

**AGAINST GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN TRACIE PETERSON AND JUDITH  
MILLER'S NOVEL *A TAPESTRY OF HOPE* (2004): FEMINIST APPROACH**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The object of the study is a novel entitled *A Tapestry of Hope* written by Tracie Peterson and Judith Miller that was published in 2004. The study is to analyze how women discrimination is reflected in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel. The method of collecting data is library research and the technique of analyzing data is classifying the obtained data by selecting the necessary ones. Then, the writer analyzes data based on Feminist theory. The results of the study are as follows. First, based on the structural analysis, the authors want to deliver that women should have the same right, freedom, and participation as men do. Second, based on the feminist analysis, the authors reflect gender discrimination in the society that places women as subordinate and most of them are enslaved.*

*Keywords: tapestry of hope, feminist approach, gender discrimination*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

The novel entitled *A Tapestry of Hope* is one of Tracie Peterson and Judith Miller's novels that is interesting to be analyzed, because the story in this novel represents the real life of woman, especially in America. Peterson and Miller concern on Gender Discrimination. They create Jasmine as a character who is always discriminated in her entire whole life, from in her own family till in her marriage. She grows up, both in age and in maturity. She begins to see how wrong owning slaves truly is. She also begins to mature in her faith, even when her days seem too dark to imagine. Jasmine can represent the women life in that time.

The writer decides to analyze the subject matter of Gender Discrimination. Currently, discrimination based on sex is defined as adverse action against another person that would not have occurred had the person been of another sex. This is considered a form of [prejudice](#) and is illegal in certain enumerated circumstances in most countries. In addition, women could not do anything as freely as men could. Their roles were limited only to doing household chores, such as cleaning the house, looking after the children, cooking, etc. Although they had extraordinary potency and ability to be considered as same as men, no men took notice of this. Many women raised their voices for equality, but very frequently it was just ignored by the world.

In analyzing gender discrimination as a subject matter in this novel, she uses Feminist theory. In discussing problem related to feminism, it is better to understand the term of feminism itself. According to Mandell, Feminism is a movement directed at changing existing power relationship between men and women in society. It is merged at a reaction upon women's oppression both psychologically and socially. This movement constitutes a social, economic, and political commitment to equalize between women and men. They want to equalize their right and roles in public. Role has expanded altered, and broadened the definition of feminism that includes political cultural, economical, sexual, racial, and ethical dimension (Mandell and Elliot, 1995:4). The other Feminist said that Feminism is a movement and an awareness starting from the assumption that female got discrimination treatment and the effort to stop that discrimination (Fakih, et all, 2000:38).

So, Feminism is a theory which has the commitment to erase and to stop the discrimination between men and women in all aspects such as social, economics, politics, education and culture.

There are four major principles in Feminism, they are woman's position, woman's right, woman's role, and woman's participation. In Woman's position, Feminists believe that women are treated as inferior (Anderson, 1991: 9). It is supported by Mandell in *Feminist Issues* which stated that "Women was oppressed by a special form of life called patriarchy through which man appropriates all superior social roles and keep women in subordinated and exploited position" (Mandell and Elliot, 1995: 14). Their position is always inferior and under man's control.

Second is woman's right. "In principle, every person wants to be given equal opportunities and civil rights (Mandell and Elliot, 1995: 5). "Feminist attempt to gain democratic right, the right to have education and occupation, the right to be the Member of Parliament also the right to divorce" (Humm, 2002: 53). "Women also demand the right to choose what they attend to, including having freedom to" be what they want" (Humm, 2002: 102).

Third is woman's role that is always in domestic area. Anderson states that: "Women's role in economic life has always been underestimated, there are assumption that women who stay at home as full time house wives are not working and women who work for wages are doing it for 'pin money' and women's work is not as valuable as man's. The result was women's work has not been paid same as men's get" (Anderson, 1997: 75).

The last is woman's participation. Based on the concept of women's equality, stated that "Women's equality entirely in term of men's existing right and responsibilities and they assert, although not without controversy, women's right to participate in public life". In other word, women have the similar access to men to participate in public life. Besides that, women must also be involved indecision making process, either in domestic or public role (Mandell and Elliot, 1995: 5).

