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# Discrimination Against Mulatto as Reflected in Faulkner's Light in August

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**Abstract**. The purpose of this study is to reveal discrimination in Faulkner's Light in August. This study is qualitative, which means that the data are in the form of words, thus the data got from the novel and other books are relevant to this research. In analyzing the data, the writer uses a mimetic approach in order to reveal discrimination in Light in August. The findings show that when slavery was embodied, these freed blacks did not automatically obtain equal rights as the whites. The white Americans have treated the blacks unequally. They have excluded the blacks from the white orphanage, schools, and colleges. Besides, they do not allow people of mixed parentage to enter the white school. People of mixed parentage, in spite of their white skin, are regarded as blacks and therefore should enter the black school. In employment, white Americans often refuse to hire black workers because of their racial prejudice of blacks as lazy, lacking in initiative, inferior and untrustworthy. In law enforcement, African Americans receive unequal legal protection. White Americans may cheat, strike, and even kill the blacks but black Americans may not. When a black man kills a white man, he will soon be sentenced to death or lynched. The blacks receive harsher sentences than white Americans and they are easily sentenced to death or lynched. White racism may destroy all the aspects of American life such as politics, culture, social relations, education, employment, and legal protection because it will array white and black Americans against each other which could eventually destroy the social structure of the United States.

**Keywords**: discrimination, physical violence, mulatto.

Abstrak. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap diskriminasi dalam Faulkner's Light pada bulan Agustus. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif, artinya data berupa kata-kata, sehingga data yang diperoleh dari novel dan buku lain relevan dengan penelitian ini. Dalam menganalisis data, penulis menggunakan pendekatan mimesis untuk mengungkap diskriminasi dalam Light pada bulan Agustus. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ketika perbudakan diwujudkan, orang kulit hitam yang dibebaskan ini tidak secara

otomatis mendapatkan hak yang sama dengan orang kulit putih. Orang kulit putih Amerika telah memperlakukan orang kulit hitam secara tidak setara. Mereka telah mengeluarkan orang kulit hitam dari panti asuhan kulit putih, sekolah, dan perguruan tinggi. Selain itu, mereka tidak mengizinkan orang-orang dari keturunan campuran memasuki sekolah kulit putih. Orang-orang dari keturunan campuran, meskipun kulit mereka putih, dianggap sebagai orang kulit hitam dan oleh karena itu harus masuk sekolah kulit hitam. Dalam pekerjaan, kulit putih Amerika sering menolak untuk mempekerjakan pekerja kulit hitam karena prasangka rasial mereka terhadap orang kulit hitam sebagai pemalas, kurang inisiatif, inferior dan tidak dapat dipercaya. Dalam penegakan hukum, orang Afrika-Amerika menerima perlindungan hukum yang tidak setara. Orang Amerika kulit putih mungkin menipu, menyerang, dan bahkan membunuh orang kulit hitam tetapi orang Amerika kulit hitam tidak boleh. Ketika seorang pria kulit hitam membunuh seorang pria kulit putih, dia akan segera dihukum mati atau digantung. Orang kulit hitam menerima hukuman yang lebih keras daripada orang kulit putih Amerika dan mereka dengan mudah dihukum mati atau digantung. Rasisme kulit putih dapat menghancurkan semua aspek kehidupan Amerika seperti politik, budaya, hubungan sosial, pendidikan, pekerjaan, dan perlindungan hukum karena akan membuat orang Amerika kulit putih dan kulit hitam saling berhadapan yang pada akhirnya dapat menghancurkan struktur sosial Amerika Serikat.

Kata kunci: diskriminasi, kekerasan fisik, blasteran.

### INTRODUCTION

Faulkner's Light in August describes the life of the white American, the blacks, and the people of mixed parentage in the rural area of Mississippi. The blacks and the people of mixed white and black parentage lived in the poverty-stricken area dominated by high racial violence and crimes, whipping, murder and mutilation.

Thus Christmas has been contaminated or impure. As black, they are regarded as evil or animal and thus they are brute, immoral, lazy, and inferior. These people have suffered so much because of white prejudice and discrimination.

