

Representation Of Race Relations In Bigelow's Movie, Detroit With Regard To Black Lives Matter From The Viewpoint Of Critical Race Theory

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Abstract

The study aims to present the debate on the movie, Detroit (2013) directed by Kathryn Bigelow in light of the theoretical framework used- Critical Race Theory (CRT) by Richard Delgado. CRT is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that examines society and culture, therefore, the theory in the context of the selected movie will be applied to unfold the rampant racism and marginalization of Black community in America. The study will help support the slogan of Black Lives Matter as its major contention to highlight factors and causes that lead to violation of equality of human rights. To challenge the rampant institutional racism that causes marginality of Black people treated them as an inferior being and the white people as the superior being, is one of the objectives of the study in hand. The racial mounting discrimination is the biggest challenge, which is amazingly dramatized through magnificent performances of key characters in the movies, to a peaceful co-existence in the modern democratic world of human rights based on human dignity and equality.

Keywords: Detroit, racism, marginalization, black lives matter, Critical race theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The research aims to critically analyze the movie, Detroit directed by Kathryn Bigelow in light of "Critical Race Theory" by Richard Delgado. Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power. It began as a theoretical movement within American law schools in the mid- to late 1980s as a reworking of critical legal studies on race issues and is

loosely unified by two common themes: First, CRT proposes that white supremacy and racial power are maintained over time, and in particular, that the law may play a role in this process. Second, CRT work has investigated the possibility of transforming the relationship between law and racial power, and more broadly, pursues a project of achieving racial emancipation and anti-subordination.

Racism is defined as the belief in the superiority of one race over another, which often results in discrimination towards people based on their race or ethnicity. The use of the term racism doesn't fall under a single definition. The ideology underlying racism often includes the idea that humans can be subdivided into distinct groups that are different due to their social behavior and their innate capacities, as well as the idea that can be ranked as inferior or superior. Racism can be subdivided into many other groups some of the important are cultural racism and institutional racism. Institutional racism includes the holocaust, the apartheid regime in South Africa, slavery and segregation in the United States, and slavery in Latin America. Racism was also an aspect of the social organization of many colonial states and empires. Racial discrimination is also used as an ethnic and cultural base for racism. All of the aspects can be found in critical race theory.

The movie Detroit also deals with the problems caused by Racism and deals with the suffering faced by the subjugated people; the blacks and how they fight against it. It also shows the resistance to the rules which are made by the patriarchal authorities. Detroit: a movie directed by Kathryn Bigelow in 2017. It depicts the history and situation of the city with references to 1916's situation when the black African-Americans migrated from their homelands towards the civilization while leaving their fields of cotton just for the sake of civil rights, equality, and development. The movie opens with an animated sequence telling about the great migration in 1916. After the migration, the blacks were caught in the oppression within the city of Detroit and it was not just only the case with Detroit but was with many other cities of America. The people of Detroit were segregated by aggressive white policemen. It was a type of institutional racism. This type of oppression by the whites over the blacks in the future gives birth to a great movement called Black Lives Matter. As the city was in the control of the white Americans and they were the people who made laws and imposed them on them so in such effect institutionalized racism is done to the Subjugated people African-Americans. Although the blacks were waiting for the change, which was supposed to come, waited by the people and will inevitably come, the question was "When and How". Bigelow creates a metaphor for how racism works in contemporary society. The story of the movie is traced back in history when police integrated a raid on a private party of African-Americans celebrating the return of the two black soldiers from Vietnam. The raid lasted for four days from July 23 to July 27. In which hundreds of the people were injured and more than twenty died. The same happened in the movie Detroit. A raid was integrated by the police on a hotel called Algiers Motel, where three teenagers were killed by Detroit police officers over the night of July 25-26. In the film, it is shown how white men with badges seemed to be the authority and were ruling over

people of different colors. On the other hand, they also protect themselves by establishing a system of corruption. They made their own rules and laws and made them applicable to the people. A clear picture of institutional racism has been shown by the white over the blacks.