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher uses Peterson and Miller's *Tapestry of Hope* novel that was published in 2004 as object of the study. Type of the data is text, which can be word, phrase, and sentence. Type of the study is descriptive qualitative research that takes the source data from words and other written text. In analyzing this novel, she uses the primary data sources such as; Tracie Peterson and Judith Miller's *Tapestry of Hope* novel and its translation by Yeri Ekomunajat. And secondary data sources are books and other sources, such as the biography of the author, the websites on the internet that support the analysis.

Then, in collecting the data she uses technique of library research. The techniques of data collecting steps applied in this research are: reading the novel in English version entitled *Tapestry of Hope*, reading the translation of the novel entitled *Puing-Puing Asa*, taking notes of important part in both primary and secondary data, determining the character that will be analyzed by reading the summary of the novel, classifying and determining the relevant data. Techniques used in analyzing the data are classifying the obtained data by selecting the necessary ones. Then, analyzing data based on Feminist theory.

## **C. DISCUSSION**

In this point, the researcher will discuss about gender discrimination in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel using feminist approach whose issues refer to the application of basic concepts of feminism that include women's position, women's right, women's role and women's participation.

## 1. Woman's Position

### a) Women's position at home

During the years of the nineteenth century, women held an inferior position to men, which usually reflects their social status. Women are always differentiated from men in her family. And when a woman married, they wholly become the property of their husband. All of which is owned by a woman will become the property of their husband. Women's position in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel basically is subordinate. The position of women in home environment is under the control of men. We can see from the life of Jasmine, as a major character in this novel. In her own family, her father always discriminates her as a girl. Based on her family, especially her father, a woman should listen and seem interested to what topics that the men were speaking. In marriage, most of women have to serve anything their husband want. Woman is still regarded as a means to be possessed by husband.

...The men in her family were generally compelled to decide her fate regarding every issue of her life.... Jasmine was hard-pressed to be as congenial. (ATOS, 2004: 33-34); Besides, women were more easily controlled if they married at a young age—before they developed a mind of their own. (ATOS, 2004: 39); He would train her in short order that there would be repercussions for such inappropriate behavior. (ATOS, 2004: 145)

### b) Women's position in larger society

In the early nineteenth century, there were increasing in textiles industries. It leads many women (especially lower class woman) go to the city earning money. Lower class women have much more chance to do activity in public. It is because they have to help their father or husband who has low income, so they have to earn money. But their position is still under the man. Those women work in lower position and none of them become boss. The lower class like Bridget or Kiara, they have to earn money to stay alive. Although on a place where they work, they will be always under the man's position. Kiara who worked as a servant at Jasmine's house, still has to obey all of Bradley's commands, because man holds the power in the household.

The life of women in a higher class depends on the man (fathers or husband). Jasmine and her mother were only allowed out around their home. Jasmine grows up very sheltered and unaware of the difficulty put upon the slaves. She sees the world through naive eyes, not realizing the degree of pain and suffering that most slaves endured. The lives of Jasmine can represent the lives of women in that time where they just have a limitation to socialize with others. The authors stated that Jasmine is difficult to join in a new place when she was in the North America looking in her grandmother. Peterson and Miller also told that the women, especially in the North America in nineteenth century, socialize with other women by making some social gatherings, their agenda is raise funds to help slaves.

Jasmine shook her head, "I understand that I am nothing more to you [Malcolm Wainwright] than a possession to be bartered. I might as well be one of your slaves, up on the block, sold to the highest bidder." (ATOS, 2004: 135)

By writing this novel, the authors want to tell the reader that the position of women in subordinate should be made equal. By creating the character of Jasmine, the authors want the same position between women and men.

## 2. Women's right

### a. Woman's right for getting education

Women are human beings capable of rational thought that deserve to gain the same right as men include in getting education. All colleges at that time received only male students, while schools under college level (such as primary school) also accept male students, the schools want to accept female students only if there is remaining seat in the class.

As in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel, the authors tell that Jasmine get her education at home, she did not have opportunity to study at school like her three older brothers. So Jasmine did not have freedom and opportunity to engage in education.

