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## **Exposing Modern Discrimination: Reflecting on Struggles of the African-American Depicted in *Judas and the Black Messiah***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is expected to reduce the injustices faced by African Americans. However, life after the Act proves to be not easy. The issues of oppression experienced by African Americans in the past continue to recur. This is because some discrimination against black people is done in a more latent way, called modern discrimination. Therefore, it is important to discuss modern discrimination against African Americans as depicted in *Judas and the Black Messiah* movie. This article aims to analyze the causes of modern discrimination against African Americans. In this research, the researcher used a qualitative method through library research. The main data was taken from the dialogue of *Judas and the Black Messiah* movie, while supporting data came from articles, books, and online sources. The researcher applied a post-nationalist perspective, Critical Race Theory, and modern discrimination theory. The research findings identify four key factors explaining modern discrimination against African Americans: normalization of discrimination, exploitation of minority interests to support white dominance, adaptation of African-American stereotypes to fit white demands, and the intersectionality of multiple sources contributing to discrimination.

**Keywords:** *African Americans; critical race theory; Judas and the Black Messiah; modern discrimination*

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## INTRODUCTION

Over five centuries, the African-American community has been subjected to acts of racial hatred. The injustice faced by the African nation is still one of the most important issues in understanding 'the definition of multiculturalism' that American society is proud of in describing its civilization. Historical documents show that the beginning of their suffering was when the first black Africans were brought to Virginia in 1619.

At first, they were considered contract servants for a few years who had the opportunity to gain their freedom at the end of the contract. By the 1660s, they began to be locked into a lifelong system of involuntary servitude (Hamby, 2010, p. 19). The slavery system restricted their movement because they were seen as the property of slave masters and experienced discrimination from white Americans. However, over time, former slaves and some white people in the North American region wanted to abolish the slavery system throughout the Americas. Therefore, Congress passed the 13th Amendment to the American Constitution,

which declared the abolition of the slavery system in all American territories in December 1865 (Hamby, 2010, p. 148).

Unfortunately, African Americans still experience several acts of discrimination. The era of the slavery system that discriminated against African Americans is replaced by the term Jim Crow era. The Jim Crow era (1877-1965) was the enactment of the "separate but equal" law that was unequal when they differentiated public facilities between blacks and whites and eliminated the voting rights of most blacks by imposing a poll tax. It extends to all areas of Southern society's life at that time (Hamby, 2010, p. 197). It marked the beginning of the civil rights movement that aimed to abolish segregation. The rise of the Civil Rights Movement to achieve equality and end segregation for the African-American community in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ending the Jim Crow era.

Still, those do not immediately end all forms of discrimination or violence against African Americans. The violent incidents experienced by African Americans are

contradictory to the idea of American multiculturalism. When it comes to African-American identity, there is a double standard in defining individual freedom and legal policies that often work against them. Indeed, the discrimination of white Americans against African Americans during the cruelty of slavery has been abolished, African-Americans still experience discrimination today, which is known as modern discrimination.

Cortina (2008) describes modern discrimination as a prejudicial or biased act manifested in a latent way that often goes unnoticed since it has a plausible explanation for one's discriminatory actions. Modern discrimination may be difficult for the targets to identify, and this ambiguity can make it challenging for individuals to notice whether discrimination has occurred and what the motivations behind it might be.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits all forms of discrimination and segregation based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, does not prevent the acts of discrimination against African Americans. As an illustration, it can be seen in the case of the Selma-to-Montgomery march

in March 1965. The march aims to commemorate and protest the brutality of white Alabama state police in the killing of Jimmie Lee Jackson. The tragedy began in February 1965 when Jackson participated in a protest calling for justice for the Alabama state government to give voting rights to African Americans in Alabama and throughout the South.

The initially peaceful march suddenly became a tragedy when unprovoked white police used excessive force to stop the march. The police beat them, fired tear gas, and even shot Jackson. At the time, Jackson was shot while trying to protect his mother from rioting police officers and activists (Franklin & Evelyn, 2011). The tragedy certainly shakes the attention of the American public regarding the acts of violence that continue to plague African Americans and demonstrate civil rights violations.