In the movie Detroit, it is shown very clearly how the people in authority make the other people follow their own made rules. They made the situation in which they tried to naturalize those things which are their production: the subjugation. According to Oxford Advanced, Learner's Dictionary Subjugation is defined as "An act of defeating somebody and gaining control over somebody or something". From Subjugation here, it means that those rules and regulations are made by the authority, are not natural and were forced by a group of people in the society to follow those unnatural things, rules and regulations. Naturalization is the process of making the subjugated things natural. The things which are not in their ideal form and apart from it are not meant to be obeyed or followed but still were imposed by the people and make them follow that unnatural phenomenon, in one way or another, this phenomenon is called naturalization. The Naturalization of Subjugation is always done by the people who are in a strong position or authority. The same thing was also shown in the movie Detroit. Where the white people who are in power and were in a strong position make their laws and those who are subjugated, not in the power, the blacks were supposed to follow those rules and regulations although those rules have no moral background but were followed by the African-Americans, because of the cultural difference between them and the base on which such activities are done is linked to the Racism or Racial discrimination it may be of cultural or institutional. They were forced to accept the unnatural things and were told that the black people were the evil people who were supposed to be in the slavery of the civilized people or culture.

1.3 Research Questions

This research explores the following questions

1. How does Kathryn Bigelow present the misuse of particular authority in his film Detroit?
2. How does the black community face segregation and discrimination in the movie as a result of cultural and institutional racism?
3. Is there an implicit attempt to make subjugation naturalized in the context of African American struggle?

1.4 Methodology

The "Critical Race Theory" by Richard Delgado will be used as a theoretical framework for the research. The research uses a qualitative paradigm and falls into the category of descriptive research. Being a qualitative research, it is concerned with 'developing explanations of social phenomena. It helps to answer questions about: Why do people behave the way they do? How opinions and attitudes are formed? How are people affected by the events that go on around them? How and why cultures have developed in the way they have?

Aim and Objective of the study:

The aim of the study is that one should realize and know that whenever there is an action being performed to naturalize things on subjugated people so as a result there will be chaos and a total negative response to it. Soon or later there will be a rebellion against it. Subjugation has the opposite and it is resistance and both of them play an important role in the power relationship of specific social and cultural contexts. So with the analysis of the movies in the light of Critical Race Theory and Black Lives Matters Naturalization of Subjugation has been shown to the readers.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology and Nature

In addition, to counter stories being a theoretical contribution of CRT, they are also a methodology of sorts that challenges discrimination and works toward social justice by “talking back” to rationalist and social-scientific research that supports marginalizing notions about people of color. Counter stories may be narratives constructed using empirical evidence, they may be amalgamations of many people’s personal experience (often called composite stores), or they may even be completely

Counter stories rely on the power of people’s “voices. ”According to Delgado (1990) , “voice” results from the shared experiences of the structures of systems of power. People of color are unified (not essentialized) by their experiences of navigating the structures of power that marginalize them. They all have stories of times when they were dismissed, ignored, even oppressed. These experiences shape the way they interact with and understand the world. More importantly, in the stories of others, we are able to recognize our own voices, our own experiences, and our own struggles within the narrative. It is this ability to create the effect, to share and empathize, and to witness that makes voice such an important part of CRT.

Critical race methodology must foreground race and racism in all the parts of the research process from inception to write up (Yosso, 2002). This awareness of the primacy of race is central to CRT scholarship in several ways. The first is that critical race scholars will ask questions from a perspective that recognizes the centrality of race. This allows them to be reflexive about their relationship to research participants, which avoids or at least minimizes the irresponsible use of the scholarly privilege. The history of scholarship is littered with academics who exploited, misrepresented, or ignored the voices of people of color they studied (Solomon,1985). In order to avoid this type of abuse, CRT methodology self-reflectively recognizes power as an intersectional problematic that cuts across social identities, and recognizes that researchers must be diligent in their willingness to see the difference and respect the people with whom they work.

CRT methodology also challenges traditional paradigms that marginalize the experiences of people of color. The reason a CRT stance takes an oppositional approach to research is to ensure

rigor and to produce research that confronts master narratives. CRT researchers look to challenge issues that appear settled and to destabilize normalized discourses. Adherents describe CRT as an activist movement and, as such, CRT methodology aims to locate liberatory and transformational solutions to the problems facing people of color.

In order to make social change, CRT scholarship has even developed a “critical race epistemology,” an alternative to empiricist or rationalist paradigms. CRT scholars suggest one can begin to engage a critical race epistemology by maintaining focus on two principles. The first is that knowledge production is political. To make knowledge is to exert power over the social, which requires privileges accessible to only a very few. Second, there is radical potential in alternative epistemologies that foreground the perspectives of people of color. CRT epistemology appropriates the academic space as a site of struggle, employs a critique of power, and ultimately challenges racial hegemony.

