



## A RACIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE DJANGO UNCHAINED

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to analyze the depiction of racism in the movie Django Unchained. In this qualitative research the “belief system” that one human race is superior to the other has been both explicitly and implicitly presented through different dialogues being delivered by various characters. From the title of the movie Django unchained the very concept of slavery is given. Similarly, the protagonist of the movie goes through many phases where he being black is considered as the slave of the white men. By analyzing the movie and various scene in it the researcher concludes that the movie Django Unchained is based upon the theme of racism. The paper concludes that Django Unchained manages to present the theme of racial injustice, oppression, and psychological effects of slavery successfully, thus offering much insight into the long-term effects of the racism issue in the American history.

**Keywords:** *Black, Django Unchained, Oppression, Psychological, Racial Injustice, Racism*

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## 1. Introduction

Cinema is depiction of real life with a touch of imaginations, expectations and exaggerations. It has been a great field of research and exploration in modern life. Literature and cinema are always interrelated because both of them depict life.

Cinema and literature are closely intertwined. Eugenie Mercia writes about the postmodern state of cinema. She says, "It is cinema that has the ability to produce cohesion between contents that are realistic and mythical and this is because cinema has the potential of transforming abstract ideas into visual signs which can be identified and communicated; to capture and condense the collective imaginary, shaping it into stories, making the invisible visible. Thus, the cinema becomes more than ever, the key to understanding subjectivity in our relation to the word."(Colored Works,1988)

The Django Unchanged is a 2012 movie whose director is Quentin Tarantino. It is produced by Stacey Sher, PolorSavone, and Reginald Hudlin. Racism and class discrimination is portrayed in an artistic manner in the movie for the better understanding of the colonial atrocities, faced by the blacks. Django unchained is an American movie and a winner of sixteen different awards in the United States and around the world.

### 1.1. Research Problems

Racism has a long history in America. Black people have suffered immensely because of it; they are still suffering to a great extent even after the civil war. The movie Django by Quentin Tarantino has so many aspects. This research has analyzed and found out the aspects of racism practiced against black people in America.

### 1.2. Research Questions

- 1) How is Djando a representative of black people?
- 2) How the movie reinforces or contests racism?

### 1.3. Research Objectives

- 1) To find out if Django represents black people.
- 2) To explore whether the movie is reinforcing or contesting racism.

### 1.4. Significance of the study

This work has uncovered the interdicted layers of racial injustice in the movie to make the voice of the black heard. Academically, it will help students to understand the concept of racism better.

## 2. Literature Review

Origin and Theory (1991) by Bowser is a review of the theoretical development of the concept of racism. From its 1960s activist roots, the concept lost its theoretical content in its 1970s popularization. Now racism describes virtually anything having to do with racial conflict. The concept is reintroduced and used to analyze the post-1970s race relations propositions. The declining significance of race, symbolic racism, color-blind racism, and unconscious racism missed the structural regressions brought on by the “southern strategy” to mask indirect and covert ways to continue racial oppression. As a result, the new Jim Crow was missed in race relations since the 1980s. A reconsideration of the theory of racism calls for a strategic approach to race relations. The writer did not discuss racism which is a gap for this research.

The racism Portrayed in Django unchanged (2001) by Abd & Dumbi study aimed at analysis of racism in Django Unchained by Quentin Tarantino using socio-psychological approach. The analysis used only three types of racism from five categories in Django Unchained, which are Blatant Racism, Cover Racism, and Unintentional Racism and the impact of them in the character’s psychological condition around environment. The method is qualitative method. Based on the research findings, it was found that there are five of racism. They are getting after reading the scripts, watching the film and understanding precisely the Django Unchained movie.

Allien (2012) in his critical essay Django unchained psychotic Analysis clearly states that the movie inquires deeply how racial discriminated slaves were threaded like goods or tools that wear just mere objects as seen in the movie. they are not eligible according to the white people to make any decision not only these decision which are indelibly related to their own lives for example they are unable to marry someone they like or love for that matter they cannot just protect themselves from the humanly greatest suffering and pains inflicted by the white people most of the people black girls are raped and used in a manner that one would never want that not even in hell .