They experience negative attitudes from whites in so many ways, as also depicted in Judas and the Black Messiah movie. The movie was released on February 12, 2021, and was directed and produced by Shaka King. The movie is a biographical drama of the American Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton. The movie is seen from the point of view of the

true story of FBI informant O'Neal, who infiltrates the Black Panther Party and becomes involved in Hampton's murder plan.

One example of modern discrimination can be seen in this movie when Fred Hampton was arrested by the local police and accused of stealing \$70 worth of ice cream. Without an arrest warrant, Hampton can only surrender when his hands are suddenly cuffed. This scene subtly reflects modern discrimination through the misuse of police authority against the African-American community, despite the government's passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the modern discrimination theory by Triana et al. (2015), modern discrimination is often subtle and ambiguous, leaving the target unsure whether they are being discriminated against and unclear about the perpetrator's intentions. This ambiguity requires victims to accumulate several ambiguous incidents before recognizing the discrimination.

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From the explanation above, ideally, African Americans are guaranteed a life free from discrimination through the enactment of the Civil Rights Act. In reality, life after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is anything but easy. The issues of oppression experienced by the African-American community in the past continue to recur. This is because some discrimination against black people is done in a more latent way. Therefore, it is important to discuss the roots of modern discrimination against African Americans. For a more in-depth discussion, modern discrimination is also depicted in the movies *Judas and the Black Messiah*. The article presents the causes of modern discrimination against African Americans.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This study comes under the American Studies discipline, and it is conducted from the

Post-Nationalist perspective. According to Rowe in Post-nationalist American (2000), he states that the meaning of American identity needs to be considered in the context of global studies and minority groups, such as ethnic, women, and gender studies, African Americans, Asian Americans, and other minority groups. The reinterpretation is not only based on the standards of white American dominance but also needs to embrace the minority perspective as the whole of Americans.

Moreover, this study also employs Critical Race Theory (CRT) by Delgado & Stefancic to examine the subject of modern discrimination. As they state, CRT is required to challenge the inequitable practices of people of color against white American domination and to examine the relationship between race, racism, and power, even though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 safeguarded against discrimination (2017, p. 4). As they state, CRT has six basic tenets (pp. 8-11): (1) Racism is ordinary, not aberrational (2) Interest convergence (3) Social construction (4) Differential racialization and its consequences (5) Intersectionality and anti-essentialism (6) Voice of color.

Moving on to modern discrimination theory, Triana et al. (2015, p.2) state that Modern discrimination is often subtle and has many meanings. As a result, the target may be unsure whether there is discrimination or not. They may also not know the reason for the perpetrator. Because of this ambiguity, it is possible that targets must accumulate multiple (ambiguous) events to know whether there is discrimination.

During the analysis of the data, this study employs the qualitative method through library research. Qualitative research is a method that emphasizes descriptive analysis through various data collection, such as text and others, so that the problem studied has a meaning that can be interpreted (Creswell, 2016). In analyzing the data, the primary data of the study is chosen from the dialogues of Judas and the Black Messiah movie.

The first step in collecting data is watching the movie to find the selected dialogues. Second, the researcher is taking notes by focusing on dialogues. Third, the researchers collect all the data into categorized folders related to the research topic. Therefore, the selected data is being created. Moreover, this

research also relies on secondary data by examining academic articles, books, internet sources, and other readings related to the research topic.

Talking about analyzing the data, first, the researcher prepares the selected data of dialogues for analysis. These data have been sorted into different categories based on the general idea of the research theme. Second, the researcher reads and reviews all the data. This step offers a general understanding of the information. Third, the researcher codes all the data by categorizing the pieces of dialogue in accordance with CRT theory and composing analytical comments that represent the findings of a category. By applying CRT, the researcher explores how these dialogues reflect systematic discrimination that continues to affect African Americans in more subtle forms. The analysis reveals how discrimination persists, though it is not as overt as in the past. Fifth, the researcher presented the arguments of the analysis interpretation into a more detailed narrative by connecting modern discrimination theory and the post-nationalist perspective. Modern discrimination theory helps the researcher to explain

how the discriminatory acts may appear rational or justified on the surface but are, in fact, biased. These acts are subtle and often ambiguous, making them harder to recognize as discriminatory, aligning with the points made in CRT. Moreover, this research also relies on secondary data by examining academic articles, books, internet sources, and other readings related to the research topic.

