An Analysis of Racial Discrimination in *The Help*.

**THESIS**
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

Marlen Angela Daik
112006188

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
SATYA WACANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
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An Analysis of Racial Discrimination in *The Help*

**Abstract**

Racism has long been part of human history so that it has been portrayed as one of the serious problems in every social layer in different forms of art including film. One work which discusses racism is *The Help*, which portrays racism as the manifestation of prejudice and discrimination. The fact that racism still exists means people do need to learn about it in order to abolish or, at least, to minimize it. Therefore, this study attempted to describe the forms of racial discrimination as well as the response of the victims and the reasons behind it. The analysis revealed that racism can be personal as well as institutional and both may cause each other, including derogatory remarks, such as name calling, prejudice, racist propaganda and stereotypes as well as provoking others to be racist. Most of the victims are submissive since they have already had a mindset that they are unequal and different. However, some of them are trying to fight for their equality since they realize that they are also human beings which deserved equal treatment.

**Keywords:** Racial Discrimination, Personal racism, Institutional racism

**Introduction**

One long – existing aspect of human experience is related to racism. In fact, it has been a part of human life since it has always existed throughout human history. “Racism and class Struggle” maintains that racial oppression remains a defining feature of the modern capitalist world and is manifested most spectacularly in violent attacks on immigrants and minorities by fascist gangs. It also exists in the systematic and increasing discrimination by capitalist state manifested in attacks on the immigrants’ rights, cuts in welfare services and racist police and court system (“Black & Red Revolution” 11). Take for example, between 1877 to mid-1960s, the United States government applied racial
A caste system called Jim Crow Law; which segregated black and white in public places such as schools, buses, libraries, hospitals, etc (ferris.edu).

Racist ideas were developed in the context of the slave trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Storey points out that, “racism first emerges as a defensive ideology, promulgated in order to defend the economic profits of slavery and the slavery trade” (169). Similarly, Longen et.al states that by 1640, most blacks in America were slaves since they had certain “advantages” over white workers. According to colonial accounts, blacks were strong and inexpensive. Besides having no government protection, black seemed to be always available because their black skin prevented them from blending with the white population, making it easier to identify them. Their different skin color also reflects their status as the second class (Americanslaveryandracism.8k.com).

Being as old as human history, racism has been portrayed in many forms of art such as songs, literature and films. Film may express racism effectively since it may appeal to viewers’ senses of sight, hearing and touch. One of such films is The Help, which was inspired by Kathryn Stockett’s novel of the same title. Taking Jackson, Mississippi, as its setting, The Help depicts a young white woman, Eugenia Skeeter Phelan, and her relationship with two blacks maids during the Civil Right era in the early 1960s. Skeeter is a journalist who decided to write a book from the point of view of the maids (referred to as “the help”). In her book, she tried to expose racism that the maids faced as they worked for white families. Britannica.com states that the 1960s is marked by a movement to fight for equality between whites and blacks. Before that era, Jim Crow law was implemented in the southern states. Under Jim Crow law, African Americans were relegated to the status of second class citizens.
Such a situation makes *The Help* more interesting because it views racism from the perspective of the victims, who could not express their opinion at that time. In fact, African Americans women suffered most as the oppressed class. They suffered not only by being black as the inferior to white, but also by being maids who worked in white’s houses. Besides that, they also suffered as subordinates to man. In other words, they were victims of triple subordination. Therefore, the writer was interested in analyzing the forms of racial discrimination experienced by the black maids in *The Help*, their response to the racist attitudes and the reasons behind their responses. Besides, having observed several previous studies, the writer found that this study has never been done yet.

Since the problems portrayed in the film to be scrutinized are rooted in the interracial interaction, this study tried to examine these questions:

1. How is racism expressed in *The Help*?
2. How do the maids respond to the racist attitudes directed to them?
3. Why do they respond in such a way?

There are thirteen maids who shared their stories in *The Help*. However, only two maids i.e. Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson would be discussed in this study since both of them are the main characters. The findings of this study are expected to deepen the readers’ appreciation of film so that they will be more aware that film is not merely entertaining but also informative and educating. The findings are also expected to give the readers a better understanding of racial discrimination and to widen their horizon so that they can develop a non-racist attitude and they will know how to respond properly to such racist attitudes.