The novel written by William Faulkner Light In August reveals the prejudice and discrimination of Joe Christmas who is the main character of the novel and tells the story of Joe Christmas's life, as a child of mixed parentage or mulatto. Mulatto is a person of mixed white and black ancestry, especially one having one white and one black parent. Joe Christmas suffers because of his grandfather and his adopted father. He hates his grandson that has destroyed his pure white race. Christmas was thrown on the step of the orphanage when he was a child. Furthermore, the other children in the orphanage humiliated him. They call him nigger. He gets depressed and frustrated. How these discriminations and prejudice happened in the writer's opinion is worth studying.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is said to be actions or practices carried out by members of dominant groups which have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups (Feagin and Feagin 20-21).

Furthermore, Pettigrew states that discrimination is an institutional process of exclusion against an out-group, racial or cultural, based simply on who they are rather than on their knowledge or abilities. Thus discrimination refers to a person's actual behavior or actions rather than the attitude that has inferior treatment of certain individuals merely because they are members of a particular racial or ethnic group.

# Prejudice and Discrimination against mulatto

The term mulatto, referring to an individual of mixed white and black ancestry, has been in use for centuries. The sociologist Edward B. Reuter (1918) and the historian Joel Williamson (1995) generally use the term to include all people of mixed "white blood" and "black blood" without consideration for the degree of mixture. Early twenty-first-century social scientists of course view such notions of "blood" and "race" as social constructions, not as biological realities. However, an important issue related to the social construction of the term mulatto is its racist basis. The historian Patricia Morton argues that "mulatto is a Latin term for the mule and in a popular 'museology' linked the mule and the mixed 'blood.' The mule was the hybrid product of the mating of a horse and a donkey, and, supposedly like the mulattos, had no parents of its own breed and no descendants since it could not produce offspring. Similarly, mulattoes were perceived as the product of an unnatural union" (Morton 1985, p.111). The tragic mulatto character that frequently appears in American media and literature depicts "mixed-bloods as a visible symbol of lust and what the culture deemed, pejoratively, miscegenation" (1985, p.111).

The Emergence of the mulatto, From the inception of the continental slave trade through the era of legal segregation, mulattos have been a constant reminder of the historical raping and coercion of black women. In some instances, the unions between white men and black women, as well as those between white women and black men, were thought to be consensual. However, the majority of unions were a result of violent sexual coercion by whites in an effort to enforce the racial oppression of blacks. The raping and sexual coercion of black women by white men prompted governments to enact antimiscegenation laws throughout the southern United States. These laws were not constructed to protect black women from rape or to discourage white men from having sexual relations with black women; rather, the laws ensured that the children of these forced unions could not claim rights to inheritance or freedom. Anti-miscegenation laws varied from state to state, but the main objective was to protect the institution of slavery and wealthy landowners' inheritance.

### **Novel**

The novel is a part of literature. There are many definitions of literature. Literature comes from human beings' minds feeling based on what they have seen in life and experienced. Wellek and Warren said in Theory of Literature that:

"Literature represents life, and life is in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world their inner or subject world of the individual have also been subjecting of literary imitation". (94)

Literature is the expression of life that tells about human beings and the environment where they live. The literature presents human experiences and knowledge uniquely. It gives us something more than pleased because it sharpens our minds in appreciating our life. According to Hudson W.H:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, and what they have though and felt about those aspects of it, which have the most immediate and enduring interest for human beings. It is true fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language. (10)

### The Elements of Novel

#### Plot

as Kelley Griffith says "Plot is defined as what happens in the narrative. The plot is a pattern of carefully selected, causally related events that contain conflict" (43-44). Although writers of fiction arrange into many patterns, the most common is that represented by the Freytag pyramid in 1863. As James Picking states that: "Plot refers to deliberately arranged sequence interrelated events that make up its basic narrative structure". (93) From both statements above the writer's opinion is that a plot is a series of events that occur in a play and we can use the Freytag pyramid to analyze the plot. This novel introduces the suffering of Christmas. He describes the major character Christmas and also describes the other character.

Faulkner's Light in August describes the life of the white American, the blacks, and the people of mixed parentage in a rural area of Mississippi. The blacks and the people of mixed white and black parentage lived in the poverty-stricken area dominated by high racial violence and crimes, whipping, murder and mutilation.

### Characters

Character is important in the novel because without character the story cannot be written by the author.

