

## Women Resistance Towards Men Domination and Race Discrimination in Freedom Writers (2007)

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### Abstract

*This research aimed at analyzing: 1) what are the indicators of women resistance, 2) how was women resistance illustrated in the movie, 3) why did Richard LaGravenese bring the issues of women resistance in the movie. The type of this study is qualitative. The data collection technique that be used by the researcher is documentation method. The data obtained are in the form of dialogues, pictures, and explanations of situations found in movie and transcript which show data showing forms of women's resistance to men domination and racial discrimination contained in the movie. The results show that the indicators of women resistance, namely: 1) fight for equality; 2) dare to make decisions; 3) can convey without hesitation their experience, which is also valuable; 4) can express an opinion and stick to it; 5) dare to take their rights and opportunities. There are five data that illustrate how the women resistance toward the domination and discrimination they receive. Last, this movie is interesting about how women can resist dominations and discriminations which can inspire many other women out there to have the courage to make decisions, to have determination, to have the courage to resist inequality.*

**Keywords:** resistance, feminism, movie

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## INTRODUCTION

Feminism has always been an interesting subject to discuss. This is because inequality is still a part of life both in social, economic, and political terms. Every individual should have the same human rights, that are rights inherent to every individual since they were born which makes every individual entitled and free to make decisions for their lives. Men and women have an equal position in all matters, so there should not be oppression or discrimination between them because there is no dominant gender (Wolf, 2013). The principle of resistance from a feminist perspective is explained by Annatasya & Saksono (2021) that: (1) women and men are equally valuable; (2) just like men, women also have the right to make their own choices; (3) women have experiences that are as valuable as men; (4) women are free to express their opinions; and (5) women deserve the same opportunities as men in various aspects such as politics, economy, education, health, wealth and honor. Therefore, the fact that men have more opportunities than women have and culture that places women at a lower level than men which ultimately becomes the reason for women to fight to get the same rights and opportunities as men have, which is called feminism. Furthermore, this has also become a topic that has been widely discussed in books or movies.

As raised by director Richard LaGravenese in his movie entitled *Freedom Writers*. *Freedom Writers* is a great movie directed by Richard LaGravenese. The movie, which is an adaptation of his novel, is based on the true story of the author. Set in Long Beach, California in 1992-1995, it tells the true experience of violence, shootings, oppression and discrimination by gangs that took lives. It is also show how the victims show their resistance, especially for women who are able to fight against domination and discrimination. Women's resistance is an action where women are able to fight things that are detrimental to them in social life by believing of their strength and thoughts. One of these resistances arises after receiving discrimination by

showing their strength that they do not deserve this treatment. This is what attracted Richard LaGravenese to make it into a movie.

Movie is a moving image in which there is a story told with sound (Hornby, 2006). As a movie based on a true story, *Freedom Writers* raises issues related to real life, such as discrimination, juvenile delinquency, education and history. Many researchers have conducted research on this movie. No wonder many researchers have made it research material from various points of view. As research has been conducted by (Kiptiyah & Salafiyah, 2020), which discuss the linguistics of this movie. The topics that have been researched by them are Politeness strategies and Speech Acts. Apart from linguistics, there are also many studies in terms of literature, one of which is research by (Hidayati, 2017) which conducted a literature research to find out the message in the movie with a rating system to determine the attitude of the author through the main character.

It has been stated that this movie raises many issues in it, one of which is education. one that we can take from teaching such as about the learning system and learning methods used by Erin to be able to make students who were originally naughty, negative and never listen to her to like learning and are positive. There are several studies related to this, for example research was done by (Pradana & Laila, 2020) who discussed the turn-taking process in the movie. The results obtained are the students' intention to ask questions is high. Meanwhile, (Aminun Omolu, 2018) in his study were identifying and analyzing teaching strategies performed in this movie. Another research is (Lustika, 2021) conducted a research which aimed to know how the teacher motivates her learners and to observe the activities which were applied by the teacher. The results showed that teacher employed 10 different motivational strategies by giving respects, loves, cares and always motivate her learners, playing games, using song's lyrics, writing assignments, switching the learners' seat, outing class, discussing with some informants and giving supports.

