

Teaching Multiculturalism To Fight Against Racism In The Freedom Writer By Richard Lagravenese

Al Devia Ratu Vanessa¹, Dewi Candraningrum²

Department of English Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta,

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Abstrak

Multikulturalisme merujuk pada perbedana yang disebabkan oleh eksistensi kelompok yang berbeda didalam masyarakat, dimana perilaku dan tindakan masyarakat menciptakan identitas tertentu. Sementara itu, Freedom Writers adalah sebuah film yang telah rilis pada tahun 2007 lalu menggambarkan multikulturalisme pada sebuah sekolah yang diajar oleh Erin Gruwell. Film ini disutradarai oleh Richard LaGravenese. Penelitian ini menguji tentang pengajaran multikulturalisme untuk melawan rasisme di sekolah. Penelitian ini merupakan sebuah penelitian kualitatif dan hasil yang ada pada penelitian ini adalah: pertama, pendekatan multikulturalisme diterapkan dengan sangat baik oleh Erin Gruwell pada film tersebut. Kedua, multikulturalisme dapat mengubah sikap dan perilaku siswa-siswa difilm tersebut. Ketiga, film *Freedom Writers* memberikan contoh yang baik atas keefektifan pendekatan multikulturalisme pada bidang pendidikan.

Abstract

Multiculturalism is refers to cultural differences caused by the existence of different groups in society, where people's attitudes and practices create a distinctive group identity. While, Freedom Writers movie which was released on 2007 portrayed the multiculturalism in a school taught by Erin Gruwell. This movie directed by Richard LaGravenes. This study examined the teaching multiculturalism in the movie to fight racism in the school. This research belongs to qualitative research and the result og this research are: first, the multiculturalism approach applied so well in the movie by Erin Gruwell. Second, the multiculturalism can change the attitude and behavior of the students in the movie. Third, Freedom Writers movie provide great example of the effectiveness of multiculturalism approach in education.

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Corresponding Author:

Al Devia Ratu Vanessa,

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

E-mail: a320190028@student.ums.ac.id,

1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism is used as a descriptive and prescriptive term. It refers to cultural differences caused by the existence of different groups in society, where people's attitudes and practices create a distinctive group identity. As a technical term, multiculturalism is necessarily used to refer to multiple communities based on racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences. As a normative term, multiculturalism refers to the right to respect and acceptance of other cultural groups or the acceptance of regional diversity by people based on the moral and cultural demands, opinions, and attitudes of the majority in a society where cultural diversity is respected. To begin with, Multiculturalism is an effort so that minorities and immigrants get equal opportunities. Other researchers say that Multiculturalism combines many cultures. Multiculturalism is also a condition where individuals have different cultures, beliefs, and religions but respect each other's differences and coexist in one place (Diem, 2020).

According to James A. Banks, multicultural education means idea, concept, educational reform, or moving process. Multicultural education includes the idea that all students should have

equal opportunities for schooling, regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity, or culture (Banks, 2008, 4). Teaching multiculturalism group learners is a common phenomenon on many continents in the era of globalization. Diverse cultures are beneficial in reducing social inequalities and preparing students for a better future in the workforce. It can also be a reference for reducing social tension and conflict and increasing social solidarity. (Shayovitz et al., 2020.) Several previous studies have explored the meaning of Multiculturalism to dig deeper into the meaning contained in the Freedom Writer movie by Richard LaGravenese. In 1971 the idea of Multiculturalism was born, which was introduced as an administrative program. Several previous studies have explored Multiculturalism to provide learning to multiculturalism groups. According to academics, Multiculturalism is cultural relativism adopting an ahistorical essentialist perspective on social identity while emphasizing recognizing and celebrating differences among various collective groups.