## **DISCUSSION**

In detailing the problematic issues of African-American discrimination, the movie will serve as a window that reveals the harsh journey of the African-American community despite the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Therefore, there are three basic tenets to explain the cause of modern discrimination toward African Americans.

### **Racism is Ordinary, not Aberrational**

According to this point, the act of injustice is difficult to overcome because it is not aberrational. Even though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, black people in America still face various forms of discrimination daily. More importantly, the acts of injustice that they endured are often considered normal in the

daily lives of white Americans. This can be seen in the following analysis of the movie's dialogue that follows.

Police : "Hey, Williams,  
Officer 1 is that Harriet  
Tubman?"

Police : "You made it  
William out. You're  
good."

(00:57:47-00:57:51)

The police, as part of the civilian government, occasionally disrespect black culture. Black women dressed in attire reminiscent of the abolitionist Harriet Tubman are made fun of by the white police officers. The police officers' actions are extremely underestimating toward blacks as if they do not regard Harriet Tubman as a figure worthy of respect for her efforts to abolish slavery. Furthermore, they demean blacks as if they do not respect the principles contained in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits various forms of racial discrimination. This also results in modern discrimination, where black people continue to experience various forms of discrimination even though slavery has been abolished.

Although at first glance, the dialogue may seem like an ordinary joke. A deeper analysis using modern

discrimination theory reveals that this behavior can be categorized as a form of modern discrimination. Mockery, which falls under modern discriminatory behavior, can also be found in the research by Ellemers and Barreto (2015), who explain that instead of discrimination being done explicitly, it now tends to be done implicitly towards the target. They also point out that modern discrimination has become more subtle, for example, by making jokes that ridicule cultural practices (pp. 142-143). Hence, modern discrimination practices are difficult to recognize since they do not seem like discriminatory actions from the outside. However, by understanding the motives behind such behavior, it can be concluded that they still do not acknowledge the equality between black and white Americans, as reflected in the behavior of demeaning the abolitionist figure Harriet Tubman.

In addition, as a government official, the police should be the first party to ensure protection for the black community. However, they become the primary perpetrator of racial discrimination when referring to the movie. They create discomfort in the black community by making sarcastic

comments to black women who resemble Harriet Tubman. Another instance of discrimination carried out by the FBI and white police against the black community can also be observed in the dialog where Fred Hampton is suddenly arrested by the police without an arrest warrant.

Hoover : "I want him off the street. Charge him with something. Anything. But get his Black ass off the street."

Deborah : "Y'all don't see there's kids in here? Huh? Of course, you're gonna wait till you get to a free breakfast program to pull something like this! Bunch of cowards! You disgust."

Hampton : "Show some discipline. Tell Rush to get me a lawyer."

Interviewer : "What was he arrested for?"

O'Neal : "Ice cream. Yeah, he was accused of

taking 70-something dollars' worth of ice cream."

(00:46:29-00:47:02)

The police's arrest of Fred Hampton constitutes an act of discrimination when referring to the first basic tenet of CRT. Discrimination still occurs, but it is disguised with the concept of equality expressed in the rules where the police arrested Hampton on charges of theft. Police misconduct in Hampton's arrest was discovered when the police suddenly apprehended him without an arrest warrant. He is unaware of the reason behind his arrest, which is proven to have been planned by Hoover.

The background of Fred Hampton's arrest in the movie takes place in 1969, which is after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In reality, the black community is supposed to be free from legal oppression and guaranteed their freedom from acts of discrimination. Nonetheless, discrimination continues to be a daily occurrence for the black community because it is seen as normal or non-deviant, as seen in the case of Fred Hampton. As a result, discrimination has become more prevalent in the modern era.