The research uses a qualitative paradigm and falls into the category of descriptive research. As it is qualitative research, qualitative research is concerned with 'developing explanations of social phenomena'. It helps to answer questions about: Why do people behave the way they do? How opinions and attitudes are formed? How are people affected by the events that go on around them? How and why cultures have developed in the way they have? And how are the differences made between social groups?

3.2. Research Population

The research population is limited to the specific movie of Kathryn Bigelow Detroit and it will be analyzed with the help of Critical Race Theory by Richard Delgado, and with the help of an international activist movement, Black Lives Matter. No other than the above-mentioned areas will be discussed.

3.2. Sampling Technique

Systematic sampling is often used instead of random sampling. After the required sample size has been calculated, in systematic technique the record is selected from a list of population members. As long as the list does not contain any hidden order, as it is the study of a movie, this sampling method will be very efficient.

3.3. Source of data

1. Books
2. Movie
3. Internet

3.4. Data collection procedure

Data collection procedure will be done with the help of Critical Race Theory, from the social media related to the Black lives matter, and from the script of the movie.

3.5. Data analysis technique

As it is qualitative research, the qualitative data analysis technique refers to non-numeric information such as interview transcripts, notes, video and audio recordings, images and text documents.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section of the study deals with racial relations analysis of the movie Detroit by Kathryn Bigelow, following Richard Delgado's "Critical Race Theory". The movie will be examined under the discussion and the reemerging movement "Black Lives Matter". The text of the movie and how race relation techniques are shown will be analyzed to strengthen the case of this study.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an international organization or movement, which is governed or run by the African-American community. The organizers of the movement were Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in 2013. It is made against the brutality and despotic rules towards the black people. It is considered as a liberation movement to make a place or room for leadership from the people who belong to black culture. Several aspects have been highlighted by this movement, such as racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system governed by the police. The involvement of police in the brutality towards the killing of black people has also been discussed in the movement.

It was started in 2013 with the use of hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media. The reason behind the movement's start was the death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin in February 2012 by George Zimmerman in the shooting. From here it started street protests and was started to become nation wise recognized. After the death of Trayvon Martin in the protests followed by further two deaths of African Americans in 2014: Michael Brown and Eric Garner. The protest has resulted in the deaths of many of the other blacks who also occurred in police custody or at police actions. Michael Brown's death resulted in the protests and resulting in unrest in the city Ferguson. It was started in August 2014, where black lives matter organizations organized their first protest about the freedom ride in Ferguson. After the shooting of Michael Brown in a reaction to it 500 people came out to the streets and roads to protest against it in a nonviolent way. From there the movement came to be known to the world. In the summer of 2015, Black Lives Matter activists became involved in the 2016 United States presidential election. The originators of the hashtag and call to action, Alicia Garza, PatrisseCullors, and Opal Tometi, expanded their project into a national network of over 30 local chapters between 2014 and 2016. Black lives matter is compared to the civil rights movement.

As at the start of the movie we can see how the white policemen arrest the blacks and whom they stop their party, the celebrations were all breaking down just because of the white policemen. They interrupt the personal lives of black Africans. They are stopped by the police many of the time to not enjoy what the white can do openly; they are not allowed to do the same.. All of the activities which are easily allowed to white people are forbidden to blacks. The blacks were not allowed to

have or hold a private party. The authorities also get themselves involved and interfere in the private lives of Afro- Americans because they are the ones who were in power in Detroit. It can be seen very easily in the movies that the authorities enter the private party and how they shut it down by force.

MAN:

Hey, what's happening, Jack?

Private party.

Pick another card.

There you go!

(DOOR THUDS)

Oh, I see what you're saying.

There we go!

(GRUNTING)

Damn it! Give me that shit.

Party's over!

Here we go. Move on out.

Move on out.

Step out! Step out!

Everybody out! Out!

Let's go!

I know you can hear me.

Get the fuck up and go!