The film *Freedom Writers*, which aired in 2007, adapted a book by Erin Gruwell that was based on a true story that she went through when she was a teacher at Wilson High School, especially in Room 203, Long Beach, United States, in 1994. The area is known for its violent areas. Triggered by gangs of different races and as a result of tensions between gangs, the school that made Erin Gruwell a teacher also faced a new problem, Woodrow Wilson High School had to accept students from various racial backgrounds, which resulted in Erin's school being thrown out of the ranks of the favorite schools in California. Erin faces a new challenge, namely, having to teach in a class full of a number of tense students. So one day, Erin sees one of her students committing acts of racism against other students by illustrating African-American students with big mouths and thick lips. Erin then understood that most of her students harbored hatred and suspicion of one another. The series of events that occurred in class certainly made Erin a little depressed. However, she is passionate about finding the proper teaching method for her students, so Erin is willing to work two side jobs at the same time to meet the needs of a new book for her students, namely "The Diary of Anne Frank" which is closely related to issues of racism and discrimination.

The director, Richard LaGravenese, managed to lure the winner of 2 Oscars (2000 and 2005), Hilary Swank, to play the main character in *Freedom Writers*. Swank is accompanied by actor Patrick Dempsey, his co-star in this film. LaGravenese's work won a lot of praise from the audience even though it only won 2 awards, namely the 2008 Golden Camera in the Best International Actress category and the 2007 Humanitas Prize (feature film). Data from the Rotten Tomatoes website shows that *Freedom Writers* has a score of 87 percent from more than 250,000 viewers.

2. METHOD

This research belongs to qualitative research. The meaning of qualitative research according to Royadi, *et.al* Creswell states that in a qualitative research there must be some aspects such as comprehensive and complex picture presented, reporting insights into sources of information and seeking to understand human problems in a social context by doing so in natural setting scientific research process and arrange without the interference of researchers. The object of this research is the movie entitled *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese. The data source used in this research are the movie entitled *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese and previous studies related to this research. Those data in this research collected by document analysis approach. Document analysis meaning according to Michelle, *et.al* is a collection of important documents organized in a systematic way. Then, after the data collected, those data are analyzed by content analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This chapter designed to explain about the research findings and discussion Of Teaching Multiculturalism To Fight Against Racism In The Freedom Writer By Richard

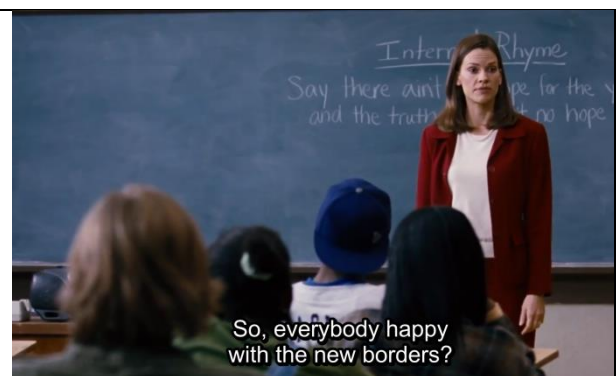
Lagravenese movie. The findings discussed based on the research questions of this research. Those findings are :

1. The Teaching Multiculturalism Approach To Fight Against Racism Uses The Famous Rapper Tupac Shakur's Song Lyrics



In the duration (00:20:03 - 00:20:47), Erin Gruwell tries to play the song and discuss the lyrics of Tupac Shakur's song in front of her students but does not get a negative response because the students consider it irrelevant because Erin is a white teacher.

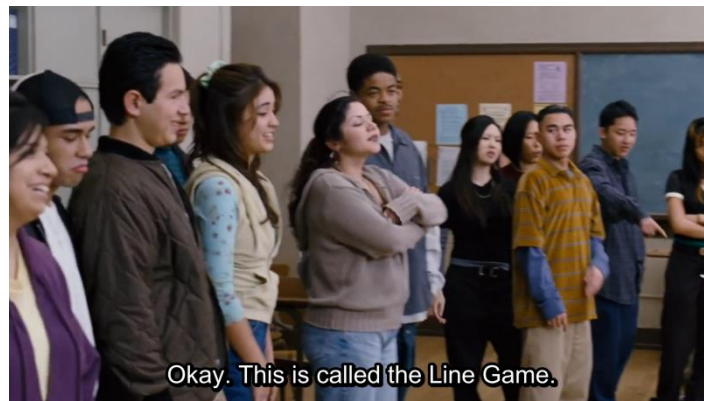
2. The Approach to Teaching Multiculturalism to Fight Against Racism is by Arranging Student Seats