It is called modern discrimination because those who practice it have a reasonable reason for doing so. According to the movie, the false charges against Fred Hampton, the Director of the FBI under Hoover's orders, show that the white government still has a way to go before fully embracing black equality. Hampton is falsely accused of stealing \$70 worth of ice cream, as reported by O'Neal's dialogue. Therefore, modern discrimination proves difficult to address because it is carried out by institutions with seemingly logical reasons for engaging in subtle acts of discrimination.

The scene where Hampton was arrested on false charges without a warrant also occurs in the everyday lives of African American communities. The case of Terry v. Ohio (1968) serves as an example reflecting the abuse of police power to undermine the freedoms of black people. Quoted from Mackey (2023), the incident began when a Cleveland police detective, Martin McFadden, searched for three black men suspected of planning a robbery at a store. Two of them, John Terry and Richard Chilton, were found to be carrying firearms.

Eventually, they were convicted for possessing concealed weapons.

Dissatisfied with the court's decision, Terry appealed, claiming that their search and arrest were illegal. In 1967, this case was brought to the US Supreme Court to challenge the police actions that violated Terry's constitutional rights. As stated in the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, unjustified police actions without a warrant in conducting searches, arrests, and seizures are prohibited.

In the end, the judgment of the US Supreme Court delivered on June 10, 1968, said that the 'stop and frisk' procedure, when individuals are stopped for interrogation without a reasonable suspicion based only on belief, is considered legitimate and does not violate the Fourth Amendment. This ruling caused controversy because it may allow police to target particular groups with discriminatory intent, a practice known as racial profiling.

### **Interest Convergence**

The analysis of this point focuses on white people's interests. This tenet explains that racial equality for Blacks overlaps with white people's desires. The progress of oppressed black people through reparations provided by white groups is uncertain. This is

because, without realizing it, the benefits received by African Americans are only utilized as a tool for the interests of white people.

In the context of this movie, interest convergence can be found in the relationship between Roy Mitchell and O'Neal, where their interests intersect with each other. First, for O'Neal, joining the FBI gives him protection from the legal consequences of his actions as a car thief. For him, being cleared of his criminal charges, receiving special treatment from Mitchell, being valued by Mitchell, and even Mitchell's acts of kindness toward him are considered significant achievements, leading O'Neal to consider Mitchell as a role model in his life. On the other hand, for Mitchell, O'Neal is a tool to penetrate and monitor the activities of the Black Panther Party, which is considered a threat to national security. Mitchell provides benefits to O'Neal just to make the FBI's plan to destroy the Black Panther easier by utilizing O'Neal as a pawn or part of the FBI's strategy.

Interviewer : "What made you think you could trust Roy Mitchell?"

O'Neal : "Uh, I'd rode around in his car. I had dinner with him at his dinner table. You know, he was, at one point, for me, he was like a role model when I didn't have one, you know? We had very few role models back then. We had Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali. I had an FBI agent."

(00:24:48-00:25:14)

Mitchell : "Come on in, make yourself at home in the den."

(00:24:37-00:24:39)

Mitchell : "No, no, sit down. You're a guest. If you want a taste of good stuff, there's a bottle of scotch in this bottom cabinet there. You can help yourself."

(00:26:53-00:27:02)

O'Neal explains that he has barely had a role model in his

life. However, he finds out that Mitchell saved his life from prison for car theft and impersonating a federal officer. Moreover, O'Neal, as a black citizen, is invited to a fancy dinner at a restaurant with FBI agents. As understood, the movie is set in 1968, a period when conflicts between white police and the FBI escalated. Nevertheless, O'Neal feels accepted by Mitchell as a white FBI officer, who invites him to dine without considering the criminal case involving him.

Furthermore, Mitchell treats O'Neal as his guest in a polite way when inviting him to his home. As Mitchell said, "make yourself at home in the den ... no sit down. You're a guest" emphasizing that Mitchell respects him as a guest and appreciates his presence. Therefore, all of Mitchell's actions, which granted O'Neal a break on the legal matter and even led to them becoming work colleagues, made Mitchell feel like a role model in O'Neal's life.

