the stories showing

the specific logic. It happens because the ideology tends to refer to narrative forms for maintaining between dominating relation and its legitimate claims.

The stories are told by those who have power and try to perpetuate their status quo. In this case, colonial is an institution which has the power to frame the meaning of race and racial difference. Nair (2002) has found that colonial discourse on race thus forced postcolonial intellectuals to theorize the class basis of domination. For example, Frantz Fanon has argued that "in the colonies, you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich". This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched in understanding the world's politics.

After analyzing the ideology in Jacqueline Woodson's novels, the next step is the researcher carefully analyzed the process of resistance forms toward ideology domination related to racial differences. It refers to the concept of Brown (2012) who said that white supremacy as a systemic and systematic force connect racism to colonialism and capitalism, thus relegating sub-humans nonwhites to inferior social status and subject to economic exploitation based solely on biology or ethnicity.

At the last step, researcher analayzes the ideology negosiation in Jacqueline Woodson's novels. It concerns how the ideology is negotiated for achieving the hegemonic position. Koepke (2007) has found that antidiscrimination laws are not enough to justify the wrong of the past. The equal resources and the unequal treatment are needed to ensure equal outcomes because the country creates the conditions that make it impossible for blacks to take advantage of those laws.

Therefore, the focus of the research data is all of the events which involve a variety of different racial characters. Then, it is mapped how the different racial ideology disseminates in the stories. This agrees with Faruk (2001) who said that compared to the others, Thompson's theory of ideology dissemination seems more detailed and comprehensive. However, unilateral still exists, for example, the ideology placement which just seems on the activities of the dominant class. Furhermore, Pandey (2006) has reported that for 200 years and more, the struggles waged by the oppressed and subordinated as subaltern are seen as struggles for recognition as equals. In fact, the subordinate class must not be passive, but they mobilize the meaning to de-legitimate the existent legitimacy, and so on. Coronil (2005) has said that the project allows itself to imagine exceeded its incarnation in the group and even its identification as the subaltern group.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part describes how the forms of resistance toward dissemination of dominant ideology related to racial differences. Besides that, it also describes how the ideology of racial difference is negotiated to achieve the dominant position. The research shows that there are resistance forms toward domination and ideology dissemination of racial differences, such as (1) moderation, (2) pretention, (3) devaluation, (4) respectful resignation, and (5) rejection.

Moderation belongs to a resistance form of individuals or groups by appreciating what they own or achieve. They appreciate the forms of symbol and try to protect the culture that they own from the domination of dominant classes. For example, they try to maximize style but also minimizing the costs, looking for an appealing purchase and making annual

or bi-annual sales. In the novels, the moderation can be found in the following citation.

> "Well, don't go reinventing yourself too much. It's okay to be our son. Remember Brooklyn Tech people knew who you were there and you got along fine." Yeah I remember. At Tech, some people treated him strange and some people treated him okay…. But new kids, well, sometimes they just acted weird, like he was some untouchable god or something. He hated that." (Woodson, 1998)

The discourse tells the dialogue between a white-skinned character named Jeremiah and his father. Before continuing his study, his father has said that he does not need much change to adapt to the white-skinned people. The statement can be found in the sentence, "Well, don't go reinventing yourself too much. It's okay to be our son". The advice shows that they should respect the symbolic forms and try to protect their own culture from the domination of dominant classes. Therefore, it does not need to be always submissive and immerse himself in the dominant group. It is also confirmed by the advice of Jeremiah's father who states that people in Brooklyn Tech will know him. Brooklyn Tech is Jeremiah's school where many black students are previously studied. That is why it can be categorized into moderation resistance.

The second form of resistance is pretention. It is a resistance of facing a dominant position by producing the symbolic forms as if they belong to a product of dominant individuals or groups. Thus, the individual in the position can follow the pretention strategy which desires to be a person who has not or being assimilated himself/herself in the superior position compared to his/her own position. For example, the individuals in the center position can use accentuation, vocabularies, and language styles from the dominant groups which show their ambition, restlessness, or both. The resistance in the pretention form can be seen in the following citation.

