

## **Racism Phenomenon Portrays in *Till* Movie by Chinonye Chukwu**

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**Abstrak** – Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui rasisme seperti apa yang ditampilkan dalam film *Till*, jumlah fenomena rasisme yang terjadi dalam film *Till*, dan respon masyarakat kulit hitam terhadap rasisme dalam film *Till*. Penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan semiotik yang berfokus pada bahasa isyarat rasisme. Ada dua teknik pengumpulan data: Data Primer dan Data Sekunder. Data primer diperoleh dari video film *Till*, dan data sekunder diperoleh dari tinjauan pustaka. Penulis menemukan enam jenis rasisme yang terdapat dalam film *Till*. Ada Rasisme Interpersonal, Rasisme Institusional, Rasisme Struktural, Rasisme Masyarakat, Diskriminasi, dan Kekerasan. Total ada tujuh belas fenomena rasisme yang terjadi di film *Till*. Ada beberapa tanggapan orang kulit hitam terhadap rasisme yang mereka alami di film *Till*. Reaksi yang muncul adalah pengertian dan kasih sayang, solidaritas masyarakat, perayaan, kebanggaan terhadap budaya kita, bantuan dan bimbingan terhadap generasi muda, advokasi dan aktivisme, serta dukungan dari berbagai ras..

**Kata Kunci:** *rasisme, tipe rasisme, respon rasisme*

**Abstract** - This research aims to find what kinds of racism are shown in the *Till* movie, the amount of racist phenomena that occur in the *Till* movie, and the black people respond to racism in the *Till* movie. The writer used qualitative methods with a semiotic approach focusing on language signs of racism. There are two data-collecting techniques: Primary Data and Secondary Data. Primary data is from a video of the *Till* movie, and secondary data is from the literature review. The writer found six types of racism found in the *Till* movie. There are Interpersonal Racism, Institutional Racism, Structural Racism, Societal Racism, Discrimination, and Violence. In total, seventeen phenomena of racism occur in the *Till* movie. There are several black people's responses to the racism they experienced in the *Till* movie. The reactions are understanding and compassion, community solidarity, celebration, pride in our culture, assistance and guidance of younger generations, advocacy and activism, and support from different races.

**Key words:** *racism, types of racism, respond to racism.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Literary works come in many forms; one of them is a movie. A movie is the expression of artists with a specific purpose or meaning. Each movie has had its importance, purpose, and message for decades. Movies are also one of the most effective means of conveying a message because the viewer can easily understand the message. A movie is an audio-visual communication tool that provides information and can even move the audience's emotions rather than simply providing entertainment. Movies serve several essential purposes besides entertainment and can be a means of preserving critical historical memories. The movie can also be used as a propaganda tool in which the prosperity of information, education, and persuasion is no longer shared.

According to (McQuail & Deuze, 2020), "In the realm of culture, the media are for most people the main channel of cultural representation, expression and the primary source of images of social reality and materials for forming and maintaining social identity." Movie creators often use their work as a tool to describe what cannot be communicated. Movies are also suitable for developing artistic skills, such as depicting social issues. They do this to make people recognize and understand the social problems they are talking about. People will know there is a social problem around them, how to solve it, and how to avoid it in real life; then, the world will eliminate such social issues, and people will live in peace. The writer wants to discuss a specific social problem, namely racism, which occurs everywhere. Movies have always been a great medium to inspire or serve as a tool for societal change. The moviemakers usually bring more awareness to change people's hearts and minds regarding the topic they want to highlight. Maryann Erigha (Erigha, 2019) stated, "Cinema is a forceful piston of an ideological engine that builds consensus around public and social issues. Cinematic messages influence



people's views about ideas, social issues, and social groups; hence, inequality in the production and dissemination of movies causes reverberations that echo beyond their origins."

In 2020, the United Nations (Nation & Townhall, 2021) surveyed on racism in the workplace. According to the Results of the 2020 United Nations Survey on Racism, they polled 8,052 people about their experiences with racism in the workplace. Over 1/3 of respondents felt that our human resource norms and procedures are occasionally enforced unfairly based on race, nationality, or ethnic background. In 1/3 of respondents reported encountering discrimination based on national origin, racial identity, or gender identity; 21% reported experiencing it frequently. 72% of those who did not report occurrences of racial discrimination because they believed nothing would happen, lacked trust or were afraid of retaliation. Furthermore, 52% of individuals who claimed racial discrimination were unhappy or unsatisfied with how the problem was handled. Only 13% of those who had experienced reported being supported or protected by someone. This survey demonstrates that racism is still prevalent, particularly in the workplace.

