



**REGINA'S LIFE JOURNEY TO BEA TRANSRACIAL ADOPTED
CHILD IN *I AM SOMEBODY'S CHILD: THE REGINA LOUISE STORY***

Diana Zuriati
Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Persada Bunda
diana.zuriati77@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to explain and describe how Regina's life journey to be a transracially adopted child. The researcher formulated the problems into two, the first how Regina's life journey at foster care and Psychiatric Treatment, and the second how Regina's life journey to be a transracially adopted child in *I am Somebody's Child: The Regina Louise Story* Movie. The research method used by the writer was the qualitative research method. In answering the first formulation of the problem, it showed that when Regina was in foster care and Psychiatric Treatment, she was still an emotional girl, had bad behavior, it was because she never got any love from her parents, she also often got bullied by the people at these two places. She already navigated more than 30 places, but when she met Jeanne Kerr as her counselor who cared about her, she changed a lot. She listened to her and learned many things from her, Jeanne was the one who wanted to adopt her. The second result of this research was how Regina's life journey to be a transracially adopted child. Her first efforts were to find Jeanne by studying hard, then she could go to a college and had her own business. When many people knew her, through her business, she decided to make a book about her childhood experience that could be published everywhere, she believed that Jeanne would know her so that they could be reunited. Finally, Jeanne could adopt Regina as her transracial adopted child from the same courthouse which is denied them before

Keywords: foster care, transracial adoption

I. INTRODUCTION

Parents who love each other very much desire a descendant, namely the birth of a child. And the birth of a child will add to the complete happiness in the family. But there are also married couples who don't have the luck like other married couples. Likewise, children who are born also need complete love. Children who are raised affectionately and lovingly by their parents and their families generally have good personalities and are very pleasant. Because surrounded by people who love them.

Children who are raised without parental love have a lot of bad personalities or behavior. Their attitude is rude, indifferent to the environment, and lack of care, because they do not get affection, even though they have parents. What about children who are abandoned by their parents and do not recognize their existence as children. Of course, their attitudes and behavior are more likely to be rude, irritable, and quick to get emotional because they don't get love and attention.

The movie entitled "*I am Somebody's Child: The Regina Louise Story*" was a true story told about the journey of a young African-American girl named Regina Louise who navigated more than 30 foster homes and psychiatric facilities. The story gave a lot of moral messages, where the problem of skin color becomes a barrier as

a black American child. eventually had to move from one place of care to another. Regina even had lived in a psychiatric pension due to her attitude and behavior. She was abandoned by her biological mother, she became an emotional person, stubborn, and tended to play physically. She often caused trouble to the people around her and she was very difficult to make friends

Regina had a pleasant personality, she would become rude when someone teased her or annoyed her. Although she tended to be emotional, she was very considerate. While she was at the foster care, she met a counselor named Jeanne Kerr who was very concerned about her. Kerr's attention to Regina was so great from trying to find Regina's parents to want to adopt Regina as her adopted daughter. She got so much love from Jeanne like a mother to Regina, when other people always say bad things about her, Jeanne always says positively "You are beautiful," You are valuable ". It gave Regina the motivation to live life even though they are separated and her enthusiasm to be able to meet Jeanne again

After Jeanne's unsuccessful attempt to adopt Regina due to a racially motivated ruling, their bond is forced apart. Another thing of this movie was about how a woman's trust and love becomes her lifeline when she trumps the odds of a corrupt and

successful system. After 25 years, Jeanne is finally able to adopt Regina in the same courthouse that denied them before

Based on the explanation above, the writer was interested to study and analyze this movie about (1) Regina's life journey at foster care, and (2) Regina's life journey to be a transracially adopted child.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Foster Care

Foster care is government-subsidized and -regulated temporary care for children who have been removed from their families for reasons of abuse and neglect (Paediatric Clinical advisor:2017). In addition, in the United States, the children in foster care will be looked after by the government until their age is 18 years old.

Foster care (also known as out-of-home care) is a temporary service provided by States for children who cannot live with their families. Children in foster care may live with relatives or with unrelated foster parents. Foster care can also refer to placement settings such as group homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, and supervised independent living. (Child Welfare Information Gateway). It can be concluded that foster care is a place where abandoned children live together without love from their families by giving them some facilities and shelter.

The system at the foster care is a temporary arrangement. It means that the government provides the care of the children from their parents who are unable to take care of them. In foster care, it is not where juvenile delinquents go. It is where children go when their parents cannot take care of them, for a variety of reasons.

There are several facts about children who live in foster care. The first is about the amount, currently more than 400.000 children in foster care in the United States. The second is about their age. They range in age from infants to 21 years old (in some states). The average age of a child in foster care is more than 8 years old, and there are slightly more boys than girls. The third is because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their parents or guardians.