> "It doesn't matter," Charli said, rolling her eyes. "Pauli doesn't hang with sisters." She assimilated. Marie added, snidely. Pauli had thrown her head back and was laughing with the group of white girls sitting at her table. They stared at her adoringly..... Charli turned to me. "Pauli really doesn't hang with us, so it doesn't matter what grade she's in." Pauli never gets involved. It's like she doesn't want to face the fact that she's black.(Woodson, 1992).

The citation tells a black student, Pauli who consorts with the white students. She desires to be a person who has not or being assimilated herself into the superior position compared to her own position. Pauli's pretention can be seen from her friends' comment which state, "Pauli doesn't hang with sisters. She assimilated." The term of 'assimilated' shows that Pauli really consorts with the whites.

Devaluation is a strategy of resistance toward dominant groups by abolishing symbolic forms produced by them. They do not only develop the values of dominant groups and assimilate themselves on the dominant position but also can humiliate the symbolic forms produced by the dominant individual or group and attempt to raise themselves on their dominant position. Therefore, the

emergence of the bourgeoisie in the 18th and 19th century in Europe sometimes depicts the old aristocracy group as a group which is exaggerated, amoral, un-responsible, unable to regulate economic and political relations, and superficial in their social life. Once the bourgeoisie success in taking a role as old aristocracy group and creates the new domination, the main battlefield of symbols turn into a line separating the lower groups from a group which is lack of cultural and economic capital and then from the emergence of new middle class.

The resistance in devaluation can be found in the form of acts which humiliate the values stuck on the dominant group and state that what they own as black people is valuable. It can be seen in Jeremiah's sentence as follows.

> He wished his grandmother was alive so he could tell her that it wasn't a bad thing. That you couldn't get too black. He remembered the time his father had taken him to see a film about the Black Panthers-all those Afros and fits raised in the air. Jeremiah smiled. He wished his grandmother had heard them shouting Black is beautiful. (Woodson, 1998).

In the citation, Jeremiah seems to remember his grandmother's advice when she was alive. She used to say that being a black is not the worst. She also said that he is not too black. Meanwhile, his father used to invite to watch *Black Panthers* movie, as seen in the sentence, "He remembered the time his father had taken him to see a film about the Black Panthers". Through the advice and acts, the blacks want to emphasize that black is beautiful.

Resignation is a strategy conducted in relation to symbolic forms which are produced by individuals placing superior position. Those forms which place the dominant position are deemed as a superior position, as propriety. However, the resignation has been a superior thing toward those forms, and the inferiority of the product can be accepted as an inevitable thing. They choose to respect the symbolic forms which are practical, easy-to-get, and relatively cheap. The resistance in the resignation is conducted by Maizon as seen in the following citation.

> "You have something to tell us, Maizon?" Miss Norman asked quietly. "I'm leaving," I said, lifting my head to look at her. "I don't want to come back here."….I looked at her know. "I'm going to try to find a place where I can fit in being both black and smart. There has to be a place somewhere, right?" (Woodson, 1992)

The citation is a dialogue between Maizon and Miss Norman, a Blue Hill's teacher. Maizon feels that her presence is so hard as a minority, the black student, at Blue Hill because there is discrimination experienced by her and her black friends. Thus, Maizon chooses to resign honorably from the school. Maizon's choice is implied in the sentence "I don't want to come back here." When Miss Norman advises her to keep staying at the school, she firmly states that she does not want to come back there. This shows that Maizon conducts the resistance by honorably resigning. Moreover, she states that she would find the better school for a black girl outside Blue Hill. Her confidence is implied in the following utterance, "I'm going to try to find a place where I can fit in being both black and smart. There has to be a place somewhere, right?"

Rejection is a form of resistance by rejecting or humiliating symbolic forms produced by individuals who place a superior position. The rejection can be conducted, for example, children from labor class parodying an authority language, rejecting their activities which are considered as womanish activities. Furthermore, individuals in the subordinate position must not rise themselves by placing their position in the specific field. Rising themselves in that way is not a real purpose. However, rejecting the symbolic forms produced by their superiority, the individuals in the subordinate position can get the way to emphasize the values of their own products and activities without fundamentally disturbing the characteristics of equitable resources in the specific field.

