



**DISCRIMINATION TOWARD TOM ROBINSON  
IN THE NOVEL TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD BY HARPER LEE**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement  
For S-1 Degree in American Studies In  
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**2015**

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

I states truthfully that this project is compiled by me without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publication of someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, 9 June 2015

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## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

— Albert Einstein

This project is dedicated to those I love.

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The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfection. The writer will be glad to receive critic and recommendations to make this final project better. Finally, the writer hopes that this final project will be useful for the readers

Semarang, 9 June 2015

Adelland Sukma Putri

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## ABSTRAK

Esai ini membahas tentang diskriminasi yang dialami oleh tokoh Tom Robinson yang di lihat dari sudut pandang tokoh Scout dalam novel *To Kill A Mocking Bird* karya Harper Lee. Kajian dalam esai ini di latar belakangi kurangnya pembahasan mengenai diskriminasi terutama pada tokoh Tom. Tujuan dari kajian dalam esai ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana Tom mengalami diskriminasi hingga dalam novel ini nasib Tom berakhir tragis. Kajian dalam esai ini mengadopsi teori perjuangan kelas menurut faham Marxisme. Metode yang digunakan dalam mengkaji novel ini adalah kajian pustaka, dengan narasi melalui sudut pandang tokoh Scout. Pembahasan dalam esai ini mencangkupi diskriminasi secara umum; diskriminasi yang terjadi pada Tom di pengadilan; diskriminasi terhadap fakta yang ditunjukkan. Dari kajian yang dilakukan dapat disimpulkan bahwa tokoh Tom merupakan representasi dari diskriminasi yang dinarasikan oleh Tokoh Scout dalam novel *To Kill A Mocking Bird*.

*Key words : class struggle, discrimination on trial, discrimination in prison. discrimination in street, characters.*

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Discrimination is the impression that the writer got when she read *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. In this novel, discriminations are experienced by its central character, Tom Robinson. How Tom's experiences discrimination is narrated through the eyes of Scout. In short, this novel clearly describes discrimination which is indicated through class struggle.

This extended essay focuses on three parts of discrimination, discrimination in general, discrimination on trial and discrimination toward the facts. Several studies have been presented to elaborate discrimination as topics. One study has been discussed by Rob Atkinson on essay entitled *Liberating Lawyers; Divergent Parallels in Intruder in the Dust and to Kill a Mocking Bird*. Atkinson essay focused on the divergent parallels between the novel *Intruder in the Dust* and *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. Another study has been made by Jenifer Murray on the essay entitled *More Than One Way To (Mis)Read Mocking Bird* which explained about textual disturbances in the novel. The last but not least is the essay entitled *Beyond Atticus Finch; Lessons on Ethics and Morality from a Lawyer and Judges on post colonial Literature Title* by Renee Newmen Knake. This essay aims to give an information of the benefit from learning literary books that are related to

the lawyer. However, this extended essay focuses on discrimination toward the blacks based on Marxism theory.

This extended essay discusses the discrimination toward African American labour such as Tom who is considered as a cheap labour. Tom is illiterate and uneducated because of that the superior class can prevent him from getting equitable rights. Eventually, to understand the cause of discrimination the writer must analyse the relations between different classes.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

- How discrimination affects Tom Robinson life?
- How is the juror' attitude toward Tom Robinson in the court?
- How is the juror' attitude toward the evidence and the course of justice?

## **1.3 Purpose of The Study**

- To describe how discrimination affects Tom Robinson's life;
- To describe how the juror' reaction toward Tom Robinson in the court.
- To describe how do the juror' attitude toward the evidence and the course of justice

#### **1.4 Method of The Study**

The writer used library research to get several necessary sources and factual information from the library. The writer used critical theory of racial discrimination and the Marxist theory as the approach method in this extended essay.

#### **1.5 Significance of The Research**

This essays not only a pleasure reading but also have a practical and theoretical benefit. The practical benefit is to increase knowledge and information about discrimination toward the African American with the approaching theory from Eagleton's. Theoretical benefits of this study can be used as reading material and reference for students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Recent Studies on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*

There are three recent studies. First study has been discussed by Rob Atkinson as an essay from *Duke Law Journal vol. 49, no 3*. Atkinson analyses the fundamental differences between *Intruder in The Dust* and *To Kill a Mocking Bird*.