**Racism**
Racism could refer to different treatment to others in the same or similar situation. As proved by Cubber, racial discrimination refers to unequal and unfair treatment and denial of rights on a group basis (qtd in Simmone 17). In Terry’s word, racism is any activities by individuals, groups, institutions or cultures that treats human being unjustly because of color and nationalities by attributing to them undesirable biological, psychological, social or cultural characteristics (qtd in Mogot 13). Moreover, Widianingrum adds that some researchers use the term racism to refer to a preference for a particular ethnic group (ethnocentrism), the fear of foreigners (xenophobia), rejection of race relations (miscegenation), and generalization to a specific group of people (stereotypes) (9). Yet, it concerns the issue of identity, biological and physical optimization perspective seen from one’s point of view. From these concepts the social discrimination, racial violence and segregation, including genocide, will emerge. In short, racism “consists of being mistrustful of people, even looking down on those who have different physical and cultural characteristics from one another”(Jelloun, 13).

Racial problems such as prejudice and discrimination have existed throughout the world and periods. This policy was not born with the Nazis in Germany; it was practiced long before that, in the name of imperialist expansion, economic advantage, and appropriation of land (www.worldsocialism.org). Indeed, racism was first developed as an ideology during the 18th and 19th centuries with the development of biological theories of race- idea that ethnic and racial groups can be defined on the basis of claims about biological nature and inherent superiority or ability – and the practices of imperialism. Similarly, Hall (cited in Storey, 168) maintains that,” there are three key points in the history of ‘race’ and racism in the West. These occur around slavery trade, colonialism and imperialism, and 1950’s immigration following decolonization. In fact, racism which is rooted in the belief that “some” race is superior to other then led Europeans to colonize
a half quarter of the world including Asia, Africa, Americans, and Caribbean and exploit their economics (Herawati 13).

For Americans, as a nation of immigrants, racism is not a new problem anymore. According to Myrdal, racial conflicts have plagued in United States from its very beginning, particularly, driven by racial prejudice against blacks. African-Americans were the second class citizens (qtd in Sears and Henry 2). As the second class citizens, African-Americans were denied the pursuit of American dream in all spheres of life; i.e. socially, economically and politically (Sears and Henry 2). In addition, Stevenson describes that, there has been an unfortunate tendency to see U.S as a country consisting of two groups: a large, homogeneous majority (“whites”), known as the dominant and a small minority (“blacks”) referred to minorities including “Hispanics” who has recently been added to this perspective (19). Racial prejudice exists not only against blacks, but also against people of Chinese, Japanese and Filipino origins. Moreover, not only Mexicans and Puerto Ricans suffer from discrimination, but also “white” skins who originate from countries such as Italy, Poland, and Russia. Yet, Americans cannot be separated from race, ethnic background, ancestry, religious affiliation, as well as economic culture as argued by Neubeck and Glasberg, “in U.S society, many people are treated as subordinates or inferiors on the basis of their class, race or ethnicity, or gender and are subjects to various form of discriminatory treatment by other” (185).

**Forms of Racism**

Prejudice and discrimination as part of racism do exist because of some factors. However, the most important is racism emerged since people or society were divided into social classes based on status, gender as well as race. Racism does not only simply mean one group of people being less- treated or provided for others. Moreover, it may be
reflected in simple attitudes like stereotyped joke or the extreme behavior, such as terrorism directed to people of different religion. Racism can be experienced personally through jokes, graffiti, abuse and violence, and discrimination from other people or simply make ludicrous one ethnic group or the other (Herawati 13). Besides, Akiva mentions that racism takes six forms, i.e. (1) physical assault and harassment, (2) verbal abuse threats including derogatory language, ridicule stereotyped comments, (3) racist propaganda – symbol, signs, graffiti, (4) incitement of others to behave in a racist manner, (5) refusal to cooperate with other people because of their color ethnicity, religion or language and (6) institutional racism, which often unintentionally disadvantages or marginalizes the less dominant ethnic and cultural groups, in the forms of biased policies, rules or curriculum (2).