"Jasmine has received her entire education at home. Madelaine, that's my daughter-in-law, insisted on having a tutor rather than sending Jasmine to a finishing school. In my opinion, the isolation has stilted Jasmine's level of maturity. (ATOS, 2004: 52)

### b. Woman's right for getting good job

Economy in the North America in the nineteenth century greatly was influenced by cotton spinning mills that are being the largest industrial complex in the United States. The factory uses women labors from fifteen to twenty five years old. But in the fact, those women labors have to comply with labor regulations not only apply in the factory, but also in life outside the factory. The regulations on how many hours they have to sleep, to wake up, to eat, to shower, to go out boarding house, to have a break, and so on. The wage they get is a half that men get. Moreover their salary has to be cut for no apparent reason. The authors show to the readers that they (those woman) did not have job security that can be seen when the association closes all windows to make the yawn being faster to produce, but that can make the labors are harder to breathe. Most of them have the problem in breathing, most of them are ill because they have to work overtime. It is clear that women still have no same right as men in the economic aspect.

"... ,these girls are now stating they believe the female workers should be treated as equals to the men," .. (ATOS, 2004: 242); "The girls are working in this area trim, fold, and prepare our cloth for shipment"... (ATOS, 2004: 67); "... It appears that having farm girls work in the mills and constructing this paternalistic community around your business was a stroke of genius." (ATOS, 2004: 69)

### c. Woman's right for choosing husband

Peterson and Miller show the reader how the girls' marriage in that time. Jasmine as the main character can be the example that woman did not have freedom to choose their husband. She was forced to marry a man she did not love, for the sake of her father's business. And Jasmine's fate is same as the other girls that woman did not have freedom to choose their partner of life.

Jasmine thought of her three closest friends. One had been matched to a man nearly twenty years her senior because his land holdings adjoining her family's property... (ATOS, 2004: 137); "...Why is it my brothers are permitted to choose any young woman they desire, while I am forced into a loveless marriage?" (ATOS, 2004: 140)

After marrying to Bradley, Jasmine's life becomes more difficult, because everything is ordered by Bradley. Jasmine does not have right to decide anything in her life, although it is just choosing to see her own mother. Jasmine's activity should have permissions from Bradley. What Bradley wants is a must. Based on Bradley, woman does not have right to speak when the men are still speaking, and they do not have the right to interfere in business.

The two women sat in stunned silence after Bradley Houston departed. For Jasmine, it was the moment she realized that she had very little say over her life and future. Men would make choices for her, and she would be nothing more than a pawn in their game. (ATOS, 2004: 105)

d. Woman's right in law

Female inferiority affects the status of women in law. Women who had not married could own property, make contracts, sue and be sued. Then for women who were married, became one with their husbands, they were completely under the control of their husband, the wife fully belongs to the property right of man. Women lacked the rights to own their own property no matter their rank in society. As in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel Jasmine is regarded as Bradley's property. She has no right to choose her own life to get her happiness, because being Bradley's wife makes her so stressed. In this novel it is implicitly clear that there is no law to protect woman from domestic violence. And for a wife who is experiencing unhappiness in the household and then running away, she will be looked for by the police like a fugitive, which will then be returned to the place of her husband. And from this novel there is no law to protect woman from sexual abuse. It can be seen when Kiara is forced to have sex with Bradley.

By writing *A Tapestry of Hope* novel, the authors want to tell to the readers that women still have no same right to vote, to determine their marriage, to get education as men, and also to work. But the authors also tell that not all men underestimate a woman or treat women like property. There are also men who appreciate women as in the present. In *A Tapestry of Hope* novel, the authors created the character Roger. He is adult male figure who loves Kiara, a forced labor, sincerely.

3. Women's role

a. Domestic Area

The ideology of women's role places concrete limitations on women's aspiration and actions, such as their capacity to organize and implement change (Mandell, 1995:13). Women are expected in the morality side. Women are seen as the root of morality of their children. When Jasmine was still young girl, had not married yet, her father always asked her to have a behavior as a girl in higher status. From the way how Jasmine walks till how Jasmine has to act in front of Bradley. And when she is forced to go home by riding horse, Malcolm Wainwright, her father got angry. Malcolm did not care about any reason from his only daughter.