O'Neal not only escapes prison sentences but he is also given a car by Mitchell, which he previously wanted and obtained through theft. O'Neal gains various benefits, and he also earns income as an FBI spy, achieving prosperity. As a result, Mitchell starts to

serve as a role model for O'Neal for saving his life in a trying situation.

There is no such thing as a free lunch. Something desired and needed by O'Neal overlaps with the FBI's interests as a white people. Rather than a genuine desire to help, all the kindness shown to O'Neal by Mitchell only serves to facilitate the FBI's plan to overthrow Fred Hampton, deputy chairman of the Black Panther Party's Illinois chapter.

Mitchell : "Hello."

O'Neal : "Hey, Listen. I'm out Roy. I'm out!"

Mitchell : "Calm down. Calm Down Bill."

O'Neal : "Don't you tell me to fucking calm down, all right? I was almost killed, man! Now, Fred's in jail, I did the damn job, and I'm out!"

Mitchell : "No, that's not how it works."

O'Neal : "What the fuck do you mean that's not how it works? Why don't you give me one good reason?"

Mitchell : "Because, as I've mentioned, it's a year and a

half for the  
stolen car, and  
five years for  
impersonating a  
federal officer.  
And if you run, I  
will hunt you  
down. You  
understand ..."

O'Neal : "Man, shut the  
fuck up!"

(01:04:01-01:04:33)

The above dialogue explains that Mitchell threatens not to let O'Neal go freely when he wants to leave the mission. This is because O'Neal owes him a debt of gratitude for freeing him from various legal troubles. The interest convergence from the basic tenet of CRT led to modern discrimination. Modern discrimination deals with subtle discrimination, which can be observed in O'Neal's case. O'Neal's advantage aligns with the interest of the white elite. Black interests will only be accommodated if they align with white interests. The sympathy, kindness, and decency shown by Mitchell to O'Neal mean nothing.

This is an example of modern discrimination because O'Neal is used as a pawn or instrument by the FBI to achieve its goals indirectly using black informant. Initially, he agrees to be an informant to gather information about the Black

Panthers. However, over time, he becomes uncomfortable with his role as an informant because he has completed his job when Fred Hampton is imprisoned. As O'Neal said, "Now, Fred's in jail, I did the damn job, and I'm out!" with the imprisonment of Fred Hampton, the FBI had reached its limit to overthrow the Black Panther. However, it seems like Mitchell disagrees with O'Neal's way of thinking and won't let him quit.

Furthermore, modern discrimination occurs when someone from a minority group is recruited by a majority group to collectively achieve their goals. O'Neal is freed from legal charges, while the FBI obtains confidential information through O'Neal. However, O'Neal feels trapped and unable to leave the situation. Ideally, if someone has done their job and wants to leave, then they have the right to leave the job. However, unlike O'Neal's case, he is forced to continue his work as an informant even though the FBI's goal of imprisoning Fred Hampton has been accomplished. This is because Mitchell, as a majority group, uses his power to pressure O'Neal to remain loyal to the FBI. Mitchell exploits O'Neal's lack of power, justifying his actions as if to protect O'Neal from

the negative influence of the Black Panthers when it is the FBI that is framing them.

### **Differential Racialization and Its Consequences**

This part focuses on how African Americans are racialized as the minority group by white Americans, the dominant group, and how this is changed to suit white interests. Over time, the stereotypes of African Americans are modified in response to the demands of the white American community. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) claim that because black people were perceived as ignorant, irreligious, and simple-minded during the time of slavery, the white community intervened to rescue black people from the shadows of their existence. This would justify the slavery system implemented in America.

Nonetheless, several movements advocating for black equality emerged following the abolition of slavery, as black people desired the freedom to pursue their interests without being constrained by the color of their skin or any other characteristic that set them apart from white people. It was evident that some white people felt their position as the dominant group was under threat. The black community was, therefore, portrayed as a

violent, dangerous, and peace-threatening group during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. If someone was portrayed as simple, weak, and backward, how could they logically become a dangerous person. Hence, stereotypes instilled in the black community tend to originate from mistakes. An analysis of the movie's dialog can also prove this.