A research done by Race Equality and the University of Kent which involved 1370 participants in secondary schools in Sandwell reveals that most participants considered accidently insulting someone, refusing to be friends, having negative attitudes and telling jokes about people of different ethnic and racial background as kinds of racist attitudes (tackling-racism.co.uk ). Racism does happen in everyday life through jokes which consist of stereotypes to other or racist comments (Herawati 13). In fact, the negative treatment experienced by African Americans affects their lifestyles and life chances (Neubeck and Glasberg 241). Seiter adds that wealth plays a significant role in shaping a family’s life chances and creating opportunities. Even in the same income brackets, whites have on average twice the wealth of blacks (www.pbs.org).

Moreover, there are two types of expressing racism according to sociologists. The first type is personal racism which is expressed by individuals or a small group of people. It is an indication of bigotry or prejudice against the inferior, and it may take such forms
as espousing stereotyped based on alleged racial differences, using racial slurs, and engaging in discriminatory treatment, harassment and even treats or act of violence. Another type of racism is institutional racism; i.e. a social structure created to accomplish certain tasks or perform certain needed functions in society (qtd in Neubeck and Glasberg 198-200). As maintains by Solid-ground that, institutional racism help to built racism in form of policies and institutional which distributed resources and ideas that shape our [people] view of ourselves and others (1). Furthermore, De Silva et.al believe that institutional racism refers to manifestation of racism in social system and institutions including social, economic, educational and political or policies sectors which operate to foster discriminatory outcomes and it may take form as combination of policies, practices or procedures embedded in bureaucratic structure that systematically lead to unequal treatments for groups of people (8). As the result, it leads to racial stratification and disparities in employment, housing, education, healthcare, government and other sectors (Solidground 1). For instance, in the past, blacks in the USA were not allowed to vote or take a part in an election as according to Neubeck and Glasberg, people of color have historically been excluded from key policy making or decision making roles in such institutions (75).

In sum, racism which is a belief that one race is superior than the other, is still a huge problem faced by every society in an advanced society in globalization era. It is often taken for granted so that it leads to negative attitudes, such as prejudice, stereotyping on the base of race, gender, age, and religion, even war and killing.

**Racism in The Help**

In analyzing racism expressed in *The Help*, the racist attitudes will be classified into two types; i.e. personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is expressed by
individual or group; whereas institutional racism is a social structure created to strengthen or shape racism. Both include physical assault and harassment, verbal abuse threats, racist propaganda, incitement of others to behave in a racist manner, and refusal to cooperate with people based on their color, ethnicity, religion and language (Neubeck & Glasberg 198-200, Akiva 2).

**Personal Racism**

The personal racism portrayed in the movie is mainly triggered by the majority or their feeling superior toward the minority as depicted in the following dialogue (15min: 27sec):

Ms. Leefolt : Hilly, I wish you'd just go use the bathroom.
Ms. Hilly : I'm fine.
Ms Walters : Oh, she's just upset because the nigra uses the guest bath and so do we.
Ms Leefolt : Aibileen, go check on Mae Mobley.
Aibileen : Yes, ma'am
Ms Leefolt : Just go use mine and Raleigh's.
Ms Hilly : If Aibileen uses the guest bath, I'm sure she uses yours, too.
Ms Leefolt : She does not.

The quotation reflects the white women’s racist attitude is expressed in their language by using derogatory word or name calling (Akiva 2), when Ms.Walters referred to Aibileen as “Nigra”. White seem to never call black with respect, or address them as, Mr., Mrs., Miss., Sir, or Ma'am, but their first names. On the contrary, blacks have to use courtesy titles when they refer to whites, and are not allowed to call them by their first names which indicate that they are different in race and social status. Worse, black are sometimes considered to have no name. Instead they were based on their skin color such as black; nigra and negro which actually humiliates them (ferris.edu).
Furthermore, the above quotation also reflects Ms. Hilly’s prejudice toward Aibileen so that she is not willing to use even Ms. Leefolt’s personal bathroom. She suspects that if Aibileen uses the indoor bathroom then it is not impossible that she must also use Ms. Leefolt’s. Her attitude reflects racism in which she treats Aibileen differently because of her race and social status. In Ms. Hilly’s point of view, Aibileen is a black maid who does not deserve to use the same bathroom as her employer or the one who holds the power since they are the lowest in the society. This fits Terry’s opinion that racism is any activity that treats other unjustly based on colour and nationalizes (qtd in Mogot 13).