(00:21:02 - 00:22:35)

Seating is an integral part of lesson planning for classroom management. Baron (1992:13), cited by Riki Bugis 2018 considers a class with maximum action behavior. Erin feels overwhelmed by the ridiculous attitude of one of her students, Jamal. Nevertheless, Erin still found a way for students to mix between races. However, it still failed. Many students left Erin's class because of the arrangement of new chairs ordered by Erin.

3. Teaching Multiculturalism to Fight Against Racism by Playing the Line Game



(00:41:11 - 00:45:22)

Erin Gruwell continues teaching through game development (Line Games). As a teacher at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, California.

Erin Gruwell: "I'm gonna ask you a question. If that question applies to you, you step onto the line and then step back away for the next question"

The primary purpose of using games in learning is to increase students' intrinsic desire to play and increase their interest in learning. This method caught the students' attention and received a positive response from Erin Gruwell, who came to the fore after questioning the students and allowing them to express themselves. This enhances student skills, discipline, and reasoning skills creates weak interactions for skill development and makes interracial assimilation much easier without even realizing it.

4. Teaching Multiculturalism to Fight Against Racism With Writing Journal



(00:45:25 - 00:46:31)

Erin Gruwell: "Now, I have something for each of you. Everyone has their own story, and it's important for you to tell your own story, even to yourself. So, what we're going to do is we're gonna write every day in these journals."

Erin Gruwell: "You can write about whatever you want, the past, the present, the future. You can write it like a diary, or you can write songs, poems, any good thing, bad thing, anything. But you have to write every day. Keep a pen nearby. Whenever you feel the inspiration. And they won't be graded. How can I give an A or a B for writing the truth, right? And I will not read them unless you give me permission. I will need to see that you've made an entry, but I'll just do this, skim to see that you wrote that day. Now, if you want me to read it, I have... Excuse me. A cabinet over here. It has a lock on it. I will keep it open during class, and you can leave your diary there if you want me to read it. I will lock this cabinet at the end of every class"

Erin created a new teaching approach by using a method of writing journals that students could write in books that Erin Gruwell had given. Students were required to write every day but were free to write anything. Again, this effort was successful, increasing the students' desire to write. Students managed to pour out their hearts in this way so that the students of various races in the class began to break down the barriers between races and unite with one another. This approach received public attention to the extent that several newspapers published the activities carried out by Erin Gruwell and her student.

5. Teaching Multiculturalism to Fight Against Racism Approach by Inviting the Student to The Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem, Simon Wiesenthal Center.



(01:03:41 - 01:07:26)

Teachers believe museum visits stimulate interest and motivation in learning and social skills (Michie, 1998). Other reasons for visiting museums include teachers' desire for a change of pace, the provision of social experiences, and general enrichment and enjoyment (Kubota & Olstad, 1991; Gottfried, 1980; Hicks, 1986). Due to cultural differences, Erin Gruwell took some of her students to The Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem, Simon Wiesenthal Center. Mock an African-American student (Jamal), is portrayed as a big man with the full lips of a Latin student by Tito and laughed at by *the* whole class. She chose this way to compare the crimes committed by Tito and other students by telling them about the Holocaust. The students, initially mistaken because they thought Erin Gruwell did not know anything about race because Erin was a white woman, finally became curious about the Holocaust. There they learn about the Holocaust not only by visiting museums but also by talking to Holocaust victims so that they can learn about interracial tolerance.