Farshi (2014) in her essay Racial identity in a Postmodern World touch on the other side of the movie which is the display of white people behavior, temperament, status and their real face. While watching the movie, sometimes audience are more focused on the protagonist and ignoring the representation of antagonists who, undoubtedly, are the ones, who committed the most terrible crimes against humanity. The antagonists are the enslavers with all their tricks and traps. Their dominance is shown by the classical music they play; the castle they live in; they cash almost all the amenities and luxuries which an aristocrat could afford. The reason behind the existence of this exploitable comfort lies in

the chains and scares of black people. If these white people are capable (who of course are capable in any sense) of giving some basic human rights of black people, the movie would have shown something pleasant but why would a white man share his comfort with the people on whose shoulders is his entire aristocracy. The movie in a way, also suggests the unbreakable power which is produced by racism, which, in this case, goes in favor of white people.

Jinying Zhao in *An Analysis of Django*, emphasized that the movie not only express characters psychological and subjective world, but also convey the real complex social situation. It has successfully characterized racism. This paper managed to analyze causes of black people, namely, mainly from three perspectives: a personal tragedy, a family tragedy and a social tragedy. We could discover that his life revealed some social problems behind personal and family tragedy in current society along with arousing our reflection on ethical and moral standards in money-oriented society. The writer did not discuss racism which is a gap for this research.

### **3. Data Collection**

The primary and secondary sources used to collect the data about this study are as follows. The movie under consideration is the film *Django Unchained* (2012) directed by Quentin Tarantino, which is the primary source of the analysis as it implies the way of how the problem of racism is represented and how it affects the characters. The movie is the main piece of writing, and the particular attention is paid to the scenes and the conversations that represent the systemic and psychological aspects of racial discrimination. The list of secondary sources contains internet articles, magazines, reviews, and research articles, which offer more context, theoretical frames of the themes of racism, slavery, and postcolonial theory as reflected by the film. These are secondary sources that help to extend the analysis by providing historical context, theoretical debates on race relations and critical reviews on the cultural relevance of the film, which enhance the meaning of how racism is portrayed and challenged in the movie *Django Unchained*.

### **4. Data analysis**

The data source is the movie *Django Unchained*. The researcher has analyzed this movie through Racism; where the researcher only focused on the racism against Black people.

#### **4.1. Analysis and Discussion**

*Django: A Representative of Black People*

The movie Django unchained is the true depiction of the very concept of racism. The movie portrays different themes. This research is an attempt to explore and discuss the concept of racism in the movie. There are different characters but the focal point is the protagonist of the movie Django, his wife Broom Hilda, Dr. King Schultz and Calvin Candy.

The very title of the movie Django unchained uses the word 'unchained' which suggests that someone was in chains and historically speaking only slaves were enchained. As the audience starts watching the movie, they come to know the protagonist of the movie 'Django', along with other black people are in chains or being enslaved. These black people are shown in actual chains but what the director wants to display is the abstract ideas behind those chains. Those are the chains of slavery; the chains of oppression, the chains of discrimination. Those chains have cut their wings of freedom – and how brutally they are being cut; the audience can imagine that by looking at the brutish scars on their bodies. What to speak of their desires and wishes; right and goals; present and future planning; these racially discriminated people cannot even drink water, without the permission of their master, when they are thirsty.

The very first glimpse of the racial discrimination that the audiences can easily detects is when Django and the white man (Dr. King Schultz) enter into the city, somewhere in the Taxes riding on their horses. The people stop their work and start staring at Django in a very strange manner. They are shocked and amazed that how on earth can a black man ride a horse because at that time, specifically before the civil war, the blacks were not allowed to set on horse and ride freely.

Dr. Schultz: What everybody staring at?

Django: They never seen a nigger on a horse before.

Dr. Schultz: What this bizarre obsession they have with you not riding horses?