Ms. Hilly also tried to “brainwash” Ms. Leefolt by persuading Ms. Leefolt to build a separate bathroom for Aibileen (15min: 54sec).

**Ms. Hilly** : Wouldn't you rather them take their business outside? ... Tell Raleigh every penny he spends on a colored's bathroom he'll get back in spades when y'all sell. It’s just plain dangerous. They carry different diseases than we do. That's why I've drafted the Home Health Sanitation Initiative.

**Ms. Skeeter** : The what?

**Ms. Hilly** : A disease-preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. It's been endorsed by the White Citizens' Council.

By saying that black and white carry different diseases than white; Ms. Hilly seems to put black and white in equal position: i.e. both carry diseases. However, her next statement explains that she’s racist because she states that black’s diseases are dangerous; while white’s diseases are not. As Widianingrum explains, racism refers to generalization to a specific group of people or stereotyped (9). Moreover, by persuading Ms. Leefolt to build a separate bathroom for the maid, Ms. Hilly actually has encouraged Ms. Leefolt to behave in a racist manner. Indeed, this dialogue proves that racism is not only expressed through
verbal abuse threats including derogatory language or ridicule stereotyped comment, but also in the form of provoking others to be racist (Akiva 2)

Besides building a separate bathroom outside the house for Aibileen, Ms. Leefolt forbade her daughter, Mae Mobley, never go inside that bathroom. On the other side, Aibileen looks so upset and humiliated with the new bathroom and Ms. Leefolt’s attitude (34min: 30sec).

Ms. Leefolt : Hurry, Aibileen! Mae Mobley is up, and I'm off to the doctor!
Mae Mobley : That's Aibee's bathroom Mama. Hey, Aibee!
Ms. Leefolt : No, no, no, honey. Promise me you won't go in there, OK?
Mae Mobley : yes, mom
Aibileen : Yes, ma'am. I'm right here, Baby Girl (to Mae Mobley)
Ms. Leefolt : Isn't it so nice to have your own, Aibileen?
Aibileen : Yes, ma'am.

By building a new bathroom for her black maid, Ms. Leefolt shows that Ms. Hilly has successfully influenced her to be racist. Her telling Aibileen that it’s nice to have a personal bathroom may reflect that she actually feels a bit guilty to do it or to behave in a racist manner toward Aibileen. Her question sounds kind but what matters is the reason behind it. Yet, it reflects the opposite in which she wraps her racist attitude in “nice words”. Rejection on working together with people of different color, ethnic and religion as well as verbal abuse including derogatory language was some types of racism as stated by Akiva (2).

Furthermore, *The Help* also portrays another black maid who gets a similar unfair treatment in the white’s house. Minny Jackson, an African-American black maid who worked for Ms. Hilly. Minny, suffers from such unjust treatment, when she was prohibited from using the same bathroom as her employer, Ms. Hilly. She even got fired when she insisted on using it (31min: 54sec).

Minny : Uh... Miss Hilly?
Ms. Hilly : Mm-hm?
Minny : Never mind.
Ms. Walters : You go on ahead and use the inside bath, Minny, it's all right.
Ms. Hilly : Oh, for crying out loud, it's just a little rain. She can go on up and get an umbrella from William's study.
Ms. Walters : I believe she was working for me before you dragged us both here. Daddy ruined you.
Minny : I'm just gonna get your tea.
Ms. Hilly : Minny? Minny, are you in there?
Minny : Yes, ma'am.
Ms. Hilly : And just what are you doing? Get off my toilet! You are fired, Minny Jackson! Go on!

