

# RACISM IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA REFLECTED IN THE FILM “TILL” (2022)

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## **Abstract**

This study is aimed at analyzing how racism is generally represented in the film “Till” (2022) and how forms of racial discrimination violate human rights in the film “Till” (2022) and leave deeply felt feelings. The researcher uses the qualitative method to analyze the film “Till” (2022), directed by Chinonye Chukwu, as objective research. The approach and theory that the researcher uses to analyze the data are based on Miles & Brown's (2003) theory of racism. This study shows that racial discrimination issues in daily life can happen in many places and in any circumstance. Everyone in African America can experience it. In extreme situations, white people can murder brutally anyone who is the object of discrimination, regardless of age. It is racial discrimination that leaves deep wounds, such as trauma. On the other side, it became brave to oppose racism.

**Keywords:** racism, discrimination, racial, ages

## **Introduction**

Racism is a social phenomenon that legitimizes inequality, particularly in class structures, and denial of humanity by substituting races for the human race. It began in the 20th century and is a social phenomenon in developed countries like the United States. Racism views differences in racial, ethnic, or tribal groups as inferior, with white people often having a higher social status than black people. Racism can turn into discrimination when someone violates human rights and restricts freedom. Human rights are inherent in every human being, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, or other factors. Institutional racism perpetuates discrimination based on race, affecting inequalities in wealth, income, education, healthcare, citizenship, and more. The film “Till” (2022) is a biopic based on a true story about a 14-year-old black boy who was brutally murdered by white people

## **Literary Review**

### ***Sociology of Literature***

According to Abrams (1999: 288) sociology of literature refers to the writings of historians and critics whose primary, and occasionally exclusive. Interest is in the ways that the social class, conception, and values of the audience that an author addresses with the literary product or to which it is made available affect the composition and form of a literary work. These circumstances include the author's class status, gender, and political and other interests. Racism is one of the social issues included in literary sociology, along with all other aspects of social conditions. Literary works that depict people's emotions and social circumstances in the past and present. There is racial discrimination in culture. The issue of race is a social phenomenon that continues in various aspects of life and finds expression in literary works. Since it is a reflection of social life, the literary world is related to sociology and contains sociological literary elements. Literary works are artistic creations that represent humanity.

### ***Racism***

Robert Miles & Malcolm Brown (2003:10) racism is the process of dehumanizing and brutalizing those who express it. It also distorts people and social connections. All cases of racial discrimination can happen anywhere, anytime, and in any circumstances that are unpredictable at any time. Then, to have to remember that racial discrimination occurs in the social environment. Unfair treatment of a particular race based solely on skin color and historical background is a racism issue. Racism also occurs when a minority race is forced to conform to the majority race. The United States is home to numerous racial groupings. It turns relationships between Black and White and other racial groups into the center of attention. The relationship between white and black skin in America is the most widely discussed topic regarding racism.

### ***Discrimination***

According to Thio (1991:172) Discrimination is when someone treats another unfairly out of jealousy or disagreement over what they will or will not do. Prejudice and discrimination are not the same thing. An individual's attitude toward a different race is determined by their personal perception. People discriminate against others because they believe that they are better than everyone else. The concept of discrimination can be seen from an approximation and moralized concept. A concept that has been moralized makes a distinction between behavior, practices, or laws that unfairly disadvantage people because of their membership in a social group.

### **Method**

This research is qualitative description research according to Edmons and Kennedy (2017:142) explained that intends to provide and understanding or interpretation of phenomenon in the context of the meaning of community

expression without trying to generalize the result to other objects using words for the data.

In this research, the researcher used the main data and supporting data. The main data for this research was collected from English subtitle in film "*Till*" (2022) that was directed by Chinnoye Chukwu. While the supporting data for this research is collected from books, journal, and articles related to the problem statements related to the analysis. The procedures of collecting data are watching and reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### ***Racism represented in the film Till (2022)***

America is a country with a case of racism that is so obvious that the whole world knows how racism happens. As we all know, racism begins with racial differences that are superior to others. Racism is an act that can be unfavorable, degrading, humiliating, or even brutal and distorting. It was committed by the white race toward the black race. Acts of racism are acts targeting African Americans. Then the white race became superior to the black race, as mentioned in Chapter II about racism. Discrimination is one part of racism. In this research, it discusses the differences between black and white and where white is superior to black in society. In this discussion, show what discrimination treatments Black people get in a particular circumstance or situation. Below is the data related to how the Blacks get into the circumstances as reflected in "*Till*" (2022).