Mitchell : "Don't let Hampton fool you. The panthers and the Klan are one and the same. Their aim is to sow hatred and inspire terror. Plain and simple. Now, I'm all for civil rights, but you can't cheat your way to equality. And you certainly can't shoot your way to it."

O'Neal : "Yep."

(00:26:09-00:26:38)

The dialogue above makes it quite evident that Mitchell is comparing the Black Panthers to the KKK and telling O'Neal that they are a dangerous organization that is inciting terror in the community. Furthermore, Mitchell states that, as part of the white community, he supports civil rights but not in a cheating way, saying, "Now I'm all for

civil rights, but you can't cheat your way to equality". As is well known, the civil rights movement emerged in response to discrimination and inequality experienced by minority groups, such as African Americans. In this context, the Black Panthers emerged in response to various forms of intimidation and discrimination by local police officers and community service programs, including the free breakfast program.

Angela : "The first thing that the black panther party did, of course, in Oakland, was to set up an armed patrol in order to ensure that Black people were not harassed and intimidated by local police department."

(00:02:15-00:02:25)

Bobby : "Yeah, we armed. We are armed propaganda union, but we spend most of our time working with these programs, serving the people, free medical clinic, free breakfast children program, the inter-communal institute in liberation schools, free legal aid,

education for the community."

(00:02:41-00:02:56)

It is evident from the conversation above that Black Panthers have only one goal to defend the rights of the Black community, which are still unaddressed despite the 1964 Human Rights Act. The dialog also implies that the Black Panther is trying to do everything possible to shield the black community from white police brutality and intimidation, as well as to give them access to public services like free health clinics and education. They did whatever it took to support the rights of African Americans. In addition, the FBI's accusation that the Black Panther Party is a dangerous group and commits terror is a false accusation.

Fred : "Somebody define war for me."

Palmer "War is a violent conflict between two or more parties."

Fred : "Would you say we at war with the pigs, comrade palmer? Well, how about politics? How would you define politics, Brother Winters?"

Winter : "You know, elections."

Fred : "Elections can be part of politics, certainly. But we in the party ascribe to Chairman Mao's definition of politics. He said, war is politics with bloodshed, and politics is war without bloodshed. So, how we win this war? What's our most lethal weapon? Guns? Grenades? Rocket launchers?"

O'Neal : "[murmuring] These niggas got rocket launchers?"

Fred : "The people. There's strength in numbers. Power anywhere there's people. And in order to overthrow this racist, fascist, nefarious U.S government, it's gonna take everybody."

(00:13:03-00:14:37)

The Black Panthers are not a terrorist organization, unlike what the FBI claims; instead, they use "the people" power to draw public attention to the racial issues that they are fighting for. Put another way, instead of returning violence with violence, the solidarity and support of "the people" is needed to overcome various

forms of violence and injustice.

Based on the explanation above, white American elites see the African Americans represented by the Black Panther Party as a dangerous group. This is because they are concerned that the BPP could dominate society's perception of minority group issues, threatening socio-political change in the United States. This also contributes to the modernization of discrimination, which occurs in this context when the Federal Bureau of Investigation carries out various discriminations against Black Panther political activists and organizations, such as describing them as a terrorist group.

Minority issues will be terrorists when they speak out against injustices and use self-defense to prevent the violence they encounter. The FBI's criminalization of black Panthers, such as the false charges against Fred Hampton, would not appear to be discriminatory. The FBI's designation of the Black Panthers as a terrorist organization that needs to be destroyed justifies such discriminatory actions. Furthermore, the FBI begins its unjust activities against the Black Progressive Party (BPP) on the pretense of being

unbiased and exclusively supporting white interests.

In the O'Neal-Mitchell conversation, Mitchell states, "Now, I'm all for civil rights, but you can't cheat your way to equality," which suggests that, although he is a member of the white elite, Mitchell supports all initiatives related to the fight for black equality. To convince O'Neal that the BPP deserves to be exterminated, Mitchell seems to speak neutrally, as if the criminalization of the BPP is the right course of action rather than an action biased against a particular group.