Both the novel narrates nearly the similarities story about a a white male lawyer try to free black man that falsely accused for a capital crime. However there are the fundamental differences between the two novel finding by Professor Atkinson (Atkinson,1999:601).

In Atkinson essay, he divided the divergent part of the two novels into several main points such as southern hospitality and the relationship between the lawyers and the client.

Emphasizing white professional duty to social inferiors was affirmed basic position in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. Most of racial tensions happen around the end of the story. Only the lowest of the low class of whites directly threatened by black principal status claim (Atkinson,1999:613).

However the object of my extended essay is discrimination based on critical theory and the main topic was divided into three parts, discriminations in general, discriminations on the trial and discriminations toward the course of the justice and the evidence.

Another study has been made by Jenifer Murray and her essay discusses the unbalanced characteristic and the textual disturbances in the novel.

The writer purposes of this essay is to analysis a number of splendid failure characteristic through questioning those aspect of the text with interpretative debate to find the indicate points either ideological compromise of artistic or unresolved tension symptomatic in the work. (Murray, 2010: 76)

According to Murray's, *To Kill a Mocking Bird* is one of the novels that is worthy for critical considerations (2010: 76). Furthermore, Murray also raises the forms of racial discrimination.

Several descriptive substances of the book discourse on racism such as racial lines was influenced the division of worship, the issue of segregation between black and white community where black was relegated to outer boundary of garbage dump and nigger lover as an example of racial slurs which was prevalently use (Murray, 2010: 86)

However, the focus of the writer essay is the relation between two different classes by Eagleton's. The focus distinguishes the writer extended essay from her essay.

Another study has been made by Renee Newman Knake and her essay discusses the advantages from learning literary books that related to the lawyer and the judges.

Oftenly legal scholarship ignored the relations between literature and the law. these stories offer a question about the importance of untangled the rule of the law and individual morality for collective understanding.(Knake, 2008: 36)

Furthermore, Knake also states that one common theme has been shared by the lawyer characters through the struggle to reconciling the relations between the duty to the law and beliefs on morality (2008: 38).

Knake discusses the importance of studying ethnics and morality through Atticus Finch character. Whereas this extended essay is generally intended to raise the issue of discrimination toward Tom Robinson.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Terry Eagleton's concept of discrimination is based on Karl Marx's manifesto about social clash. Eagleton's conceptualizes the manifesto to more simple forms. Eagleton's says that political, social, and intellectual life process in general has been conditioned by the mode of productions of material life (1976:2). In other words, the means of production manage the social life and control the society.

Eagleton's states that the change of social relations between the proletariat, the people who sell their labor power in return for salary and the capitalist class, who owns the means of productions can develop a new mode of productions (1976:3). It means there are two divisions of social classes, bourgeois and the labor. Eagleton's also says that the idea of its ruling class is the major ideas of the society where the ruling class using ideology to legitimate their power (1976:3). In this case, racist ideology is used by the dominant class to legitimate their position as the ruling class.

In the book titled *Critical Theory Today* says that racial discrimination is defined as systematic practice that occur as result of institutionalized racism. The institutionalized racism is described as consolidations between practices in the



institutions and racist policies such as in local government, law, education, federal and states (1950:361). The institutionalized racism led to the establishment of racial discrimination into daily life.

According to Marxism, Eagleton mentions that the virtuous class using law, politics even the various aspect to legitimate their position as the most powerful class in the society that owns the means of productions (1976:3). It means that the ownership of the means of production may push some people to buy the law. Moreover, Tyson's writes that the juror' inclination to use law's abstract language to hide the personal value opinions behind their neutral decisions always give advantages to the white society (1950:383).

Finally, racial discrimination occurred because of the existences of social system that divides people into two major classes where the majority class using racist ideology to legitimate their power in society. Meanwhile, the inferior class struggles to get equality and justice.

