

Univerzita Hradec Králové
Pedagogická fakulta
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Rasová segregace v americkém filmu druhé poloviny 20. století

Bakalářská práce

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Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch - německý jazyk
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Racial Segregation in American Film in the Late 20th Century

Bachelor Thesis

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Práce se zabývá fenoménem rasové segregace v americkém filmu 2. poloviny 20. století. Cílem práce je vytyčit podobné rysy zobrazování a formy útlaku na Afroameričany a zasadit je do dobového kontextu.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala pod odborným vedením
Mgr. Jana Suka samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 10.5. 2015

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Anotace

MORÁVKOVÁ, VENDULA. *Rasová segregace v americkém filmu druhé poloviny 20.stol.* Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2015. 67 s. Bakalářská práce.

Práce se věnuje fenoménu rasové diskriminace v americkém filmu 2. pol. 20. století. Pro lepší pochopení problematiky jsou v první části vysvětleny důležité termíny spojené s diskriminací jako je otázka lidské rasy, rasismus a rasová segregace. Další část se zabývá vývojem společenského postavení a práv Afroameričanů a jejich bojem za rovná občanská práva a svobodu od doby, kdy byl do Ameriky přivezen první otrok až do smrti nejvýznamnějšího vůdce afroamerického hnutí za lidská práva Martina Luthera Kinga.

Poslední část je věnována vybraným filmům s danou tématikou, v nichž jsou na základě získaných znalostí identifikovány projevy rasové diskriminace v chování, jednání i mluvě postav. Součástí jsou i základní informace o jednotlivých filmech včetně krátkého shrnutí děje nebo recenzí, které vyšly krátce po premiéře filmu.

Klíčová slova: rasová segregace, Afroameričané, Martin Luther King, Jr., americký film 2. pol. 20. století, rovnoprávnost

Annotation

MORÁVKOVÁ, VENDULA. *Racial Segregation in American Film in the Late 20th Century*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové, 2015, 67 pp. Bachelor Degree Thesis.

The Bachelor thesis is dedicated to the phenomenon of racial segregation in American films made in the late 20th century. For better understanding of issue in the first part we can find explanations of important terms linked to discrimination such as human race, racism and racial segregation. The next part deals with the development of social status and rights of Afro-Americans and their fight for equal civil rights and freedom since the time the first slave was imported to America till the death of the most important leader of the Afro-American Civil Rights Movement Martin Luther King, Jr.

The last part is dedicated to chosen films with the given issues, in which displays of racial discrimination in behaviour, acting and characters' speech are identified on the grounds of acquired knowledge. This part of thesis also provides information about particular films including short plot summary or reviews which were published soon after the premiere of films.

Keywords: racial segregation, Afro-Americans, Martin Luther King, Jr., American film in the late 20th century, equality

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INTRODUCTION

”I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.“¹

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and his famous speech *I Have a Dream* is generally perceived as a symbol of racial segregation in the United States of America. He was indubitably an extraordinary personality and a powerful leader of the Afro-American Civil Rights Movement of his times. His speeches managed to excite large crowds. He helped Afro-Americans to believe in better future that will come one day. He is mostly appreciated for his courage and hope he provided for millions of Afro-American people. The importance of his acts is so big that even every single pupil knows him.

Racial segregation and a fight for equal civil rights of Afro-Americans have become a favourite theme of many American films of the 20th century .This trend has not ended yet. Films such as *The Help* released in 2011 or extremely successful *Twelve Years a Slave* released in 2013 and awarded three Oscars have it recently showed. All films of the 20th century of this topic usually widely differ in a way they adapt the issue as well as in its depiction and in an approach which a director and screenplay writer have chosen. That makes films extremely various. My thesis is dedicated right to identification of displays of racial segregation and discrimination in American films of the late 20th century and tries to find differences between them.

As it would be hard to grasp films without understanding basic terms such as human race, racism and racial segregation, the first chapter explains them and presents also some interesting scientific approaches. As well social and historical background is extremely important and on account of it the second and third chapters include most important events and documents of fight for equal rights of Afro-Americans together with Martin Luther King’s merit. The last part of my thesis is devoted to American films of the late 20th century. Each particular film chapter provides basic information

¹ KING, Martin Luther. I have a dream: delivered 28 August, 1963. *American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches* [online]. ©2001-2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihavedream.htm>

such as a year of release, director's name or awards. Short plot summary follows thereafter. And last but not least, the next part attempts to point to displays of racism and racial discrimination on the basis of characters' speech and dialogues, behaviour, acting and face expressions. In addition, the thesis tries to reveal reasons that led film makers to create films right in this way. Films also frequently describe ordinary life of Afro-Americans in the United States of America in a particular period.

1 TOWARDS RACIAL SEGREGATION

“Laundry is the only thing that should be separated by color.”

Unknown Author

For better understanding a theme of the present bachelor thesis, it is absolutely necessary to mention and express some basic terms connected with racial segregation in order to find roots on which racial segregation was based and reasons why it was practised. Racial segregation is closely associated with terms such as human race, racism and segregation.

1.1 Human Race

Teachers at elementary schools usually teach children that we distinguish four human races according to a skin tone, typical features of their appearance and country of their origin. We usually distinguish between Caucasian race, Mongoloid race, Negroid race and Australoid race. But to tell the truth, scientists have never agreed on any specific number of races, designation or criterion for their identification. The conception of human races has separated scientists into many different groups.

Tomáš Dacík mentions that according to a French aristocrat and novelist Arthur de Gobineau, who lived in 19th century, human races are not equal and it is possible to divide them into higher ones which mean nobler ones and into lower (inferior) ones which are less noble.² “[...] the Negro has been considered to be of inferior native intelligence.”³ From this theory emerges that the Aryan race is the most perfect and noblest race, because it has reached the highest level of cultural development. Because of developing the theory of the Aryan race Arthur Gobineau is considered to be the father of modern racial demography. His ideas influenced also Adolf Hitler.

On the other hand it has not been ever proved that intellectual or cultural values

² See Dacík, Tomáš., *Člověk a rasa*, p.86

³ Miller, Kent.S. Psychological Characteristics of the Negro. In: *The Negro in American Society*, p.20

are influenced by biological features and race types. Because of this reason all races are considered to be equal and there is no difference in their development.⁴ Additionally, the Negro was said to have unusual talents and a superior sense of rhythm.⁵

As can be visible ideas on differentiation of human races as well as definitions vary in common dictionaries and encyclopaedias. *Cambridge Dictionary* explains the term human race as: “a group, especially of people, with particular similar physical characteristics, are considered as belonging to the same type, or the fact of belonging to such a group” or as: “a group of people who share the same language, history, characteristics, etc.”⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says about race that it is

the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the basis of inherited physical and behavioural differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that “races” are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century.⁷

Although some scientists state that the human race is based on genetic differences such as DNA, others insist on that race is: “[...] NOT based on biology; it is a CREATED category with historical roots used to classify groups of people.”⁸ This statement was also confirmed by The Human Genome Project which mapped out the complete human genetic code. This project clearly proved that race is not influenced by our genes. Some scientists also came with surprising and ground-breaking idea that our skin colour is influenced by geography and skin colour is caused by ultraviolet rays. As an example they mention Alaska and Canada natives who are dark-skinned. According to them it is caused by long periods of darkness and receiving higher levels of ultraviolet rays reflected from snow during summer.⁹

⁴ See MACHALOVÁ, Tatiana. *Lidská práva proti rasismu*, p.96

⁵ See MILLER, Kent.S. Psychological Characteristics of the Negro. In: *The Negro in American Society*, p.23

⁶ Race. In: *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* [online]. Cambridge University Press, © 2015 [cit. 2015-01-27]. Available from: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/race>

⁷ SMEDLEY, Audrey. Race: human. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online]. London: Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last updated 8-18-2014 [cit. 2015-01-27]. Available from: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488030/race>

⁸ *Definitions of Race* [online]. Roselle (Pennsylvania): Centre for the Study of White American Culture, December 20, 2002 [cit. 2015-01-27] Available from: http://www.euroamerican.org/Library/Definitions_Race.asp

⁹ See 50 Interesting Facts about...: Race and Racism. In: *Random Facts* [online]. Random History.com, May 13,

1.2 Racism

Racism is a term which is closely connected with the human race, because it is usually based on giving precedence to one race over the other. According to Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an international Jewish non-governmental organization founded in the USA, racism “[...] may be defined as the hatred of one person by another - or the belief that another person is less than human - because of skin color, language, customs, place of birth or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person.”¹⁰

George M. Fredrickson states in his work *Racism: A Short History* that “The term “racism” is often used in a loose and unreflective way to describe the hostile or negative feeling of one ethnic group or “people” toward another and the actions resulting from such attitudes.”¹¹

According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* racism is “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.”¹² This idea often led to racial segregation, discrimination or killing people.

Already in antiquity a Greek philosopher Aristotle stated that the Greeks are free by nature whereas barbarians or non-Greeks are slaves by nature. Racism was practised in every period of our history. The most memorable and gruesome shows of racism were experienced by mankind during World War II and period of Nazi time when the Jews, Gypsies, black people, mixed race people and Slavic people were considered to be “subhumans” and the “Aryan” race was viewed as “master race”. As Fredrickson states the 20th century also brought racial segregation into the USA where Afro-Americans were seen as inferior, although the Amendment XIV adopted in 1868 should have ensured them equal law protection. Afro-American men were considered to be horrible beats yearning for white women.¹³ Discrimination was also practised on the Australian Aborigines because they were not regarded as human beings. Last but

2012. [cit. 2015-01-27]. Available from: <http://facts.randomhistory.com/facts-about-race.html>

¹⁰ Racism. In: *Anti-Defamation League* [online]. Anti-Defamation League, © 2001. [cit. 2015-01-27]. Available from: http://archive.adl.org/hate-patrol/racism.html#.VMYwQP6G_ZF

¹¹ FREDRICKSON, George M. *Racism: A Short History*, p.13

¹² *Definitions of Race* [online]. Roselle (Pennsylvania): Centre for the Study of White American Culture, December 20, 2002 [cit. 2015-01-27] Available from: http://www.euroamerican.org/Library/Definitions_Race.asp

¹³ See FREDRICKSON, George M. *Racism: A Short History*, p.13

not least, a typical example of discrimination was also a period of apartheid in South Africa.

1.3 Racial Segregation

Generally spoken, racial segregation is based on a statement that one race is more superior than the other. Different races usually lead to separation. According to *Macmillan Dictionary* segregation is: “the policy of keeping people from different groups, especially different races, separate.”¹⁴ This separation is usually applied to activities such as eating in restaurants, using public toilets, travelling by public means of transport, visiting cinemas, schools, using phone boxes or drinking from water fountains. An Afro-American boy bending down old water fountain and peering at the newer one caught by a photographer Elliot Erwitt on his photo became a symbol for racial segregation in the USA. *Black's Law Dictionary* defines racial segregation as: “The unconstitutional policy of separating people on the basis of color, nationality, religion, or the like.”¹⁵

In Southern states of the USA there was mainly applied „de jure“ segregation which is explained by *Black's Law Dictionary* as: “segregation that is permitted by law”¹⁶. This type of segregation was based on Jim Crow Laws - due to these laws majority of public places were divided into separated places for the whites and Afro-Americans. This separation involved for example banks, public toilets, schools etc.