Another survey in 2023 (Stafford, 2023) reveals that more than a third of people from ethnic and religious minority groups in Britain have experienced some form of racist assault, according to new research led by experts from The University of Manchester, the University of St Andrews, and King's College London. The Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) is a major new survey of racism and ethnic inequalities carried out by the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), which reveals the extent of racism and racial discrimination experienced by people from ethnic and religious minority groups. The racism reported by the survey's respondents took different forms - physical, verbal, or damage to property - and happened in all areas of life, including education, work, and when looking for housing.

In the same year, 2023 (Radio France Internationale, 2023), another survey in France presents their findings. A study by the French Representative Council of black associations has found that almost all black people in France say they have experienced discrimination based on their skin color. In a survey of black and mixed-race people living in mainland France, nine out of ten respondents, 91 percent, said that they experience racial discrimination in their daily lives. Patrick Lozès, the president of the Cran, the black advocacy group that ordered the survey, was to present the results to lawmakers at the National Assembly on Wednesday, just weeks after the government introduced its multi-year anti-racism action plan. The surveys above demonstrate that racism is still prevalent everywhere in many countries.

No one deserves to be racist or do something racist because people are equal. No race is superior, more intelligent, or better than another race. It is wrong to demean, threaten, or make someone feel hated or even hate someone. Racism is the same as depriving someone of human rights. People are born with human rights; no one can take them away, and we must treat everyone equally, regardless of skin color, hair color, eye color, or race. According to (DeCooman & Schuyler, 2022), "The racism definition is the belief that individuals of certain races, or ethnicities, are somehow less than or inferior to others. Racism has plagued humanity for centuries, and there are multiple types of racism." This movie best represents what racism looks like in real life through the lens of black people. This movie also reminds us that social issues such as social injustice, racism, racial discrimination, and social intimidation happened and are still happening even now.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The writer uses qualitative methods (Bhandari, 2020), which involve collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. In other words, the writer tries to describe the phenomenon in depth, namely racism, using a multidisciplinary approach to obtain factual data. The research object is the *Till* movie. There are two data-collecting techniques that the writer used, there are:

1. Primary Data.

Primary data is obtained from a video of the movie *Till* and selected visuals of pictures of the scenes needed in this research.

2. Secondary Data.

Secondary data is data obtained from the literature. It supports the primary data, such as dictionaries, the internet, articles, journals, books related to the analysis, lecture notes, etc.

The research technique contains two parts; the first is observation. Observation is the act or process of carefully observing something or someone to obtain information. (Bhasin, 2023) explained that "The observation method is described as a method to observe and describe the behaviour of a subject. As the name suggests, it is a way of

collecting relevant information and data by observing." The writer deeply observed the data collected from the scenes or visuals of the *Till* movie by watching and observing the dialogues and settings in the film *Till* and then selecting and analysing them. The second is a literature review, which collects data through inspection and examines various literature relevant to the research.

The researcher deliberately uses the lens of semiotic analysis because the film contains signs and symbols. Hence, semiotic analysis becomes more appropriate for use in this study. After collecting primary and secondary data, they are then clarified according to the research questions that have been determined. Then, data analysis was carried out using analytical techniques semiotics Roland Barthes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to find what kinds of racism are shown in the *Till* movie, the amount of racist phenomena that occur in the *Till* movie, and the black people respond to racism in the *Till* movie.

### 1. Type of Racism in the *Till* movie

The types of racism that found in this movie are Interpersonal Racism, Institutional Racism, Structural Racism, Societal Racism, Violence, and Discrimination.

#### a. Interpersonal Racism

The interpersonal racism is referring to discriminatory behaviors, actions or attitudes that happen between individuals based on race or ethnicity. Interpersonal racism is shown in some scene in *Till* movie. The first scene is when Mamie Till-Nobley was shopping in a fancy store, she met a security guard.