Character is most often used to refer to the person in a fictional story. Characters are the people in narratives. Sometimes, as in fiction, the characters are not just people, they may be animals, robots, or characters from outer space, but the author gives them human abilities and human psychological traits. Thus they really are in people in all but outward form. (Griffith 46).

So the writer in her opinion that the author creates such a type of character and it could be people even animals in order to fulfill the creation of his or her story. Miller and Cluley explain

the classification of characters is major/main and minor characters and round and flat characters. Main characters are those so central to the action, so continual in their presence and minor characters are the characters that are seen by us only as they impinge on the lives of the central person in the action (7).

### **Joe Christmas**

Christmas is one of the main characters. He is a stranger to Jefferson and is correctly accused of killing his lover Miss Burden after living in the town for three years. From an early age, he believed he is of mixed race, although he looks like a white person. His heritage torments him and is seen to be central to his thoughts. It is also apparent that the possibility that he is not white is a major concern for others too. Through the depictions of his self-tournament and treatment by others, the novel is able to offer a damning indictment of racism in the south.

### Lena Grove

She is pregnant by Lucas Bruch (who calls him Brown) at the beginning of the novel and arrives in Jefferson to find him. Byron falls in love with her almost immediately and he attempts to care for her. At the end of the novel, it is apparent that she enjoys the surprise of traveling.

### McEchern

This is an adoptive father of Christmas. He is characterized by his zealous religious beliefs and his brutal treatment of Christmas as a boy.

### Miss Burden

Miss Burden is the lover of Christmas and is murdered by him. She is described as a spinster and is isolated in the community because of her ancestor's connections to the North and their disavowal of slavery.

# **Hightower**

This is a former minister who has become an outcast in Jefferson after the death of his wife. His desire to live and work in this town was inspired by his grandfather's death and was all-encompassing. Byron is his only friend.

### Hines

Hines is the grandfather of Joe Christmas and an irredeemable racist. He allowed his daughter to die in childbirth and then took Christmas to an orphanage.

# **Setting**

According to Kelley Griffith:

The setting includes several closely related aspects of the work a fiction. First, the setting is the physical, sensuous world of the work. Second, the time in which the action of the work takes place, Third, it is the social environment of the characters and fourth, it is the atmosphere. (52)

### **Theme**

Griffith says "theme is perhaps the most obvious statement of the "truth" of work. The theme is the central idea in the work whether fiction, poetry, or drama".(49) From the definition above the writer thinks that the theme is an important element in creating a literary work since it becomes the subject or the main idea of the literature work. It seems impossible for one to write or to create a literary work such as a novel without having the main idea of his work since a theme reflects the content of literary work.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### **Research Design**

In doing this research the writer uses qualitative research since the data obtained are in the form of words. About this research Bogdan and Biklen in Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Method State,

"Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The result of the research contains the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation "(1992: 28)

Related to the explanation the contents presentation of the study will be in descriptive form. The writer will describe the data provided in descriptive form.

"Qualitative Research has a natural setting as the direct source of the data and the researcher is the key instrument" (1992: 27)

From the quotation above the writer may say that she is the only instrument in doing the research to collect and analyze the data.

### **Data Collection**

In collecting the data the writer will use two kinds of sources, primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Light in August and some other books, magazines, and the internet related to the topic will be used as secondary sources to support the data.

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the writer uses Mimetic Approach about this Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamps state Mimetic regards the work of art as an imitation or reflection or representation of the Universe and human life and all their aspects, yet the imitation is not merely an imitation or a secondary copy of the universe, it is a creation of the writer's own perception of these aspects of the universe (1970: 8-10).

The above approach describes that the mimetic approach seeks all the aspects of human life; the historical, sociological, and cultural aspects. In this case, the writer would like to seek the social condition of mulatto or the son of mixed white and black parentage and the historical aspects; the period when White Americans discriminate against the mulatto; the relationship among the white Americans, Afro Americans, and Mulatto.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is said to be actions or practices carried out by members of dominant groups which have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups (Feagin and Feagin 20-21) Furthermore, as Pettigrew in Race and Ethnic Relations states Discrimination is an institutional process of exclusion against an out-group, racial or cultural, based simply on who they are rather than on their knowledge or abilities (Marger 87) Thus, discrimination refers to a person's actual behavior or actions rather than the attitude that has inferior treatment of certain individual merely because they are members of particular racial-ethnic group. In addition, discrimination means the refusal to grant Negroes equal rights with whites.