The audience can see the overwhelming faces of white people and grasp on the idea of racism, Authorization and demonization of black for that matter. Generally speaking, the act of riding a horse is not a big action at all but when the idea of racism is so deeply inculcated in the collective mind of the race, then easily ignorable actions become more than acts of defiance. Along with that the audience must be hunted with the idea of the self vs. the other because the expressions of the wonder and astonishment on the face of white people clearly states that we belong to one race and they belong to the 'Other'. This idea of self vs other is displayed throughout the movie because it too is a fatal disease. In this case the diseases are infected upon the black slaves by the white

masters. The problem of authorization is that just does not stop at authorization, it leads to marginalization and finally to demonization, and the dangerous outcome of this sort of ideas can be seen in the deep scars of black people –in the eyes of those raped girls.

Racism was deeply rooted in 1800s Americans society. Almost all the black were used as mere tool and objects. As objects have no authority, self-respect, honor etc. they can be used in any way their owner wants. As portrayed in the movie, the black people perform all the duties of ranging from fields cultivation to the cleaning of washrooms. There is nothing wrong with performing those duties but a person performs those hard duties and in return you give him /her nothing rather snatch everything he/she has liberty, freedom, wishes dreams and almost the entire existences, life become hell is racism. Although there is substantial direct empirical evidence for the prevalence of large disparities among racial and ethnic groups in various domains, it is often difficult to obtain direct evidence of whether and to what extent discrimination may be a contributing factor. Differential outcomes by race and ethnicity may or may not indicate discrimination. Examples of studies using methods that persuasively measure the presence or absence of discrimination are rare, and appropriate data for measurement are often unobtainable.

One reason that it is difficult to assess discrimination is that changes have occurred in the nature of prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other laws that prohibit discrimination because of race in a variety of domains, overt discrimination is less often apparent. However, discrimination may persist in more subtle forms. Indeed, social psychological research suggests that relatively automatic and unexamined cognitive processes, of which the holder (and sometimes the target) may not be fully aware, can lead to discrimination (Devine,1989). These subtleties make defining and measuring discrimination more difficult.

At the same morning at Daugherty, when Dr. Schultz, along with Django enters a bar for drink-the bar keeper refused to give a vein to a Negro, and an extremely abusive and disrespectful language is showered upon the Negro. Django is treated with the greatest possible uncivilized and unsophisticated manner. It is not the bar keeper who harmed Django's feeling but the idea of racism which existed at that time. Although, on the insistence of Dr. Schultz, the bar keeper leaves the bar but come with a surprise; he comes back with a white man having a gun in his hand and anger and detest for the black Django. He is actually the sheriff of the town and having said that it is illegal for black person to roam around any papers, the sheriff comes for the inquiry but Dr. Schultz deals with him. Here the power of extremism of racism but the bar keeper refuses the drink, leaves the bar and comes with the sheriff and this all he does just because of a black person sitting in his bar.

After that accident Dr. King and Django go for an agreement for which Django has been bought. Dr. Schultz comes upon with a deal that if Django helps him in identifying ‘Brittle Brothers’, in reward, he will give Django freedom and some money through which he can buy freedom for his wife Broomhilda, who is in the hand of Calvin candy. Here is a point worth mentioning that the Doctor promises him freedom but under a certain condition and freedom under condition is no freedom at all. Dr. Schultz starts training Django intellectually and psychologically. They make a plan in which Django will be played a role of vale- servant of Dr. Schultz.

SPENCER BENNETT: It’s against the law of niggers to ride a horse on this territory.

Dr. Schultz: This is my valet, and my valet doesn’t walk.

SPENCER BENNET: Not on my property, around my niggers he can’t.