## METHODOLOGY

The writer took several necessary resources such as a number of journals and books through library research in order to get factual information. The main references of this extended essay are Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* and the books entitled *Critical Theory Today* by Lois Tyson. In addition, several journals were also used as references; first, a journal titled "Liberating Lawyers; Divergent Parallels in *Intruder in the Dusk* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*" written by Rob Atkinson. The writer used this journal to get the various perspectives, such as the relationship between Tom and his lawyer. The second journal was entitled "More than One Way to (Mis)Read *Mockingbird*" written by Jennifer Murray. The writer used this essay as additional information on racial discrimination that faced by Tom. The last is the journal entitled "Beyond Atticus Finch; Listen on Ethnic and Morality from a lawyer and The Judge on Post Colonial Literature" written by Renee Newman Knake. This Essay described the lawyer obligation. Finally the writer summarise all the main ideas and the main points from both the books and the journals. The writer gradually applies the concept to her analysis using several perspectives as references.

## ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Discrimination on Tom Robinson's Life

The writer describes how discrimination affected Tom's life which is caused by the changes in social relation. Based on Eagleton's concepts of discrimination which was explained in the previous chapter, there are two divisions of social classes, bourgeois and the labour. In Tom's case, he is a black man who works as a labor in the cotton plantation. In other word social inferior status is belong to Tom Robinson. As a member of a minority group, he is most of the time treated cruelly by their owners and the society. Townsfolk usually call him Negro which is an abbreviation of a phrase "never grow". The ugly term is used to label a black man as a hatefull creature. The younger generation then imitate this action from their enviroment.

"Do you defend niggers, Atticus?" the writer asked him that evening.  
"Of course the writer do. Don't say nigger, Scout. That's common."  
"that's what everybody at school says." (Lee, 1960: 75)

Another discrimination is white townsfolk excluded him to get educational opportunities. In addition Tom's was illiterate and uneducated.

When in tranquility, her grammar was as good as anybody's in Maycomb. Atticus said Calpurnia had more education than most colored folks (Lee, 1960: 22)

The issue of segregations in certain facilities also influenced Tom's life. He cannot attend white public church. Moreover, the condition of black people church is bad. Tom's also do not get any equal concern and respect because of white people gambled in his church on week days.

First Purchase African M.E. Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill tracks. It was an ancient paint-peeled frame building, the only church in Maycomb with a steeple and bell, called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves. Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays (Lee, 1960: 117).

Moreover, their housing is placed in the area which is far away from the white rural place. Usually a slave cabin is placed near garbage dump near the place of the poor white folks who are considered by the society as a lower class above the slave.

Maycomb's Ewells lived behind the town garbage dump in what was once a Negro cabin (Lee, 1960: 170).

#### **4.2. Discrimination on the Trial**

There are social hierarchy that classifies the Maycomb society into several class. The lower class is black then above them is poor white clan. The highest class who has ownership of the means of production is considered as the winning class who struggles to legitimate its position. It means that the members of the highest class make a law that only give advantages to them like on the courts where black man practically does not have any opportunity to win the trials.

Then Mr. Underwood's meaning became clear, Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson's, but in the secret courts of men's heart Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed (Lee, 1960:243).

The juror's reaction toward Tom's in the trials is filled up with hatred and racial discrimination. Tom's situation is uncommon where he is under Atticus's defense.

The unfavorable situations happen when the time for the trials comes. Scout comes to the trial then she sees many white towns folks come like they are going on vacation.

It was a gala occasion. There was no room at the public hitching rail for another animal, mules and wagons were parked under every available tree. The courthouse square was covered with picnic parties sitting on newspapers, washing down biscuit and syrup with warm milk from fruit jars. Some people were gnawing on cold chicken and cold fried pork chops. The more affluent chased their food with drugstore Coca-Cola in bulb-shaped soda glasses. Greasy-faced children popped-the-whip through the crowd, and babies lunched at their mothers' breasts (Lee, 1960: 160).

Since the trial begins, everyone knows that Tom does not have any choices. The jurors speak using a hateful voice and the juror' from the beginning already conspiring to convict him.

That old Mr. Gilmer doin' him thataway, talking so hateful to him—"(Lee, 1960: 202).

In the middle of the trials, Mr. Gilmer's, one of the juror', asks Tom's why he often help Mayella's to do the chores for free. Tom's says that he feel sorry for Mayella's. Tom's knows that Mayella's also living below the poverty. The juror' were immediately angry with Tom's answer.

"Yes, suh. I felt right sorry for her, she seemed to try more'n the rest of 'em—"

“You felt sorry for her, you felt sorry for he?” Mr. Gilmer seemed ready to rise to the ceiling. (Lee, 1960: 199).

