CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Nowadays, the global community is still reeling from the effects of racism, a pervasive and entrenched social problem. According to Ducey (2018), disparities in educational opportunities, housing, employment, income, and political representation are all results of the pervasive racism that persists in today's culture. That which we are looking at is different because people believe that one race is naturally better than others. This belief leads to biased actions, biased thoughts, and the creation of systemic differences. A lot of important events in history, like the transatlantic slave trade, the European empire, and the Holocaust, show how racism got its start over many centuries. These examples show very clearly how bias based on race can have many negative effects. A big part of this problem is systemic racism, which includes the social and institutional factors that keep racial differences going. Racist policies and practices, as well as highly ingrained social norms, are some of the ways that racial minorities are harmed in many areas, such as education, employment, housing, and the criminal justice system.

Lois Tyson in her book argues that "Racism refers to the unequal power relations that grow from the socio-political domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices" (*Critical Theory Today*, P.360). Racism is not suprising and has evolved throughout history. Implicit

prejudice, microaggressions, and racial inequities in healthcare, education, and the criminal justice system are manifestations of this problem in today's society. Even though these examples of discrimination today are less clear, they have their roots in a troubled past. This means that we need to carefully study the beginnings and development of racist ideas and actions throughout history.

There is a belief held by certain individuals that racism is exclusively a problem experienced by black people. They often experience disparities in treatment, primarily due to their racial background. "Race" is a societal concept rooted in the erroneous notion that physical attributes like skin color and facial features (or other physical traits) are linked to intelligence, moral superiority, or intellectual superiority. The concept of race lacks a biological basis and hence holds no significance outside of its social implications (Madula et al. 130).

Examining the deep historical roots of racism uncovers its presence in the earliest human civilizations and underscores the challenge of identifying its precise inception. Upon closer analysis, the era of European colonialism emerged as a pivotal moment characterized by the establishment of dehumanization and the enslavement of African populations. These practices were not only carried out but also justified through the formulation of pseudoscientific ideologies. These theories disseminated the false belief in racial hierarchies as a means to rationalize and legitimize acts of severe discrimination. Racial divides and hierarchies were solidified through methods such as the transatlantic slave trade and the establishment of racist systems of exploitation

and segregation in the Americas and other areas. The formation of racial categorizations and the codification of prejudiced laws during periods of extensive colonization established the basis for the ongoing racial disparities and prejudices that persist in contemporary society. The historical practices of overt racism established a pattern for the entrenched institutional discrimination that would permeate societal structures.

Building upon this historical context, the enlightenment era contributed its share to the perpetuation of racism through 'scientific racism'—pseudo-scientific theories that erroneously promoted the notion of a biologically predetermined racial hierarchy. Such ideologies provided the intellectual underpinnings for racial discrimination and were employed to rationalize and uphold the racially prejudiced policies of the time. As in his book, Kendi (2016) states that "Racist ideas did not arise from ignorance or hatred. They were created to justify and rationalize deeply entrenched discriminatory policies and the nation's racial inequities." The transatlantic slave trade forcibly transported millions of Africans to the Americas. As a result, a racialized social order was established, perpetuating systemic racism via the systematic denial of human rights and mistreatment of Black people. If we want to devise effective strategies to combat racism in today's culture, we must first grasp its historical roots. Only then can we comprehend how racism has evolved and persisted over the years.

Racism has had huge effects on history and is still relevant in today's culture, so it's important to look at it closely. Substantial societal disparities persist in the modern day as a result of "scientific racism," the transatlantic slave

trade, and institutionalized prejudice. Racism is incompatible with equity and justice, and it prevents people from reaching their maximum potential. The effects of racism on many areas of modern life, including the workplace, schools, hospitals, and the legal system, show no signs of going away any time soon.

Through exploration into the history and complexities of racism, we may better comprehend its causes, effects, and processes of persistence. A more accepting and diverse society can be guided by this information. For a more united, equitable, and racially prejudice-free society in today's more diversified globe, studies like these are crucial.

At this time, racism is deeply embedded in our neighborhoods and communities. Disparities in housing, education, work, income, and leadership possibilities are common outcomes of this trait, which shows up as a lack of trust in or unfavorable generalizations about others who are different. Our nation's institutional racism and the historical legacies of slavery are the primary causes of these inequities. Through an understanding of these links, racism can be seen as more than just bias in isolated events; it is a systemic problem that affects every part of our society.

As Ibram X. Kendi articulates in *"How to Be an Antiracist"* "Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities." Similarly, Michelle Alexander, in "*The New Jim Crow*" highlights the systemic nature of racism: "We have not ended racial caste in America; we

have merely redesigned it." To confront and lessen racism's ubiquitous influence on society, it is essential to understand it from this larger perspective.