> When I heard that Blue Hill was predominantly white, I didn't even want to come here. "Me either" Charli said.....Marie nodded, "It's not even a choice, Maizon. We want to protect you because we've seen what could happen to sister here. It hurts, but you have to make a choice. "What kind of choice?" I asked.... "Pauli made a choice," Marie said casually, picking up her roll. "Well, I'm not Pauli," I said loudly. Some girls turned toward our table. (Woodson, 1992).

One of the rejections on the novels is rejecting capitalism and attempting to abolish it through the struggle of labors but allowing parliamentary democracy. The values can be seen in the following citation.

> People see somebody poor and they think it's cause the person don't want to work or don't have good sense or something, but that's not always true. People all the time looking for a way to blame a person's troubles on the person. In Chauncey, people would look at me and Dion like we was dirt sometimes. Besides the dresses Mama used to make, I don't remember having something new. After she took sick and our daddy wasn't working regular, shirts and pants just sort of showed up at our house, buried deep in the back of a box or wrinkled at the bottom af a bag of clothes.(Woodson, 2006).

The citation shows the complaints of Lena and Dion who feel excluded from their people because of the poor family. In their environment, people just respect the riches. Lena's perspective of the environment can be seen in the sentence "people see somebody poor, and they think it's cause the person don't want to work or don't have good sense or something, but that's not always true." According to Lena, the people always consider that being poor is caused by laziness. In fact, they are poor because of capitalism system. Therefore, it needs a struggle against capitalism and the spirit shows the socialism values. From the resistance forms to the domination, it can be concluded that the resistance of middle class is different from the resistance of subordinate class.

The ideological struggle on Jacquiline Woodson's novels is pointed to hegemonic ideology which needs ideological negotiation and relation on the struggle. The following presents the negotiation analysis among ideologies which involve in the racial differences.

The negotiation between liberalism and capitalism ideology seems in their perspectives of the state roles in keeping their people's freedom. In liberalism ideology, the government should keep freedom, equality, and security of all people. There is resistance toward intervention from society, state, institution, and group base on self-choice. This can be seen in the characters of Jeremiah and Elisha who want their rights admitted as individuals and citizens. They want freedom in choosing their preferred school and sports community.

The liberalism ideology also correlates viewing religion and moral. According to liberalism ideology, religion should be tolerated, and the freedom of thought and expression should be appreciated. Liberalists force all the moral standards which apply to individuals because the standards hinder the freedom. It can be seen in Elisha's demeanor who ignores Jeremiah's activity whether he often worships or not because it is his personal rights.

The struggle for freedom also appears in the conflict between Maizon and the white students at her school. Maizon feels deserving to be the student of Blue Hill because of her struggle and work hard. Meanwhile, her friends believe that Blue Hill is just for the students who come from rich families and higher class families. Besides that, liberalism values appear on the guidance in order to have the equal-law rights as civil independence. It is shown by the people reaction who demonstrates when Jeremiah is shoot-dead by the policeman. The people demand that the law should be imposed because they think the state should ensure the security of all citizens.

Meanwhile, capitalism ideology as ideology negotiating with liberalism appears in the storyline which shows that the economic structure, especially production process results in the formation of two social classes, capitalists who control the work equipment and the workers. The capitalists belong to the ruling class while the workers belong to the ruled class. This pattern occurs in Lena, Marie, and their environment. Both come from the different class backgrounds. Marie is from the rich family while Lena is from the poor family. Nevertheless, they remain to keep their friendship as the manifestation of egalitarian society. Their friendship is opposed by the society.

The support of capitalism ideology toward liberalism also appears from the perspective of poverty. The capitalism believes that underdevelopment and poverty are results of black people's laziness. The contradiction occurs between Maizon and Suzan. Maizon, a white girl, is deemed poor. Susan states that the appearance of Maizon is similar to her housekeeper. The perspective is opposed by Maizon by saying that not all of the blacks are poor because they can thrive by working hard.