In Northern states there was used „de facto“ segregation meaning: “segregation that occurs without state authority, usually on the basis of socioeconomic factors.”¹⁷ De facto segregation affected for example housing, work or bank services.

¹⁴Segregation. In: *Maxmillan Dictionary* [online].Maxmillan Publihers, ©2009-2015. [cit. 2015-28-01]. Available from: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/segregation>

¹⁵ GARNER, Bryan A. - BLACK, Henry Campbell. *Black's Law Dictionary*, p. 1362

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

2 ISSUE OF RACISM AGAINST THE BLACKS IN THE USA

According to Robert Ivanov, an author of a book called *Blacks in United States History*: “The Negro issue is not just a problem of today; its roots extend back even deeper than US history, back into the colonial period of the American continent.”¹⁸ Way to freedom and equality of Afro-Americans lasted long. It was lasting centuries till Carol Moseley Braun was elected the first female Afro-American Senator (1993), till Barack Obama won presidential elections and became the first black president of the USA (2008). A black question was the major topic in many periods of history of the USA, because Afro-Americans constituted a significant part of the population and their struggle for freedom is an important and inseparable part of U.S. history. They played a key role during revolutionary historical events such as the War of Independence, the Civil War or during the Reconstruction Era in Southern states.

This chapter presents important moments in Afro-American history concerning the struggle for equality.

2.1 Black Slaves in Colonial Period

Trade with slaves was begun by Portuguese people already in 1444 and they were the leading nation of black-skinned slave trade till the U.S. Civil War.

O’Callaghan in *An Illustrated History of the USA* states that first slaves occurred in the USA in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 and he believes that it was another important beginning for the USA. He also mentions that slaves were transported to Jamestown by a small Dutch ship and sold by a captain as indentured servants.¹⁹ That originally meant that they made a fixed-term contract which was valid usually three or seven years and these indentured servants were paid in kin. Their task was to work on

¹⁸ IVANOV, Robert Fedorovič. *Blacks in United States History*, p. 19

¹⁹ See O’CALLAGHAN, Bryn. *An Illustrated History of the USA*, p. 14

tobacco, cotton, coffee or sugar cane plantations together with white servants from England. But these two groups of servants had different conditions - white servants knew that one day they will be free in contrast to black servants. Indentured servants changed their status and became slaves, but this fact was admitted many years after. This change was mainly caused by an increase in a requirement for labour force. Slaves were transported by boats in absolutely horrible conditions.

An American historian describes for instance these:

there the space assigned each to lie down in was six feet by sixteen inches. The bare board were their beds. To make them lie close, the lash was used [...] But the misery of a night was as nothing to the misery of a stormy day. Then the hatches were fastened down, tarpaulins were drawn over the gratings, and ventilation ceased; the air grew thick and stifling; the floor became wet with perspiration; the groaning and panting of the pent-up Negroes could be heard on deck.²⁰

No wonder that it was not rare that the percentage of mortality on a boat was about thirty percent. Between 1660 and 1680 there existed the first evidence of so called *Slave Codes*. These were laws in the United States which defined rights and status of slaves and they differed from state to state. Generally spoken, a slave was lifelong property of his owner and children of slaves were slaves automatically, they were not allowed to possess a gun, leave a plantation without permission of his owner, have a property and learn to read or write. They could be sold, did not have a right to vote and they could not testify against a white person as well as enter into marriage. And last but not least, a murder of a slave, often very sadistic, was not seen as a criminal act. "One slave owner in Maryland, for instance, burned his slave alive in 1695 by pouring hot liquid lead over him. The court pronounced the murderer not guilty, since, in its opinion, the slave was "incorrigible."²¹ Slave masters had to provide food and clothes for their slaves and they were not allowed to punish them stricter than it was necessary.

An Arkansas slaveholder explained why slaves had to be made to work:

²⁰ McMASTER, John Bach. *A History of the People of the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War*, p. 16-17

²¹ IVANOV, Robert. *Blacks in United States History*, p. 38

now, I speak what I know, when I say it is like ‘casting pearls before swine’ to try to persuade a Negro to work. He must be made to work, and should always been given to understand that if he fails to perform his duty he will be punished for it.²²

But why were Afro-Americans seen as ideal labour force for American plantation? In contrast to white slaves and Indians, they better tolerated the tropical and subtropical climate and they were physically strong, because only the strongest ones could overcome a voyage on a boat.

According to Ivanov the total number of slaves was rapidly rising. At the beginning of the War of Independence there were about 455,000 of black slaves in Southern Provinces (165,000 in Virginia) and 46,000 in Northern Provinces and in 1760 there were more Negro people in South Carolina than the white.²³ “Black slaves comprised about 20 percent of the population in the colonies before the War of Independence.”²⁴ A slave system played a crucial role in economic development of the USA.

2.2 The War of Independence and Period Before the Civil War

“Anti-black sentiments and racist notions took deep root in American society as early as the colonial period.”²⁵ And abolitionist movements started to be established. As Robert Ivanov puts it, one of the small but important steps towards the equality was undoubtedly a decision known as *The Articles of Association* passed in 1774 by the Continental Congress. This document said that the importation of slaves and trade had to be banned.²⁶ Thomas Paine’s article *African Slavery in America* that appeared in Philadelphia newspapers of March 8, 1775 was among important works of his time. Thomas Paine, one of the most influential and earliest men calling for the abolition of slavery in America, sent there a message to Americans:

²² WEINSTEIN, Allen, GATELL, Frank Otto. *American Negro Slavery: A Modern Reader*, p. 51

²³ See IVANOV, Robert. *Blacks in United States History*, p. 29-30

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42

²⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 50

“That some desperate wretches should be willing to steal and enslave men by violence and murder for gain, is rather lamentable than strange.”²⁷

Abolitionism was also supported for instance by Anthony Benezet, Benjamin Rush or Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. And it is very surprising that all including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton were slave-owners. But we must understand that slavery was established many years before the War of Independence and that slavery was very important for economy and politics.

Slavery was clearly affected during the Revolutionary War. “Slave-owners were afraid to leave for war in case the slaves rose up and slaughtered their families in their absence. They didn't want to give slaves weapons to fight for the same reason, in case they used them against their owners.”²⁸ Some people wanted to give black slaves a chance to create corps and fight with the Patriots in exchange for their freedom. Because of not inconsiderable number of black slaves in the American population, it was advantageous to have these Afro-American fighters on own side. As Esther Pavao states *Lord Dunmore's Proclamation*, written by the British Governor Lord Dunmore, announced that any slaves who would fight for the British army would be freed after the end of the war. And he followed his promise and relocated slaves who were signed in *The Book of Negroes* to Jamaica, Nova Scotia or Britain although the British finally lost the war.²⁹

The War of Independence known also as the Revolutionary War (1775- 1783) was a conflict between thirteen founding American colonies and the British Empire. A very popular slogan of those days which depicts the atmosphere and demand was “no taxation without representation” because the British colonists had to pay higher and higher taxes but they had no representation in the British Parliament. On July 4, 1776 these thirteen colonies declared themselves as thirteen independent states and formed a new nation called the United States of America. The preamble declares that: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and

²⁷ PAINE, Thomas. *African Slavery in America* [online]. Constitution society. Last updated 2015-02-01 [cit. 2015-02-06]. Available from: <http://www.constitution.org/tp/afri.htm>.

²⁸ PAVAO, Esther. *Slavery and the Revolutionary War* [online]. Revolutionary-War.net, ©2010-2014 [cit. 2015-02-06]. Available from: <http://www.revolutionary-war.net/slavery-and-the-revolutionary-war.html>

²⁹ See Ibid.

the pursuit of Happiness.”³⁰ After *The Declaration of Independence* slavery started to be seen as incompatible with the idea of equality whereas in the South the occurrence of slaves was higher because of economical reasons - slaves were important for economy of the region.

One of the first important attempts to begin an abolishment of slavery was *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* passed by Pennsylvania legislature on March 1, 1780. This act brought a lot of noticeable changes into slaves’ lives and meant a crucial step towards the abolition of slavery. The Act stated that all persons born in Pennsylvania after the Act was passed are no longer slaves or “lifelong servant of any kinds”, but children are required to stay in a service of their owners as a type of indentured servant until 28. Slave owners have an obligation to register their slaves every year and to add additional information about them such as name or age. If owners failed to register their slaves, they would have to free them. The Act also banned all future slavery and protected every freed man from being enslaved again, however, it excluded visitors staying less than six months. Slaves who have run away and have been missing for more than five years are free. And last but not least, the Act made longer forms of indentured service illegal, regardless of laws in other states.³¹ This Act started to be adopted in other states; some of them even outlawed slavery.

Another crucial document for the USA of this period was *the United States Constitution* ratified on June 21, 1788 replacing *the Articles of Confederation* (1777). Although this document is not devoted to the question of slavery, the problem of slavery was one of crucial topics for debates when creating it. And even though slavery was made illegal in the North in 1787 they insisted together with the Southern states that slavery was an issue for individual states to decide. The Constitution also determines the way how slaves are officially counted during division of seats in the House of Representatives and for tax assessment.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to

³⁰ *Charters of Freedom: Declaration of Independence: A Transcription* [online]. College Park (Maryland): The National archives and records administration, [cit. 2015-02-06]. Available from: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

³¹ See PAVAO, Esther. *The Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* [online]. Revolutionary-War.net, ©2010-2014 [cit. 2015-02-06]. Available from: <http://www.revolutionary-war.net/abolition-of-slavery-gradual-act.html>

Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.³²

And additionally:

the Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person³³

In 1808 the United States Federal law called *The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves* came into effect and banned importation of slaves into the United States, however, the internal slave trade continued in states where slavery was seen as legal. States such as Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky or Delaware started to specialize in nasty business - they started to rear slaves for sale. “In the year 1810 there were 7.2 million people in the United States. For 1.2 million of these people the words of the Declaration of Independence “that all men are created equal” were far from true. They were black and they were slaves.”³⁴ O’Callaghan mentions that in the North farmers did not need slaves in such measure, their farms were small and the climate was cool, but in the South farmers would not be able to cultivate their farms of tobacco, rice or cotton without slaves, because thanks to Eli Whitney, who invented in 1793 the cotton gin (cotton engine), a machine for quick separation of the seeds and the fibre of the raw cotton, it was made possible to grow bigger amount of cotton and the output rose eight thousand times.³⁵

When Missouri wanted to join the Union (Northern States) and was practising slavery in 1819, the Union denied it, because they started to feel that Southern states were already too much powerful. As has been said when speaking about the number of the Congress representatives, slaves were counted as three-fifths of a person. The solution called “the Missouri Compromise” of 1820 meant that Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state at the same time with a free state Maine and this act balanced the number of free and slave states. Slavery was permitted in Missouri and

³² *The Constitution of the United States of America* [online], available from: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>, p. 2

³³ Ibid. p. 5

³⁴ O’CALLAGHAN, Bryn. *An Illustrated History of the USA*, p. 44

³⁵ See Ibid., p. 46

Arkansas territories and banned in all lands to the west and north of Missouri. The continuation of this division was so called *Kansas-Nebraska Act* of 1854. It determined that new states north of the boundary could have decided whether they permitted slavery or not.

