

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

People in the world are created equal in terms of human rights even though each person has different race, sex, religion or even political opinion. Yet, there are some people who do not treat others equally because of those differences, and the most obvious case is racial differences. Some people make racial differences as a gap to separate each other. They believe that one race is better or even superior than the other races, and this is what is called racism. According to John Arthur (2007), racism is a negative attitude that people take towards other people because of their race. Racism is a doctrine about which one is the superior or inferior than others (Light, Keller & Calhoun, 1989: 352). It has long been a major issue and can be found throughout the world, for example in the United States. Racism in the United States occurs because of white people feels superior to black people. It is well-known that the United States has historically been associated with this problem because of slavery, which is one of the violations of the human rights, was legal for centuries in this country.

As we know, racial tension between the whites and blacks has been existed in American society since a long time ago. Racism in the United States began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Europeans brought African slaves to the American colonies. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Europeans turned to African slaves because they were plenty and cheaper than indentured servants who were mostly poor Europeans. As slave population grew rapidly, their living conditions became harsher since they worked harder, died earlier, and had less opportunity of

gaining freedom. Through the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the 1865, the slavery was officially abolished, but the racism is not completely gone after that (Klarman, 2007). The long period of slavery in the United States has affected on how both white and black people treat each other until now. White people, who feel superior, are being racist and treating black people unequally even though equality was mentioned in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Until today those racial inequalities are still happening in the United States. The slavery has indeed been abolished, but racism still exists in more subtle forms that occur through racial discrimination, stereotype and prejudice (Healey, 2002).

Those never-ending unequal treatments has encouraged black people to stand up and fight against racism by marching on the streets doing anti-racism protest and protesting through literature such as prose, poetry, drama, non-fiction and media. The purpose of protest literature is to not only criticize and protests society, but also suggests a solution either explicitly or implicitly (Stauffer, 2006). Nowadays, this kind of protest literature can also be seen in song lyrics. Songs has long been an effective way in delivering messages since they can be heard through radio, television and music streaming platforms on mobile phone. So, song lyrics have played a massive role in delivering messages, especially for today's generation.

Although song lyrics are not literary works, song lyrics are not much different than the words in a poem (Lee, 1965). Both lyric and poem express the writer's thoughts, feelings and emotion and written in poetical way. The language that is used in song lyrics or poetry could contain an implicit or explicit meaning and cannot be taken literally. Therefore, the lyrics may be interpreted differently by the listeners. So, not all of the listeners can easily understand the implied meaning that a writer is trying to convey. For that reason, to understand more about the

lyrics, it is necessary to analyze word, phrases, and lines in denotative and connotative level so the whole meaning can be interpreted.

According to Erickson (2010:10), song lyric and poem is used to propose the ideas about the life. Through song lyrics, a writer is able to express their emotions and feelings toward something or someone, so it is not always mere imagination, but also usually reflects on what is happening in his or her life. Song lyrics are created as a reflection of the real life according to what the writer has been felt, read, heard, and experienced. There are various themes that a writer discusses in his or her song lyrics. They can be about social issues such as racism, war and peace, poverty, materialism, etc. Song lyrics are important because they can be a tool for change, to encourage or inspire the listeners to be a better person. Logic, an American rapper, is one of singer and songwriter who use song lyrics as a weapon to fight against racism that is still happening in our society.

Logic is one of many singers or rappers that not only talks about racism and equality, but also self-love, suicide prevention, and also political message in his song lyrics. He is an American singer, rapper, songwriter and music producer. Sir Robert Bryson Hall II or also known as Logic was born in Gaithersburg, Maryland in 1990. Even though his father is an American-African, he has his mother skin who is a Caucasian and because of that, he often faces racial discrimination on both sides as a white and black man (thefamouspeople.com). The lyrics that he wrote mostly based on his personal experiences such as his feelings about racism and how he inspires people to be a better person through his song lyrics. Since Logic's song lyrics are based on his personal experiences, it is necessary to analyze his sociological background in order to know his intention of writing racism issue in his lyrics. To analyze Logic's sociological background, the writer will be using sociology of literature approach.

Sociology of literature is one of literary approaches that can be applied in the study of literary works. Wellek and Warren (1994) have proposed three kinds of approaches in sociology of literature; those are sociology of the writer, sociology of the literary work and sociology of the reader. Sociology of the writer covers writer's social status, social ideology, social and cultural background, and other issues relating to the writer as a producer of literature, while the sociology of literary work examines the social content, purpose, as well as other things implied in the literary work itself which related to social problems, and the sociology of the reader focuses on the relationship between literary work and the reader. It examines the reader's problem, the social impact of the literary work on its readers and how far literary works are determined or dependent on social background, social change and social development. In this study, the writer is focusing on the sociology of the writer since understanding a writer is the main key to understand the social relationship between literature and society. The sociology of the writer will cover Logic's social status, social ideology, social and cultural background in order to find out how Logic's sociological background influence his writing.

There are some previous studies that are related to the issue that have been discussed plenty of times. First, Agata Szulkowska in his journal article entitled *The Problem of Racism in Kathryn Stockett's novel The Help (2009)* discusses the problem of racism which experienced by black maids in the 1960s in Jackson, Mississippi as depicted in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. It discusses different types of racism, such as overt, institutional, and structural, which occur in the novel.

Second, in study entitled *An analysis of the Racial Discrimination Suffered by Edgar Allan in John Neufeld's Edgar Allan (2017)* conducted by Mas Muhammad Idris discusses the racial discrimination in *Edgar Allan* novel which written by John Naufeld. This study depicts how the

white people executed the subordinate people through their treatments of racism. The results of this study show the structural racism that occurred in the novel is in the forms of aversive racial attitudes, individual racism, institutional racism and interpersonal racism. Moreover, the expressions of prejudice namely anti-locution of prejudice, avoidance of prejudice, discrimination of prejudice and extermination of prejudice had been discussed in this study.

Third, a study entitled '*We Gon' Be Alright: Kendrick Lamar's Criticism of Racism and the Potential for Social Change Through Love* (2014) by Courtney Julia Heffernan analyzes Kendrick Lamar's criticism of institutionalized racism in America and its damaging effects on African-American subjectivity on his albums *Section.80*, *Good Kid M.A.A.D City* and *To Pimp a Butterfly*. Those albums address the social implications of racism in the present day, throughout Lamar's life and throughout the lives of his ancestors.

Differing from those previous studies and this study is there is no research that talks about racism in Logic's song lyrics. There are three of Logic's song lyrics which talks about racism that the writer is going to analyze; those are *Black Spiderman*, *Everybody* and *Take it Back*.

## 1.2. Research Question

1. How is racism portrayed in Logic's song lyrics?
2. How does Logic's sociological background influence his writing?

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

1. To find out how racism is portrayed in Logic's song lyrics
2. To investigate how Logic's sociological background influences his writing.

### **1.4. Scope of The Study**

The focus of this study will be based on analyzing the racism issue in Logic's song lyrics and analyzing how Logic's sociological background influences his writing.

### **1.5. Significance of The Study**

This study is expected to be useful for those who are interested in studying about racism and also analyzing semiotic through song lyrics. Moreover, this study is also expected to give a better knowledge and enrich the references of the readers, especially English Department's students, who want to study about racism and sociology of literature through song lyrics.