Duration (2:00-2:16): Mamie in a Fancy Store

*Security guard* : "are you looking for something?  
*Mamie* : "No, I'm just doing a little shopping."  
*Security guard* : "**We also have shoes in the basement.**"  
*Mamie* : "Do your other customers know that too?"

It means that the security guard is humiliating Mamie. It refers to the mindset of the security guard (a white person) that black people like Mamie could not afford to buy shoes in that fancy store. He thinks that Mamie can only afford to buy shoes in the basement. It perpetuates discrimination, reinforces negative stereotypes, and undermines the dignity and worth of black people, in this case, Mamie. Humiliation based on race is a form of racism and can have severe emotional, psychological, and social consequences for the person experiencing it.

The second scene that shows interpersonal racism is When Mr. Bryant and some men (Carolyn's people) go to his uncle's house to take Emmet with them.

Duration (25:56-26:00): They took Emmet

*Mr. Bryant* : "You that big mouth **nigger**?  
*Emmet* : "Who are you?"  
*Mr. Bryant* : "Get your clothes on!"

Nigger or nigga is a racial slur against black people, especially African Americans. Non-black people call black people "Nigger or Nigga" means racism shows insult black people. It is essential to recognize that using racial slurs, regardless of variations or intentions, is hurtful, offensive, and perpetuates a culture of racism. This language contributes to the ongoing marginalization and mistreatment of black people and goes against the principles of equality and respect.

#### b. Institutional Racism

Institutionalized racism refers to the systemic and entrenched forms of discrimination and unequal treatment embedded within social institutions' structures, policies, and practices. Emmet is sitting on the train and looking at the view, the Conductor tells him to move to another wagon because the regulation is that black people must be separated from white people on the train.

Duration (11:20-11:50): Separation on The Train

*The Conductor: "Time to **move** now."*

It is Institutionalized racism (Systemic racism) because it refers to the implicit or explicit rules and regulations within an organization or institution that discriminate against black people. The practice of separating seats for black and white people on trains, commonly known as racial segregation, was enforced by law in many parts of the United States during periods of intense racial discrimination and segregation. This practice aimed to implement racial hierarchy and maintain social, political, and economic control by promoting white supremacy.

c. Structural Racism

Structural racism is deeply ingrained in the foundations of society, shaping power dynamics, opportunities, and resources. It is manifested through discriminatory practices, policies, and norms that advantage certain racial or ethnic groups while disadvantaging others. Some scenes show the presence of structural racism. The first scene is when Mamie talks to Emmet about being careful with Money; she suggests he always be cautious because Mississippi has different rules for black people.

Duration (11:20-11:50): Mamie gives advices to Emmet

*Mamie: "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."*

In the sentence, "they have a different set of rules for Negroes down there." It cannot be seen that structural racism happens. Structural racism is when a structural bias (laws, rules, regulations) within a city or a country takes sides only with white people. That set of regulations gives benefits to white people and gives harm to black people. These disparities were often enforced through laws and practices explicitly designed to maintain racial segregation and deny equal rights and opportunities to black individuals.

d. Societal Racism

Societal racism refers to the discrimination, bias, and unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity within a society. Mamie and her boyfriend (Gene) meet Mr. William Huff to ask for help and discuss finding Emmet.

Duration (36:26-36:40): Mamie, her boyfriend and Mr. William Huff

*Mamie : "You think they had a part in any of it?"*

*Mr. William Huff : "When the message to **white people is to stop Negroes from voting or advancing, by any means short of violence, it's only a matter of time before someone doesn't stop short of it.**"*

Societal racism has historically played a significant role in attempting to suppress and impede black people from exercising their right to vote. It has taken various forms throughout history, including laws, policies, and practices aimed at disenfranchising black voters and suppressing their political participation.

e. Violence

Violence is using physical force or aggression to cause harm, damage, or injury to oneself, others, or property. Emmet whistles to Carolyn (a cashier) in front of the store; she is mad, takes a gun, and then points it at Emmet and his cousins.

Duration (16:18-16:58): Carolyn Bryant took a gun

*Johnny: "She getting her **gun**. She getting her **gun**, y'all. Come on! Move! Get up, now! Come on! Move! Move! She goin' to get a **gun**, y'all!"*

Violent acts include physical contact. In this scene, the woman threatens Emmet and his cousins with a gun, a dangerous weapon. Addressing and understanding the underlying factors contributing to gun violence against black people is essential. These factors may include racial bias, socioeconomic disparities, limited access to resources and opportunities, and unequal treatment within the criminal justice system.