Year 1831 is associated with the name Nathaniel “Nat” Turner, who was an American slave. He led an uprising of black slaves in Virginia. His revolt had horrible consequences. Sixty white men and about 100 black slaves died. He was arrested, given a death penalty and hung. Other 56 blacks were sentenced and killed. This uprising led to a ban of education of both slaves and free blacks and to attendance of a clergyman on black services. This revolt was followed by foundation of anti-slavery newspaper “The Liberator” by William Lloyd Garrison in 1831. It made a contribution to development of the Abolitionist movement.

Tension between pro-slavery supporters and anti-slavery supporters was rising. In 1856 town Lawrence in Kansas was attacked by pro-slavery raiders from Missouri. They burnt the town and killed many people. This moment was also a part of a series of violent political actions in Kansas Territory between 1854 and 1861 later known as Bleeding Kansas. One of its leading figures was John Brown, a white American abolitionist. His followers killed some supporters of slavery at the Battle of Black Jack, where he commanded forces. It is said that he was mentally unbalanced.

Another important act of this time period was the *Fugitive Slave Act of 1850*, which was a part of series of five bills concluded in *Compromise of 1850* that admitted California as a free state, let a chance to decide for Utah or New Mexico territories and banned slave trade in Washington, D.C. “This controversial law allowed slave-hunters to seize alleged fugitive slaves without due process of law and prohibited anyone from aiding escaped fugitives or obstructing their recovery.”³⁶ This law is stricter than the original one of 1793. After this act a new profession emerged - “bounty hunters”. These people were catching fugitives for monetary reward.

An issue of legal position of Afro-Americans was discussed in a case called “Dred Scott vs. Sandford” in 1857. Dred Scott was a black slave in Missouri taken by his slave-owner to live in a free state, after return to Missouri he claimed he was a free man because he lived in a free state. In 1857 he asked the Supreme Court to make it

³⁶ Fugitive Slave Law: North to Canada. In *The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship* [online]. Part 2 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart3b.html>

legal, but the Supreme Court refused. The Court stated that black slaves had no rights as American citizens. This decision depicts the beginning of legal segregation and discrimination in the United States. Slave owners were delighted with this decision, abolitionists were horrified.

During the presidential elections of 1860 the United States were also divided thanks to candidates for president. A majority of citizens in southern states voted against Abraham Lincoln whereas the North voted for him. Finally, Abraham Lincoln won the elections. Soon after in December 1860 South Carolina announced the secession from the United States and this decision was followed by ten more southern states. These eleven states proclaimed themselves independent nation and created the Confederate States (the Confederacy). It was on the eve of the Civil War.

2.3 The Civil War and the Reconstruction Era

Among main reasons which led to the Civil War were undoubtedly waves of emancipation appearing mainly in the North of the USA.³⁷ After the establishment of the Confederacy newly formed nation published their own Constitution called *The Constitution of Confederate States of America*. This constitution replicated *the United States Constitution*, but included many protections concerning slavery. Among differences between *the United States Constitution* and *the Constitution of Confederate States of America* were for instance these:

“The importation of Negroes of the African race from any foreign country, other than the slaveholding States or Territories of the United States of America, is hereby forbidden; and Congress is required to pass such laws as shall effectually prevent the same.”³⁸ The US Constitution did not use a term “Negro”, but instead of it used “Person held to Service or Labour”.

“The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States; and shall have the right of transit and sojourn in any

³⁷ See MATUŠÍKOVÁ, Marta. *Otázka rasové segregace a diskriminace v USA po roce 1945*, p. 22

³⁸ *Constitution of the Confederate States: March 11, 1861: Article I, Section 9(1)* [online]. New Haven (Connecticut): Lillian Goldman Law Library, ©2008 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_csa.asp

State of this Confederacy, with their slaves and other property; and the right of property in said slaves shall not be thereby impaired.”³⁹

And the Confederate Constitution also stated that slavery is legally permitted and should be protected in territories:

in all such territory, the institution of negro slavery as it now exists in the Confederate States, shall be recognized and protected by Congress, and by the territorial government: and the inhabitants of the several Confederate States and Territories, shall have the right to take to such territory any slaves lawfully held by them in any of the states or territories of the Confederate states.⁴⁰

The answer to *the Confederate Constitution* was *the Emancipation Proclamation* issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It was a crucial step towards the abolition of slavery in the United States. “The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.”⁴¹ Obviously the proclamation did not end slavery but importantly, it announced that black men were accepted into the Union Army and Navy. And this fact was important for the Civil War. During the American Civil War black men became members of guerrilla movement fighting against the Confederates and significantly helped to the federal forces. In 1865 the Confederacy surrendered and the Union won the American Civil War after four years of cruel fights.

Soon after, in December 1865, *the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution*, one of three Reconstruction Amendments, was adopted. It meant the abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude in the whole United States. In contrast to this revolutionary act at the same time *Black Codes of 1865* were accepted. Although at that time the blacks could have property and enter into marriage, *Black Codes* denied their rights to testify against the whites, vote or be a member of a jury.

Because of a fear of land owners that they would lose their cheap labour force, the blacks had an obligation to conclude a contract for a year without a possibility to

³⁹ *Constitution of the Confederate States: March 11, 1861: Article I, Section 2(1)* [online]. New Haven (Connecticut): Lillian Goldman Law Library, ©2008 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_csa.asp

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *Article IV Section 3(3)*

⁴¹ The Emancipation Proclamation. *Featured Documents* [online]. Washington [D. C.]: U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

cancel it.

As a reaction to *Black Codes* the Congress passed the *Civil Rights Acts of 1866* which ended the effect of *Black Codes* and was an important step towards *the Fourteenth Amendment*, proposed in June 1866, giving citizenship and same laws to all Americans. It lasted a century until this amendment was fully practised in all the United States. *The Fourteenth Amendment* included four important clauses modifying questions of citizenship, privileges and immunities, equal protection and due process. Here is the actual wording of these revolutionary clauses:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State where in they reside.⁴²

The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states.⁴³

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.⁴⁴

Importantly, *the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870*, the last of three Reconstruction Amendments, gave equal rights to vote to all Americans. “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”⁴⁵ In the same year Hiram Revels is voted the first African American senator.

Year 1865 is not only a year of Amendment XIII. At this time a well-known terror organisation the Ku Klux Klan was established. They started to lead terror actions against the blacks and violently killed them. These murders were not punished.

⁴² 14th Amendment. *Legal Information Institute* [online]. Ithaca (NewYork): University Law School, ©2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv>. Section 1, Clause 1

⁴³ Article IV: Section 2. *Legal Information Institute* [online]. Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Law School, ©2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/articleiv>
Section 2

⁴⁴ 14th Amendment. *Legal Information Institute* [online]. Ithaca (NewYork): University Law School, ©2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv>
Section 1, Clause 1

⁴⁵ 15th Amendment. *Legal Information Institute* [online]. Ithaca (NewYork): University Law School, ©2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxv>
Section 1

The Ku Klux Klan was banned and declared a terrorist group in 1870.

The Reconstruction Era that can mean the period between 1865 and 1877 or transformation of Southern United States between years 1863-1877 was extremely important in history of Afro-American people.

The period of Reconstruction was a renaissance of the black people in America. The progress they made in this period in all areas of life testified to enormous unspent spiritual, intellectual, and physical strength which had been pent up by centuries of slavery.⁴⁶

2.4 Jim Crow Laws Period

Although it could be believed that reconstruction amendments abolished racial discrimination of Afro-Americans, it was not true. What is more, the blacks lost a lot of rights they had gained before.

Segregation in the USA is closely connected with Jim Crow Laws nicknamed after a song and dance of fictional character of a black slave performed by a white actor Thomas D. Rice. Later on „Jim Crow“ was seen as a pejorative nickname for „the Negro“. Jim Crow laws were introduced especially in southern states from Delaware to California and from North Dakota to Texas and were effective from the beginning of 1880s till mid-1960s. The main aim of this racial caste system was to keep different races separated because Afro-Americans were considered to be only „second class citizens“, and keep black population under control.

Jim Crow Laws brought legal racial discrimination, lynching and violence. Public places were marked with restrictive signs saying „for white passengers“, „colored waiting rooms“ or „for rent to colored“. Strictly separated were public transport waiting rooms, theatres, libraries, lunch counters, lifts, places for church service or schools for blind people. Black children were educated in separated schools with lower quality of education, inter-marriage between the whites and the blacks was illegal, Afro-Americans were less paid and worked only on lower positions f.e. as

⁴⁶ IVANOV, Robert. *Blacks in United States History*, p. 153

cleaners. Employers had to provide separated toilets for the blacks and the whites, white convicts had to have separated cells and all facilities from the black ones in prisons.

In addition to this it was quite impossible for Afro-Americans to register to vote because they had to pay a „Pool Tax“ and most of them were too poor to be able to pay it and last but not least, they had to pass literacy tests and prove that they were able to read difficult texts - many of them were not able to pass these tests because a large number of black people were illiterate due to poor education. If they passed, they would be threatened and attacked. As an example I mention some strict norms which had to be kept during Jim Crow Laws era:

It shall be unlawful for a negro and white person to play together or in company with each other in any game of cards or dice, dominoes or checkers.⁴⁷

Birmingham, Alabama, 1930

A black male could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a white male because it implied being socially equal. Obviously, a black male could not offer his hand or any other part of his body to a white woman, because he risked being accused of rap.⁴⁸

Under no circumstance was a black male to offer to light the cigarette of a white female -- that gesture implied intimacy.⁴⁹

Whites did not use courtesy titles of respect when referring to the blacks, for example, Mr., Mrs., Miss., Sir, or Ma'am. Instead, blacks were called by their first names. The blacks had to use courtesy titles when referring to whites, and were not allowed to call them by their first names.⁵⁰

Racial segregation was not only a problem of southern states, but in northern states there was practised only segregation “de facto”. For better understanding „de facto“ segregation we can mention a situation concerning segregation of a school

⁴⁷ Jim Crow Laws. *Separate Is Not Equal: Brown v. Board Education* [online]. Washington (D.C.): The National Museum of American History [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/jim-crow.html>

⁴⁸ PILGRIM, David. *What Was Jim Crow* [online]. Big Rapids (Michigan): Jim Crow Museum of racist memorabilia, Sept 2000. Edited 2012 [cit. 2015-02-08]. Available from: <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

system:

because school budgets were often linked to property taxes, poor neighbourhoods tended to have poorer schools with inferior facilities. And the schools with a large non-white population tended to be staffed by inexperienced teachers who did not have seniority to choose a school district with more money and better resources.⁵¹

Jim Crow Laws influenced whole life of Afro-Americans. It was not about laws, but also about way of life. Anna Deavere Smith, an American actress, quoted:

you know if we were to look back and how we were in 1955 living in Jim Crow, living in segregation, living in segregated schools, it's hard to believe that it was America, but it really was."⁵²

2.5 Plessy v. Ferguson

The Plessy v. Ferguson case is believed to be one of major U.S. Supreme Court decisions concerning racial segregation in the USA. This decision gave official consent to the “separate but equal” doctrine.