The capitalism ideology believes that public rating is made based on their competence and success in settling themselves toward the global capital economy. The perspective can be seen in the conflict between Elisha and her father. Her father only allows Elisha is having the relationship with a man who has the respectable job. He thinks that level of social class is important. On the other hand, Elisha tends to behave egalitarian and wants to consort with all people from different social class backgrounds.

From the negotiation, it can be known that liberalism and capitalism ideology intertwines in extending the freedom against discrimination promoted by racist ideology. Therefore, liberalism ideology can be known as a hegemonic ideology and can negotiate with capitalism. Negotiation between liberalism and racism is shown with

the relationship between Maizon and her white friends at Blue Hill. They are students at the school. As liberalism and racism representation, both parties often have the different opinions; even they tend to be confrontational. It means when they get resistance and confrontation related to the perspective of something.

Liberalism emphasizes the importance of freedom values individually and tends to ignore either convention or written rules. It is like the condition of Maizon. Both in terms of acts and utterances, she tends to take out from all of the existing norms. Racism prioritizes the respect toward the whites. The Jacqueline Woodson's novel through the character of Maizon and her white friends depicts that the relationship between racism and liberalism can exist if only mediated by their democratic thought. It is shown from the school's policy which receives the black students and Maizon's willingness of studying at Blue Hill. However, if proportionally observed, racism negotiates with liberalism because of a concept which states that the freedom is a naturally inherent value of human beings. It seems when Maizon has a chance to study at Blue Hill through academic scholarship. Nevertheless, her freedom is restricted. She could not enroll the certain extracurricular dominated by the white students, for example, debate club.

The discrimination on the black students shows that racist ideology is still negotiated in the school site. Maizon's dropping out from her school shows her commitment to continuously negotiate her liberalism ideology. According to an ideological study of the text, it can be known that Maizon is a figure of liberalism ideology. The ideological situation outside the school is different. It can be concluded that racism ideology negotiates with liberalism. Racism ideology needs negotiation with liberalism in order to be welcomed in the society. The liberalism ideology seen at Maizon is just false. Maizon seems liberal as she struggles her freedom, but she finally drops out of her school.

In the Jacqueline Woodson's novels, the negotiation between capitalism and racism appears in the characters of Elisha's family and Jeremiah's family. The negotiation indicates the hegemonic attempts between them. Elisha's father restricts her to consort and has a special relation with Jeremiah as he comes from the black family. However, after she convinces her father that Jeremiah's family is rich and success, the attitude softens. She tells that Jeremiah is a son of Norman Roselind and Nelia Roselind, the well-known film producers. In this case, Elisha is negotiating with the racism ideology represented by the character of her father. The negotiation runs well, and her father allows them having the relationship. However, Jeremiah is restricted to visit her home. Finally, Jeremiah is shot-dead by a policeman, and Elisha's family does not mourn deeply. Moreover, when she reads the news of Jeremiah's death, her mother, Marion, tries to get rid of the newspaper in order to avoid increasing her sadness.

In the relation between racism and capitalism, materialism appears as their mediator. It is shown by the acts of Lena and Dion who are highly praised and proud when Marie's father buys airplane tickets for them. It can be implied that boarding a plane belongs to a symbol of social status related to wealth because not all people have that chance. Their pride and admiration belong to a sign that they undergo a shift from racism to materialism or their racism, at least, in tandem with the materialism embedded by Marie's father. Directly or indirectly, the relation between Marie and Lena runs well because of the smooth negotiation. However, the racism remains affirming itself

as a dominant party which is able to dominate capitalism as their interracial friendship is not accepted in their social environment. The friendship is only recognized in the scope of family.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the negotiation among ideologies in the novels, it can be concluded that the modern life places the human beings in more and more complex problems. One of the problematic issues is about racial difference ideology. Besides that, inter-ideology relation represents the struggle of human beings in maintaining their existence. The relation also shows the existence of hegemony that can be ensured that the dominant class is a class which is able to dominate black as the subaltern class. It happens because of supporting certain ideologies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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