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Based on the movie, discrimination appeared because there is disturbed social relationship between Black people and White people. Several data show that Black people must be careful when starting communication or interaction with White people. White people tend to take seriously response on even the smallest act done by Black people, and because of this, White people see that whatever Black people do is not correct in their standard. This situation is exemplified by the data below:

Mamie : “Bo, when you get down there...”  
 Emmet : “Oh, not again, Mama. I've already been to Mississippi.”  
 Mamie : “Only one time before, and you started a fight with another little boy.”  
 Emmet : “He was picking on me.”  
 Mamie : “You're in the right to stand up for yourself, but that's not what I'm talking about. Well, they have a different set of rules for Negroes down there. Are you listening?”  
 Emmet : “Yes.”  
 Mamie : “You have to be extra careful with White people. You can't risk looking at them the wrong way.”  
 Emmet : “I know.”  
 Mamie : “Bo. Be small down there.”  
 (Till: 2022, 00:07:24-00:08:04)

Emmet Louis Till, known as Bo, is a young African American. He was a brave African-American boy. He was excited to travel to Mississippi with his cousins. Mamie was his mother. Before going to Mississippi, Mamie warned Bo about the White people's strict rules against Blacks and that he needed to be extra cautious. However, Bo was a brave African-American child who was unfazed by these rules and the natural fear of the black race.

The statement “Be small down there” as said by Mamie to Emmet indicates that Black people have lower values or social status than other groups in society. They are considered as someone or a group may be less valuable, less competent, or less qualified to obtain the same rights as those of the majority group (White people). It is a form of racial repression and discrimination that can lead to injustice in various aspects of life, including education, employment, access to health services, and participation in political life. Then from that, they have to be careful as said by Mamie to Emmet “You have to be extra careful with White people. You can't risk looking at them the wrong way”. It means that Black people must be careful in speech and action. Black people who want to be saved from White people must be obedient to the rules. Because when they do something bad or trivial gain a white, he will not be saved from what he has done. Black people realize that they are a minority in society. They are treated differently compared to White people. The discrimination includes humiliating treatment, either from the words or deeds of White people. In extreme situation they can dead by White people.

America gives different justice to Black people because they are African-American. This is exemplified in the dialogue below:

Lizzie : "Please!"  
 Mr Bryant : "Move!"  
 Lizzie : "Don't take him!"  
 Mr Bryant : "Move!"  
 Lizzie : "I'll whup him if he's done something wrong! We'll give you money."  
 Mr Bryant : "Watch out."  
 Milam : "We don't need no money!"  
 Preacher : "Please! the boy ain't got good sense. He's gonna learn! but, Mr. Bryant!"  
 (Till: 2022, 00:26:39-00:26:58)

In the dialogue above, two white men (Mr. Bryant and Milam) broke into Preacher's house. They searched Bo. Mr. Bryant was a white man who owned Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market. Bo made a mistake by whistling in front of Mrs. Bryant, which made her angry. Mr. Bryant and his colleagues took Bo away. Preacher and Lizzie drove him out. Then, Mr. Bryant threw a gun at them to keep them quiet, and Bo was taken away successfully.

From the statement said by Lizzie, "If he's done something wrong! We'll give you money". Lizzie said this as a solution by offering money to Mr. Bryant in order to not take Bo. But Mr. Bryant refused, "We don't need any money!" as said by Milam. It is not about the money or compensation, but because they (Black people) are African-Americans. Whatever reasons a black person gives will not be accepted by a white person. This is a stereotype that occurs in society. It means when a black man gets into trouble with a white man, even the money cannot help them. Every crime committed by Black people must be punished. They have own privilege that they are superior over the black race. Additionally, it gives implication about how bad African-American are treated or become the victims of discrimination at that time

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Maurice : "Think you so damn funny, huh? why you whistle like that?"

Emmet : "Look, it's been three days, okay? and we haven't heard nothin' more about what I did in Money."

Maurice : "That's 'cause no one knows your face 'round here. That don't mean they not in one of 'em cars looking for us."

Bobo : "Look, I said I was sorry."

Maurice : "We gotta tell Pappa."

Jhonny : "We all agreed we wouldn't say anything."

Simmy : "He'll make Bobo go home."

Maurice : "So what? You don't see what's been going on around here? They killin' Negroes for doing way less than what you did in Money. You ain't no White man, Bobo. You one of us!"

Jhonny : "Hey, leave him alone, Maurice. Mrs. Bryant must've kept it to herself. No one has to know."