Homer Adolph Plessy was an American successful businessman living in Louisiana. Because he had an Afro-American grandparent he was defined by Louisiana law “octoroon” - a one-eighth Afro-American and he was considered coloured. John Howard Ferguson was an American lawyer and judge known as a defendant in this case. On June 7, 1892 Homer Plessy was returning home by train from New Orleans. He bought a first class ticket and boarded a “whites only” car and sat there. He was asked by railroad officials to change his seat and sit in a car for coloured people. He refused. After that he was jailed. All Louisiana courts decided that he broke *Separate Car Act of 1890*. He appealed to the Supreme Court and raised objections that this law is incompatible with *the Thirteenth Amendment* (the abolition

⁵¹ ROSENBAUM, Judith. De Facto Segregation in the North: Introductory Essay. *Living the Legacy* [online]. Brookline (Massachusetts): Jewish Women's Archive, ©1998-2015 [cit. 2015-01-27] Available from: <http://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/de-facto-segregation-in-north-introductory-essay>

⁵² Jim Crow Quotes. *BrainyQuote* [online]. Xplore: ©2001-2015 [cit.2015-01-27]. Available from: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/jim_crow.html#4UvdpEclrTllqcgJ.99

of slavery) and *the Fourteenth Amendment* (equal law protection) of *the U.S. Constitution*. This complaint was by seven-to-one majority refused on May 18, 1896. “The Plessy decision set the precedent that “separate” facilities for the blacks and the whites were constitutional as long as they were equal.”⁵³ But this statement was only rarely fulfilled.

In the pre-war period two important movements were established. In 1905 an American sociologist, historian and civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois founded the Niagara movement which was a forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Niagara movement was characterized by a radical approach. They required equality in all areas of American life. Du Bois was also a leader of the NAACP formed by a group of white and black intellectuals and established in New York in 1909. The NAACP was the most influential African-American civil rights organisation for a half century.

Afro-American population was not about to give up their struggle for equality and the birth of the most influential personality of struggle for equality Martin Luther King, Jr. only expedited everything.

⁵³ Plessy v. Ferguson. In *The Rise and the Fall of Jim Crow* [online]. Newark (New Jersey): Educational Broadcasting Corporation, ©2002. [cit. 2015-02-08]. Available from: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_plessy.html

3 MARTIN LUTHER KING

Martin Luther King, Jr. is definitely one of the greatest symbols of struggle for equality of Afro-Americans in the USA, a key figure of the nonviolent African-American Civil Rights Movement and last but not least, a Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1964. He was also in memoriam awarded two highest civilian awards of the USA - in 1977 he was honoured by President Jimmy Carter with the Presidential Medal of Freedom which “[...] is bestowed to people who have made meritorious act or service which has aided the United States in the prosecution of a war against an enemy or enemies and for which an award of another United States medal or decoration is considered inappropriate.”⁵⁴ During this ceremonial occasion President Jimmy Carter said about Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Martin Luther King, Jr., was the conscience of his generation. He gazed upon the great wall of segregation and saw that the power of love could bring it down. From the pain and exhaustion of his fight to fulfil the promises of our founding fathers for our humblest citizens, he wrung his eloquent statement of his dream for America. He made our nation stronger because he made it better. His dream sustains us yet.⁵⁵

In 2004 he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by the United State Congress. This medal was initially bestowed on military leaders but later on “the Congressional Gold Medal was used to recognize achievements in many fields, including world and space exploration, science, medicine, arts, entertainment, and humanitarian and public service.”⁵⁶ His life has become a great inspiration for thousands of people all around the world and his quotes are well known even nowadays. Martin Luther King’s personality can be simply described in five words:

⁵⁴ TRUMAN, Harry S. Executive order 9586 – The Medal of Freedom. In PETERS, Gerhard – WOOLEY, John T. *American Presidency Project* [online], ©1999-2015 [cit. 2015-02-06]. Available from: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=59291>

⁵⁵ CARTER, Jimmy. Presidential Medal of Freedom Remarks on Presenting the Medal to Dr. Jonas E. Salk and to Martin Luther King, Jr.: July 11, 1977. In PETERS, Gerhard – WOOLEY, John T. *American Presidency Project* [online], ©1999-2015 [cit. 2015-02-09]. Available from: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7784>.

⁵⁶ TORREO, Barbara Salazar. *A Guide to Major Congressional and Presidential Awards* [online]. Montgomery (Alabama): The Air University, March 31, 2004. Reviewed 07-January-2015 [cit 2015-02-09]. Available from: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/rs20884.pdf>

patience, bravery, leadership, persistence and trustworthiness.

His attitude to life is clear thanks to following quotations:

“I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”⁵⁷

“If a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.”⁵⁸

No wonder that these quotations became life mottos of many Afro-Americans. They express a desire for better living conditions and at the same time the fact that it is worth fighting.

3.1 Martin Luther King's Personal Life

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born as a second child of a Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. (1899 - 1984) and a former school teacher Alberta Williams King (1904 - 1974) in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929. He was brought up together with his younger brother Alfred Daniel Williams King (1930 - 1969) and older sister Willie Christine King, future Christine King Farris, the only living sibling born in 1927. Very interesting fact is that both he and his father were originally named Michael, but his father had their names changed into Martin in honour of the German reformer Martin Luther. King was influenced by racial segregation since his early childhood. When he was about six, he kept friendship with a white boy from his neighbourhood. When he started to attend a segregated school for Afro-Americans, their friendship was finished. King was very successful when speaking about education. He was so clever that he skipped the ninth and the twelfth grades of high school. Already at the age of fifteen he started to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta. Without any bigger problems he

⁵⁷ KING, Martin Luther. *Acceptance Speech: Nobel Peace Prize 1964* [online]. Nobelprize.org, 2012 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance_en.html

⁵⁸ KING, Martin Luther. *Speech at Great March on Detroit: 23 June 1963* [online]. Stanford (California): The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_speech_at_the_great_march_on_detroit/

graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology in 1948. He continued studying in Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania where he gained a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951. His study period was interrupted by marriage with Coretta Scott (1927-2006) in 1953. After that the couple settled in Montgomery in Alabama and Martin Luther King, Jr. started to act as a pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. As a Christian minister he usually quoted during his sermons Christian pacifist authors and he was highly influenced by Jesus Christ and Christian gospels that were very usual for him. He had 4 children: Yolanda King (1955 - 2007), Martin Luther King III (*1957), Dexter Scott King (*1961) and Bernice King (*1963).

After a Bachelor of Divinity degree he received his Ph.D. degree in systematic biology at Boston University in 1955. Between years 1957-1967 he was honoured with several doctorates by universities all around the world. In addition Martin Luther King, Jr. was a member of executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. This civil right organisation was founded in 1909 and has fought for social justice of all Americans since nowadays and it is considered to be the oldest and the largest association of this kind in the USA.

3.2 Brown v. Board Education of Topeka

The time of Martin Luther King was also the time when an extremely important verdict was delivered by the U.S. Supreme Court. The organisation called the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People established in 1909 wanted to let review the decision on the Plessy v. Ferguson case and the doctrine "separate but equal". In 1950s the NAACP raised an objection against segregation in public schools.

An American historian George Brown Tindall states that Brown v. Board Education of Topeka is a name given to five separate cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. On May 14, 1954 the jury unanimously reached the verdict and made school segregation unconstitutional. The Chief Justice Earl Warren stated that there was no place for segregation in public school. The court announced that it was necessary to admit this decision as a standard for former cases. Surprisingly, this decision initially evoked quite calm reactions in southern states, but they were followed by

intensification of hostility and resistance. At the end of 1956 there were no schools for both white and black students. Racial segregation still flourished in southern schools and colleges.⁵⁹

3.3 Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955

In 1955 Martin Luther King's hometown became a centre of the first Afro-American nonviolent demonstration which was given name Montgomery Bus Boycott. The first key situation that led up to this boycott happened in March 1955. Claudette Colvin, a fifteen-year-old student, refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. She did not follow Jim Crow Laws - laws that enforced racial segregation in the South. In 1890 all Afro-Americans were given a status "separate but equal":

the phrase used to support the principle of segregation in the southern US. It was based on a US Supreme Court decision in 1896 which said that segregation was legal provided that the separate facilities for black people were equal to those for white people. It was also used as an excuse for segregation in schools, restaurants, etc., where conditions for black people were usually much worse than those for white people.⁶⁰

A classmate of Claudette Colvin, Annie Larkins Prince described the situation in the bus in these words:

the bus was getting crowded and I remember him (the bus driver) looking through the rear-view mirror asking her to get up out of her seat, which she didn't,' said a classmate at the time, Annie Larkins Price. 'She didn't say anything. She just continued looking out the window. She decided on that day that she wasn't going to move.'⁶¹

After that Colvin was arrested. Nevertheless, her brave act contributed to

⁵⁹See TINDALL, George Brown. *USA: dějiny států*, p. 677

⁶⁰Separate but equal. In *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* [online]. Oxford University Press, ©2015 [cit.2015-02-09]. Available from: <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/separate-but-equal>

⁶¹ DAWKINS, Amanda. South Wire: Forgotten Heroine of Bus Boycott Cited in 50th Anniversary Year. *AP News* [online]. February 5, 2005 [cit. 2015-02-09]. Available from: <http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/apnews/stories/020505/D88256203.shtml>

desegregation of Alabama's bus system. Although she is not as well-known as Rosa Parks, she was the one who started the fight.

Rosa Parks was arrested for definitely the same thing nine months later - on December 1, 1955. Thanks to her act of defiance she became known as „the first lady of civil rights“ or “the mother of the freedom movement“. Then Montgomery Bus Boycott started and it lasted 381 days. It was planned by Nixon and Martin Luther King, Jr. accepted the leadership of the demonstration. During this time, his house was bombed and he was arrested. What was the content of the flyer which occurred after Rosa Parks's arrest?

Another woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down. It is the second time since the Claudette Colvin case that a Negro woman has been arrested for the same thing. This has to be stopped. Negroes have rights too, for if Negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are Negro, yet we are arrested, or have to stand over empty seats. If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it may be you, or your daughter, or mother. This woman's case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus. You can also afford to stay out of town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups, don't ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off all buses Monday. ⁶²

The flyer is fully cited, because it depicts an atmosphere of those days and it would be impossible to leave something out.

The boycott ended on December 20, 1956 and Afro-American passengers were allowed to choose whatever bus seat they wanted because segregated seating in city buses was proclaimed unconstitutional. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a national hero and the most favourite spokesman and fighter for civil rights. After this great success he founded together with other civil rights activists The Southern Christian Leadership

⁶² FEENEY, Mark. Rosa Parks, Civil Rights Icon, Dead at 92. *The Boston Globe* [online]. October 25, 2005 [cit.2015-01-21]. Available from: http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2005/10/25/rosa_parks_civil_rights_icon_dead_at_92/?page=3

Conference (SCLC). The main goal of this group was to non-violently achieve full equality for Afro-Americans. As a president of the SCLC he travelled a lot, was giving lectures and met many religious personalities and political leaders. He had also a chance to meet his great inspiration - Gandhi.

