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Re-imagining Black Scientist in *Hidden Figures* (2016)

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ABSTRACT

Hidden Figures clearly show how the injustice committed by white people against black people as a society with majority status treat black people in Virginia, United States. This study aimed to represent Black Scientist characters and the intersectionality of racialized, gendered, and classed identity in reconceptualization of Black Feminism by Patricia Hill Collins. As can be seen in Hidden Figures, Theodore Melfi's illustrated the lives of the Black Scientists to prove that they could achieve success. The research in Hidden Figures points out that Black scientists experienced sexism, racism, and classism as intersecting oppression. The state of being subjected to tyranny. The experience of facing gender, race, and socioeconomic discrimination in everyday life. Black Scientist women respond to prejudice by succeeding in their jobs via hard effort, exploiting the system and working against it, disregarding the prejudice, concentrating on their good fortune, and urging others to join the struggle. It becomes clear that the Black Scientist characters also have the qualities and thoughts of Black Feminists, which lead to conflicting behaviours. Finally, the characters' re-imagining of Black Feminist leads to the establishment of Black Scientist orientation and empowerment, which results in the characters' lives.

Keywords: black scientist, black feminism, racism, sexism, classism

ABSTRAK

Hidden Figures menunjukkan bagaimana ketidakadilan yang dilakukan oleh orang kulit putih terhadap orang kulit hitam yang mana masyarakat dengan status mayoritas memperlakukan orang kulit hitam di Virginia, Amerika Serikat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merepresentasikan karakter Black Scientist dan interseksionalitas identitas ras, gender, dan kelas dalam rekonseptualisasi mereka tentang Feminisme Hitam Oleh Patricia Hill Collins. Seperti yang bisa dilihat di Hidden Figures, Theodore Melfi menggambarkan kehidupan Ilmuwan Hitam untuk membuktikan bahwa mereka dapat mencapai kesuksesan. Penelitian di Hidden Figures menunjukkan bahwa ilmuwan kulit hitam mengalami seksisme, rasisme, dan klasisme sebagai penindasan yang berpotongan. Keadaan menjadi sasaran tirani. Pengalaman menghadapi diskriminasi gender, ras, dan sosial ekonomi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Wanita Ilmuwan Hitam menanggapi prasangka dengan berhasil dalam pekerjaan mereka melalui usaha keras, mengeksploitasi sistem dan bekerja melawannya, mengabaikan prasangka, berkonsentrasi pada nasib baik mereka, dan mendesak orang lain untuk bergabung dalam perjuangan. Menjadi sangat jelas bahwa karakter Ilmuwan Hitam juga memiliki kualitas dan pemikiran Feminis Hitam, yang mengarah pada perilaku yang saling

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bertentangan. Akhirnya, re-imajinasi karakter Black Feminis mengarah pada pembentukan orientasi dan pemberdayaan Black Scientist, yang menghasilkan kehidupan karakter.

Kata kunci: ilmuwan kulit hitam, feminisme kulit hitam, rasisme, seksisme, klasisme

INTRODUCTION

The film is one of the literary works with a high enough appeal in various circles of society, from the middle economy to the upper economy, from children to adults. Movies are not just about an effort to present a "moving image," but sometimes moral responsibility is stored, opens people's horizons, and disseminates information. It also contains elements of entertainment that give rise to enthusiasm, innovation, creation, and aspects of politics, capitalism, human rights, and lifestyle (Mambor, 2008). So it can be concluded that literary works are very beneficial for everyone. The values in academic work generally reflect the social life that influences society. Therefore, it is very interested in studying a movie entitled "Hidden Figures," directed by Theodore Melfi, which tells about the struggles of three black women to achieve success when white people sometimes underestimate them because they are black (Theodore, 2017).

Hidden Figures is a movie adapted from the best-selling novel in New York, Hidden Figures: The American Dream and The Untold Story of Black Woman by Margot Lee Shetterly, later turned into a movie based on a true story in the United States in 1961. The film made by producer Theodore Melfi described how complex the problem of racism was at that time in the United States. This movie tells a story of the struggles of three genius Black Scientists (African women) who work at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) like a computer.