In the above-mentioned dialogue from the movie the reality of state racism is clear. If a country’s specific proportion of people hold to a certain destructive idea, it becomes easier to eradicate but when most of the people with the help of their state follow a catastrophic idea, it becomes impossible to cure it. Because state is ultimate authority which can possibly destroy a destructive idea. But, as vividly seen in the above quoted dialogue from the movie, the state was also supporting the idea of racism that is why Bennet says that it is the violation of the law for the black person to ride a horse. In simple word it means that racism was legalized by the law at that time period. And on the other hand, Bennet insists upon that he should not ride a horse in front ‘My niggers’. This implies two things; one is that he considers these black peoples as property and the reason behind is that he uses the word ‘my’ and ‘my’ is a pronoun which shows some sort of position of something. These are his people; he owns them like someone own the car or dog. To the white people these black people were like cars (objects) and dogs (animals). The second is that Bennet does not allow him around his niggers because he is afraid- afraid of the thought in his mind that seeing him (Django) on the horse will sort of motivate other black people who will, at the end rebel against him in his whole empire, which is built upon the very existences of these niggers, will cease to exist. Along with that, the thought of black defiance in his mind contradicts with his idea of self and other. If that thought in his mind manifests itself in an action, there will be no superior self and inferior other- they will become the same or even worst, the opposite.

The audience sees Django and Dr. Schultz riding towards Bennet Monar Plantation which is located in Gatlinburg Tennessee. While entering to the Bennet’s

property, people working in the cotton fields become shocked; all the slaves alongside the fields straighten their bent back and starts staring and wondering at the sight which they just cannot believe that a Negro can ride a horse and meet with honorable landlord. After meeting with Spencer Bennet, who is the master of that plantation, he comes up with the opinion that blacks are not allowed to enter into his territory. Furthermore when Dr. Schultz ask Bennet to sell him one of his Negro girls for a profitable price, Spencer Bennet refuses his offered just because a Negro has accompanied him. From the above state lines, one can easily observe the racial Discrimination and the supremacy of the white people over the blacks. At that time racial differences were so much deeply inculcated in the mind of black population, that they were not even ready to saw a black man on the property of a white man. Here worth mentioning is the scene where Django and Stephen (a servant of Calvin) meet for the first time. Even Stephen strictly objects to his riding. The idea of racism is so deep that the black people seem unaware of their existing status of being slaves. Until and unless a slave does not come to know that he is a slave, he cannot be freed but once he realized that I am a slave and there is a master, the master slave relation being to cease. Furthermore, white man is not even ready to bargains with black people. As mention earlier, even the black men were not allowed in their constitution to enter into the white property.

The white society, in the movie, does everything to make the black suffer and to remind them that they are their property as those fields are their property. They can do anything they want with them. But sometimes the whites deliberately do horrible things to let them know and show their places. For example, when Django and his wife try to escape from the hell to their worst luck, they were caught and brought back. The master black lashes his wife in front of him. The pain she is in can be felt by her screams could be heard on seventh sky. And the master says to Django, 'I like the way you beg boy'. It seems that the master telling him that you are my toy-come on entertaining me. But the effect on Django's mind is unimaginable, he is being reminded that I am your superior and you are inferior. The movie has truly displayed the existing racism at that time.

There are two horrible things to be noticed; one is that how these black slaves treated by their masters, if they can backlash a slave for breaking eggs, what they would do if they commit a high mistake. To them they were not human beings if they were, they would not at least, punish a girl for breaking eggs. But everything is justifiable when you are struck by a fatal and deadly disease and this case the disease is racism. The second and very serious problem is that of quoting bible. One of the core ideas behind colonialism and racism for that matter was the expansion of Christianity and refined western civilization. They used their religion in order to justify their worst crimes which are matchless in the entire history of mankind. Along with that, the brittle quotes a line where he considers

himself as a lord and the girl as a beast. Here both the arguments of this research can be justified; the extreme racism which is built upon superior vs inferior and the idea of self vs other. He considers himself which superior to anything on earth and the girl as an inferior and on the other hand he considers himself as the Godly self and the girl as the damned other.