3.4 March on Washington For Jobs and Freedom, 1963

On February 1, 1960 the first mass movement in the U.S. history was formed. It was called „sit-in“. This movement was established by four Afro-American university students from Greensboro who took seats „for white people only“ at lunch counter in a store and ordered coffee. Hana Marková states in her Bachelor Thesis *The African American Civil Rights Movement As a Long Lasting Process of Struggle for Freedom* that Harvard Sitkoff in his work *The Struggle for Black Equality 1954-1992* describes the first “sit-in” situation like this way: “They knew the waitress would not serve them because they were black, so they proceeded with their plan. They sat and waited to be served whole afternoon, until the store closed.”⁶³ This movement was spreading as well as their protest actions - they started to practise also „kneel-in“ in churches or „wade-in“ at outdoor swimming pools. They refused defence even though they were beaten with sticks, cattle-prods or they were burnt with cigarettes. Many of them paid with their lives.

In April 1963, Martin Luther King launched a campaign in Birmingham. He was arrested and imprisoned during numerous demonstrations. While being in a jail he wrote his famous work *The Letter from Birmingham Jail* defending the nonviolent resistance. This work later became one of classical civil rights works.

The Birmingham campaign was followed by others and the civil rights movement finally culminated in March on Washington on August 28, 1963. More than 200,000 demonstrators were marching to the Lincoln Memorial and singing “We Shall Overcome”. Martin Luther King’s 16-minute speech which he presented became a symbol for a fight for equality and human rights all over the world. And already

⁶³ Marková, Hana. *The African American Civil Rights Movement As a Long Lasting Process of Struggle for Freedom*, p. 56

children at elementary school know his „I Have a Dream“.

King said:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama [...] little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. ⁶⁴

This event “[...] is widely regarded as a watershed moment in the history of the American civil rights movement and a factor in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”⁶⁵

This act outlawed discrimination based on colour, race, nation or religion in all public places and facilities such as restaurants, theatres, schools or parks as well as it banned gender discrimination by employers and unequal voting rights. That was the very important step towards the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* signed by President Lyndon Johnson.

3.5 Selma Voting Rights Movement, 1965

At the beginning of the year 1965 Martin Luther King, Jr. organised together with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) a campaign for registration of Afro-American voters in the South. The plan was to go from Selma in Alabama to the capital city of Alabama - Montgomery. The first attempt to organise this march was realized on March 7, 1965

⁶⁴ KING, Martin Luther. I have a dream: delivered 28 August, 1963. American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches [online]. ©2001-2015 [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihavedream.htm>

⁶⁵ Martin Luther King Jr. *History.com* [online]. A&E Television Network, 2009 [cit. 2015-01-21]. Available from <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/martin-luther-king-jr>

and was unsuccessful because a crowd of demonstrators was violently broken up by police. Later on this day was nicknamed „Bloody Sunday“ because about 600 protesters were attacked by police. After that the march was permitted. King finally organized the march on March 9. This action ended in Montgomery on March 25 and King delivered on the steps of the state capitol another influential speech known as „How Long, Not Long“ or „Our God is Marching On“ which encouraged people to continue in struggle and gave them a kind of hope.

“ How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.”⁶⁶

In August, Congress passed *the Voting Rights Act of 1965* which eliminated all discriminatory voting practices common mainly in southern states.⁶⁷ These practises involved for instance literacy tests. According to Paul Johnson due to this Act a number of Afro-Americans registered in electoral list rose in Mississippi, where Afro-Americans created 36 % of the population, from 6% to 71% (at the end of the year 1970).⁶⁸

3.6 Riots of Young Radicals

Soon after *the Voting Rights Act* the movement started to vary. On August 11, 1966 there was a mass riot in streets of Afro-American district Watts in Los Angeles. During these rebellions about forty people lost their lives, 4,000 people were arrested and property damages reached \$40 million. And it was only the beginning of racial rebellions. The riots continued following four years for instance in Chicago and Cleveland (summer 1966), Detroit and in other forty American cities. So called „Black Power“ became a popular movement for young radicals, but this movement was markedly distant from King’s nonviolent concept. H. Rap Brown, a leader of SNCC, urged Afro-Americans on killing white people in 1967.

⁶⁶ KING, Martin Luther. *Our God Is Marching On!: 25 March 1965* [online]. Stanford (California): The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute [cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/our_god_is_marching_on/

⁶⁷ See *Voting Rights Act* [online]. Ourdocuments.gov [cit. 2015-01-21]. Available from: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100>

⁶⁸ See JOHNSON, Paul. *Dějiny dvacátého století*, p. 627

3.7 Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 when he was giving a speech to support worker's strike on a balcony in Memphis, Tennessee. His death caused sadness not only among Afro-Americans, but also among white people. On April 7, 1968 President Johnson declared a national day of mourning. King's death was followed by riots in Chicago and Washington, D.C. King's murderer James Earl Ray (1928-1998) was captured at London Heathrow Airport two months later, pleaded guilty to murder and sentenced to a 99-year prison term.

Martin Luther King Day which commemorates Martin Luther King's personality, life and his achievements was declared a federal holiday by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 and first celebrated in the USA in 1986. It is held every year on the third Monday in January.

3.8 Summary of Both Historical Chapters

A lot of time has passed since the first blacks occurred in America in 1619. They were seen only as inferior human race, worked as slaves in horrible conditions on plantations and had no rights. The way towards equal rights of Afro-Americans has been extremely long. Although racial discrimination was de facto outlawed many years ago, it is still deeply ingrained in people's mind and behaviour.

Crucial steps towards equality meant for Afro-American inhabitants many acts such as *The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves*, which came into effect in 1808. Incredibly important was undoubtedly *the Declaration of Independence* speaking about equality of all men as well as *the 13th Amendment* abolishing slavery in the USA, *the 14th Amendment* giving citizenship and same laws to all Americans and *the 15th Amendment* declaring equal rights to vote for all American citizens. The Supreme Court decisions known as *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* had also great impact on development of that situation. Unfortunately, Jim Crow Laws period meant intensification of racial discrimination.

The most famous and influential personality who fought for equal rights of Afro-

Americans was indubitably Martin Luther King. He became a civil rights leader. The 20th century was full of extremely revolutionary events. As an illustration we can mention a verdict made by the U.S. Supreme Court called Brown vs Board Education of Topeka or Montgomery Bus Boycott resulting in outlawing segregated seating in public means of transport. Last but not least, we have to mention March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 led by Martin Luther King. As a consequence *the Civil Rights Act of 1964* outlawed discrimination based on skin colour, race, nation or religion in all public places. From this moment it was only small step towards *the Voting Rights Act of 1965* eliminating all discriminatory voting practises. Surely the fight for equality did not end with this moment. Many displays of racism can be seen till nowadays and racial discrimination remains an enormous problem of current society.

4 RACIAL SEGREGATION IN AMERICAN FILM IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

“Racial segregation and racism: topics that were a challenge for an American film.”⁶⁹ That is the title of an article written by Oldřich Mánert for a webpage Xman.cz. The subtitle of his article comments on an American film industry: “Today it looks like scented factory which does not know discrimination on the grounds of colour, but Hollywood has not always been like this. Also American cinematography reflected attitudes that governed society.”⁷⁰ Racial segregation and racism has been so oppressive problem for whole American society that many films with these topics have come into existence. What they have in common is that they have mostly pointed at problems and horrors of everyday life of Afro-Americans and have depicted situation in society.

According to the fact that it would be hardly impossible to mention all films with topics of racial segregation, discrimination and racism, my thesis is focused on some films directed in the late 20th century. I tried to choose most interesting, influential and thematically different ones such as *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Long Walk Home* and *In the Heat of the Night*.

4.1 To Kill a Mocking Bird

To Kill a Mocking Bird is a black and white American drama directed by Robert Mullingham in 1962. It is based on a novel of the same name written by Harper Lee and published in 1960, which was awarded Pulitzer Prize of 1961. The film won the Academy Award (Oscar) in three categories: Best Actor in a Leading Role (Gregory

⁶⁹ MÁNERT, Oldřich. Segregace a rasismus: témata, která byla pro americký film výzvou. *Xman.cz* [online]. October 30, 2012 [cit. 2015-04-21]. Available from: http://xman.idnes.cz/rasismus-segregace-americka-kinematografie-feu-xman-styl.aspx?c=A121024_120044_xman-styl_fro (translated by Vendula Morávková)

⁷⁰ Ibid. (translated by Vendula Morávková)

Peck – Atticus Finch), Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (screenplay by Horton Foote) and Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, Black and White.

The film is set in Alabama in Maycomb in the 1930s and it is narrated by six-year-old Jane Louise Finch nicknamed Scout. Her father, Atticus Finch, is a lawyer who admitted to defend a Negro man Tom Robinson, who was accused of raping and beating a white woman Mayella Violet Ewell. This serious storyline is going on a background of innocence, seemingly carefree, children's world. Scout enjoys holidays together with her older brother Jem and neighbour's nephew named Charles Baker Harris, simply called Dill. As it is typical for children, they believe in a terrifying story about Arthur Radley nicknamed Boo, who is said to have to be tied to a bed in order not to be bad for others. They use every single opportunity to see if it is true and set out in, for them, horrifying expeditions to his house. Although their father is not in a good situation because of defending a Negro which is usually seen as useless, and because many people believe in guilt of a Negro, he is a good father and citizen who acts honestly and brings their children up in the best way. As the trial with Tom Robinson is coming, he is being threatened and intimidated by Mayella's father Bob Ewell, who drinks a lot. What is more the night before the trial he has to protect Tom Robinson because a group of white men from Old Sarum wants to kill him. The trial shows a false testimony of Mayella. It is revealed that Tom was asked by her to help her, then she tried to seduce him and because she did not succeed and felt blemished that she was refused by a black man she only wanted to send him into a prison. In reality she was beaten by Bob Ewell. During the trial Atticus comes with an unquestionable evidence of Tom's innocence. Mayella had to be beaten by a left hand, but Tom cannot move with it. Despite this evidence, the jury decides to find Tom guilty and sends him to prison. On the way he is shot by a sheriff. Even though Atticus did not win a trial he is very appreciated by black-skinned citizens. Finally, Bob Ewell is killed with a kitchen knife by Boo Radley when he attacks Atticus Finch's children when going from school and Boo saves their lives. Firstly, Atticus is afraid that Bob was murdered by his own son, but a sheriff asks him whether he really believed that it was him. It is clear that it was Boo who killed him and they decide not to announce it to the police.

Atticus Finch's great personality is clearly visible via examples and advice he gives to his daughter Scout. Following quotes also help to create an idea of his personality.

Atticus Finch: I remember when my daddy gave me that gun. [...] he supposed the temptation to go after birds would be too much, and that I could shoot all the blue jays I wanted, if I could hit 'em, but to remember it was a sin to kill a mockingbird...Well, I reckon because mockingbirds don't do anything but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat people's gardens, don't nest in the corncribs, they don't do one thing but just sing their hearts out for us.⁷¹

Atticus Finch: If you just learn a single trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.⁷²

Scout: If you shouldn't be defending him, then why are you doing it?

Atticus: For a number of reasons. The main one is that if I didn't, I couldn't hold my head up in town. I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do somethin' again.⁷³

Scout: Mr Tate was right.

Atticus: What do you mean?