A kind of hybridity is also shown in that scene. It can be seen clearly in the movie how white people use the same race men to play a role of them instead. It has been shown clearly that they use their people against them. A kind of BOUJWAZEE class has been made by the white people to control the black people and on their shoulders; they can easily do whatever they want to do. As can be seen clearly how the officer enters the party and how a couple of police officers are stopping the party and ordering the hundreds of blacks to go home, meanwhile he also uses abusive language for them. And all of the dialogues can be analyzed and it can be seen clearly that all of them are ordering dialogues, making him a man of authority. The officers also threatened the gatekeeper by pointing him to the police officers who came along with him. A kind of power show is also shown by the police in it. If they don't obey the orders or go against them, they will have to face the police the brutal authorities of the time. In a reaction of this, the people around the area gathered around and witnessed the arrests of the people who were there in the party and have not committed any crime, are being arrested by the police so it makes them start protesting and throwing bottles and stones on the policemen and on their cars it makes them leave the area as soon as possible and after this riots started by the black people. So the same is also happening in the lives of black people in the USA. The authorities interfere in the personal lives of the blacks and want to make

them a puppet, who just obeys all of the orders which are from the side of the police or authorities. As a result of the passage of time, the movement emerged of the rights of the blacks. After the 1960s and late 20 the century, the situation got in control and all of the people were treated in the same way but at the start of the 21st century, it was started again in the USA. The class distinctions, racial profiling has become very common among the people living there and same situations are started again as it was in the 1960`s so blacks were suppressed by the white especially by the police department, and they also involved in the killing of some blacks so a result a movement was started by the people and the favor of blacks with a hashtag #BlackLivesMatters.

KAREN, Julia, Larry and Fred leave the room of Carl Copper after they go. Carl saw some officers down the street and wanted to make them feel like what they made the black feel that frightened them, by shooting over the Africans.

We should teach
these pigs a lesson.

LEE: What you
talking about, Carl?

Them right down there.

(LAUGHS)

LEE: You know
if you shoot them,
...they're gonna
shoot us back, right?

How they gonna know
where it came from, Lee?

- It's not even possible.

- Just calm down, man.

Man, you chicken.

LEE: It's already crazy
in here enough.

CARL: Look.

They need to understand...

...that they can't be picking
on us all the time.

Y'all gotta be
with the program!

We're gonna
get our asses beat!

One, two.

Would you...

(GUNSHOT) (48:23)

SOLDIER:

Get down! Hit the deck!

You guys okay?

- Who's shooting?

- From down there, maybe?

It could be

any one of those buildings.

Did you just hear

that gunshot, baby?

No, I didn't hear anything.

Anyway, you know

if I get a record deal,

...we gonna drive

a Cadillac, right?

(CHUCKLES)

Look, check him out!

(LAUGHING)

Run, Mr. Cracker, run!

(GUNSHOTS)

ROBERTS: Get down!

EDDIE: Muzzle flash!

By the Algiers,

could be a sniper. (48:23)

After firing some shots on the troops down, the troops thought that it was a sniper who was firing on us. They cover the building from where Carl shot the fires. Carl and his fellows notice that they have been surrounded so they get confused and start moving and the troops down notice the sudden movement on the top floor, so they start firing on the building. When they stop shooting Carl gets confused and wants to leave the building, and start running downstairs, meanwhile, Krauss enters the building and notices Carl he was running and shoots him with the shotgun twice from the backside. When he examined Carl so he had no guns, and from there Krauss got confused that he shot an innocent again. Krauss saving himself from another murder he plants a knife with him and let him bleed till death. The rest of the officers take all the other people living in the motel downstairs and a kind of brutal investigation was started again as explained by Carl to prank Julia and Karan. Meanwhile, when Larry, Fred, Julia and Karan leave the room of Carl after the prank Larry asks Julia and Karan to join them in their rooms, but they refuse to join them because they have to go to the room of an army officer who was also black and a soldier who just came from the Vietnam war.

CONCLUSION

The research concluded that the police and judiciary are involved to make the black people suppressed by the whites. In the movie, it can be seen clearly how the police and the specific departments deal with the black African Americans. How they are victimizing the black people and the way they deal with the blacks in the investigation of how they got killed by the hands of white police. The blacks have not been given equal rights as they were promised to be given constitutionally. They enforced all the laws on the African Americans and limited them in their homes; they are not allowed to have parties like the whites do in their lazier time. The police all the time interfere in their personal lives and make them suffer, and they drive them in the way they want to make the blacks act like.

The movie highlights the ways in which the black race suffers as a result of cultural and institutional racism. Their culture was dominated by the institutions. Like in the start of the movie when the blacks were having a party and enjoying the gathering, the police interfere in the party by force and make them all shut down the party and were ordered to leave the place, and soon after that, they arrest the blacks who were there in the party and take them to jail. So the opportunities which are there for the blacks were snatched away by the authorities and they were then left to suffer, as they didn't do anything. The institutions all consist of the people who belong to the race of superiors and they consider their culture the standard one and all the time one way or another way they were making the blacks feel ashamed of their culture that leads to institutional racism.

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