B. Discussion

The researcher held this research using the theory of Teaching Multiculturalism to find the analysis result of the data above. This research position adds information from the previous research mentioned above. This research adds new information about the teaching multiculturalism in Freedom Writer movie by Richard LaGravenese. Teaching multiculturalism refers to teaching to all students from different ethnic and race. Through the findings above the issue of racism was raised by Richard LaGravenese in the film Freedom Writers because the director wanted to describe the reality that is happening among the community, especially school children. Moreover, this film is an adaptation of a true story that has been recorded by the teacher of Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, California, Erin Gruwell, who is going through a difficult time but is eager to help her

students who have different racial backgrounds and have tension between one another. The film shows how the teacher's efforts to build a relationship of love between students and mutual understanding of different racial groups. In his journey, he is sensitive to the surroundings when so many students are discriminated against because of race. Through the topic of racism which is based on a true story that has been written by Erin Gruwell, LaGravenese wants to convey the dark side of American schools which are filled with discrimination and injustice which are still very common.

By addressing this topic in his film, LaGravenese tries to show that we can coexist in harmony only by understanding or respecting each other and building a more inclusive society. LaGravenese also intends to explore this theme because teaching multiculturalism can have a good impact on the lives of students and society as a whole. Teaching multicultural values such as fairness, equity and tolerance helps students broaden their horizons and increase their ability to build better relationships with people from different fields. LaGravenese hopes to use the power of storytelling and film as an artist to stimulate, educate and change people's thinking about important issues such as racism and multiculturalism. In working on his work, namely the film *Freedom Writers*, he was able to show that teaching multiculturalism can create a better and fairer world for all people.

4. CONCLUSION

Here I will examine the work of director Richard LaGravenese, this study aims to analyze and understand the use of Teaching multiculturalism to fight against racism in the film "Freedom Writers". Film was adapted from a book entitled "The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them". The film "Freedom Writers" is set from 1992 to 1995 and tells the story of a teacher's struggle in educating students at a middle school in Long Beach, United States concluded that:

First of all, in *Freedom Writers Movie*, a multiculturalism approach is well applied, and different identities and cultural backgrounds are portrayed in the context of a school tainted by racial discrimination. The film succeeds in presenting the diverse and complex life experiences of learner from different ethnic groups through strong characterization and in-depth narrative. Secondly, learning about multiculturalism from this film can change the attitudes and behaviors of students, originally full of humility, to more open and respectful ones. The hero teacher uses a holistic educational approach to help students understand each other's life experiences, respect differences, and work together to create a safe and inclusive environment. Third, the movie "Freedom Writers" provides an important example of how effective a multicultural education tool can be in combating racism. Learning focused on intercultural understanding, respect, and cooperation can build bridges between different groups, reduce social tension, and encourage deeper interaction and understanding of each other's cultures.

However, this study also revealed some limitations of the portrayal of multiculturalism in *Freedom Writers*. Some aspects could be simplified or idealized, and the movie doesn't fully address all issues related to racism and multiculturalism. In this regard, this study offers some recommendations for further research. First, more detailed research is needed to examine the actual impact of learning about multiculturalism on overcoming racism in the real world, especially in educational settings. Furthermore, further research may explore more complex and holistic approaches to multiculturalism that may be more effective in addressing the challenges of racism. Overall, this study demonstrates that the use of multiculturalism learning in the movie "Freedom Writer" has great potential in combating racism and promoting intercultural understanding. The film provides inspiration and valuable lessons on the importance of dialogue, tolerance and awareness of cultural differences in building an inclusive and just society.

5. SUGGESTION

Some aspects could be simplified or idealized, and the movie doesn't fully address all issues related to racism and multiculturalism. In this regard, this study offers some recommendations for further research. First, more detailed research is needed to examine the actual impact of learning about multiculturalism on overcoming racism in the real world, especially in educational settings. Furthermore, further research may explore more complex and holistic approaches to multiculturalism that may be more effective in addressing the challenges of racism. Overall, this study demonstrates that the use of multiculturalism learning in the movie "Freedom Writer" has great potential in combating racism and promoting intercultural understanding. The film provides inspiration and valuable lessons on the importance of dialogue, tolerance and awareness of cultural differences in building an inclusive and just society.

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