

## Research Article

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# The Depiction of White Savior Narrative in John Ferrelly's Green Book (2018) Movie

Dania Rachma Prabasiwi<sup>a</sup>, Rifka Pratama<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang, 50274, Indonesia*

<sup>b</sup>*English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang, 50274, Indonesia*

*pratamarifka@live.undip.ac.id*

## Abstract

In the other manifestations, racism may refer to a very implicit condition and it called as a white savior narrative by an expert. In Green Book movie directed by Peter Farrelly's depicts this phenomenon. The writer try tries to examine white savior phenomenon depicted inside the movie where there is the dominance of Tony lip as a white people who becomes a savior for black people, Don Shirley. Library research method is used as the research method of this study; meanwhile exponential approach is applied to focus its discussion by examining several of the intrinsic elements namely setting, character, and conflict. Meanwhile extrinsic approach, especially sociological approach, which discusses the white savior phenomenon inside the movie, is used in this study. The result of this discussion shows that there exist some white savior narrative phenomena reflected by Tony Lip, one of the main characters inside the movie.

**Keywords:** white savior; racial discrimination; racism

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## 1. Background of the Study

Racial discrimination is one of the problems that take place in the United States. As the time goes by, racial discrimination becomes more invisible. It can be seen throughout an American movie entitled Green Book. The film is based on the actual story of classical and jazz pianist Don Shirley from Africa and bouncer Tony Lip Vallelonga from the Italian Americas who served on the 1962 Deep South tour as Shirley's driver. Don's record label offers Tony a book for African-American travelers to help search out motels, restaurants, and filling stations for colored people it called Green Book.

From the perspective of the writer, the writer sees that the main problem that is depicted throughout the movie is related with racial discrimination, specifically, white savior narrative. Thus, in this discussion, the writer tries to analyze white savior as a new racism which is reflected inside Green Book movie.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### *2.1 Intrinsic Elements*

#### 2.1.1 Settings

The setting of place refers to the physical location wherever events during a story occur. The setting of place presentation is additionally supported by descriptive things during which a story takes place leading to a narrative unity. The setting of time describes the time of each event in the plot, such as present, past, or unknown periods, while the setting of culture describes social circumstances, social classes, and behaviors, such as rituals, lifestyle, and language [1].

#### 2.1.2 Character

According to its definition, character refers to a presumably imaginary individual who inhabits the plot of the story [2]. Character itself can be further divided into two categories namely main character and supporting character. Main character has significant role in the story. Meanwhile supporting character is the character who does not focus on the main storyline [1].

#### 2.1.3 Conflict

According to Laurence Perrine's book *The Narrative Structure, Sound, and Sense*, conflict is a conflict of action, desire, emotions, or goods in the plot of a story or drama. There may be confrontation between the main character and another individual or individuals (man against man); between the main character and any external power, such as physical existence, society, or fate (man against environment); or between the main character and disruptive powers of his own nature (man against nature) (man against self) [3].

### *2.2 Extrinsic Elements*

#### 2.2.1 White Savior

According to Hughey, the terms "noble savage," "manifest destiny," "white man's duty," and "great white hope" relate to previous iterations of the complex relationship between the tropes of the white savior and the broken "other" in need of help or saving. A trope is a recurring cinematic theme that has a strong symbolic meaning [4]. Moreover, Hughey says that white savior movies have several characteristics namely (1) crossing the racial and cultural divide; (2) white people save colored people from injustice or problems; (3) white people are portrayed suffering as the result of helping the black people; (4) black people, white savior, and bad white people are present; (5) white savior movie tends to adapt real events that has occurred in real life in order to break the white supremacies stigma inside the society.

