



Racism: Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to highlight racism in Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry*. Racism is a complex and disputed concept not only in America but found all over the world. Although Twain was an American comic writer who often satirized his subject. In this novel, he also has made a deeper study about racism. He is interested in studying further the problem of racism, especially in the 19th century, where acts that led to discrimination were very intensively carried out in the United States of America.

In this novel, Twain has thrown light on the nature and character of the actor and has described the reflections of racism which are related to the social conditions namely discrimination, violence and prejudice. The reflection in the novel is the existence of racism that occurred in society as a result of the world war. The social condition that related the novel to the discrimination, violence, fraud and racism experienced by Huck and Jim.

The term racism means the misuse of power and privilege by a dominant race to consider oneself superior, more intelligent, more moral than others less dominant race and who does unfair or harmful things.

Keywords: Racism, dominant, superior, violence, discrimination, fraud, social conditions, satirized, America and so on.

Introduction

Racism is a condition that assesses various actions and values in a group based on its cultural perspective which views all the social values of other societies outside themselves. It arises from the viewpoint of a society to differentiate its group from other groups and can be seen in the physical form of the community or group, such as skin color and face shape. The whole story of the novel seems to criticize the attitudes of the public at that time, especially about racism.

The importance of examining this theme because nowadays racism is increasing very fast. The term racism is one of the important debates in the field of society because racism is one of the human phenomena. The debates on the basis of racism cannot be separated from the debate of minority groups in which many ways are treated unfairly by the majority group, racial differences.

There are three kinds of racism reflected in this novel namely discrimination, violence and prejudice. Discrimination is the first kind of racism, it starts from the beginning of their

adventurous journey sailing from the islands to the canoe made by Huck and Jim. However, Jim is a black slave, so Huck tried to save him from outside's attack. Huck feels that Jim is different from him so he must have many ways to cover Jim from the people around. Such as:

“so, take it all around, we made a good haul. when we was ready to shove off we was a quarter of a mile below the island, and it was pretty broad day; so I made Jim lay down in the canoe and cover up with the quilt, because if he set up people could tell he was a nigger a good way off”.

(The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p.64)

Huck and Jim are boarded in the canoe, Huck tells Jim to lie down in the canoe and cover himself to avoid being discovered by others. In this Journey, in the beginning Huck thinks Jim is different from him.

On the other hand, Huck was raised to be racist so when Huck lies to Jim it took him a while to apologize. such as:

“I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white white folks does for their'n”.

(The Greatest Novels of Mark Twain, p.486)

It all started with the attitude of Huck about how he saw black people and slaves had changed. He realizes that Jim is human. He has real feelings just like him. The irony is that it is the most natural thing in the world for people to love their families, but Huck was brought up to think that it was not natural for a black man to do. However one time, Huck observed Jim and made a statement for him to keep the statement secret to himself. It is described as:

“I knowed he was white inside”.

(The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p.309)

Huck tells Jim that white people are seen by many of their race as kind and trustworthy and black people are the opposite. However, it sounds racist but Huck is an uneducated person who came from the old south, according to Huck his remarks don't matter because this is actually a compliment about his friend.

Violence is the second kind of racism in which Tom plans a secret oath for a band of robbers, the oath reads every member must be loyal to the gang and if anyone harms one of the members, any other member is appointed to take revenge for it. such as:

“Here's Huck Finn, he hain't got no family; what you going to do 'bout him?” (says Ben Rogers)

" Well, hain't he got a father?" says Tom Sawyer.

" Yes, he's got a father but you can't never find him these days. He used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard but he hain't been seen in these parts for a year or more.”

They talked it over and they was going to rule me out, because they said every boy must have a family or somebody to kill, or else it wouldn't be fair and square for the others. Well nobody could think of anything to do - everybody was stumped, and set still. I was most ready to cry, but all at once I thought of a way and so I offered them Miss Watson - they could kill her”.

(The Portable Mark Twain, P.p, 201-202)

Everyone agrees with the agreement of Tom, in which he must remain loyal to the group and will not reveal any secret, and that if anyone breaks these rules, the members will be retaliated by killing the perpetrator and his whole family.

In this novel, the father of Huck is named Pap. Everyday, Huck is locked up by his father alone in the hut and always beaten by his father when was drunk. Oneday, Huck devised a plan to run away from his father. such as:

“But by and by Pap got too handy with his hick’ry, and I couldn't stand it. I was all over welts”.
(The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p.35)

After the father of Huck had disappeared drunk for a long time and finally he reappeared. The father of Huck is surprised to see the progress of Huck because the father of Huck feels that Huck is now an educated person who can read and write, unlike when he lived with him. For two days, the father of Huck went to town all he heard about was the fortune of Huck. Huck had deposited the money with Judge Thatcher and apparently Pap came to know about it.

“He caught me a couple of times and thrashed me, but I went to school just the same, and dodged him or outrun him most of the time”.
(The Greatest Novels of Mark Twain, p.378)

Pap did not accept the Widow treatment of teaching his son to read and write which made him feel proud because of it. Pap is also very enthusiastic about taking the money of his son from Judge Thatcher to claim his right to the money of Huck. The money will be used by Pap to drink whiskey.

Prejudice is the third kind of racism in this novel. When Huck and Jim were about to approach the clear water of Ohio, Huck was surprised when Jim was so excited at the thought of freedom fever. In this condition, Jim said that he had thoughts of stealing his children out of the bondage zone whereas here in reality the children belong to another man. It is described with a quote as:

“It most froze me to hear such talk. He wouldn't ever dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free. It was according to the old saying, " Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell.” Thinks I, this is what comes of my not thinking. Here was this nigger, which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children - children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm”.
(The adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p.105)

The data above shows that there are several kinds of racism begins because of differences in skin color which causes biological differences inherent in the human race. The racism is the most evident in the character of Huck's himself, and can be seen in how he relates to runaway with Negro slave Jim. Huck is simply a product of his environment and upbringing who reflects the cruelty and injustice towards black people, he is completely unaware that it is a wrong attitude that he should not do.

Conclusion

Mark Twain's novel is an important source of information on pre- Civil War literature in America, reflecting the period's connection to racism. A study of novel reveal that racism was the most

dangerous for black people. In the novel, the word nigger used as an insult to black people. After conducting a deeper study, result can be obtained regarding the types of racism contained in the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. There are three kinds of racism contained in the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Discrimination is the first kind of racism contained in the novel. The second kind of racism is violence which is experienced by the character of Huck who is always beaten by his father when drunk. Prejudice is the last type of racism found in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Prejudice always has an impact on someone who feels that nothing is good. Likewise, in this novel, prejudice is shown by Huck when he sees the strange behavior of the king and prince while taking to the people.

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