One of the things that is interesting for researchers to discuss in this movie is the persistence of the main character in achieving his goals. Erin, who does not even get support from many people around her, can says her opinion and confident when making decisions even though there are always those who oppose her. From this, one can see the feminist side that exists in her as a woman who has ideals and goals to strive for. Her attitude became the research of (Permana, 2021) which uses a feminist approach to analyze the character of Erin Gruwell. Another research by (Sari, 2015) in her research analyzed the second main character of the movie *Freedom Writers*, Eva. Eva is a female student who struggles to survive in Long Beach, California, where it is prone to murder by gangs and racism. The researcher uses the Social Identity theory by Henri Tajfel and a psychology approach to support the analysis. Finally, there is a hegemonic research conducted by (Nugroho, 2016) This is a qualitative study, which shows the results that Erin uses someone who has higher authority than the principal, with the aim that school policy does not interfere with her intention to make changes to her students.

Based on the description above, it can be seen that there has been feminist research with the same movie. In this study, the researcher wanted to complement previous studies on women's resistance, not only from the main character, but also from other female figures. Because researcher sees many points of women's resistance that can be examined from other characters who are also involved in the movie.

In this study, the researcher aims to find the answer of the questions (1) What are the indicators of women resistance?; (2) How was women resistance illustrated in the movie?; and (3) Why did Richard LaGravenese bring the issues of women resistance in the movie?

## METHODS

This type of this study is descriptive qualitative research. The object of this study is an American movie based on true story entitled *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese which was released in 2007. This movie is an adaptation of the biographical novel entitled *The Freedom Writer Diary* by Erin Gruwell and the *Freedom Writers*. The data are in the form of dialogues, picture, and descriptions of events or phenomenon related to women in resisting on men domination and race discrimination in the movie. The data sources used by the

researcher are *Freedom Writers* movie and the transcript. In addition, the researcher can also find other information from websites or journal articles.

The researcher use documentation method to collecting the data. The first step taken by researcher was to watch the movie as a whole, understand its contents, especially the women characters. Furthermore, the researcher will read and analyze use the feminism theory from Naomi Wolf (1993) through the script of the movie. Then, the researcher wrote a conclusion from the data that has been analyzed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Indicators of Women Resistance

In a book entitled *Fire with Fire*, Wolf (1993) based on her feminism principles which can be concluded by researcher about women's actions that can be assessed as resistance, namely: (1) Women and men are equally valuable, so that no one has the right to dominate one of them. When there is domination from men which causes injustice and inequality for women, an attitude arises to fight to get equal rights, equality and recognition; (2) Women also have the right to make their own choices, it can be concluded that women as individuals have the right to make their own choices and hold on to it without interference or coercion from outside. They are free to choose without any control from any domination, including gender and race; (3) Women have experiences that are as valuable as those of men, so that women are aware of their value and aware that no one can judge their experience; (4) Women are free to convey opinions, they have the right to argue like men have. the right to opinion cannot be hindered or coerced or of any gender or race; and (5) Women are entitled to equal opportunities in various aspects such as politics, economy, education, health, wealth, and honor, and women can take this opportunity without doubt and fear.

### 2. Women Resistance Illustrated in the movie

#### Data 1:

*Eva: When I got my initiation into gang life, I became third generation. They beat you so you would not break. They are my family. in Long Beach, it all comes down to what you look like. If you're Latino or Asian or black, you could get blasted anytime you walk out your door. We fight each other for territory. We kill each other over race, pride, and respect. We fight for what is ours.*

From Eva's monologue, it can be concluded that she who is not white is experiencing discrimination. Discrimination is the treatment of the majority group that corners the minority group because of differences, one of which is gender (Jainah et al, 2023; Musaad, 2022). For that she shows resistance by joining into the gang to protect herself, her family, and people who are of the same race with her.

#### Data 2:

*Erin: Thank you. I brought my lesson plans. I'd love it if you'd look them over*

*Margaret: Yes, and this are the classes you'll start with. Freshman English, four classes, about 150 students in all.*

The conversation above shows where Erin comes to Woodrow Wilson High School as a new teacher. There she met Margaret or what Erin used to call Mrs. Campbell, she is the Head of the Department. In that scene, she brings her lesson plan to Margaret. this shows that women can make choices in their own lives and get opportunities like men get.