The juror’ asked Tom’s why he runs off from the place. He says that he is scared because of the white folks place him in the disadvantage positions in whatever what he says.

“If you had a clear conscience, why were you scared?”

“Like the writer says before, it weren’t safe for any nigger to be in a—fix like that.” (Lee, 1960: 202).

The juror’ reaction toward Tom’s answer always bad. Everything that Tom’s says always wrong in their eyes. They also decide to consider all Tom’s word as a lie.

the evil assumption—that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their calibre. (Lee, 1960: 206).

The juror’ are neglected the facts that Tom’s was innocent. The juror’ do not give any equal reaction, respect and opportunity to a black man who against white man on the trial.

Now don’t you be so confident, Mr. Jem, the writer ain’t ever seen any jurors decide in favour of a colored man over a white man...” (Lee, 1960: 213).

### 4.3. Discrimination toward the Facts that Tom's is innocent

The writer describes discrimination toward the facts. The white town folks are equipped with capital so they can buy the law. As a result the black people always lose in the court. The juror' are deliberately ignore the evidence that show Tom's is innocent. The juror' do not ask any medical evidence from Bob's and just provided two witnesses who also deliberately ignore the truth and justice.

“ The state has not produced one iots of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. It has relied instead upon the testimony of two witnesses whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is. (Lee, 1960: 205).

Atticus asks Bob Ewell's why he does not call the doctor even though he knows that his daughter is injured. Atticus knows that medical evidence can liberate Tom's from the guilty verdict.

“Didn't call a doctor?”

“No sir,” repeated Mr. Tate.

“Why not?” There was an edge to Atticus's voice.

“Well the writer can tell you why the writer didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious.” (Lee, 1960: 167).

Mayella's right eye is bruised so it can be assumed that someone who beat her is left handed. Atticus knows that is not Tom's who made Mayella injured, but Bob himself did. Atticus then asks Bob to writes but the one of the juror' forbid Atticus request.

“ Mr. Ewell, can you read and write?”

Mr. Gilmer interrupted “objection,” he said.” Cannot see what withess's literacy has to do with the case, irrelevant's'immaterial” (Lee, 1960: 177).

After asks the juror' again, finally the juror' permit Ewell's to write. Afterwards Atticus proved that Bob is left handed. Yet, the juror' consider this evidence not strong enough as the evidence. After that Mayella says that she is choked by Tom Robinson then she tries to fight back. Atticus immediately asks her to look at Tom's hand.

Tom Robinson's powerful shoulders rippled under his thin shirt. He rose to his feet and stood with his right hand on the back of his chair. He looked oddly off balance, but it was not from the way he was standing. His left arm was fully twelve inches shorter than his right, and hung dead at his side. It ended in a small shrivelled hand, and from as far away as the balcony the writer could see that it was no use to him (Lee, 1960: 186).

Even though the overwhelming evidence can proof that Tom's unable to choked anybody because of his useless left hand, the juror' say that evidence is still not irrelevant.

"Now let's considered this calmly" began Atticus, but Mr.Gilmer interrupted with an objection''he was not irrelevant or immaterial, but Atticus was browbeating the witness" (Lee, 1960: 187).

Finally the jurors find Tom's guilty, and then imprison him. Tom's tries to run away. Unfortunately the white town folks find him, and then shoot him several times until he dies in a tragic way.

Tom's death was typical. Typical of a nigger to cut and run. Typical of a nigger's mentality to have no plan, no thought for the future, just run blind first chance he saw. Funny thing, Atticus Finch might've got him off scot free, but wait—? Hell no. You know how they are. Easy come, easy go. Just shows you, that Robinson boy was legally married, they say he kept himself clean, went to church and all that, but when it comes down to the line the veneer's mighty thin. Nigger always comes out in 'em.A few more details, enabling (Lee, 1960: 242).



## CONCLUSION

The novel *To Kill a Mocking Bird* raises the issue of discrimination toward the black people. Through the eyes of an innocent child it can be found the essential issue such as social class, and how the winning class legitimate their power through the law. Meanwhile the lowest class as in Tom Robinson's cases experiences the discrimination which is unable him to get an opportunity and the rights even though he was a victims. In the end of novel the writer can summarize that discrimination is an evil nature of human beings that experienced by black people mostly because of they are the member of minority class.

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