(Till: 2022, 00:19:29-00:20:08)

In the evening, Maurice, Johnny, Simmy, and Bo were having fun at a black bar. Bo sweetly came and greeted the black ladies by whistling to them. Maurice with an angry face stared at Bo. He asked Bo what he was doing. Maurice was angry and disappointed to Bo. Maurice reminded Bo to be careful with his behavior. The flaming situation was beaten. Then Johnny calmed the situation

The question of "why you whistle like that?" as said by Maurice to Bo means an affirmation attitude about Black people when they are talking to the White people. For Bo, whistling is a simple matter and it shows his attraction, however for White people it comes into different perception. The word "whistle" that is said by Black people in front of White people could mean humiliation toward White people because the social condition at that time showed that they are not equal in social life. Bo, as Black people, must know that it is not right just to whistle although it is just an expression. As said by Maurice "You ain't no White man, Bobo. You one of us!" it means that Blacks must know as Black people and know what they should do. This statement emerges because that is how Black people are treated within the community.

As said by Maurice "That's 'cause no one knows your face 'round here. That don't mean they not in one of 'em cars looking for us" means that black people who insult White people will get dangerous. His statement signifies the consequence when Black people hurt White people's feeling. The Whites will not be quite. It is just about the matter of times to they find them. It can be so cruel as said Maurice "They killin' Negroes for doing way less than what you did in Money".

It means that the White people and the Black people there is no interaction of casual conversation between them. But in the film shows it.

Another circumstance that supports the same situation is also found in this movie. Black people must also be careful in speaking to White people and be cautious with their behavior. As said by Mamie to Bo in another scene “You have to be extra careful with White people (00:07:51-00:07:54)”. This statement is a warning that must be listened by Bo that the White people do not care and respect all Black people, even ignoring the status, age, or relationship of them. Additionally, another data that implies White people’s ignorance about Black people is also shown in a simple situation, for example when one Black people make small talk. It confirms the statement by Preacher in another scene “Bobo was with my boys. When he went to talk to some White woman. You understand what that mean down here? (01:28:23-01:28:28)”. It can say that the White people hate the Black people who talk to them meaningless. They will get dangerous if do it as relate in the film.

It is understood that Black people have no freedom to speak anything to White people without reason. Even being in front of them is an insult. The consequence that occurs when Black people make mistakes is that they will face the worst risk, even it can be a murder. It means that they have a very limited right to speak their mind or thought. The data that shows the consequence when Black people do not follow White people in term of their right to speak is exemplified in the data below:

Mamie : “That's why you're moving after the trial. To testify?”  
Preacher : “No Negro in Money has ever spoken against a White man and lived.”

(Till: 2022, 01:29:59-01:30:16)

Connected to the previous data discussion, Mamie went to Money, Mississippi, to meet Uncle Preacher. Mamie asked Preacher after a heated debate about the circumstances of the night his son was murdered by a white man. Previously, when Mamie met her nieces, they said they were going to move to the north. The professor will witness the murder of Emmet Till.

The statement “No Negro in Money has ever spoken against a white man and lived,” as said by Preacher, means there is no safety for Black people who oppose White people. Even though they speak out against enforcing civil laws for Black people, As Mamie said, “To testify?” means Black people who testify to a criminal action that was done by White people while in trial. They will be dead. As is known, the trial is to uphold laws and justification. A criminal act must be punished by law in trial, but not for the black race. It is such a shame to commit

suicide for them. It makes all Black people feel the fear of fighting White people. The relevant data is shown in the dialogue below:

- Medgar : "We need to keep him here just in case he runs off again."  
Willie Mae : "I ain't gonna run. I'll tell 'em what I saw that night."  
Medgar : "And what about your grandparents? Would you say that they heard sounds comin' out the barn too?"  
Willie Mae : "No, no, I promised them I was gonna keep them out of it."  
Dr. Howard : "We're gonna finance security for your entire family after they testify, so don't you worry none, son. All right?"

(Till: 2022, 01:32:10 -01:32:33)

Medgar Evers is a black citizen who works for the negro government. Medgar is very enthusiastic about helping to bring justice to Emmet Till's trial. Medgar and the other three are looking for another witness, a semi-adult of a family (only grandparents) near the warehouse where Bo was murdered. They took him to Mound Bayou.

This film shows how difficult it is to find a witness for the Emmet Till murder case, as said by Medgar: "We need to keep him here just in case he runs off again.". In the scene Medgar find the adults named Willie Wood to testify. Medgar says to Dr. Howard to keep Willie in Moun Bayou in order to he will not escape again. This statement is an example of a fear expressed by Black people. It is very hard to find someone who is brave enough to testify against White people on trial. The statement as said by Dr. Howard to Willie "We're going to finance security for your entire family after they testify, so don't you worry, none, son." Explain that the black government must give a guarantee of safety for Willie in order to Willie not to be worry about his life. It is a form of thanks giving for giving testimony in court.