This scene perfectly presents how racism can be very destructive since it characterizes interaction among people (qtd in Mogot 14). Feeling more superior than Minny, Ms. Hilly views herself a higher being, so she refused to share the same bathroom with Minny even during the hurricane, an emergency situation where people should help each other regardless of race and social status. By refusing to permit Minny to use her toilet, Ms. Hilly is racist (Akiva 2). Besides, Ms. Hilly’s immediate decision to fire Minny is a show of power that she is an employer who has the right to fire her worker. This scene reveals that Minny suffers from double marginalisation as a black and a maid (qtd in Sears and Henry 2).

Minny’s stubbornness gets her into multiple troubles. Being jobless, her husband tortured her. Besides, her daughter, Sugar, had to quit school and worked as a maid to help earn money for their living. It’s seems that a black maid’s disobedience results in her own problems and other black women’s i.e. Minny and her daughter, suffering. Minny’s problem is added by her difficulty in finding a new job because Ms. Hilly has told all white people in the town that she was a thief (38min: 28sec).

Aibileen : Hello?
Minny : Aibileen, I done went and did it now. I went to Miss Hilly's house this afternoon.
Aibileen : Why Minny?
Minny : She done told every white woman in town I'm a thief. Said I stole a candelabra. But I got her back.
This scene crystallizes that actually prejudice toward black is so strong and clear. White as the dominant group in Jackson consider everything that black do is wrong, especially in Minny’s case, where she is being accused, exploited and prejudiced for something she did not do. Indeed, it reveals that institutional racism did exist as a result of personal racism because the society does not question Ms. Hilly’s statement, but completely accept what she says about Minny. Because Minny is a lower class member and works as a maid, people believe immediately when her ex employer says she is a thief. It proves that the social attitude plays an important part in the emergence of racism (qtd in Mogot 13).

Another personal racism which is expressed in the film is taken from the scene, when Aibileen was on her way home and there was a chaos which killed a black so that the driver asked her and another black man to get out of the bus before they reached their destination (1hr:21 min: 12sec).

Henry : Yeah. That's good. What's going on out there, mister?
Driver : Colored people off. The rest of you let me know where you're going. I'll get you close as I can.
Man : What happened?
Driver : I don't know. Some nigger got shot. Where you headed?
Man : Woodrow Wilson.
Driver : Woodrow Wilson. All right.
Henry : You gonna be all right, Miss Clark?
Aibileen : I'll be all right. You go on now.

By asking Hendry and Aibileen to get off from the bus in the middle of the chaos before their destination and letting the white stay and continue their trip, the driver is discriminating his passengers based on their skin colour. His attitude reflects that he does not want to get involved in that chaos which may be may harm himself or other passengers. It fits Cuber’s statement that racial discrimination refers to unequal and unfair treatment and denial of rights on a group basis (qtd in Simmone 17, Akiva 2).

Institutional Racism
As the oppressed group in the society, black experience most unfair legalized treatment from white as the majority as reflected in the following dialogue (16min: 00sec).

Ms. Hilly : Tell Raleigh every penny he spends on a colored's bathroom he'll get back in spades when y'all sell. It's just plain dangerous. They carry different diseases than we do. That's why I've drafted the Home Health Sanitation Initiative.

Ms. Skeeter : The what?

Ms. Hilly : A disease-preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. It's been endorsed by the White Citizens' Council.

Skeeter : Maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly.

Hilly : You ought not to joke about the colored situation. I'll do whatever it takes to protect our children.

The above dialog shows how Ms. Hilly is using different measurements for the same thing. Ms. Hilly acknowledges that black and white carry diseases. However, to her black’s diseases are more dangerous than white’s. In fact, all diseases are dangerous. This scene reveals that Ms. Hilly terribly underestimate blacks by using double standards. Ms. Hilly’s claim that black carry different dangerous diseases therefore, mirrors her racist attitude (Jelloun 13).

Moreover, institutional racism is also reflected in the rules which were applied in Jackson at that time (37min: 44sec).