White Americans discriminate against black and mulatto because they are considered as blacks and thus they have to be discriminated against and segregated in all aspects of life. In Faulkners Light in August, Faulkner portrays among others the discrimination on the basis of Interpersonal and social relations and Education that makes the blacks and the mulatto suffer so much. Faulkner describes that blacks are not allowed to stay with whites and marry whites. The white oppose intermarriage because they think that the blacks are evil and slaves.

# **Discrimination in Interpersonal and Social Relations**

From the outset, Christmas's race is located at precisely that loop of sight and belief: the children at the orphanage call him "nigger" and he is thus perceived as black. When he arrives in Jefferson, because the citizens believe him to be white, they see him as white. Even after he takes a 'negro's job at the mill' and 'is living a tumble down negro cabin' no one suspects he is anything other than white (Light on August 36). Clearly living as a black man, Christmas is taken as white, that is until the body of Joanna Burden turns up dead and her murder is attributed to him. (59) 10 Once it has been established that Christmas is the murderer, things start to become more and more complicated, especially when it comes to the perception that Christmas's actions are a "result" of his race. Once Lucas Burch/Joe Brown tells the policemen that Christmas is black and that information begins to circulate throughout the town, the people begin to look back upon Christmas's life in the community and start to notice-or at least start to create-instances when Christmas's "blackness" appears through his actions. All of Christmas's actions are reinterpreted as manifestations of his race. The marshal, just after Burch/Brown has revealed that Christmas is black, responds by saying "A nigger .. .l always thought there was something funny about that fellow" (99). As the news starts to circulate, the collective voice Jefferson says, "He doesn't look any more like a nigger than I do. But it must have been the nigger blood in him" that led him to his actions (349). And finally, to explain why Christmas's actions and his passing, both before and after murdering Joanna are so offensive to the community, it is simply because Christmas is an important character when it comes to Faulkner's commentary because he is excluded and alienated not only for his "blackness," as already shown, but also for his "foreignness." What is most

interesting about the case of Christmas is the fact that, throughout much of Christmas's time in Jefferson, it is never known to the people of the community that he might actually be black. Our first introduction to Christmas, before we are given any background information about his life, places him as a foreigner. Byron recalls a conversation regarding Christmas's background: "His name is what?" one said. "Christmas." "Is he a foreigner?" "Did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas?" the foreman said. (33) The people of Jefferson automatically assume that Christmas is a foreigner because he 19 appears to be white to them, but carries a "foreign" name. To further complicate the matters of race and foreignness is the fact that most immigrants, with the exception of Northern and Western Europeans (as they represent the race of the founding fathers of the United States), were considered not only racially inferior but were considered "nonwhite."

# Discrimination in Education and Employment

One of the American values in education is that the equality of educational opportunity for all citizens is the just and desirable foundation for a democratic society. Yet, as Faulkner reveals gaps appeared between the ideals and their realization. He shows that education for African Americans always meets strong opposition from the whites, especially the southern white. If these people are educated by the whites, the white's purpose in educating themes, is first, to make these people believe that they are inferior and the whites are superior and to make them believe that they are not equal with the white.

Doc Hones, in order to teach his grandson to accept and believe that he is black, and inferior in intellect and morals, applies as the janitor at the orphanage. In the orphanage, he begins to torture the child and let the other white children call him "nigger". And old Doc Hines watched and heard the mouths of little children, of God's own fatherless and motherless putting his words and knowledge into their mouths....even the girl ones without sin and bitchery yet; Nigger! Nigger! In the innocent mouths of little children (Faulkner, 382).

Christmas is taught to accept and believe that he is a nigger, meaning that he is inferior in intellect and morals, though he does not do anything immoral. Doc Hinees is very proud and satisfied with seeing the white children call his biracial grandson "nigger". Indeed, Doc Hines' purpose in throwing away his own grandson at the orphanage and callijng him "nigger" is to isolate him from the white family and society and to emphasize his status as black, inferior, and subordination. The whites always force the black to accept their inferiority and admit white supremacy.