All of these children have their own experiences and trauma. In other ways, foster children are no different from children who aren't in foster care: they are learning and growing, like to play and hang out with friends their age, and need the love and stability a permanent home provides.

Many children in foster care are at high risk for emotional, behavioral, developmental, and physical health problems (Halfon & Klee, 1991). In addition, children in foster care also are likely to suffer from a range of acute and chronic physical health problems (Wald, Carlsmith, & Liederman, 1985).

2.2 Transracial Adoption

Following the topic, the researcher finds out the definition of transracial adoption, which is defined as “the joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families” (Silverman, 1993.p. 104). In the United States, the debate of adopting black children for white parents has always been pro and contra. it can be seen when *Loving v. Virginia*, a 1967 Supreme Court case that made laws prohibiting racial intermarriage unconstitutional, some states, such as Louisiana, continued to ban transracial adoptions.

Determined would-be parents were usually the impetus in the first black-white adoptions. Interestingly, they often lived in overwhelmingly white parts of the country. Worn down by the discrimination that made it difficult to find enough same-race parents for all the children of color in need, a few agencies began cautiously placing mixed-race and African-American children in white homes. Some, but not all, of these families became targets of violence and harassment.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

For this research, the researcher used qualitative research as the kind of research. It was used because the researcher described Regina’s life journey from foster home to being a transracially adopted child in *I am Somebody’s Child: The Regina*

Louise Story Movie. According to Myers (2009) in Frank Nyame and Nandish Patel’s journal (2009), qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena.

According to Ross (1999), qualitative approaches to research are based on a holistic worldview. It has the following beliefs; there is not a single reality, reality based on perceptions that are different for each person and change over time, and what we know has meaning only based on the context. This research had explored the story of a novel, the character, behavior, and the disorder by using qualitative research. This novel is not only about the story, but some moral messages can be found. The researcher analyzed it by using this method.

In conclusion, the qualitative research method is a research method that can describe or explore a phenomenon such as feeling or thoughts processes and the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of a person’s or group’s experience. This method fit with the object of this research, which analysed a character in novel.

The researcher took a movie as the object of the research because it had a lot of studies and data to be analysed. The title of the movie is *I am Somebody’s Child: The Regina Louise Story*. This movie is based on

the true story of Regina Louise's life. It was launched on 20th April 2019

Before the researcher started her research about the movie, there were some points to support her research, first, the researcher read some books that have a relation with the object of research to support her analysis, then found out an approach that was the best suit to this novel. And the last, she collected information about the approach and the object from some books, journals, and internet sources.

The researcher analyzed the problems by using descriptive research which the researcher describes words later. According to Glass and Hopkins (1984), descriptive research involves gathering data that describes events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection.

The researcher concluded that descriptive research is a research process of collecting data on a problem that enables them to describe the situation more completely and clearly.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Regina's Life Journey at Foster Care

The writer would like to describe the first formulation of the problem about Regina's Life journey in two places, the first at foster care and the second at Psychiatric.

4.1.1. Regina's Behaviour at Foster Care

Regina never got love from her parents. Both of them had rejected her. She moved from one place to another. When she lived in illegal pay care, she got beaten and had many scars on her back.

Miss Kerr: "Regina has lived in illegal pay care situations since birth. In one home she was viciously and repeatedly beaten. The scars were ugly. Well, this weekend she confided that the abuser was an older child, no relation living in the same quasi foster home in Texas" (Louise, 2019)

Then Miss Kerr, a white counselor who pays attention to Regina, tried to contact her mother. Regina was so happy to hear that. But then, she took her shoes so that she could meet her mama by using the shoes. But it made Miss Ker shocked because Regina took those shoes without permission. It meant that her habit was like stealing something still inside her. Miss Kerr: Where did you get those shoes? Regina: I took 'em. Miss Kerr: You can't do that. That is unacceptable. (Louise, 2019)

She had problems with her behavior. She acted harshly. She would get angry easily when heard someone mog at her or bullied her. She could not control her emotion, it happened when she heard one of the girls named Sandy bullied her in the canteen at the foster care. Then she fought with her. Sandy: And I told her to your face, you're a worthless. piece of shit! Regina:

What did you say to me?! You want to get some, Sandy, huh? (Louise, 2019)

But another fight happened again, Regina got angry with Sandy because bullied her about her mother. Regina's mother did not come to see her at the foster care. That was why Sandy loved to bully her again. Sandy: Thought you were leaving. Your mother forgot somethin'? (Louise, 2019)

It can be said that once again Regina still could not control her emotion, even though she would get a red star and would get into juvie, a room of punishment, she did not care about that. Besides that Regina also spoke impolitely. Her words were harsh. Regina: but I should have kicked Sandy's ass! Annie: We don't talk like that. (Louise, 2019)

But during her stay at the foster care, Regina also learned many lessons from Miss Kerr. She would like to listen to all that Miss Kerr said. Regina was taught how to swim and she also learned many words from a dictionary.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that Regina had a problem with her behavior, it did not happen just like that. It was because she did not get love from her parents. She was rejected and her parents dumbled her. She could not control her emotion, always fought if she got bullied and she spoke harshly too Then she lived in many foster homes. She got beaten there.