In this movie, it is clear how the injustice committed by white people against black people as a society with majority status treat black people in Virginia, United States. American society believes that everyone should have the same opportunity to get and achieve something they want, as the American Declaration of Independence reads as follows.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable right, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, driving their just powers from the consent of the government." (Paul & Merle, 1972).

The expression above shows the belief in human rights that cannot be changed by American society. Thus, the American Declaration of Independence contains the lofty ideals of individual rights, including freedom of speech and opinion, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of association, and the right to equal protection in law. However, in reality, the equality of opportunity has not been able to run correctly for black people because the black race is considered a low race for white people. On the other hand, white people think they are a superior race. As a result of this assumption, black people are treated in the form of discrimination and segregation. For example, black people are not allowed to go to school in white people's places in education. It is also caused by racism between blacks and whites, so doubts about their identity still plague black people.

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As documented in the 1960s, racial and gender discrimination still exists in America. Lots of women who are differentiated are not only distinguished by men; women who have other races are also distinguished by women who are of different races. Like other women, women of different races struggle so that they get the same rights as others and as men. The emergence of feminist movements awakens women's souls who feel oppressed by men and women to get their rights. According to Hooks, white women who controlled the women's movement in the late 1960s fostered the notion that it was solely "their" movement (Perkins & Hooks, 1983). On the other hand, African-American women who were urged to join the movement were confronted with sexist and racist attitudes from white women (Perkins & Hooks, 1983). As a result of the women's liberation movement's racist discrimination of white women, African-American women made a withdrawn effort to form black feminist groups.

In the women's liberation movement, describe that the women's liberation movement was a collective battle for equality that was most active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Its goal was to liberate women from oppression and male tyranny. As a result, Friedan hypothesizes that women are victims of wrong ideas that force them to search for identity in their lives. This study employs Black Feminism theory, which focuses on the experiences of Black Scientist women who unintentionally suffer racism as a result of their language and cultural preconceptions (Maggie, 2003). In terms of Black Feminism philosophy, black feminists acknowledge that there is discrimination. According to Angela Davis, any fight against sexism must be accompanied by a struggle against racism (Maggie, 2003). While according to Deborah L. Madsen's book Feminist Theory and Literary Practice, double discrimination refers to the persecution of persons who are both women and members of an ethnic minority (Deborah, 2000).

The study represents Black Scientist characters and intersectionality of racialized, gendered, and classed identity in their conception of black feminism. As can be seen in *Hidden Figures*, Theodore Melfi's illustrated the lives of the Black Scientists to prove that they could achieve success. The writer regards *Hidden Figures* as an extraordinary work because of the inspirational narrative of the "*Hidden Figures*," which contemplates the struggles of Black Scientists women whose existence in the United States is recognized as a minority. The narrative components of the movie, such as character, place, conflicts, and the main character's subjugation, are how this research illustrates the subject of Black Scientists' women's fight. It employs Black Feminism philosophy to provide the data, and the concerns pique the writer's interest in learning more about feminism.

In analysing this movie, the writer uses black feminism theory to complete this analysis. Feminism, specifically Black Feminism, is a subset of feminism. To comprehend what black feminism entails, we must first understand what feminism entails. Feminism is a phrase used by feminists to characterize the idea of female supremacy, according to Maggie Humm's The Dictionary of Feminist Theory. Furthermore, it is stated that feminism is a philosophy that advocates for women to have the same rights as men. That feminism is an idea of a social shift that occurs to achieve social equality between men and women. (Maggie, 1992).

Black feminism, according to Feminist Theory and Literary Practice, is a strain of feminist thought that stresses the numerous disadvantages of gender, class, and race that impact the lives of black women or Black Scientists women. Black feminists argue that early feminist philosophy reflected the specific problems of white women rather than single unified

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gender oppression experienced by all women equally. The theme of black feminism is the historical relation between white feminism and racism.

Because the analysis is primarily concerned with black feminism, black feminism theory is necessary as the analysis's foundation. The Black Feminist Movement arose in response to the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement. The Black Feminist Movement was created to meet the concerns of Black women who felt they were being racially oppressed by the Women's Movement and sexually oppressed by the Black Liberation Movement. Black women engaged in the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement faced sexual and racial discrimination.