Scout: Well, it would be sort of like shooting a mockingbird, wouldn't it?⁷⁴

(when discussing whether it would be right to arrest Boo)

The film depicts unequal status of Afro-Americans and white people in Alabama as well as prejudices against Afro-Americans which were considered to be normal those days. It is clearly visible in many scenes. For instance Bob Ewell asks Atticus Finch if it was possible that had overheard that he had believed more in Tom Robinson's words than in words of white people. Bob Ewell was sure that it could not be true.⁷⁵ Another example of view on Afro-American inhabitants could be apparent from words of Bob Ewell.

⁷¹ *To Kill a Mockingbird* [film]. Directed by Robert MULLIGAN. USA: Universal Pictures, 1962.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*

I'm real sorry they picked you to defend that nigger that raped my Mayella. I don't know why I didn't kill him myself instead of goin' to the sheriff. That would have saved you and the sheriff and the taxpayers lots of trouble...⁷⁶

The film describes also rigid codes of the then society through the words said by Atticus during the trial with Tom Robinson:

she tempted a Negro. She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable. She kissed a black man. Not an old uncle, but a strong, young Negro man.⁷⁷

And last but not least, the film depicts everyday life in Alabama of those times. As it was usual the Finchs have a servant Calpurnia at home. She cares about children and Atticus, cooks and tidies up for them. She is always helpful and responds to all requests simply: „Yes, Sir.“⁷⁸ A social status of Afro-Americans is indirectly captured during the trial. All Afro-Americans observe the proceedings in the court room from the upper gallery and it follows that they were not allowed to stand downstairs together with white citizens.

4.2 Mississippi Burning

Mississippi Burning is an American film directed by Alan Parker in 1988. Gene Hackman (as Agent Rupert Anderson), Willem Dafoe (as Agent Alan Ward) or Frances McDormand (as Mrs Pell) starred in main roles in the film. The film was nominated for many film awards, also for the Academy Awards in seven categories, but succeeded only in one of them – the film won an Oscar for “Best Cinematography”. The film received a lot of positive criticisms. Desson Howe, a Washington Post Staff Writer quoted: “Mississippi Burning speeds down the

⁷⁶ *To Kill a Mockingbird* [film]. Directed by Robert MULLIGAN. USA: Universal Pictures, 1962.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

complicated, painful path of civil rights in search of a good thriller.⁷⁹ Roger Ebert from Chicago Sun-Time wrote:

[...] "Mississippi Burning" feels like a movie made from the inside out, a movie that knows the ways and people of its small Southern city so intimately that, having seen it, I know the place I'd go for a cup of coffee and the place I'd steer clear from. This acute sense of time and place - rural Mississippi, 1964 - is the lifeblood of the film. More than any other film I've seen, this one gets inside the passion of race relations in America.⁸⁰

The film starts with the famous and common shot on separated water fountains, one is labelled „white“ and the second one „colored“. The following shot is on a burning church. In the next scene three young boys, civil rights workers, are chased by some cars, after that they stop and shots can be heard. The plot is set in a small town in Mississippi in 1964. Two FBI agents come to the town to investigate a case of three kidnapped boys – two were white, one boy was black. Local policemen insist on the fact that they released three boys and that they left the country. Gradually, it is shown that the kidnapping should be caused by secret members of the Ku Klux Klan living in the city. They set houses of the blacks on fire, beat them, kidnap them and kill them. FBI agents want to know the truth and do not want to give up. After finding a car of three boys in swamp, Agent Alan Ward calls more agents and reporters start to be interested in this case. Agents question white suspects as well as black ones, but the blacks are too afraid to speak. Tension is intensifying, attacks of the Ku Klux Klan continue. Finally, one's suspect wife, Mrs Pell, gives a talk and reveals that her husband was that night of July, 21 in one of those cars and also says where corpses of three boys are buried. It helps agents to convict members of the Ku Klux Klan guilty and send them into prison. The film ends with the scene where the blacks and the whites are singing together. Agents leave Mississippi.

The film demonstrates the situation and tension in southern states during Martin Luther King's fight for equality of Afro-Americans in Mississippi. As we can see southern states did not agree with this fight and did not want to change the situation.

⁷⁹ HOWE, Desson. Mississippi Burning. *The Washington Post* [online]. December 09, 1998 [cit. 2015-03-11]. Available from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/mississippiburninghowe_a0b1d2.htm

⁸⁰ EBERT, Roger. Mississippi Burning. *Roger Ebert.com* [online]. Chicago (Illinois): Ebert Digital, December 09, 1988 [cit. 2015-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/mississippi-burning-1988>

The film shows that there was blatant racial hatred against Afro-Americans. Here are film scenes that confirm this statement. A white member of the civil service is called by policeman “nigger-loving Jew-boy”⁸¹ and all Afro-Americans are called simply „coloured“.

Mayor Tilman: Fact is, we got two cultures down here: a white culture, and a colored culture. Now, that's the way it always has been, and that's the way it always will be.⁸²

Sheriff Ray Stuckey: Do you like baseball, do you, Anderson?

Anderson: Yeah, I do. You know, it's the only time when a black man can wave a stick at a white man and not start a riot.⁸³

The inequality can be even clearer due to an approach of a judge to the verdict: ”I'm gonna sentence you each to five years' imprisonment. But I'm gonna suspend these sentences.”⁸⁴ And when speaking with Clayton Towney, a local businessman:

Clayton Towney: All I know is we got 500 niggers in this county who ain't registered to vote yet. And, as far as I'm concerned, they never will.

Agent Rupert: So tell your stiff suits up in Washington, D.C., they ain't gonna change us one bit.

Clayton Towney : Unless it's over my dead body.Or a lot of dead niggers.⁸⁵

Difference in behaviour towards the whites and Afro-Americans is expressed both through the words of Mrs Pell and a dialogue between agents Rupert and Alan. “Mrs Pell: Do you think you'd be here if it weren't for those two white boys?”⁸⁶

Anderson: You know, if I were a Negro, I'd probably think the same way they do.

Ward: If you were a Negro, nobody would give a damn what you thought.⁸⁷

Another feature that goes through the film is the fact that white people did not

⁸¹ *Mississippi Burning* [film]. Directed by Alan PARKER. USA: Orion Pictures, 1988.

⁸² *Mississippi Burning* [film]. Directed by Alan PARKER. USA: Orion Pictures, 1988.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

sympathize with Martin Luther King. In many scenes there are allusions to him or the NAACP. White local people blame him for attracting public attention to southern states as well as for black revolts. For example Sheriff says that publicity around it got them into trouble.⁸⁸ He also quotes: “NAACP. Do you know what it stands for? Niggers, Alligators, Apes, Coons and Possums.”⁸⁹

The film also depicts segregated Mississippi. When agents going into a restaurant there are separated places for coloured and white people. Because seats for the whites are overcrowded and agent Alan Ward does not want to wait he goes into the section of coloured. He attracts the attention of all customers, everybody is quiet.

Rupert Anderson: “That's coloured down there. Don't even think about it.”⁹⁰

In the city there operates the Ku Klux Klan. They burn churches and houses of the blacks, set crosses on fire, kidnap and kill the blacks. Cases of lynching are not rare. Despite this situation, Afro-Americans fight for equality and they believe in better future. It is visible through the words of for instance black priests.

Maybe there'll come a time when we won't have to say "Mr Stuckey". One day there'll come a time when we'll just say “Stuckey” or “Sheriff”. And one day there'll come a time when the sheriff won't even be a white man.⁹¹

They want me to say: “Let us not forget that two white boys also died helping Negroes help themselves.” They want me to say: “We mourn with the mothers of these two white boys.” But the state of Mississippi won't even allow these white boys to be buried in the same cemetery as this. [...] What is an unalienable right if you are a negro? What does it mean, Equal Treatment under the law? What-what does it mean, Liberty and justice for all? Now I say to these people: “Look at the face of this young man, and you will see the face of a black man. But if you look at the blood shed, it is red! It is like yours! It is JUST... LIKE... YOURS!”⁹²

In the film there are some characters who fight against this inequality and

⁸⁸See *Mississippi Burning* [film]. Directed by Alan PARKER. USA: Orion Pictures, 1988.

⁸⁹*Mississippi Burning* [film]. Directed by Alan PARKER. USA: Orion Pictures, 1988.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

injustice. These characters do not make differences between the whites and the blacks. It is Agent Ward, who investigates the case and wants to find offender and punish him, and it is Mrs Pell, who cradles black baby and explains to Agent Anderson where the hatred against the blacks comes from.

Hatred isn't something you're born with. It gets taught. At school, they said segregation what's said in the bible... Genesis 9, Verse 27. At 7 years of age, you get told it enough times, you believe it. You believe the hatred. You live it... you breathe it. You marry it.⁹³

The film ends with Mr Ward's memorable quote when finding a hanged man. Agent Rupert wonders why he did it if he had not been a member of the Ku Klux Klan and according to him he had not been guilty. Agent Ward answers: "Anyone's guilty who watches this happen and pretends it isn't."⁹⁴

4.3 Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner is a dramatic comedy directed by Stanley Kramer in the USA in 1967. The film stars Spencer Tracy (as Matt Drayton) and Katherine Hepburn (as Christina Drayton). It won Oscars for Best Actress in a Leading Role (Katherine Hepburn) and for Best Writing Story and Screenplay (William Rose). Bosley Crowther, a top critic of *The New York Times*, commented on it that it: "[...] is a most delightfully acted and gracefully entertaining film, fashioned much in the manner of a stage drawing-room comedy, that seems to be about something much more serious and challenging than it actually is."⁹⁵

The film is set in San Francisco in the 1960's and the main theme is an interracial marriage between a black man and a white woman. That was absolutely unacceptable in those times. Twenty-three-year-old Joanna Drayton returns from a vacation from Hawaii with her fiancé, a black widower and highly educated doctor

⁹³ *Mississippi Burning* [film]. Directed by Alan PARKER. USA: Orion Pictures, 1988.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ CROWTHER, Bosley. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. *The New York Times* [online]. December 12, 1967 [cit. 2015-04-01]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C03E6DE1430E23BBC4A52DFB467838C679EDE&partner=Rotten%2520Tomatoes>

John Prentice. She wants to present him to her parents and to marry him. Joanna was brought up by liberal parents – what is more her father fought for equality of Afro-Americans. Despite this fact, both of them are afraid of parents' reaction. For the first time, Joanna's mother, Christina Drayton, loses her tongue and does not believe her eyes. After that she is charmed by John's behaviour. A bigger problem occurs with the arrival of Joanna's father. Although he is liberal he cannot deal with it. John Prentice says to Joanna's parents about their love, but he informs them that he will not marry their daughter unless they consent to it and gives an ultimatum to them. They have to decide in only one day. When John calling his parents Joanna invites them to dinner. For the first time John's parents are shocked by Joanna's skin colour too. After long talks both fathers and mothers agree with their marriage although they know that they will have to overcome several problems and that they will be confronted with many jeers.