Aibileen: "No person shall require any white female to nurse in wards or rooms in which Negro men are placed. Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. No colored barber shall serve as a barber to white women or girls. - Any person printing, publishing or circulating written matter urging for public acceptance or social equality between whites and Negroes is subject to imprisonment.

What Aibileen says reflects how white females are strictly protected from black male. In the society, male and female are generally unequal. Male has the power over the female. However, the quotation implies that race is more determining since white female is higher than black male. These rules prove that the government, who actually should treat all citizens equally, discriminates its people instead (“Black & Red Revolution” 11). As a
result, powerless group have to suffer and struggle from the inequality and unjust treatment which has been legalized by the government as something that they have to accept in the form of regulations, which deny their rights and even disadvantage them.

Besides that, there are also rules that segregate white and colored people in using public services as reflected at the beginning of the movie, which depicts a separate place for colored people (02min: 21sec). Similarly, in the middle of the movie is a scene picturing a taxi with a sign which indicates that the taxi is for white only (45min: 03sec).

The above two pictures clearly reflect that racism was a general phenomenon in Jackson at that time. Segregation in public service and racist propaganda, such as the rule which prohibited black to use the same bathroom as white, enforced all people to act to conform to it. Even those who were not racist had to follow the rule. As a result, people become racist and that actually reinforces the practice of racism. It proves that institutional racism in the form of rules applied in the society helps shape people’s view of themselves and others (Akiva 2, solid-ground 1).

Furthermore, institutional racism also leads to segregation in health system with the existence of separate hospitals for white and black. This is reflected in Aibileen’s dialogue with Skeeter when she told the stories about her son (01:09:18).
Skeeter: It wouldn't be real.
Aibileen: They killed my son. He fell carrying two-by-fours at the mill. Truck run over him, crushed his lung. That white foreman threw his body on back of a truck. Drove to the colored hospital... dumped him there and honked the horn. There was nothing they could do, so I brought my baby home. Laid him down on that sofa right there. He died right in front of me. He was just 24 years old, Miss Skeeter. Best part of a person's life. Anniversary of his death comes... every year, and I can't breathe. But to y'all, it's just another day of bridge.

By stating that the white foreman drove her son and dumped him there, Aibileen shows her anger and bitterness firmly. After this incident, Aibileen feels she is not accepted by the white as she stated at the beginning of the film, “After my boy died, a bitter seed was planted inside of me. And I just didn't feel so accepting any more” (09min: 17sec). This quotation reflects that personal racism that Aibileen feels may be triggered by institutional racism as it is manifested in such of separation and segregation of public places for white and colored people (solidground 1).

The next example of institutional racism depicted in The Help is taken from the scene, after Ms. Leefolt made a new bathroom for Aibileen and she forbid her daughter to never go inside Aibileen’s place (34min: 30sec).

Ms. Leefolt : Hurry, Aibileen! Mae Mobley is up, and I'm off to the doctor!
Mae Mobley : That's Aibee's bathroom Mama. Hey, Aibee!
Ms. Leefolt : No, no, honey. Promise me you won't go in there, OK?
Aibileen : Yes, ma'am. I'm right here, Baby Girl (to Mae Mobley)
Ms. Leefolt : Isn't it so nice to have your own, Aibileen?
Aibileen : Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Leefolt’s preventing Mae to go into Aibileen’s bathroom reflects that family as the smallest institution in the society is a place where children learn to discriminate others through the rules applied in that family. Even family plays a significant role in determining one as a racist or non-racist. As Chudhury says, family is the smallest social unit by marriage as an institution and has at least rudimentary structure and organization (including normative rules status, rules, rituals, etc) and a psychology basis in the
consciousness of its member that plays crucial role for personality formation and socialization every individual (1-2). Besides that, Raab shows that by watching and learning from adults’ behaviors and attitude, racism toward black is formed in white children (qtd in Ferdiawan 8). Therefore, this scene proves that institutional racism may not only incite its members to be racist, but also indirectly inherit racism which is legalized by the parents as the one who hold the power in the family in form of rules.