The term "intersectionality" was first popularized in 1989 by the critical legal and race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in a paper entitled, "Demarginalization of the Intersection of Race and Sex: Black Feminist Critiques of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-Racist Politics,." It was published in the University of Chicago Law Forum. In this paper, Crenshaw reviews the legal process to illustrate how the intersection of race and sex shapes how black men and women experience the legal system. It also refers to the fact that what is often thought of as different forms of oppression, such as racism, classicism, sexism, and xenophobia, are interdependent and intersecting in nature. They form a unified system of oppression. Thus, Crenshaw concludes that black women are disproportionately marginalized because of the simultaneous and intersecting nature of how others read them as subjects of race and gender. (Benard & Correll, 2015). Black feminism contends that racism, sexism, and classism are all intertwined.

RACISM

Race can be understood as grouping personal identity based on a physical and living process (Ashcroft et al., 2013). At the same time, racism is associated with attitudes and treatments that highlight other racial or ethnic groups' inferiority to one's group in intellectual, cultural, and social aspects (M. Andersen, 2013). In other words, racism in society is anchored, stimulated, and subsequently developed by racists' view that their racial and ethnic features are more dominant and the construction of racial hierarchy. The proclivity to be mistreated stems from the enslavement era, especially, where black women face gendered racism, accompanied by a double burden for being black and female, which causes usual prejudice and stereotype.

Understanding stereotypes is an assumption or a standard concept of a group of people or objects. A member of a community group usually holds the idea of the standard. Stereotypes are also direct expressions of values or beliefs (Nachbar & Lausé Kevin, 1992). This stereotype is further said by Sapiro namely the assumption or belief of a group towards certain social groups and a person's perception in judging others (Katz, M.L. and Shapiro, 1986).

SEXISM

According to Perkins & Hooks (1983), sexism refers to the relationship between men and women. It primarily refers to the manifestation of male dominance in the forms of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression (). In male-dominated civilizations, inequality shapes people's beliefs and perceptions about women, influencing social interaction and expanding the formation of social institutions (Newman & O'Brien, 2013). In other terms, sexism can manifest itself personally or as institutional sexism. In everyday activities such as

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gestures and speech patterns during social interactions, individuals' sexist beliefs show in daily activities. In a broader sense, institutional sexism begins in the home and spreads to other areas such as education, health care, business, and the law (Newman & O'Brien, 2013).

CLASSISM

Classism is defined as socioeconomic and class-based views and treatment of others, reflecting disparities at individual, institutional, and cultural levels. It also refers to economic inequity that causes an imbalance in basic human necessities. Classism in Western countries is closely associated with economic conditions and racial issues; such situations significantly impact how they live their lives since the confluence of class and race leads to social and economic problems. It manifests itself in the form of stigma and social position. Such circumstances highlight them as the most disadvantaged human beings. Hooks (2000) observes that "women of all races and black people of both genders are rapidly filling up the impoverished and disenfranchised ranks. As a result, the class hierarchy is seen as a deliberate beneficial action to keep the privileged whites in place.

Feminists who attempt to remove sexism and classism but ignore race may utilize racial categories to discriminate against many people, including women. The Robbee River Collective claimed in 1974 that liberating Black women means liberating all people since it would need the abolition of racism, sexism, and class oppression. Patricia Hill-Collins defined Black Feminist Thought as women who theorize the experiences and ideas shared by ordinary Black women, providing a unique angle of perspective on self, community, and society (Collins, 1991).

In Feminist Theory and Literary Practice, Deborah L. Madsen writes that the historical link between white feminism and racism is the topic of black feminism. Madsen observes that, despite white feminists' advocacy for the liberation of slavery, they cannot place themselves on an equal footing with black people, especially black scientist women. Furthermore, white feminists regard racial prejudice and gender discrimination as separate entities unconnected. They opposed slavery against colored folks; otherwise, they would find it difficult to believe that black men are murdered above them in American society. "Black Feminist observes that the difficulties confronting the black community are not limited to the historical interaction between white feminists and Black women. They acknowledge that white domination, racism, and male supremacy are factors in American black people's subjugation (Deborah, 2000)".