Until she stayed at the Lewis Children's care from the explanation above, it can be said that Regina's behavior during her stay at foster home only listened to Miss Kerr. She wanted to study because of Miss Kerr. She learned everything from Miss Kerr the one who tried to find Regina's parents. But because her parents did not want her anymore, Miss Kerr tried to cheer her up. She asked Regina to go swimming with her and taught her how to swim. Miss Kerr also asked Regina to spend Christmas at her house. Then Miss Kerr gave a dictionary for Regina to study hard. They spent a lot together until one day Miss Ker would like to adopt her.

Regina cried a lot after hearing the intention of Miss Kerr to adopt her. Both of them were very happy but it was opposed by the head of Lewis Children's Centre namely Miss Ford because her skin is black and Miss Kerr is white American.

Miss. Ford: You don't know who you are and you're headed for an identity crisis. But understand this, Regina you are black and I see you trying to ingratiate yourself into this white world here with all your cutesy little antics. I don't want to be hanging with white people

Miss Ford always reminded her skin color to stay away from Miss Kerr. She did not want to get in trouble with white people. But Miss Kerr still wanted to adopt Regina by making a petition to the court opposed

with Miss Ford as the head of Lewis Children's Centre, but unfortunately, she lost the case, she couldn't adopt Regina at that time.

The judge: I deny your petition to adopt Regina Louise on the grounds that a white woman cannot know or fully appreciate the needs of a black child in our society. Upon the request of Miss Ford, Regina will be transferred to Redding, California, where she can receive medical treatment for behavior problems, which if not adequately treated now, could lead to more serious sociopathic behaviors in adulthood

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Miss Kerr could not adopt Regina because of their skin color and also Regina's behavior that needed to be treated in psychiatric treatment in California, and of course, again Regina would be separated away from Miss Kerr. It was quite far from where Miss Kerr lived. But Miss Kerr said that to believe her because Regina always in her heart

4.1.2. Regina's Behaviour at Psychiatric Treatment

During her treatment, Regina believed that Miss Kerr would come to visit her, she missed her so much. But actually, the staff lied to Regina. Miss Kerr ever came two times to the medical treatment but she could not see Regina.

After a month in the treatment place, Regina felt empty, she was alone, she never got any news from Miss Kerr. But her behavior seemed to tune well.

Miss Ford: You see how much better you do when you're in the right place? You see it? I see it. When Regina entered Riverways, she was prone to violent outburst and self-destructive behavior. After 30 days of treatment, she has become a model of success. Do you hear that? A model of success, that's my gold star girl.

Regina : When can I talk to Miss Kerr?

Miss Ford: Well, if you can get through the next 30 days without trouble, you can have phone privileges

Regina felt excited if no trouble anymore, and she behaved well, so, in 30 days ahead, she could phone Miss Kerr. It can be seen that Regina had become a nice girl. She did it on purpose to meet Miss Kerr again as she called Miss Kerr as her mother even only by hearing her voice from the phone. But then, Regina made a problem again. When she got bullied by some girls that they said Regina did not have a mother so that's why she did not have a picture of her mother and also, they said her mother was a man from the broken tape recorder that sounds like a man.

When the girls left the room, suddenly Regina opened Dolores's box and then took her mama's picture, Dolores was very angry with Regina when she tore it.

She did this because she wanted to talk with her mama, Miss Kerr

Regina: I didn't take it, I just wanted to look at it.

dr. Rice: Regina, I asked you a question.

Regina: I didn't take it, I just wanted to look at it.

dr. Rice: For stealing another resident's property, you're facing three months' probation

Regina: I'll tear it up if you don't let me talk to my mama, I mean it, I'll tear it

Then Regina was brought to a small room where only her in that room. It was a punishment room located downstairs. Then, she got the sad news that Miss Kerr would leave the country because she married a foreigner. She believed that Miss Kerr would leave some letters before leaving her.