In the past, social culture meant that women could only do housework without leaving the house, even after marriage (Lestari et al, 2023; Wulandari et al, 2022). This is a form of gender domination by men who see women as a lower level than men. Then came the feminist movement to fight this, so that this form of women's resistance can make them get their right to make choices in their lives and are entitled to respect and recognition. Erin is a wife who is also able to work in the public sphere as a teacher. Erin is able to make choices for her own life, an example is that she chose to become a teacher, because that was the job she wanted.

#### Data 3:

The figure 1 is a scene where Erin invites her students to play games. That day Erin was still trying to get the hearts of her students. There one of Erin's female students named Sindy, was seen wearing trouser.

Where before, women only wore long skirts and only do a house job. Then the 1930s was the moment for women to be involved in public spaces and have chores, they were finally able to wear suits like those worn by men.



Figure 1. the scene when Erin invites her students to play games

Furthermore, women in the King's Road area also started their rebellion by making and wearing miniskirts. According to Deirdre Clemente, an American fashion historian, women wear miniskirts to represent the free female spirit. This scene shows gender and race cannot be a reasons to prevent a woman from determining whatever happens to her life.

#### Data 4:

Figure 2 is a scene where Erin and Margaret met Karin Polacheck as a Head of School Board to determine whether Erin can be with her students again in junior year or not. This scene shows Karin who is authoritative with her high position and also the way she dresses. She be able to take the opportunity to have a high position and deserves recognition and honor.



Figure 1. The scene when Erin and Margaret met Karin Polacheck as a Head of School Board

#### Data 5:

*(In the class)*

*Brian: So, you had all summer to read and consider this book. And you know, I thought it would be most valuable to begin with Victoria to give us the black perspective.*

*Victoria's thought: Do I have a stamp on my forehead that says, "the national spoken-person for the plight of black people"? How the hell should I know the black perspective on the color purple? That's it, if I do not change classes, I am gonna hurt this fool. Teachers treat me like I am some kind of Rosetta stone for African-Americans. What? Black people learn how to read, and we all miraculously come to the same conclusion? At that point, I decided to check out my friend Brandy's English class.*

*(Then she decided to change classes)*

The scene shows discrimination by a teacher against his student just because he is black. Victoria, who experienced this, decided to move, because she was valuable and did not deserve discrimination because of her race.

### 3. Views of Richard LaGravanese

The success of *Freedom Writers* was impressing. In the process of production, this movie issued a budget of \$ 21 million, and grossed \$ 44,090,741. With the quality, good reception and the level of audience interested, this movie was able to win 2 awards and 1 nomination. This is certainly proof that this movie is a huge success.

This movie, which is based on the true story of the author of the book, has received a lot of positive responses. The audience can know how were many years ago about gang life, interracial riots, discrimination and others. Apart from that, this movie also conveys a valuable message about how a female teacher struggles to changes the situation in her class better. Being repeatedly rejected and belittled by her opinion does not make Erin just give up until she achieves her goals and dreams. Furthermore, there are struggles of other women against the violence they received. Another example is Eva, who was subjected to violence and discrimination because of her race. She did not take their treatment for granted, instead she fought back by joining a gang. Even though that was not the right way either, but she tried to fight and survive.

This movie conveys how women who are seen as having a lower level than men can resist against the dominations in their lives. Women can boldly take their rights as individuals, regardless of gender or race. That way they can get the opportunity to get an education, have a high position, honor, and so on that socially says women cannot get it.

The moral message that can be take is that we must not see one gender as inferior. Because every human being has the right to get his rights as an individual (Agustina et al, 2021). Discrimination is also not something that should be done because it can lead to divisions that can take lives (Widodo, 2020). Besides that, seeing the courageous struggle of women can inspire many other women out there to have the courage to make decisions, to have determination, to have the courage to resist injustice.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study which were analyzed using feminism theory, researcher know the indicators of women resistance, namely: 1) fight for equality; 2) dare to make decisions; 3) can convey without hesitation their experience, which is also valuable; 4) can express an opinion and stick to it; 5) dare to take their rights and opportunities. There are five data that illustrate how the women resistance toward the domination and discrimination they receive. Last, the director wants to convey in this movie about how women can resist dominations and discriminations which can inspire many other women out there to have the courage to make decisions, to have determination, to have the courage to resist injustice and equality.

With this research, the researcher hopes that it can complement previous studies in the field of literature. The researcher realizes that there are still deficiencies in this study, it is hoped that this can be used as a reference for further research.

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