### **Intersectionality of Race and Classes**

Oppression or any form of discrimination experienced by an individual cannot be understood through just one aspect, such as race. Discrimination experienced by an individual is often caused by multiple overlapping sources, such as sexual orientation, gender, class, and other identity markers. This concept is illustrated through the character of O'Neal in the movie *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

In the movie, O'Neal faces various forms of discrimination without realizing it. This is because the discrimination

experienced is quite complex and done subtly, as explained in the concept of modern discrimination. Modern discrimination is hard to spot directly because it does not look like typical discriminatory actions. O'Neal's unawareness that he is a victim of discrimination is because O'Neal has been manipulated by the FBI as an informant to destroy the Black Panther party movement. As expressed by O'Neal, "Um, you know, he was, at one point, for me, he was like a role model. When I didn't have one, you know?" (00:24:57-00:25:04) confirms that O'Neal considered Roy Mitchell, the FBI agent, as a role model who helped him in every way.

However, when using the lens of intersectionality and anti-essentialism analysis, it can be found that modern discrimination also occurs in O'Neal's character. It is known that O'Neal is a black man, and of course, his racial identity makes him vulnerable to surveillance and oppression by authorities, as depicted in the movie where O'Neal is immediately followed by a police car right after he successfully steals a car. However, one category of oppression does not only come from racial identity. The experience of discrimination is



also influenced by his social class identity, which comes from a less privileged economic background.

O'Neal was involved in a car theft case and then arrested by FBI agents, which later influenced his motivation to work for the FBI. It can be said that his financial instability was one of the factors affecting his decision to work as an FBI informant. This is because by becoming an FBI informant, O'Neal gets various facilities that were previously difficult for him to get, such as being paid a certain amount of money, a car, and a guarantee of freedom from the sentence that trapped him. On the other hand, the FBI, aware of O'Neal's vulnerability, eventually exploited the situation and forced him to choose to become an FBI informant.

Mitchell : "You're looking at 18 months for the stolen car and five years for impersonating a federal officer or you can go home."

(00:08:43-00:08:56)

The FBI oppressed O'Neal as a vulnerable individual for their benefit, which was to destroy the Black Panther Party. Additionally, O'Neal

also experienced complex identity conflicts. He was caught between his racial identity as an African-American man and, on the other side, his loyalty as an FBI agent. This situation reflects the complexity of intersectional identities where O'Neal is trapped between different loyalties.

Hampton : "I need everybody to repeat after me! I am a revolutionary!"

O'Neal : \*with the crowd\*  
"I am a revolutionary!"

Hampton : "Put a fist in the air for Comrade Jimmy Palmer. Jimmy Palmer died a revolutionary death. He stood face to face toe-to-toe with pig Daley's henchmen, and made the greatest sacrifice one could ever make."

O'Neal : "Right on!"

(01:16:00-01:17:50)

O'Neal unconsciously feels like he has become a part of the Black Panther Party. He has felt like a part of the group, as evidenced by repeating Hampton's revolutionary calls and showing support for the BPP. It further strengthens

Hampton's support for the BPP's  
struggle.

O'Neal : "What can I do for  
you?"

Mitchell : "You've been to  
Hampton's  
apartment,  
right?"

O'Neal : "Right."

Mitchell : "A lot of guns  
there?"

O'Neal : "Of course."

Mitchell : "Good. I need you  
to draw me a  
blueprint of the  
place."

O'Neal : "All right, well,  
if you're aware,  
then I don't  
understand."

Mitchell : "You don't have to  
understand, Bill.  
You just have to  
draw me that  
blueprint."

O'Neal : "Listen, Roy. You  
got him, man. You  
know, you won.  
What more do you  
want? Are you  
gonna kill him,  
Roy?"

Mitchell : "I saw you, you  
know."

O'Neal : "What"

Mitchell : "That day at the  
speech. I watch  
you. I remember  
thinking to  
myself, either

this guy deserves  
an Academy Award  
or he really  
believes this  
shit."

(01:37:10-01:39:03)

Man : "Check this out,  
man. I got this  
article I want you  
to read right here.  
Yeah. Right. It's  
the article in this  
paper. Very  
important. I need  
you to let the  
Chairman read it  
tomorrow night.  
(Show sleeping  
pills) And put that  
in his drink."