Another institutional racism which is reflected in the family is taken from Minny’s monologue, when she told her daughter how to be a maid, especially related to the regulations that they (refers to they as black African American maid) have to obey (48min: 21sec)

Minny: You cooking white food, you taste it with a different spoon. If they see you put the tasting spoon back in the pot, might as well throw it all out. Spoon, too. And you use the same cup, same fork, same plate every day. And you put it up in the cabinet. You tell that white woman that's where you're gonna keep it from now on out. Don't do it and see what happens. Morning, ladies. When you're sewing white folks coffee, set it down in front of them. Don't hand it to them, 'cause your hands can't touch. And don't hit on they children White folks like to do they own spanking. And last thing. Come here. Look at me. No Sass-mouthing. I mean it. Give your mama a kiss.

Minny’s monologue portrays how black maids should act or do in white house and environment. They should work and treat things in such a way as if they were dangerous and had brought deadly virus that would infect those touching them. Since this applies to all black maids, it is an institutional racism. The practice of institutional racism occurs in white family in form of rules with which they discriminate their maid, especially the black maid. According to Cole, Institutional racism is a type of racism that is structured into political and social institutions [including family] and it occurs when these institutions discriminate either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights (1).
The maids’ response to the racist attitude toward them

Basically, there are two responses of the maids towards the racist attitudes directed to them as reflected in the film. The first one is, most of the maids keep silent and accept whatever happens to them since they already have a mindset that as black they are unequal and different. The black believe that they are the second so that they are appropriate to accept punishment and unequal treatment from the white. One example of the film is taken from the conversation between Sketeer and Aibileen, when she told about herself and her family background (01min: 51sec).

Aibileen: I was born 1911, Chickasaw County, Piedmont Plantation.
Sketter: And did you know, as a girl growing up, that one day you’d be a maid?
Aibileen: Yes, ma’am, I did.
Sketter: And you knew that because...
Aibileen: My mama was a maid. My grandmama was a house slave.
Sketter: House... slave. Do you ever dream of being something else? What does it feel like to raise a white child when your own child's at home being looked after by somebody else?
Aibileen: It feels...

The above dialogue reflects that somehow racism is related to people’s mindset. As a black, Aibileen knows exactly what will happen to her future; i.e. she will become a maid just like her mother and her grandmother even thought she has a plan for herself. The existing rules and culture make black experiences the so-called internalized racism, in which they accept the stigmatized races of negative message about their own abilities and intrinsic worth (citymatch 1). So even though black has the same opportunity as white but their black “skin” prevent them from having the same social status and life opportunities as white (Neubeck and Glasbergh 241). Indeed, black can do nothing about racism or unequal treatment since they are the oppressed and powerless group.
However, the second response of black in dealing with racist attitude directed to them is contrast to the first attitude. Some black fight against racism. This is reflected in Minny’s attitude, when she took revenge bravely toward her ex employer, Ms. Hilly (01hr: 37min: 35sec).

Ms. Hilly : So... Nobody wanted to hire a sass-mouthing, thieving nigra. Did they? Oh. Pie’s as good as always, Minny.
Minny : I'm glad you like it.
Ms. Hilly : Mmm... Oh. If I take you back, I'll have to cut your pay five dollars a week.
Minny : Take me back?
Ms. Hilly : What do you put in here that makes it taste so good?
Minny : That good vanilla from Mexico... and something else real special.
Ms. Hilly : Mmm.
Minny : No, no, no, Missus Walters. That's Miss Hilly's special pie.
Ms. Hilly : Mama can have a piece. Cut her one. Go get a plate.
Minny : Eat my shit.
Ms. Hilly : What'd you say?
Minny : I said, "Eat... my... shit."
Ms. Hilly : Have you lost your mind?
Minny : No, ma'am, but you about to, 'cause you just did.
Ms. Hilly : Did what?
Ms. Walters : And you didn't eat just one. You had two slices! Run, Minny, run!