### **3. Method of the Study**

This discussion applies library research method opposed by Mary W. George [5]. According to her, library research "involves finding and locating sources that provide factual information or personal or expert opinion on a research question; essential component of any other research method at some stage," The related information can be reached out from any sources starting from books, journals, articles or any other information from the internet as long as the sources give factual information. As for the discussion, the writer examines both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the movie. The writer focuses its discussion by only examining three main components of intrinsic elements namely setting, character, and conflict. As for the extrinsic elements, the writer applies white savior narrative theory opposed by Hughey.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### *4.1 Intrinsic Elements*

##### 4.1.1 Setting

From the observation of the writer, the writer sees that the settings of *Green Book* movie take place, mostly, in New York City. From the depiction inside the movie, the writer gets the information that the beginning of the movie takes place in the New York City in 1962. Aside from that, the writer also sees that this movie takes several places such as Bronx, and countries in the south side of the United States.

##### 4.1.2 Character

###### 4.1.2.1 Don Shirley

Don Shirley is a black musician who is the main character of this movie. He is described as straightforward person. It is based on the dialogue which takes place inside his office during his interview with Tony Lip. Don Shirley knows that most of the people during that time feels weird when they (white people) are put in the position where they have to work with black people as their master.

###### 4.1.2.2 Tony Lip

Tony Lip is the other main character whose job is to help Don Shirley during his deep-south tour. Tony Lip is the manifestation of white savior itself. Tony is depicted as a person who does not really like hanging around with black people. It can be seen from the scene where Tony decides to throw away the glasses used by the black workers who come to his house. Eventually, Tony ends up working for black people named Don Shirley.

#### 4.1.3 Conflict

The major conflict that is depicted throughout *Green Book* movie is the sentiment toward black people. Tony Lip, as one of the main characters, is depicted having sentiments over black people. When his wife decides to call two black workers to his house, Tony sees that the workers use his glasses to drink. Knowing this, Tony immediately takes out the glasses into the trash bin. It shows how Tony Lip sees black people.

#### 4.2 Extrinsic Elements

##### 4.2.1 White Savior

Tony Lip is the manifestation of white savior itself. The movie starts with the depiction of Tony Lip who does not show any respects toward black people. It can be seen when the black workers come to his house to fix some problems. But, in the end, Tony ends up throwing the glasses used by the black workers into the trash bin. But eventually, Tony, somehow, ends up working for black people named Don Shirley, a black musician. He shows his sentiment toward Don Shirley because it feels awkward for him to work for black people. But, he takes the job anyway. After knowing that Tony Lip is placed as the assistant of Don Shirley during his deep-south tour, Tony Lip begins to see injustice experienced by Don Shirley.

One night, Tony Lip sees Don Shirley hanging out all alone on the balcony of his hotel. Then, he immediately writes a message for his wife. The message says that Tony is curious about what Don Shirley thinks that night. Not long after that night, Tony is shocked when the other additional players of Don Shirley talk to him that Don is having a trouble in a bar. Turns out that some white men confront him for being in that place meanwhile the place does not allow black people to come in. Knowing this, Tony comes up to the place and he immediately threatens those white men by saying that he could just pull out his gun and shoot them.

Other depiction of white savior can be seen when a police tries to stop Tony Car. In this scene, the cop sees that Tony Lip becomes the personal driver of black man, Don Shirley. Suddenly, the cop makes a racist statement and suddenly Tony feels angry. Tony immediately punches the cop because he does not like if they make fun of Don Shirley.

Last depiction of white savior is seen where Don Shirley decides not to attend the last music show. Instead, they go out to a colored pub. In the pub, Don Shirley shows his skills in front of many colored people and Tony Lip is so proud of him. After that, Tony recognizes that there are some colored thieves who try to steal Don Shirley's money. Tony immediately responds this situation by shooting some bullets to the air to make them go away.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the research conducted by the writer, the writer finds out that throughout its story, *Green Book* movie successfully represents white savior narrative. By examining its

intrinsic and extrinsic elements, the writer finds that Tony Lip, one of the main characters of this movie, represents the values that reflect white savior narrative.

Tony Lip begins to represent values which are reflecting the white savior phenomenon when he starts working as Don Shirley's personal chauffeur. Tony Lip, which is formerly has sentiment against colored people, begins to see discriminations experienced by Don Shirley throughout his deep-south tour. Tony begins to take care of him by committing many things. Tony slowly begins to understand what Don feels. Since then, Tony always takes care of him when someone tries to physically or mentally harm him.

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