Throughout the movie, there are hundreds of scenes where any rationale audience would the atrocities of white people against black people in 1800s American society. It was one of the worst times that we can find in the entire human history. This research was an attempt to expose racial discrimination, the using of the idea of self vs the other, against the black people before the civil war through the careful study of the movie Django Unchained and the analysis of different characters. At the end let Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's, dream come true, 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the meaning of its creed; we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

#### **4.2. Is the Movie Propagating Racism?**

The scenario includes a depiction of New Orleans, by the way, an apt reference point given that the city has come to symbolize the horrors as well as the unplanned promise of the African experience in the United States. Tarantino has been called to account before for his obvious love of the n-word, notably by Spike Lee, Black possessiveness of black racial capital—the claim that white artists shouldn't attempt to represent certain aspects of black history or identity—is not a legitimate reason for boycotting "Django Unchained." It just needs to be understood that a white artist's engagement with black culture usually sheds as much light on white racial psychology as on black culture and history. There's nothing wrong, ignoble, or racist about a white artist's willingness to explore his own racial psychology. In fact, it can be seen as courageous unless premised on falsehoods or fraught with intellectual dishonesty.

Tarantino contends that his film is courageous in at least one respect: While most post-civil rights era films dealing with slavery seem to walk on eggshells, aesthetically neutered by the "fear of" mislabeled respect for material, he's willing to let loose in his inimitable style even if it risks offending timid sensibilities. And let loose he does. The lingering question, however, is whether "Django Unchained" explores racist psychology in illuminating ways or simply exploits anti-racist emotional responses like a Pavlovian bell. That's exactly what last year's much-hyped *The Help* did, albeit in stylistically different ways. Like Tarantino films involving black characters, *The Help* was a movie by and for white people. The difference is this: *The Help* was a white liberal woman's fantasy, and *Django Unchained* is a male white hipster's fantasy. Neither film is racist, in that both excoriate institutional racism and advocate black equality not that such stands are any

longer brave or even controversial. But both films reduce racial injustice to a mere prop embellishing the drama of white characters' lives, and both shrink black agency to a level that falls well short of historical reality.

#### Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to analyze the depiction of racism in the movie Django unchained. By analyzing the movie and the various scenes in it the researcher concludes that the movie Django unchained is based upon the theme of racism. The 'belief system' that one human race is superior to the other has been both explicitly and the implicitly presented through different dialogues being delivered by various character. From the title of the movie Django unchained the very concept of slavery is given. Similarly, the protagonist of the movie goes through many phases where he, being black, is considered as the slave of the white men.

The concept of racism is represented thoroughly in the movie, even when the protagonist "Django" is physically unchained, but Dr. King Schultz still holds complete authority over him. Thus, the slave remains the slave. The reaction of amusement by the people of the city in response to the scene where the black slave (Django) is riding the horseback along with the master shades light upon the concept of authorization. Moreover, throughout the movie, Django is just used as mere tool and object by the Dr. king Schultz.

Furthermore, the different scenes where the white men show a strong reaction against the fact that Dr. Schultz brought a black man upon their property presented the superiority complex which the white men had. The white considered themselves as superior to the black to such an extent that even the presences of a black slave with the white men are not acceptable for them. The aggressive reaction of the bar owner and Bennet towards Django, the black slave, shows the extreme case of racism.

The various characters in the movie are representatives of the theme of racism. The black slave, Django is the representative character of the slavery and the suppressed nation of the black, while, on the other hand, the character of the Calvin Candy is a representative of white supremacy. Calvin candy, being a character of most racist nature, treats the black slavery inhumanly. The brutal torture that the wife of Django, Broom Hilda suffers is because Calvin Candy is an extremely racist person.

Thus, there are many different scenes and dialogue exchange which elaborate the problems, hardship, suffering and brutality which the black slave or nation had to bear only because of the reason that white considered themselves as superior to them and considered themselves as the owner or the masters of the black nation. In the movie, the

behavior of the white men toward the black female explicitly shows that the white men treated the blacks as an object for their satisfaction.

As per the analysis of the movie *Django Unchained*, it is a representation of the suffering of the black due to the inhumane behavior of the white men. The slave being treated worse than the animals and merely as tool and objects presents the extreme case of discrimination. The different white characters like Dr. Schultz, Calvin Candy and Bennet represent the theme of racism while the various behavioral reaction in the movie expresses the theme of self and other.

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