Being a scapegoat and blamed for something that she did not do, Minny decided to take revenge. Black fight against racism for equality because they think that they actually deserve to be treated fairly since they all are also human beings. According to Universal Declaration of Human Right which is adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 proclaims that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right’ (qtd in Parker 1). However as pictured in The Help, even though the white approve these rules, they still rejected to cooperate with people of different colour; as proved by their slogan, “separate but equal”. In Luce words, “negroes were denied their Constitutional right under the principle of “separate but equal” (4).
Another example of revenge portrayed in *The Help* is when Aibileen got fired by her employer because of Ms. Hilly’s insistence and being scapegoat for something she did not do (02hr: 13min: 36sec).

Aibileen: I didn't steal no silver.
Ms. Hilly: Maybe I can't send you to jail for what you wrote, but I can send you for being a thief.
Aibileen: I know something about you. Don't you forget that. From what Yule Mae says, there's a lot of time to write letters in jail. Plenty of time to write the truth about you. And the paper is free.
Ms. Hilly: Nobody will believe what you wrote!
Aibileen: I don't know! I been told I'm a pretty good writer. Already sold a lot of books.
Ms. Hilly: Call the police, Elizabeth.
Aibileen: All you do is scare and lie to try to get what you want.
Ms. Leefolt: Aibileen, stop!
Aibileen: You a godless woman. Ain't you tired, Miss Hilly? Ain't you tired?

Ms. Hilly’s statement implies her acknowledgement that what Aibileen’s wrote is right. On the other side, Aibileen shows that she is not afraid to be imprisoned since she realizes that she has the power to fight against Ms. Hilly by writing. Her next statement that she had been told she was a pretty good writer who already sold a lot of books is a proof that writing and her success may shape or grow her confidence. At the end, Ms. Hilly is aware that she loses that battle and as the last effort; she uses “the police” which automatically has a higher power in a society.

The above conversation proves that white can do anything to make black remain their slaves or their subordinate because they have the power even in the government institution as the one who hold the highest power. However, by her protest, Aibileen shows that she as the oppressed group, who has always been treated inhumanly, unfairly and undignified, will no longer remain silent and accept whatever white decide for her. She will rise to defend herself as black do; keep struggling and fighting against the white privilege even if they have to fight against the culture existing in the society since the culture itself reflects
the institutional racism which mostly disadvantages them as the minority group (qtd in Cole 1).

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that, as women, maids and black; Minny and Aibileen as the representation of black African American maids, suffer from triple marginalization in the male and white society. Even though they try to fight for their rights and equality, they still lack support since the society encourages inequality in the forms of rules and culture.

**Conclusion**

The analysis reveals that *The Help* depicts both personal and institutional racism. The personal racism is reflected in the characters’ interpersonal relationship, in the forms or derogatory remarks, such as name calling, prejudice, racist propaganda and stereotypes as well as provoking other to be racist. The institutional racism is represented by the societal as well as the government rules and regulations. In fact, family as the smallest unit of institution has also contributed to the creation and growth of personal racism as reflected in the unwritten rules in Ms. Lee’s family where she prevent her daughter to never go into Aibileen’s place.

The black maids as the victims of racism respond to the racist attitudes and treatments the experience differently. They accept the discrimination and behave accordingly as if that is the way things should be. What Minny tells her daughter before she starts working for a white family is an example. Another example is reflected in how Aibileen sees her grandmother, mother, and her job as maids in white families as if something natural. However, by the negative and inhuman treatments they got from the white, latter on they realize that they have fight for their equality since they are also human being which deserve for the right to live as the other. In their protest against
racism, black use different ways. Minny expresses her anger by bringing a special pie for her ex-employer to take revenge for the inhuman treatment she got. Aibileen also expresses her anger by arguing with Ms. Hilly. With the help of Skeeter, some black maids state what they think of the treatments they have received by writing a book.

In fighting against the persistence of racism, black use different ways. Basically, there are two ways in dealing with racist attitude directed to them. First, most of black are submissive. They keep silent and accept whatever happens to them since they already have a mindset that as black they are unequal and different since they experience the so-called internalized racism through the existing rules and culture in the society. However, the next response is contrast to the first. Some black directly take a revenge for the inhuman and undignified treatments they got as well as protest to show that they as the oppressed class will no longer be silent and let the white decide everything for them. They will rise to fight against racism since they are also human beings who deserve equal rights and opportunities.
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