As the general issue that most countries worldwide have, this issue is frequently discussed. Erinda (2018) examines the white savior in the *Hidden Figures* movie as the new racism. It compares it to racism because the film presents that both old racism and new racism show us the whites' superiority towards the nonwhites. Another previous study is conducted by Widi (2010). This study depicted how the white people executed the subordinate people through their treatment of racism. This study focus on women's emancipation reflected in *Bend It Like Beckham* movie on the different perspectives on lifestyle, education, job, marriage, and the role of women of Jess and her parents.

METHOD

This study is a literary study with black feminism approach. The data consists of scenes and conversations from the *Hidden Figures* movie by Theodore Melfi. As a result, the data

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gathered will be examined alongside the movie screenplay. This research aims to investigate black feminist theory related to the qualities of Black Scientists in *Hidden Figures*. The characters of Katherine Goble, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson are the center of this movie's analysis. As the data have been collected, the writer analyzed descriptive data using literary theory to conclude the analysis. The analysis findings are given in the description of the primary data. After obtaining the necessary data, the researcher analyzes the data utilizing Black Feminism theory. This research aims to discover the Black Feminism philosophy, which Katherine Goble and Dorothy Vaughan represent, and Mary Jackson. Finally, the writer concludes the analysis comprehensively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

MELFI'S REPRESENTATION OF THREE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS

As the US races against Russia to put a man in space, NASA discovers the untapped talent of the three African-American mathematicians. They served as the brains behind one of the most significant operations in US history. Based on the extraordinary real-life stories of these three women known as "computer humans," *Hidden Figures* follows Mary, Dorothy, and Katherine as they quickly rise through the ranks at NASA alongside many of history's greatest minds. The trio was explicitly tasked with calculating the critical launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit and ensuring his safe return.

Black scientists have launched someone into space and developed a technology that changes the world. Yet the achievements and contributions of black people in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are all too often forgotten. In collins's dictionary, a scientist has studied science and whose job is to teach or do research in science. Political activist Marcus Garvey once said, "We will free ourselves from mental bondage because while others may free the body, nothing can free the mind but ourselves." As citizens, they respect the incredible struggle it takes to earn a title from a country that doesn't value black talent. Black talent is everywhere and in abundance, but black people's prominence is often obscured. Therefore, they formed this list of inspiring black scientists. (The Community of Scholars, 2020). Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary crossed all genders, races, and professional lines as their wits and desire made their dreams come true beyond anything humankind had ever achieved before. Their struggle and dedication have cemented all three in US history as true American heroes.

KATHERINE GOBLE

Katherine Goble is an African-American woman whose brilliance is acknowledged and admired by those who know her. From the beginning of the movie, it is shown the genius of little Katherine. She can solve linear arithmetic equations that are barely understood by children her age and make older students and their teachers amazed by her abilities. Her brilliant intelligence earned her a scholarship, and she was also accepted at NASA as an employee in the West Area, West Computing Group. The opportunity came to Katherine when the Space Working Group needed a skilled mathematician. The vacancies were also triggered by Russia, at that time the US rival in the "Space Race," the struggle for outer space, which successfully launched its first earth-orbiting satellite. Russia's superiority made the US government more aggressive in getting NASA to speed up what it was doing. The Head of the Space Task Group, Al Harrison, needed additional manpower assistance.

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Dorothy, as the supervisor, pointed to Katherine, who was indeed thin-brained. Katherine turned out to be the first female and black mathematician to enter the working group.

Katherine is an independent and tough figure. Her independence is a reflection of her status as a widow, who has 3 daughters. As a mother, Katherine is very caring and kind and able to give understanding to her children when fighting.

DOROTHY VAUGHAN

Dorothy is a woman who takes risks, is bold, and is explicit in front of many people. She has a role as Acting Supervisor in the West Computing Group in the NASA office. As an acting supervisor, she consistently demonstrates her leadership to other black females in the movie, as she frequently advocates for her staff. She is an expert in the FORTRAN programming language and in IBM operations. Unfortunately, the position was always unsuccessful for her permanently because of her skin color.

