

THE SOCIAL CHANGES IN AMERICA AS REFLECTED IN *HEAD OF STATE* MOVIE

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Abstract

In America, we know an interesting fact that Americans had chosen their first black President. It is a rare event because it is the first time for the United States of America to be lead by an African American man. In the progress of the presidential election, the social changes had become the interesting issue. This fact is very interesting because the *Head of State* movie has the similar theme.

Keywords: Social changes, America, *Head of State*

1. Introduction

Head of State is a comedy movie that depicts the social changes happened in the United States of America. *Head of State* is a comedy movie about an African American nominated as a candidate for United States president. The movie itself is a teasing allusion about how an African American can be a president of the United States of America. Mays Gilliam, the protagonist in the movie, is an African American man. African American is considered as minority in the American social structure. Since African American is

considered as minority in America, Mays Gilliam must work hard to persuade Americans. In *Head of State* Mays Gilliam gets a lot of prejudices and stereotypes from the Americans while he is doing the campaign. In the end of the movie, finally he gets the top position as the first black American president by doing various things in his own way. The purposes of the study are to find out how prejudice and stereotype happened towards black American and to find out how prejudices and stereotypes influence the social changes in America in *Head of State* movie

2. Theoretical Review

Since the writer decides to analyze the social changes in America as reflected in the movie, she uses the sociology of literature approach. In this thesis, the sociology of literature approach has two aspects. The first aspect is the literature as the reflection of real life. According to Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*,

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Literature 'represents' 'life'; and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary 'imitation' (1973: 94).

Wellek and Warren also state that,

Literature has also a social function, or 'use', which cannot be purely individual. Usually, however, the inquiry concerning 'literature and society' is put more narrowly and externally. Questions are asked about the relations of literature to a given social situation, to an economic, social, and political system (1973: 94).

Wellek and Warren add, "Attempts are made to describe and define the influence of society on literature and to prescribe and judge the position of literature in society. This sociological approach to literature is particularly cultivated by those who profess a specific social philosophy" (Wellek and Warren, 1973: 94).

Another aspect of the sociology literature approach is the social change as the one of the sociology theories. According to Johnson, “Social change is any alteration in the cultural, structural, population, or ecological characteristics of a social system such as a society” (2000: 285).

Social change has many causes. In *Head of State* movie, the most important cause of the social changes is the conflict. According to Macionis, “Inequality and conflict in a society also produce change. Karl Marx saw class conflict as the engine that drives societies from one historical era to another” (2012: 566).

3. Analysis

In *Head of State*, Mays Gilliam is the leading character. He is the central character in the conflicts of the movie. The whole story is related to him as the main role. The main idea of *Head of State* movie is about how an African American can be a president of the United States. Mays Gilliam, as the protagonist character, is an African American man struggling to reach the top position as the United States of America president. According to this main idea, we can analyze several topics towards Mays Gilliam.

First topic is about stereotypes and prejudices happen towards Mays Gilliam. In the process of Mays Gilliam’s presidential campaign, there are stereotypes and prejudices happen towards him. As a black American presidential candidate, Mays Gilliam gets a lot of stereotypes from the Americans. Stereotype is a simplified picture that comes to mind when thinking about a particular social group. We can see the example of the stereotypes from Brian Lewis, Mays Gilliam competitor. Brian Lewis is very angry when he knows about Mays Gilliam. He does not want lose from an African American man like him. Here are some parts of Brian Lewis’s conversation with his assistant:

Lewis : This is my time. I’ve been Vice President for eight years. I’m a war hero, and I am Sharon Stone’s cousin! And I’ll be damned if I’m going to let my election be ruined by

this asshole! I want this guy done. You hear me? Finish him! *[Inilah saat yang telah lama kunantikan. Aku telah menjabat Wakil Presiden selama 8 tahun. Aku seorang pahlawan perang dan sepupunya Sharon Stone! Aku akan marah besar jika kubiarkan pemilihanku dihancurkan oleh dia! Aku ingin orang ini dihentikan. Kamu paham? Hentikan dia!]*

Lewis's Assistant : He will be destroyed, sir, as you wish.

[Dia akan hancur, Pak, seperti yang anda mau.]

(Head of State, Drew's Script-O-Rama, 00:39:42 disc 1 – 00:40:01 disc 1)

From the conversation, we can see that Brian Lewis asks his assistant to stop and destroy Mays Gilliam. He thinks that he has more experiences than Mays Gilliam. Brian Lewis, as a white man, feels irritated being compared with a black man like Mays Gilliam. He wants to make Mays Gilliam lose as badly as he can.

The next racial issue happens toward Mays Gilliam is prejudice. Basically, prejudice is the negative attitude toward members of a group. It can be seen in the beginning of the movie, when Bill Arnot recommends Mays Gilliam as the presidential candidate. In spite of recommends Mays Gilliam as the presidential candidate, Bill Arnot has a secret plan beside it. These are some parts of Bill Arnot's conversation about his secret plan:

Arnot : The United States is changing. America is changing. Inside of 20 years, you know the numbers. 20 percent black, 21 percent Asian, 39 percent Hispanic. The minorities will be the majority. The smartest thing we can do is be the first party to nominate a minority for President.

[Amerika Serikat sedang berubah. Dalam 20 tahun... Kamu tahu statistiknya. 20% kulit hitam, 21% ras Asia, 39% ras Hispanik. Warga kulit berwarna jadi mayoritas. Jalan terbaik yang dapat kita lakukan adalah menjadi partai pertama yang mencalonkan seorang kulit berwarna untuk jadi Presiden.]