Systemic racism is a deeply rooted and pervasive form of prejudice that impacts every aspect of society. It refers to an intricate system of institutional, structural, and cultural practices that, frequently unnoticed, unfairly burden individuals and communities according to their race or ethnicity. Systemic racism inherently sustains inequality, exerting subtle or explicit control over results in several domains such as education, work, housing, healthcare, and the legal system.

To tackle this widespread type of prejudice, a comprehensive strategy is needed that recognizes its historical origins as well as its present-day consequences. To demolish the complex network of systemic impediments, we need to implement a range of measures, such as making changes to legislation, reforming education, revamping the criminal justice system, and increasing social awareness. Undertaking such an effort is essential to establish a fair society that not only acknowledges the deeply-rooted presence of systemic racism but also takes proactive measures to eliminate it. Systemic racism, in its fundamental nature, perpetuates racial disparities throughout various societal realms, including but not exclusive to school, employment, housing, healthcare, and the criminal justice system. Systemic racism necessitates comprehensive measures across multiple domains, such as legislative revision, educational reorganization, and criminal justice system renovation. It is essential to acknowledge the significant and continuous influence of systemic racism to

successfully confront and eradicate these deeply rooted inequalities in social settings.

These days, we can enjoy a literary work more vividly because we can now share our thoughts or works through visible mediums like movies. As technology improves, so does the field of literature studies. Mario Klarer, an English and American studies professor at the University of Innsbruck, wrote a book called *"An Introduction to Literary Studies"* in 2004. In it, he says that the film cannot be ignored in literary studies in the early 21st century. He says the movie is part of a genre that is partly textual and partly touched by literary criticism and literature. On another hand, Joe R. Feagin in his book *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression* argues that Literary critics fulfill a crucial function in the analysis of racial narratives by deconstructing them and revealing the inherent assumptions and biases they contain. The analysis of language, imagery, and symbolism in texts is employed to uncover latent meanings about race.

Film is defined by literary methods, but literature also changes the way certain traits are developed in films. Cinema, as an art form, can convey profound stories and plays a significant role in both mirroring and influencing societal perspectives. This is effectively utilized in the 2021 movie script *"Judas and The Black Messiah"* which was co-written and directed by Shaka King. The film's incisive depiction of institutional racism during a pivotal period in history has earned it high marks from reviewers. *"Judas and The Black Messiah"* looks into the mental and social effects of these racial injustices. It tells a story that is

both a reflection on an important but often forgotten part of American history and an interesting story of personal and communal battles.

To analyze the representation of systemic racism in the *"Judas and The Black Messiah"* movie script, this thesis focusing on the issues that happened. The goal is to reveal how the film reflects the intricate nature of racism in American societies. Furthermore, the analysis will go beyond the cinematic framework to examine how these fictional representations relate to the actual dynamics of American neighborhoods. Undertaking this research enhances our comprehension of the extensive presence of systematic racism, so enriching both the academic conversation within the field of film studies and the broader societal acknowledgment of racial inequalities. This thesis aims to provoke discourse and encourage a thorough reassessment of the established systems that perpetuate racial disparities by closely analyzing Shaka King's body of work.

1.2 Limitation of the Problem

The findings of this research have practical implications in real-world contexts. The reflection of this work makes it potentially valuable to a broad readership. Specifically, individuals will gain the ability to understand the operational mechanisms of systemic racism, particularly when analyzing racial issues within the black people culture as portrayed in the movie *"Judas and The Black Messiah."* The researcher is focused on exploring how systemic racism in black society is depicted in the movie script, analyzing various issues that are presented. This approach not only sheds light on the specific context of the film

but also offers insights into the broader dynamics of racial relations within settings.

1.3 Research Questions

Drawing upon the background of this study, the researcher articulate the research challenge by formulating a series of inquiries.

1. How is the systemic racism represented from issues in the *Judas and The Black Messiah* movie script?

2. How does the systemic racism reflect the black individuals in the aspect of society in the *Judas and The Black Messiah* movie script?

1.4 Objectives of the Research

Every research endeavor necessitates the establishment of many objectives that are to be accomplished. These objectives manifest in the form of outcomes acquired after the completion of the research study. The researcher's aims, as stated in the problem formulation above, are as follows.

1. To analyze the systemic racism that is represented by issues in the *Judas and The Black Messiah* movie script.

2. To analyze how systemic racism reflects the black individuals in the aspect of society in the *Judas and The Black Messiah* movie script.