So, what has been explained from the data above can be concluded: every black person feels afraid to oppose and fight White people. Every little child, teenager, and even adult has better be silent than in danger. They have a fear of facing White people. They have to think over and over again about what they are going to do. It shows that the black race is inferior. All movements have limits, such as speaking.

The freedom of weapon possession for Whites aims to protect their status in the social hierarchy through a rejection of the restriction on arms ownership. Many of these weapon laws specifically and explicitly restrict the ability of Black



people to possess and carry firearms. The weapon is a symbol of social status and privilege for Whites. This is discrimination involving the use of firearms, as reflected in Till (2022). As in the dialogue below:

Johnny : “She getting her gun. She getting her gun, y'all.”  
: “Come on! Move!”  
: “Get up, now! Come on! move!”  
Johnny : “Move! she goin' to get a gun, y'all!”  
Simmy : “Get in!”  
Client : “Just lay low.”  
Wheeler : “Come on, Mau!”  
(Till: 2022, 00:16:36-00:16:47)

Johnny, Simmy, Wheeler, and Bo visited Bryant's grocery store and Meat Market, where they encountered five adults enjoying drinks. Johnny bought a drink at the market. Bo also followed Johnny to go in. Bo was alone in the market. Bo searched for what he wanted. The cashier, Mrs. Bryant, was intimidating and flat. Bo praised her as an artist, but Mrs. Bryant showed no response. In this scene, Bo whistled to Mrs. Bryant. Mrs. Bryant is feeling humiliated and angry because Bo's whistling on her. He found a group of Black people in the store. Everyone was quiet. Johnny yelled at all Black people to run away because Mrs. Bryant threw a gun at all Black people.

The sentence "She is getting her gun," as said by Johnny, means that White people can use a weapon whenever they feel danger, especially when they are being attacked by Black people, as in this scene. Mr. Bryant can own a gun because he is a white man, which is a form of existence under Jim Crow laws. The law creates a racial system that is the same but different in many aspects of life, including the right to possess weapons. The discrimination that happened here is that it is impossible or difficult for Black people to own a gun. So, the right is differences. In the enforcement of laws relating to the possession of weapons, Black people often have difficulties in obtaining a weapon permit or in legal proceedings involving weapons. Using a weapon is an act of racial attitude toward a black American and a privilege for White people. It shows that discrimination in the right to have weapons is not only limited to legal and policy issues but also reflects the broader challenge of achieving equality and racial justice in the United States. The relevant data is shown below:

Preacher : “White men came knocking on my door, Mamie.”  
Mamie : “I know that part.”  
Preacher : “They had a gun.”

Mamie : “You have a gun! How long did you stand there doing nothing while they took my child?”  
Preacher : “If I'd have shot them, they would've killed all of mine! it'd be hunting season for every Negro in Money!”  
(*Till*: 2022, 01:27:56-01:28:17)

Mamie visited Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market, where Emmet Till's trouble began. Mamie meets her nephews. They express guilt and grief for losing her son, Bo. They hug each other and Mamie finds a gun on the wall of preacher's house. Mamie meets Preacher. Preacher explained that why he did not use a gun when Bo was brought by two white men. Instead of using it, Preacher was just staring at Bo being brought in by the Whites.

The sentence “They had a gun,” as said by Preacher to Mamie. The word “they” refers to White people. It means, White people in using a gun is one of their privileges. And the sentence “You have a gun!” as said by Mamie to Preacher. The word “you” refers to Black people. It means, Black people in using a gun is discrimination. In other words, Black people can only have guns, but they do not have the right to use them in front of White people.

In one scene, it shows what could be happened if Black people use a gun. The relevant data is stated by Preacher to Mamie, “If I'd have shot them. They would've killed all of mine! It'd be hunting season for every Negro in Money!” (01:28:10-01:28:17). The statement “They would've killed all of mine!” explain that Preacher as a Black man use the gun, White people will kill his and his family. And that was consequence. It will be hard to save them if they do wrong to White people. Thus, the impact will be not only on the wrong family, but all Black people will be affected refers to statement “It'd be hunting season for every Negro in Money!” The word “hunting season” for animals. It indicates that White people treat Black people as animals. All Black people will be killed like animals who are free to be killed.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher identified various movements fighting against race discrimination, as reflected in “*Till*” (2022) in the United States. Main issues are racism manifests in daily life, such as social treatment, limited speech rights, and weapon use. Some racial discrimination leaves deep marks to Black people like intimidation, fear, and trauma. However, these issues can provide opportunities to enforce justice and protect minorities from discrimination and promote equality.

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