Now, we'll lose, of course, but the minorities will be happy. The minorities will be happy and they will vote for us in 2008, because we've shown we support them. And white people will vote for us because our guy isn't black.

[Kita akan kalah. Tentu saja. Tapi warga minoritas akan senang. Kaum minoritas akan bahagia, dan mereka akan memilih kita di tahun 2008, karena kita telah menunjukkan dukungan. Dan

orang kulit putih akan memilih kita karena calonnya nanti tidak berkulit hitam.]

(Head of State, Drew's Script-O-Rama, 00:11:18 disc 1 – 00:11:51 disc 1)

From the conversation, it can be seen that Bill Arnot assumes Mays Gilliam as a candidate that will lose. As an African American, Mays Gilliam will attract many supports from the minorities. The minorities will be happy and they will vote Bill Arnot as the next presidential candidate in 2008. This is a kind of negative attitude towards a black American. Bill Arnot exploits Mays Gilliam, an African American man, to fulfill Bill Arnot's desire.

Mays Gilliam also gets stereotypes from the society. All the magazines show negative comments about Mays Gilliam that is definitely an African American man. It can be seen in the Picture 4.1.



(00.10.41 disc 2)

(00.10.43 disc 2)

(00.10.45 disc 2)

Picture 4.1 The magazines show negative comments about Mays Gilliam.

In the first picture, the magazine says Mays Gilliam as the “Bad Man of the Year”. In the second picture, the magazine says Mays Gilliam, the “Ugliest Man in America”. In the last picture, a black American magazine says “Mays Gilliam, He’s a Half White!” The sentence shows the contradiction of stereotype from black people that hate Mays Gilliam. They say Mays Gilliam as a half white man. It is shown a fact that black people also stereotyping the white people.

To confront the stereotype and prejudice issues, Mays Gilliam refuses to give up. He keep tries his best to convince the Americans. In the end of the movie, finally he gets the top position as the first black American president by doing various things in his own way.

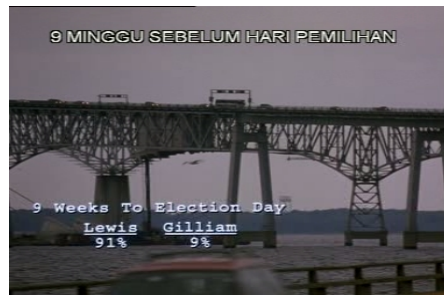
The social changes happen towards the American. In the beginning, they hate Mays Gilliam. Then, they support him to become the next America President. It can be concluded that in the *Head of State* movie, stereotypes and prejudices also influence the social changes in America.

The second topic that interesting to analyze is the social changes in America as reflected in *Head of State* movie. Mays Gilliam, the protagonist character in the movie, is an African American man. He is nominated as a candidate for the United States of America president. He gets a lot of prejudices and stereotypes from the Americans while he is doing the campaign.

It is reflected in Barack Obama's presidential election. In Obama's presidential campaign, stereotypes and prejudices also happens toward Barrack Obama. However, Barack Obama continues his campaign and he does various things in his own way to persuade the Americans. Finally, Barack Obama becomes the first black American president in the United States of America. Since Barack Obama becomes the first black American president, the social changes happen.

In *Head of State*, Mays Gilliam also does his campaign by his own way. Finally, he gets the top position as the first black American president. Since Mays Gilliam becomes the first black American president, the social changes happen in the movie. Thus, the social changes in the movie reflect the United States of America condition. Since of this topic, the writer wants to analyze the social changes happens in the movie as the reflection of the social changes in America.

In the beginning of the movie, Mays Gilliam's rate is in the bottom place. Nine weeks to the Election Day Mays Gilliam's Poll is in the bottom place. It can be seen in the Picture 4.2.



Picture 4.2 (00.25.59 disc 1)

In the picture, we can see 9 weeks to Election Day, the comparison of Mays Gilliam and Brian Lewis Poll: Gilliam 9%, Lewis 91%. It is because Mays Gilliam is a new presidential candidate. In spite of the fact that he is a black American candidate, people do not recognize and know about him.

Then, Mays Gilliam tries to get some supports from the Americans. He goes to several cities in United States and delivers speech there. Mays Gilliam's rate in the polls increases significantly shows the social changes in America. In the beginning, Mays Gilliam often gets stereotypes and prejudices from the people surround him. When he continues his campaign, he often talks about the economic problems that happened to the Americans.

Mays Gilliam states that to become a great president, the president candidate should know how the poor itself. It makes the Americans change their mind. Finally, in the end of the movie, Mays Gilliam wins the presidential election. He becomes the first black American president in the United States of America.

The social changes in the movie are the reflection of the social changes in the real context. In Barack Obama's presidential election, the social changes happen when the Americans ignore the racial issues. They concern about the economic problems in the United States. The Americans think that Obama is qualified enough to solve the economic problems. The social changes among the Americans, out of the racial issues that happened during his campaign, have made him as the first black American president.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, *Head of State* is a comedy movie that depicts the social changes happened in the United States of America. Mays Gilliam, the protagonist in the movie, is an African American man. In *Head of State* Mays Gilliam gets a lot of prejudices and stereotypes from the Americans while he is doing the campaign.

When Mays Gilliam continues his campaign, he often talks about the economic problems that happened to the Americans. It makes the Americans change their mind. Finally, in the end of the movie, Mays Gilliam wins the presidential election. He becomes the first black American president in the United States of America.

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