The film depicts the problem of interracial marriage in the USA in the 1960s. Joanna does not fully realize the problem of different races because she was brought up in a liberal family. The way how she was brought up is described by her mother:

we told her it was wrong to believe that white people were somehow essentially superior to black people or the brown or the red or the yellow ones, for that matter. People who thought that way were wrong to think that way. Sometimes hateful, usually stupid, but always wrong. That's what we said and when we said it, we did not add: "But don't ever fall in love with a colored man."⁹⁶

Joanna's character is also visible through the words of John Prentice. When speaking with Joanna's father about their love he explains: "She's not at all like anyone I've ever known. It's not just that our color difference doesn't matter to her. It's that she doesn't seem to think there is any difference."⁹⁷

Surprisingly, their black female-servant Tillie is very angry about their relationship and shows it in many situations. She also calls John "a negro", does not believe him and is suspicious of him. "Civil rights is one thing. This here is something else."⁹⁸ Another important character is Monsignor Ryan, who is a lovely family friend.

⁹⁶ *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* [film]. Directed by Stanley KRAMER. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1967.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

He is very liberal and plays an important role in persuading Joanna's father. He does not follow any prejudices and supports their love. "You know, you two make me feel quite extraordinarily happy."⁹⁹ Interestingly, the film shows that Afro-Americans were aware of different social status connected with their skin colour. The interracial marriage was for them as unacceptable as for the whites. When John talking to her father he quotes: "You think of yourself as a colored man. I think of myself as a man."¹⁰⁰

The film also depicts the situation, which was in the USA. Mr Prentice expresses worries about consequences of their marriage. He says that John will break the law in sixteen or in seventeen states and he will become a criminal.¹⁰¹ Last but not least, Mr Drayton adumbrates what will happen after their marriage and gives them consent.

There'll be a hundred million people right here in this country who'll be shocked and offended and appalled at the two of you. And the two of you will just have to ride that out. Maybe every day for the rest of your lives. You can ignore those people or your can feel sorry for them and for their prejudices and their bigotry and their blind hatreds and stupid fears. [...] But you're two wonderful people who happened to fall in love and happen to have a pigmentation problem.¹⁰²

It is important to say that this story is set in San Francisco, California which was segregated but not to the same degree as in the South. Through the film we cannot see any segregated places for the blacks and the whites or any serious cases of racism, however, it is obvious that Afro-American were seen as a lower race and it was absolutely unacceptable to enter into marriage with them.

4.4 Do the Right Thing

Do the Right Thing is an American film directed by Spike Lee, a black director born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1989. Although the film was nominated for two Oscars

⁹⁹ *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* [film]. Directed by Stanley KRAMER. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1967.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

and several other awards such as the Golden Globe Awards, it did not win any.

The film openly shows coexistence of different nationalities, namely, Afro-Americans, Italian-Americans, Koreans and white Americans during hottest days of the year. Most of the time they only sit in streets, drink beer, have a chat and do nothing. An Afro-American boy Mookie is different. He delivers pizza for Sal's pizzeria. An American-Italian Salvatore 'Sal' Fragione runs his own pizzeria in this district for ages and his major income comes from Afro-American customers. He has two sons. The first one, Vito is a friend of Mookie, whereas the second one, Pino, is a kind of racist and hates father's customers. Firstly, life seems to run calmly and no bigger problems occur. The conflict starts with a complaint made by a black boy Bugging Out. He dislikes the fact that there are no photos of Afro-Americans hanging on Sal's "Wall of Fame" in his pizzeria. In addition, Sal does not like loud music played by Radio Raheem and he repeatedly requests to turn it off. However, Radio Raheem ignores it. One evening when the blacks complaining about no "brothas" (Afro-Americans) on the wall, Sal explodes and breaks his radio. This action leads to a serious rebellion in pizzeria which moves into streets of Brooklyn. The police come to calm the situation and a policeman murders Radio Raheem. The rebellion explodes into violence. Afro-Americans destroy Sal's pizzeria and set there a fire. At one moment they want to destroy a shop of Koreans, but they, unfortunately, change their mind because they are persuaded by Da Mayor that they do not cause any problems. The next morning everything is devastated and another hot day starts.

Spike Lee provides us with an extraordinary look at Afro-American life in Brooklyn in the late 20th. Initially, it depicts fragile interracial and international relationship that changes into racism. It is clear that either Mookie or Sal and Sal's sons are not fans of mixing different races. Mookie scolds his sister Jade for keeping extremely good relationship with Sal. Sal's son Pino usually calls the blacks Negroes and his father calls them various names. The film provides a perfect example of language spoken in this district. Most spoken word is "fuck".

Sal: The fuck is wrong with you? This is not about money. I could give a fuck about money. You see this fucking place? I built this fucking place with my bare fucking hands. Every light socket, every piece of tile – me, with these fucking hands.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ *Do the Right Thing* [film]. Directed by Spike LEE. USA: Universal Pictures, 1989.

Interracial tension and hatred can be easily shown via terms of abuse they call themselves. They use swear words connected with food and animals and Pino asks them for coming back to Africa, because this continent, as home country of all Afro-Americans, was seen as inferior.

Pino: You gold-teeth-chain wearing, fried-chicken-and-biscuit eating, monkey, ape, baboon, big thigh, fast-running, high-jumping, spear-chucking, three-hundred-sixty-degree-basketball-dunking titsun spade Moulan Yan. Take your fucking pizza-pizza and go the fuck back to Africa.¹⁰⁴

Last but not least, the film shows extreme popularity of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, who were human rights activists. A stuttering black man, Smiley, sells their photos and when the pizzeria is burning, he triumphantly puts their photos on the wall. Smiley also expresses necessity to continue in fight for equal rights although these human rights activists have already died. Moreover, the film ends with their photo and famous quotes about violence.

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is a descending spiral ending in destruction of all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroys.¹⁰⁵

I think there are plenty of good people in America, but there are also plenty of bad people in America and the bad ones are the ones who seem to have all power and be in these positions to block things that you and I need. Because this is the situation, you and I have to preserve the right to do what is necessary to bring an end to that situation and it does not mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time I am not against using

¹⁰⁴ *Do the Right Thing* [film]. Directed by Spike LEE. USA: Universal Pictures, 1989.

¹⁰⁵ KING, Luther Martin. *The Quest for Peace and Justice: Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 1964* (except for „everybody blind“ part) [online]. Nobelprize.org, 2012 [cit. 2015-04-20] Available from: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-lecture.html

violence in self-defence. I do not even call it violence when it is self-defence, I call it intelligence.¹⁰⁶

These famous quotes perfectly close the whole film and give a possibility to think about its content and truth.

4.5 The Long Walk Home

The Long Walk Home is an American film directed by Richard Pearce in 1990. The subtitle of the film is “A story of an incredible friendship”. Whoopi Goldberg (as Odessa Cotter), an actress primarily known for her role in *Sister Act*, and Sissy Spacek (as Miriam Thompson) starred in the movie. It was nominated for three awards, but unfortunately it won only one – Image Award for Outstanding Lead Actress (Whoopi Goldberg) in a Motion Picture.

The story is set in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 and runs on the background of some historically accurate events during Jim Crow Laws including Rosa Parks’ arrest and Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, but there is no evidence that the rest of the story ever happened. The whole story is narrated by seven-year-old Mary Catherine. The opening scene pictures three Afro-American maids on their way to work. They are entering the front part of the bus, paying a ticket, getting off and getting into the bus using the back door. Then they are standing although the front section of the bus reserved for the whites only is empty. Odessa Cotter has been a maid of the Thompsons for ages and she brings their daughter Mary Catherine up. Odessa has her loving husband and three children: Franklin, Theodore and Selma. One day boys return from their school with the flyer informing about Rosa Parks’ arrest and inviting to boycott buses. This moment indubitably changes her life. The next morning she calls Mrs Thompson to announce her late arrival to work due to the boycott. She offers her to pick her up twice a week. This decision will cause her many problems later. Odessa walks to work three times a week and is totally exhausted because she has to walk

¹⁰⁶ MALCOLM X. Speech to Peace Corps Workers: December 12, 1964. *Malcom X: the most complete collection...*[online]. [Cit. 2015-02-07]. Available from: <http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.cz/2013/07/speech-to-peace-corps-workers-december.html>

about fifteen kilometres a day and she returns home late. Mrs Thompson hides the fact that she picks their maid up from her husband who is not so liberal. What is more his brother Tunker is a kind of racist and believes in superiority of white race as it was common. One day Mr Norman Thompson stays at home thanks to a cold and asks about their maid. He wants to know how she gets to work every day. He finds out what his wife does. This situation culminates in quarrel and he forbids her to pick Odessa up. So Odessa walks to work in rain. Mrs Thompson does not want to stop helping Odessa. What is more she decides to drive for the carpools and help Afro-American citizens. Of course, she does it secretly. Finally, Tunker reveals this fact to Norman. Tunker meets Miriam Thompson on a parking lot and tries to persuade her to stop doing it, they begin to argue. She does not want to give up. A white man asks her: "You wanna act like a nigger? Then just get your daughter and walk with the rest of the niggers."¹⁰⁷ After that he breaks her car. Then Tunker slaps her after a short confrontation. Odessa as well as Mary Catherine is present. White men chant: "Walk, nigger, walk."¹⁰⁸ Afro-American maids start to sing, one of them invites Mrs Thompson and her daughter to stand in their line. The film ends with following historically accurate information:

on December 20, 1956, under Supreme Court order, the Negro citizens of Montgomery, for the first time in history, rode on city buses and sat where they wanted. The boycott had been won. Within weeks, 4 Negro churches and 2 homes were bombed. But a movement had begun. Montgomery was only the beginning, just the first step.¹⁰⁹

The film dramatizes events during Jim Crow Laws Period, Rosa Parks' arrest and Montgomery Bus Boycott. These historically accurate events are supplemented by a fictional story of lovely friendship between Odessa and Miriam. The film depicts both many aspects of everyday life of Afro-American citizens in segregated Montgomery and life of white citizens. The film mentions the personality of Martin Luther King many times. It is clear that he was extremely popular. This fact can be illustrated with following examples. When somebody telling information that King's house was bombed in a church, some people start to cry. When listening to his speech

¹⁰⁷ *The Long Walk Home* [film]. Directed by Richard PEARCE. USA: Miramax Films, 1990.

¹⁰⁸ *The Long Walk Home* [film]. Directed by Richard PEARCE. USA: Miramax Films, 1990.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

in a church, the church is overcrowded. The film ends with Martin Luther King's famous "How Long, Not Long" speech.

Throughout the film we can notice some period TV news and newspaper articles and it makes the film more trustworthy and adds him a documentary character. *The Long Walk Home* also shows us how it worked in segregated buses during Jim Crow Laws Period.

In the film we can notice several examples of racism. Firstly, all black citizens are called "niggers". Secondly, when Selma decides to travel by bus despite the boycott, she faces to a racist assault. She is attacked by three young white boys. Later on she gets off the bus and runs away and the bus driver throws boys out of the bus. But they pursue her. "I'm gonna teach you to ride our bus. Your water's the ditch, nigger. Catch that nigger."¹¹⁰ After that they begin to beat and kick her. Her brother Theodore comes to help her and he is seriously injured too. Fortunately, a cab driver helps them.

Importantly, the film presents two different characters among white people of those times. The first type was rather rare. It is presented by Miriam Thompson. She was brought up by a black maid and realizes how much Odessa helps her and she is very grateful for bringing her daughter up.