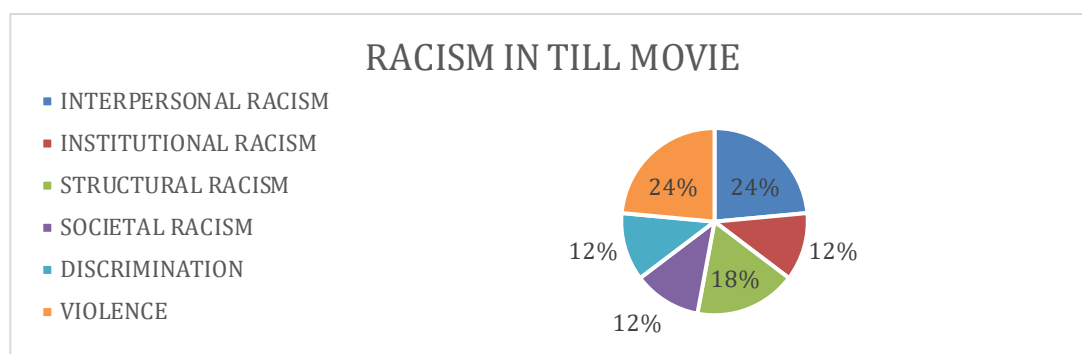
f. Discrimination

The unfair or discriminatory treatment of individuals or groups because of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability is known as discrimination. It involves treating people unequally or unfairly, resulting in disadvantages, exclusion, or denying rights and opportunities. Discrimination is shown in several scenes in the *Till* movie. The setting is when Mamie and her father come to court to give her testimony in Emmet's murder case. (Duration: 1:17:35-1:18:24)

Before they entered the room, two men checked them. They only focus on black people but not on white people. Instead, they just let the white people in without going through any checks. This scene perfectly shows what discrimination looks like in real life. This moment opens our eyes to how unjust and unequal treatment, prejudice, and bias directed towards individuals or communities based on their race happen in real life.

## 2. Amount of Racism in the *Till* movie

After watching and profoundly analyzing the movie and the types of racism found in the *Till* movie, the writer



gathered the data that there are six types of racism found in the *Till* movie.

Graph 1. Percentage Racism in the *Till* movie

The writer found that 24% of interpersonal racism happens between individuals, and there are many cases in our everyday lives. It is like someone can easily do without thinking about the impact. For institutional racism, there is 12% out of the total points. The reduced instances of institutional racism are due to the start of awareness on the part of the institutions against racism. In structural racism, there is 18%; structural racism is how societal structures, policies, and practices systematically perpetuate racial inequalities and disadvantages. Many factors contribute to Structural Racism, such as media representation, unequal access to education, the criminal justice system, etc. 12% of Societal Racism results from Cultural stereotypes, and prejudices significantly shape societal racism.

Preconceived notions, biases, and stereotypes about different racial and ethnic groups can influence how individuals perceive and interact with people from those groups. Media, entertainment, and social narratives often perpetuate these stereotypes, reinforcing racial hierarchies and promoting discrimination. Limited cultural competence and understanding of diverse racial and ethnic groups can contribute to societal racism. Ignorance of different cultures, histories, and experiences can lead to misunderstandings, bias, and discriminatory behavior. Promoting cultural education and fostering intercultural dialogue can help challenge and overcome these barriers. Structural changes are necessary to dismantle discriminatory policies and practices, promote equal opportunities, and create inclusive institutions and systems.

12% for discrimination represents that discrimination is still going on and possibly will always happen if we do not treat everyone equally. Violence has a high number, with 24%. Violent racism often stems from deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes that individuals hold against specific racial or ethnic groups. These biases can be reinforced through socialization, cultural narratives, and media representations, leading to negative attitudes and animosity. Fear and perceptions of threat can contribute to violent racism. When individuals feel threatened by perceived differences or changes in their social, economic, or cultural landscape, they may resort to violence to assert dominance or preserve their perceived social order.