MARY JACKSON

Mary Jackson is the youngest character of the two. She works in the NASA computing department in the West Computing Group. Apart from being a computer, Mary's job at NASA was to assist Mr. Zielinski with testing the capsule prototype. However, she was rejected as a technician at NASA because of her skin color and gender unless she successfully graduated from a specialized college for whites.

She is considered to be the most daring character in the movie. She is a straightforward, somewhat cynical woman who constantly says what she thinks. She is also consistently committed to everything she believes in. It made Mary's character confident and robust while petitioning in court and arguing with others, including her husband, Levi. He opposed Mary from becoming a female engineer and told her to find another job that did not consider her race and gender.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACIALIZED, GENDERED, AND CLASSED IDENTITY

RACISM RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

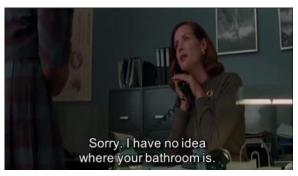
During the Cold War, Black Scientist women were exposed to racial discrimination, as portrayed in *Hidden Figures* movie. Even though women were already employed at the time, they were still subjected to discrimination, especially women of color, Black Scientist.

Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson are women mathematicians who work with NASA, and that's an excellent African American job for them. However, this does not indicate that racial prejudice is any less prevalent. The office where the research takes place is separated. The East Side is for whites, while the West Computing Group is for blacks. In the workplace, Black Scientist women frequently encountered racial discrimination in the form of separated toilets. The toilet is the essential amenity that the workplace must supply to all employees, regardless of color, gender, religion, or national origin. On the other hand, the toilet is divided into white and colored bathrooms. Katherine Goble uses this separated toilet.

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Katherine: "May I ask, were the ladies room is? Ruth: "Sorry, I have no idea where your bathroom is."

Katherine asked Ruth if there were bathrooms in the building. But Ruth answered that she didn't know if there was a bathroom that Katherine was referring to. The point of Ruth's answer is that there is no special bathroom for blacks in the building because all access to facilities has been made separately for blacks and whites. Therefore, every day, if Katherine wanted to go to the bathroom, she had to walk back to her old office, where only black bathrooms were provided.

This quote above demonstrates that the restroom is still divided between black and white people. Because NASA funds it, the segregated toilet is a kind of institutionalized discrimination. The fact that the toilet for Black Scientist employees must be labeled as a "colored ladies room" emphasizes the racial divide. The thing that distinguishes black vs. white is reinforced by the coffee holder provided in Katherine's room. When Katherine wanted to get the coffee provided in the room, she was back in the spotlight of the entire Space Task Force to make coffee in the room. And for a few days, the coffee shop between Katherine and the other white employees was separated. With a close-up shot, this scene clearly shows a term that has "colored" that only Katherine wants to have when she wants to make a cup of coffee.



It shows that black people are worthless and dirty people. Given that black people are considered inferior, in the minds of white people, they are different from other people. In the 1960 s, black people were deemed to be different by white people, so what was inside black people was considered separate, and they believed black people to carry dangerous and different diseases. On the other hand, this made Katherine feel that her space was limited and that she was not free to use the facilities. In this study, this is a visual, non-verbal message where the two scenes above show the distance between white and black people, such as

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politicians and their society, which makes it almost impossible to carry out an interpersonal communication.

SEXISM STEREOTYPE

The term stereotype may or may not be accurate; in other words, stereotypes can be both negative and positive. Positive stereotypes are used as a comparison to negative stereotypes. At the time of slavery, white people gave rise to various stereotypes against the black race. White people deliberately formed this stereotype to show their hatred for the black race.

LIMITED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Education is a powerful motivator for people to improve their quality of living by increasing their financial capacity and job competence. Furthermore, education is a catalyst for the country's advancement in science and technology. Education was required, particularly during the Cold War period, to improve the quality of humans so that They may be able to be competitive with Russia in space exploration. However, access to education is still a major obstacle for Black Scientist. It's the same with Mary's experience when she was rejected to become a technician at NASA because of her skin color and gender unless she successfully graduated from tertiary education. So, she wanted to enter Hampton High University. Still, She was disturbed when she tried to enroll in the engineering major because Hampton High School is reserved for white students at this university. Then she makes an effort to file a petition on legal grounds.