Her father stared in disbelief. "You risked your life—your reputation—to ride all the way from Lorman unescorted, for this?"..."Jasmine, this is nothing to do with feelings. This is a business arrangement that will benefit generations of Wainwright to come... How dare you come here as a spoiled and frightened child and declare the entire arrangement be dissolved in order to suit your feelings?" (ATOS, 2004: 134-135)

When a girl enters marriage, her activity is still always at home, such as cleaning the house, taking care of the baby, washing the dishes or clothes. But higher class women do not need to clean the house, but her activity is still in domestic area. Women as a wife, is always in the back of man. It leads every wife in middle or higher class to be frivolous. From the major character, Jasmine, woman always acts in domestic area. She stays at home, cares her child, everything about home activity. She is not ever allowed to interfere of Bradley's business or to work outside.

Besides that, Peterson and Miller want to show that some of women have to fight for the life of their family. They tell to the reader that although the women work inside or outside the house, they still live under the man who has to do some roles as a woman. There are some women from lower class who work to earn money for their self and also for their family. It can be seen from women labors who work in Boston association to make yarn from cotton.

#### 4. Women's participation

Actually, women need to actualize themselves in social life. Equality will provide the same opportunity to show their ability in many aspects of life. Men and women have the same right to participate in many aspects of life.

Women play important role in making progress to the factory. Seventy percent of workers in the factory are women. The factory can get more benefit by the existence of Lowell factory girls because they pay those women a half from the man labor's wages. But in the 1834 – 1836 the factory girls were protesting the unfair wages and so on. The actions cause the decrease in factory revenue and also make a quarter mill operators lack the number of workers, so that the production process was obstructed. It proves that the role of women in the economy is quite important. (<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/lowstr.html>)

“And I applaud that effort. But what of the Irish living right here in Lowell? And what the slaves held against their will down South? There is much to be done.” (ATOS, 2004: 243); I've [Jasmine] attended a number of antislavery meetings, as some of you know, and I [Jasmine] want to help in any way possible. My grandmother can vouch for the fact that I embraced the concept of freedom for all men and women.” (ATOS, 2004: 244)

Those are the example of lower class women participation. They are more easily to go outside from the home activity. It is because they have to stay alive by earning money and their husband or father does not have any reason to prohibit. Tracie Peterson and Judith Miller also give the reader view about slavery in the South America where Jasmine, major character, lives. Some women in the middle and higher class together try to help those slaves. It shows how Jasmine and the other women in Lowell try to free the slaves who always get the bad treatment. Jasmine as same as the other wives of Boston Association are asked by their husband to always make some meeting, but from that meeting they also begin to discuss about the slavery. Jasmine and the other wives and also Jasmine's grandmother always join the antislavery meetings. Then they begin to help them.

“And I applaud that effort. But what of the Irish living right here in Lowell? And what the slaves held against their will down South? There is much to be done. While that collection of money is admirable, it doesn't begin to address issues that need resolution in the South and right here in Lowell.” (ATOS, 2004: 243); I've [Jasmine] attended a number of antislavery meetings, as some of you know, and I [Jasmine] want to help in any way possible. My grandmother can vouch for the fact that I embraced the concept of freedom for all men and women.” (ATOS, 2004: 244)

From the discussion about women's participation in social life above, women show that they can be useful for other. They help to free those slaves to get the freedom in life. The story in *A Tapestry of Hope* novel shows that the authors want to show that the women feel that they have similarity with those slaves.

Women who are always seen as object and forced to do something, like those slaves, so that they begin to participate helping the slave.

#### D. CONCLUSION

Based on the feminist analysis, it can be concluded that Peterson and Miller reflected the phenomena of unequal rights in American society. They criticize the phenomena that the rights of women are limited, they do not have the same right as men in many aspects of life. Their life is in domestic area, but some of them do their activity in public society, they are who live in lower class earning money in textile factory. But their position and right cannot still be equated with men.

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