O'Neal : "I don't know what  
the fuck you  
talking about, man.  
Fuck outta here  
with that shit."

Man : "My mistake."

O'Neal : "All articles and  
shit."

Man : "No, no. It's all  
good. That's my  
mistake. No, I  
guess I had the  
wrong guy. Sorry  
about that. Lemme  
get out here."

O'Neal : "Hey! Who are you,  
man?"

Man : "Don't worry about  
it. Just go back  
inside."

O'Neal : "Nigga, I'm not gonna poison him, you hear me?!"

(01:42:05-01:43:16)

O'Neal does not want to harm Fred and believes that what the FBI has done to get rid of the BPP has gone too far. As O'Neal tells Mitchell, Fred has already been in jail, and he does not understand why the FBI wants to kill him. Additionally, his loyalty to the struggle of fellow black people is evident when Mitchell suggests that O'Neal seems to support what the BPP stands for and is part of them, almost implying that if what Mitchell sees is O'Neal's act as a BPP member, then O'Neal deserves an Academy Award.

At the bar, a man gives O'Neal an article and asks him to give it to the Chairman. He also offers sleeping pills to put in the Chairman's drink. O'Neal firmly rejects the offer and asserts that he won't poison the Chairman. This dialogue shows that O'Neal refuses to harm Hampton and feels that the FBI's actions have crossed a line. He also shows his loyalty to the struggle of fellow black people by refusing to poison Hampton's drink.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that O'Neal experiences

conflict with his intersectional identity and unknowingly becomes a victim of modern discrimination reproduced by the FBI institution. As mentioned by Ellemers and Barreto (2015), it is difficult for victims to realize they have experienced discrimination because people tend to think that discrimination is always obvious. However, modern discrimination is different as it is done more implicitly.

The FBI seems to be on O'Neal's side, represented by Mitchell, who helps O'Neal avoid criminal charges and then gives him a job and even a car. Unknowingly, O'Neal becomes a tool to strengthen the power structures that oppress African Americans; only it is done subtly and covertly. That is, the FBI profiles the BPP as an anarchist group, endangering national security, and uses O'Neal as an informant to destroy the BPP, which is an example of discrimination done subtly and covertly. Essentially, the presence of O'Neal's overlapping identities, power manipulation, and internal conflicts create discrimination in a more subtle and hidden form, in line with the concept of modern discrimination.

## CONCLUSION

Savery has been abolished and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is considered a historic milestone that should have put an end to racial discrimination in the United States. However, despite more than sixty years passing since the enactment of this law, unfortunately, the reality faced by African-American communities still reflects ongoing inequality and discrimination. They are still far from the ideal of racial equality. It is because discrimination is manifested in subtle ways, which is known as modern discrimination. Modern discrimination may be difficult for the targets to identify whether discrimination has occurred. Through the analysis of *Judas and the Black Messiah* movie by using Critical Race Theory, this study found that four factors explain the causes of modern discrimination experienced by African Americans. First, every day, African Americans continue to encounter diverse types of discrimination since it is not aberrational. In the movie, white Americans, represented by the police force and the FBI, still do not acknowledge the equality between black and white Americans. They cause unease within the black community through their use of sarcastic remarks directed at

them. Second, social and legal changes for blacks usually happen not just because of justice but also because of politics, economics, or strategies that help the dominant group. The changes that minority groups want only to happen when they are in line with the interests of white groups, and the interests of minority groups are just used as pawns in increasing white domination. Third, the stereotype of African Americans is modified in response to the demands of white Americans. When white people feel their position as the dominant group is under threat whenever blacks speak out against injustices, blacks are portrayed as violent or terrorist organizations, as depicted by the Black Panther Party. Fourth, discrimination experienced by blacks is often caused by multiple overlapping sources, such as gender, class, and other identity markers. Therefore, someone is not aware that he/she is a victim of discrimination since it is quite complex and done subtly. Modern discrimination can be done because it is overlapping with their identities, power manipulation, and internal conflicts that create discrimination in a more hidden form.

### COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

Herewith the author declares that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the assessment, review and revision, and publication process in general.

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