As a matter of fact, the white's myth of racial superiority and inferiority is also based on the following evidence: the Negro when he landed in the U.S. left behind him almost everything and what they brought with them was son lost (Levin 4).

Faulkner describes that Johanna and her family believe that the white presumes higher intelligence and good moral while the blacks impose lower intelligence and bad moral as her father tells her:

You must struggle and rise. But in order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you. But you cannot lift it to your level. I see that now, which I scape if didn't see until I came here. But escape it you cannot. (345).

# **Discrimination in Legal Protection**

One of the crucial problems, which has arisen Faulkner's concern, is the safety and security of African Americans and people of mixed parentage. Faulkner describes that equality in legal protection for these people is hard to attain. He outlines that these people have been the victim of lawless violence. Any white man can strike, whip, beat, and even kill these people without much fear of legal reprisal as described below:

And so Halliday (he was excited, thinking about that thousand dollars, and he had already hit the nigger a couple of times in the face, and the nigger acting like a nigger for the first time and taking it not saying anything just bleeding sullen and quit )- Halliday was hollering and holding him when the old man they called Uncle Doc Hines comes and hits the nigger with his walking stick.

It is the custom to permit white to resort to violence and threat of violence against the life and personnel security of Negroes. The minor forms of violence, cheating and striking, are in fact, a matter of everyday occurrence. Christmas, whether he commits a sin or not will be whipped:

When he reached home he would be whipped. But not for what he might have, or might not have done during his absence. When he reached home he would receive the same whipping though he had committed no sin as he would receive if McEachern had seen him commit it. (Faulkner,25).

Two serious racial incidents which reflect this unequal legal protection for African Americans and people of mixed are clearly elaborated in the following scenes:

In the first racial incident, the southern white old man Doc Hines kills a black circus man and leaves the body on the road. Doc Hines then goes home without being suspected by the white society.

He rode up on the right side of it and he leaned down, still in the pitch dark and without saying a word and without stopping his horse and grabbed the man that might have been a stranger..... Grabbed him by one hand and held the pistol against him with the other and shot him dead. He brought the gal back home behind him on the horse. He left the buggy on the road. It was raining again, too. (Faulkner, 60)

It is directed precisely toward Christmas. Fortunately, when she puts the trigger it does not move. Yet Christmas it self-defense and being humiliated and threatened by his white mistress cut her throat with a razor. After killing Johanna Burden, Christmas, knowing that he has black blood is soon captured by a white sheriff. He is shot five times and mutilated.

Gimm emptied the automatic's magazine into the table; later someone covered all five shots with a folded handkerchief...But the player was not done yet. When the others reached the kitchen they saw the table flung aside now and Grimm stooping

over the body. When they approached to see what was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a choked cry and stumbled back into the wall, and began to vomit. Then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. Now you'll let women alone, even in hell.' He said. But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness...For a long moment, he looked up at them with peaceful, unfathomable, and unbearable eyes. Then his face, and body, all seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out of the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent-black blood seemed to rush like a released breadth. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man. (Faulkner, 75).

# **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

#### Conclusion

When slavery was embodied, these freed blacks did not automatically obtain equal rights as the whites. The white Americans have treated the blacks unequally. They have excluded the blacks from the white orphanage, schools, and colleges. Besides, they do not allow people of mixed parentage to enter the white school. People of mixed parentage, in spite of their white skin, are regarded as blacks and therefore should enter the black school.

In employment, white Americans often refuse to hire black workers because of their racial prejudice of blacks as lazy, lacking in initiative, inferior and untrustworthy.

In law enforcement, African Americans receive unequal legal protection. White Americans may cheat, strike, and even kill the blacks but black Americans may not. When a black man kills a white man, he will soon be sentenced to death or lynched. The blacks receive a harsher sentence than white Americans and they are easily sentenced to death or lynched.

White racism may destroy all the aspects of American life such as politics, culture, social relations, education, employment, and legal protection because it will array white and black Americans against each other which could eventually destroy the social structure of the United States.

# Suggestion

White Americans should eliminate their race of the blacks as inferior. They should realize that all human beings are equal. White Americans should give equal opportunities for blacks in education, employment, social relations, and law protection for their advancement, and interracial marriage is one of the solutions to end racism.

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