Mrs. Thompson: In a lot of ways, he's better husband than I am a wife. He's better with the children. He... You know, he can say a word and make them smile.

Odessa: Mrs. Thompson, he can't be a mother to them.

Mrs. Thompson: Odessa, you do the mothering. I saw the way you held Mary Catherine when she had the chicken pox, and you hadn't even had it.

Odessa: Mrs. Thompson, anybody would have done that.

Mrs. Thompson: I wonder. Would I have done that for your daughter?¹¹¹

That is the reason why she tries to do as much as possible to help her in order to thank her for her job. Mrs Thompson is a kind of a strong woman, she decides about her life on her own. During the film she does not behave like a racist, she has no problem to do the washing up instead of her maid, she serves Odessa a coffee and borrows her some dry clothes when Odessa is soaking wet. What is more, she makes

¹¹⁰ *The Long Walk Home* [film]. Directed by Richard PEARCE. USA: Miramax Films, 1990.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

the police officer who said to Odessa to leave Oak Park because it is for the whites only apologize to her. Surprisingly, she starts to help Afro-Americans. And in the end, they invite her among them and that makes her extremely happy. Mary Catherine: „It would be years before I understood what standing in that line meant to my mother. And as I grew older, to me.”¹¹²

The right opposite of her is Tunker Thompson, her brother-in-law. He is a racist, bigot and happy about racial segregation. And he often makes jokes of them.

Tunker Thompson: The niggers are movin' to Philadelphia.

Norman Thompson: Why's that?

Tunker Thompson: Cause they hear there ain't no work in Philadelphia.¹¹³

Last but not least, the film shows us cohesion of Afro-American people. During the boycott they visit a church and sing there their gospels such as “We Are Marching to Zion”. That makes them even more united and stronger. This fact was very important for fighting for equal rights and they knew it. They had the same aim. They wanted to live better life.

4.6 In the Heat of the Night

In the Heat of the Night is an American detective story thriller directed by Norman Jewison, a Canadian director, in 1967. The film stars for instance an Afro-American actor Sidney Poitier (as Virgil Tibbs), who was the first African-American to win the Academy Award for Best Actor. The film surprisingly won in five Academy Award categories: Best Picture, Best Actor in a Leading Role (Rod Steiger as Gillespie), Best Writing. Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (a screenplay written by Stirling Silliphant was based on John Ball's novel of the same name), Best Sound, Best Film Edition (Hal Ashby). In addition to that, it won three Golden Globes and was nominated for many other awards. What is more, the quote:

¹¹² *The Long Walk Home* [film]. Directed by Richard PEARCE. USA: Miramax Films, 1990.

¹¹³ Ibid.

“They call me Mister Tibbs!”¹¹⁴ was listed on a list of top film quotes as number sixteen. This fact indicates the importance, popularity and quality of the film.

The film is set in Sparta in Mississippi and begins with the discovery of a death man. It is found out that the death body belongs to a prominent businessman Mr Colbert. He came from the North to invest in the Deep South and build there a factory and that he was also defrauded. The investigation starts. The first suspect is a black man waiting for the train. Later on the misunderstanding is explained. The black man is a police inspector and an expert at murders from Philadelphia Virgil Tibbs. After some argues this highly experienced police inspector surprisingly stays in Sparta and starts to help a white chief Gillespie with the investigation. Although all evidence points at a rich plantation owner Mr Endicott, who would most profit from Colbert’s death, a chief Gillespie charges his police colleague Sam Woods, because he lied during the investigation. Suddenly Lloyd Purdy comes to a police office with his sister Dolores and blames Sam Wood for sister’s rape. When investigating Virgil Tibbs suffers from many racist attacks and has to endure a lot of racist hints. Finally, evidence brings Virgil Tibbs to Mama Caleba, who got paid from someone for an abortion of Dolores. Shortly after that it is shown that it was not Sam Wood who got Dolores pregnant, but it was Ralph Henshaw who also accidentally murdered Mr Colbert when he attempted to rob him to gain money for an abortion. In the moment Lloyd Purdy finds out who abused his sister, he is shot by Henshaw. The case of Colbert’s murder is finally closed, Henshaw is arrested and Virgil Tibbs goes home by train.

The film was created soon both after *the Civil Rights Act of 1963* that outlawed discrimination in all public facilities and after *the Voting Rights Act* passed in 1965. Even though we cannot see any proofs of discrimination towards a black police expert Virgil Tibbs at public places such as segregated waiting rooms or seats in means of transport or in restaurants as it used to be, racism and discrimination is evident from people’s behaviour, the way they speak with Virgil or from their manners. For instance a waiter refuses to serve Vergil. Racism is most clear from behaviour of a group of white men who surround Virgil in a factory, threaten him and want to kill him. “Ok, black boy. We come here to teach you some manners.”¹¹⁵ Later on they call Gillespie

¹¹⁴ *In the Heat of the Night* [film]. Directed by Norman JEWISON. USA: The Mirisch Corporation, 1997.

¹¹⁵ *In the Heat of the Night* [film]. Directed by Norman JEWISON. USA: The Mirisch Corporation, 1997.

“a nigger-lover”, order him to get rid of Virgil Tibbs and threaten that if he does not do it, they will do it instead of him. In some parts the film also alludes to the past. When Virgil returns a slap to Endicott, Endicott states:”I’ll remember that. There was a time, when I could have had you shot.”¹¹⁶ Gillespie is also asked about his opinion to Virgil Tibbs: “What’s made you change your mind about Tibbs? Last chief we had, he’d have shot Tibbs one second after he slapped Endicott, claimed self-defence.”¹¹⁷ The public verdict on Afro-Americans as members of inferior race is visible thanks to Endicott, who compares Afro-Americans to epiphytics: “Because like the Negro, they need care and feeding and cultivating. And that takes time.”¹¹⁸ The film also provides proofs about remaining different conditions for the whites and the blacks. Gillespie says that it is impossible for coloured people to earn so much money as Virgil Tibbs does. Virgil Tibbs also points to different life of the blacks and the whites in jail. “There’s white time in jail, and coloured time. The worst kind you can do is coloured time.”¹¹⁹ Although the film is set in a racially hostile town some personalities who do not follow the opinion of majority on Vergil occur there. It is Mrs Colbert at whose request Tibbs continues in investigation or after all, it is a chief Gillespie. He confides his life lots to Tibbs, they become friends and he starts to respect his black colleague. Last but not least, the film captures in few shots Afro-American way of life. We can observe a black servant of Endicott or black people working on cotton plantations.

4.7 Chapter Summary

To Kill a Mocking Bird is apparently the most famous and important American film about racism. Thanks to Sidney Poitier, who starred in two influential films, the year of 1967 meant revolution for Afro-American actors. First, he appeared in *In the Heat of the Night*, where he returns a slap to a white businessman. Second, he acted in *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* depicting long tabooed relationship between a white girl and a black man. Some films such as *Mississippi Burning* or *The Long Walk Home*

¹¹⁶ *In the Heat of the Night* [film]. Directed by Norman JEWISON. USA: The Mirisch Corporation, 1997.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

have chosen hardly different approach to the topic adaptation than others. *Mississippi Burning* is based on historically accurate investigation of disappearance of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in the 1960s and *The Long Walk Home* depicts life of Afro-Americans during Montgomery Bus Boycott. An Afro-American director Spike Lee interestingly connected a view of multicultural friendship and racism to humour in his film *Do the Right Thing*.

A different approach to the topic and way of depiction of discrimination can be mainly explained by different time period in which films were created. At the same time everything was influenced by current situation, events and a stage in which fight for equal rights of all Americans was. Not negligible is also a role of director and screenplay writer. We can observe several differences in a point of view between Afro-American directors or screenplay writers and the white ones. Although many of white directors and screenplay writers have been highly interested in that problem, the black ones have usually had personal experience with discrimination based on skin colour.

Popularity and a trend of films with racially motivated topics have not ended in the late 20th century, but it has continued till nowadays. Shining examples of it is both a film *The Help* directed by Tate Taylor in 2011 describing life of black maids in the 1960s and a film *Twelve Years a Slave* directed by Steve McQueen in 2013 based on a story of Solomon Northup, who was kidnapped and sold as a slave to the South in 1841. Moreover, this film was awarded the Academy Awards as the best film of the year 2014. Afro-Americans also star as investigators as well as suspects in many American popular crime series and many films also show life in Afro-American ghettos, which is connected with rap music, drugs and gangs. It is likely that these trends will continue in the future.

CONCLUSION

The United States of America is commonly perceived as a country of freedom, equality and opportunity. Many people state that the only necessary prerequisite for being successful in the USA is to be a hard-working person with particular abilities. However, my thesis proves that it has not always been like this. It was skin colour that determined a fate of Afro-Americans.

It was the year 1619 when the first African slave entered the American continent. From the very beginning African slaves were seen as members of inferior race according to their black skin. They were perceived only as goods and good labour force. Despite many acts and revolutionary amendments trying to abolish slavery and eliminate discriminatory practises, the organisation called the Ku Klux Klan was established in 1865. Its members have decided to get rid of Afro-Americans. Incomprehensibly these horrible murders and cases of lynching have remained unpunished. Another horrible period was Jim Crow Laws era that can be mainly characterized by keeping strict norms. The motto which aptly expresses the era is “separate but equal”. It predominantly meant that all public facilities were separated – seats in the front part of a bus for the whites only whereas the back part for the blacks. Although many people know only Rosa Parks, who refused to give her seat to a white man and was arrested, thanks to my thesis I can now add that it was Claudette Colvin, who made this protest for the first time. These two arrests led to Montgomery Bus Boycott and step by step towards the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and outlawing discrimination.

Acquired knowledge of basic terms concerning discrimination and racial segregation as well as information about history of slavery and fight for equal civil rights of Afro-Americans and importantly films of this issue created in the late 20th century obviously show what exactly meant to be an Afro-American in the United States of America of those times. It meant to respectfully call all white men “Mr or Sir”, fulfil their sometimes absurd request answering “Yes, Sir.” with a smile on your face, have to smile when you want to cry. In addition you were the first suspect of murder and probably the last one, because hardly anybody believed a black man. It

also meant to be called “a nigger” and not to be served in a restaurant. It was also though that Afro-Americans could have not been well educated and thus your achievements were false. In addition marriage with a white girl was absolutely unacceptable, surprisingly for both races. Nobody can really understand what the life of Afro-Americans was, but a quote of Martin Luther King, who can be undoubtedly regarded as the most powerful personality of the African-American Civil Rights Movement, can help us to make at least a vague idea. Not only Afro-American people but also white people would confirm the statement that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a real king – the king of Afro-American hearts.

Being a Negro in America means trying to smile when you want to cry. It means trying to hold on to physical life amid psychological death. It means the pain of watching your children grow up with clouds of inferiority in their mental skies. It means having their legs off, and then being condemned for being a cripple.¹²⁰

The thesis findings assure us of the fact that Afro-Americans’ life was really never a bed of roses and they could only dream about their American dream. My thesis enabled me to see several high-quality pieces of American cinematography which are absolutely worth seeing. Even though they are not so famous, they were a great contribution for forming my opinion on prejudices based on skin colour.

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