When she knew that Miss Kerr left her alone, the only things that she had were a tape recorder, a gift from Miss Kerr, but now it was broken. She could not hear Miss Kerr voice anymore. She was not felt comfortable anymore because Dolores still got angry with her by spitting on her hair. When she had to drink her medicine, she lied to the nurse, she did not drink the pills, she hide them in her mouth. Then she went to the swimming pool, she drank all the pills and made her body sink in the pool. She would make suicide. Luckily, the nurse saw her body floating on the pool, she was saved because she could hear Miss Kerr's voice again from the tape recorder.

The nurse did not believe Regina anymore, so Regina had to drink the liquid medicine, but when she tried to drink it, she splashed it on the nurse's face. The second time, Regina was sent back again downstairs, the empty room. Again, Regina's behavior still did not change at all. She did not have any friends there. But when she was locked up, she asked for a piece of paper and pencil, but she got only a crayon then she wrote her feeling on the wall

Regina: I pulled her words up from my heart where they were stored for safekeeping. The story of me being able to do anything I put my mind to the story of me someday going to college, the story of me making my dreams come true

Then she tried to change her behavior, she learned everything from a dictionary that Miss Kerr gave her. She wanted to find a job so she could save money for college, then she applied for a letter for working at a saloon. She was accepted working in that saloon, and she got a full scholarship too at San Francisco State. She could go to college then. By the age of 18, Regina could be a free girl.

4.2. Regina's Life Journey to be A Transracial Adopted Child

After years gone by, Regina was 18 years old, which meant that she was a free girl. The State did not have any responsibility toward Regina's Life. Before the day came, Regina tried to remember words from the dictionary that was given by

Miss Kerr. She also had a job as a servant at a saloon. She hoped that one day she would have her saloon.

After 20 years, Regina succeeded to be a businesswoman. One of her wishes was that one day, she could meet Miss Kerr. She wanted Jeanne could be with her and her success with her.

Regina : With God's grace and 20 years of hard work, my dream came true bigger and brighter than I ever imagined. I had yearned for a mother as I made my way in the world. Now, I longed for her to share my victories

One of the efforts of Regina to find Jeanne is by writing her childhood experience into a book. She believed that Jeanne would read her book.

Regina : In my need to find Jeanne, I wrote a book about my childhood. It was my hope that she would read it and we would find each other.

Another effort of Regina to find Jeanne by publishing her book toward the national broadcast, she was interviewed about her book through national television

Regina : Every night before bed I continued my search for her. This is a national broadcast? Now as I publicized the book, I hoped she would find me. There's not a day that goes by that I don't get up and put my feet

on the floor and hope that she'll come back into my life

Every time in her life, Regina never forgot Jeanne, the one who loved her truly with her heart without seeing their skin. Then for so many efforts of Regina, it came to be real that now she could meet Jeanne in front of her having a signature on her book when she had finished giving her press conference about her book. Then in November 2003, Regina was adopted by Jeanne in the same courthouse where her petition adoption was denied twenty-three years ago.

Court staff: Do you, Jeanne Kerr take Regina Louise to be your daughter? To love, to hold and to cherish, and to support financially and emotionally in her future endeavours no matter what they may be?

Jeanne: I do.

Regina: Everybody wants to somebody's someone and today I was

Finally, Regina and Jeanne Kerr reunited again as mother and daughter through transracial adoption that was legally by the government of the United State.

V. CONCLUSION

By the objective of the research question is to answer the question "How Regina's Life Journey at foster Care and

Hoe Regina's Life to be a transracially adopted child. It can be seen from the analysis that Regina had bad behavior that she got tempered and unstable emotion because she never got loved by her parents

The second is how does Regina's life journey to be a transracially adopted child by doing some such as studying hard so she could go to college and she wanted to her own business in a saloon. Then, she wrote a story about her childhood, and she could publish the book and broadcast it nationally. Finally, Regina met Jeanne Kerr because she believed that Jeanne Kerr would watch her on television then after twenty-three years, Jeanne Kerr could adopt Regina in the same court where her petition denied

REFERENCES

- Arikunto, S. (2010). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik* (Edisi Revisi). Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Barbell, K. & Freundlich, M. (2001). *Foster care today*. Washington, D.C: Casey Family Programs
- Fletcher, M. (2016). *Through Their Eyes: Identity Development in Transracial Adoption*. The Ohio State University. Undergraduate Program
- Gay, L.R. (2011). *Educational Research Competence for Analysis and Application.Tenth Edition*. New York: Pearson.
- Ittig, M._. A family Perspective on Transracial Adoption. University of Winconsin
- McRoy, R., & Freeman, E. (1986). Racial identity issues among mixed race children. *Social Work in Education*, 8, 164-175
- McRoy, R. G., & Griffin, A. (2012). *Transracial adoption policies and practices: The US experience*. *Adoption and Fostering*, 36(3-4), 38-49