When Mary makes a petition to the court to be permitted to enroll in an all-white school as a condition for the engineer training program, Mary's character is shown in a medium shot and eye level angle to be a confident, powerful, and energetic person.



"And I, sir. I plan on being an engineer at NASA. But I can't do that without taking those classes at that all-white high school. And I can't change the color of my skin. So, I have no choice."

This petition shows Mary's strong opposition to discrimination in educational institutions. Her relentless ambition and unquenchable desire to further her profession drive her to go to any length to open the engineer class to women.

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ENGINEERING SCHOOL EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEN

The majority of the best technical schools in the country do not accept women. Mary Jackson, the only female engineer at Hampton High School, due to their experiences in segregated schools, women confront another misconception upon enrolling in a university engineering program. Mary Jackson faces this quandary when she enrolls in night classes.



"Well, the curriculum is not designed for teaching, a woman."

This statistic demonstrates that discrimination against women is wicked and wrong. Because the educational institution and the legislation back it, the limitation on enrolling in the engineering degree is institutionalized and legal discrimination. It is the result of gender stereotypes. The position of women is no longer seen only as housewives, who are referred to as female workers. However, there is a heavy price to pay when braving women to leave their domestic roles. In addition to having the same abilities as men, women must also have a high enough ideology. Women respond as newcomers if they are in a public space. Researchers found that black women must first regulate ideology in the tough public sphere with this opinion. The layout created by NASA illustrates how women are required to be as capable as white men when involved in public spaces. Because in the scene, Mary is directed to go to a white male school.

CLASSISM UNDERPAID SALARY

Any person who has given their time, thoughts, and resources to their jobs has the right to a well-paying income. All should be appreciated, regardless of their role. As experienced Katherine Goble, she said;



"Well, I don't own pearls. Lord knows you don't pay the coloreds enough to afford pearls!

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Dorothy Vaughan has also been subjected to underpaying her wages. She said when on the way to coming home after working.



"What's not fair is having the responsibility of the supervisor, but not the tittle or the pay."

Although they are doing the same job, the blacks' pay is considerably lower than the whites'. The oppression by white continues; as a result, they have to work much harder than white people; it can be noticed in the following statement.



Katherine's task is much higher than the white burden, owing to the extended work hours that African-American employees at NASA experience. Due to a lack of a catalyst, this reality places Black Scientists in the basement of American society, that they will never be equal to whites.

WOMEN ALWAYS BE INFERIOR

Because of the stigma about women, women always be inferior to men, and their existence was not considered. Many individuals believe that women should not be granted equality and that they should not have high-level positions since, in the end, women's jobs are to be homemakers. Of course, as social creatures, women have the same rights as males. However, other people believe that women are weak and do not deserve to be compared to men. Not to add preconceptions, a double load, prejudice, inferiority, and violence that a woman must bear. These beliefs demonstrate that many individuals still see women as second-class citizens to males (inferior).

Women are frequently subjected to gender discrimination in the workplace. Katherine, for example, being an open-minded woman, desired to be able to participate in large gatherings in this scenario. However, Mr. Paul said that there were no protocalists who directed women to attend large meetings. This infuriated Katherine, and denied that no protocol led men to climb the capsule around Earth's orbitals. Because she is black, she is

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also denied access to her required information. The data provided was partially written, and the numbers were crossed out with a black marker so that Katherine could not see the data because Mr. Paul thought Katherine did not have permission to know the data. According to Katherine, women have the right to choose the type of life they wish to live, and nothing can stop them from doing so.

CONCLUSION

This paper looks at the discrimination suffered by Black Scientist in the movie. Discrimination manifests itself in the form of racism, sexism, and classism. The reactions of women to prejudice are linked. This movie represented that Black Scientists have two visible that cannot be separated. The entire film has a humanitarian intention to demonstrate that prejudice is a destructive loop that has trapped women and minorities in their attempts to fulfill themselves. On the other hand, this movie indicates that Black Scientists are not inherently inferior and brainless. They may prevail against crass racial discrimination as long as there is a platform for them in the scientific sector.

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