## 3. The Black People Respond to Racism

After watching and analyzing the *Till* movie, it can be concluded that black people respond to racism that happened to them by uniting as one. They connect, encourage each other, and still fight for their rights. If racism happens to one of them, the other black people will fully support and help that person get justice. Black people in the *Till* movie created a community support and empowerment. Black communities often come together to provide support resources and charge for one another. It can include forming community organizations, creating safe spaces, and developing mentorship programs to address systemic issues and uplift one another. When individuals of black people experience racism, they often receive help and encouragement from their community. When assisting individuals in navigating the difficulties posed by racism and its effects on their well-being, this support can be crucial. Black people can encourage and support one another in facing racism in the following ways:

a. Understanding and Compassion

Black people frequently share their racism-related experiences, fostering empathy and comprehension. This approval of shared encounters can give solace and assist people with feeling appreciated and upheld. The scene duration (30:17-30:38) shows how black women comfort and share their empathy toward each other by relaxing with each other and sharing kindness; black women create a sense of community, resilience, and empowerment. Through these connections, they find strength, support, and inspiration to navigate their unique challenges while working towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

b. Solidarity in the Community

African-American populations meet up to help each other, offering a feeling of having a place and solidarity. It might entail organizing community events, making safe places, and building a solid support system. The scene duration (1:12:29-1:12:35) shows the solidarity of black people in creating a safe place for their community when fighting for their justice. In this scene, Medgar willingly helps Mamie to get justice for Emmet. This scene duration (1:10:52-1:11:09) illustrates how solid the black people are. They created a safe place for black people who were attending the trial. Thus, black people can feel safe and bond strongly in this place and live happily in peace.

c. Celebration and Pride in Our Culture

Embracing and celebrating dark culture, history, and accomplishments can be a robust method for neutralizing the adverse consequences of prejudice. Dark people frequently inspire and praise their social legacy, supporting a deep satisfaction and versatility. The scene that points out how black people celebrate those who make a change in their community's life and appreciate those who fight against racism is in the duration (1:54:56-1:55:25). In this moment, Medgar Ever organizes an event to celebrate and also give honor to Mamie for her fight against racism, make a change in their lives and seek justice.

d. Assistance and Guidance

Younger generations confronting racism may benefit from the guidance and counsel of experienced black individuals who can act as mentors and role models. This mentorship may provide insight, strategies, and assistance to navigate discriminatory environments. It appears in the scene duration (7:35-8:00) before Emmet leaves for Mississippi, Mamie gives some advice and guidance to him; he must be careful because, in Mississippi, they have a different set of rules for black people there.

e. Advocacy and Activism

Black people participate in an aggregate activity and back to battle against prejudice. It can include taking part in fights, supporting local area associations, and pushing for strategy changes to address fundamental imbalances. It can be found in the scene (31:40-32:18) Mamie asks help from Mr. William Huff, which is the counselor for the NAACP chapter in Chicago, to find Emmet.

f. Getting Support from Different Races

Black people support one another in the face of racism by showing solidarity, offering help, and sharing resources. These efforts contribute to broader racial justice and equality movements, empower individuals, and build resilience. Black people stand together, support one another, share resources, and raise each other's voices in the face of racism, which strengthens and lifts their community. They foster a sense of unity and collective resilience by standing together and providing assistance. Standing with one

another and demonstrating a shared commitment to promoting equality and combating racism is a form of solidarity. It includes perceiving that the difficulties faced by one individual or gathering are interconnected with the more significant battle against racial shamefulness.

## CONCLUSION

There are six types of racism in the *Till* movie: Interpersonal racism (also called Personally Mediated racism), Institutionalized racism (Systemic racism), Structural Racism, Societal Racism, Discrimination, Violence, and Institutional Racism. Each type of racism has its percentages. Interpersonal racism is 24%, institutional racism is 12%, structural racism is 18%, societal racism is 12%, discrimination is 12%, and violence is 24%. There are several responses from black people to the act of racism that they experience in the *Till* movie. The reactions are understanding and compassion, community solidarity, celebration, pride in our culture, assistance and guidance for younger generations, advocacy and activism, and support from different races. The writer found nine scenes that show understanding and compassion, and for the solidarity in the community, the writer found three settings. Celebration and pride in our culture are in one scene. Assistance and guidance are shown in one set. Advocacy and activism are found in two stages. The last one is support from different races, shown in one scene.

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