

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the Study**

America, for short US, or it could be USA, this country is a federal republic with 50 states. The United States itself is the largest country after Russia, Canada and China. Capitalized in Washington, the country is bordered by Canada to the north, and the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico to the south. The world population levels in the Americas are high, the overall population density is relatively low (Gopnik et al., 1998).

The population in the United States itself is very diverse, but different from other countries. America itself is diverse, most of which stems from a large and continuous share of global immigrants. Tens if not millions of these immigrants moved to America hoping for more economic, social, and political opportunities than their countries of origin. Immigrants in large numbers come to America with the reason that America is a dream land, this makes America a multicultural country, because these immigrants come from various ethnicities from various parts of the world (Daniels, 2024).

The emergence of multiculturalism in America is motivated by the problem of social inequality or unequal relations between humans. Multicultural education is one of the options for overcoming these social problems, namely strengthening unity in resilience, developing democratic ideals and practices, developing individuals, improving the national condition of society, and accelerating progress. (Mirzon Daheri, 2021).

With America as a multicultural country, popular culture can no longer be avoided. Pop culture or popular culture can be broadly termed to include film, music, entertainment, advertising and other related fields. One of the popular culture that cannot be avoided in America is music. One of the musical genres formed from ethnic diversity that entered America is Hip Hop. Hip Hop is a cultural movement that has gained its widespread popularity in the 1980's as well as in the 1990's.

Hip Hop itself was introduced from the Blacks American community, or it could also be called African American. African Americans, are the major ethnic group in the United States (Belinda, 2019). As far as their name is African in origin, once upon a time great African Americans were employed as slaves. Their rights are also very limited, such as no legal rights in American affairs, social, and even political. White people had a hard time accepting black people because their initial arrival was just slaves, because that made the mindset of accepting black people as American citizens very difficult. But with that condition they also contribute to the country. The contribution of black people can be seen in the development of music in the United State.

In the United State music industry, the Asian picture is still relatively small. However, with the presence of a young Indonesian rapper of Chinese descent, Brian Imanuel Soewarno or with the stage name Rich Brian, Hip Hop music becomes familiar to the Indonesian public today. This young man from Indonesia has written a series of hit and famous songs which make his career in the United

States as a rapper under the auspices of 88rising. Rich Brian was born in Jakarta on September 3, 1999, but Los Angeles, United States is where he lives now.

Becoming a rapper himself was not his dream before. Previously, Rich Brian himself was interested in studying and exploring the field of cinematography. Rich Brian wrote and released a controversial single in 2016 called Dat \$tick. The video was uploaded on the YouTube platform which later went viral and became a global conversation. The success of the Dat \$tick song created a record label led by Sean Miyashiro called 88rising, and then overshadowed Rich Brian as one of the singers. The 88rising itself did not only recruit Rich Brian as a singer, but also recruited other singers such as NIKI Zefanya, Stephanie Poetri and Joji.

The 88rising itself is not only a record company but also an entertainment media that often displays and publishes the lives of its singers. Rich Brian himself was successful in his career by bringing songs with the hip hop genre which are closely related to African American racial groups, or black people in the United States, a country dominated by white people or also called the Caucasian Race. Based on the description above, the writer is interested in writing this undergraduate thesis.

The main subject in this study is the description of Asian in America. Even though from a variety of different music and lyrics, Rich Brian, in this case describes Asian from his point of view and he also doesn't hide his citizenship as an Indonesian citizen, he even mentions it in the lyrics of his song. The act created a conversation among black American rappers, and Rich Brian streamed it all and illustrated it through the song's lyrics, to introduce Asia. The urgency or main point

of this research is to examine what and how Asian culture in America is, to interpret Asian identity, and the struggles that Asian people go through as a minority group in America.

As a minority group, Asian people face various problems in the United States. Hate crimes against Asians and their descendants in the United States are on the rise. This has happened since the start of the global coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) in early 2020. This is because the COVID-19 outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China. The attitude of former president Donald Trump who was in power at the time, who even called it a Chinese virus, also fueled acts of racism among Asian citizens in the United States (Arbar, 2021).

Various kinds of problems are faced by Asian immigrants in America, for example they receive treatment such as acts of discrimination and violence against Asian people and their descendants, physical and verbal violence, detention, exclusion, expulsion, and a series of other human rights violations committed by American society against Asian community in the United States, even worse is the shooting and killing of Asian groups in that country.

With the entry of Asian people into the United States, of course, it also influences the culture there. Especially the Hip Hop music culture, in which Hip Hop itself was created and associated with the African-American race or black Americans, is a genre that is very popular in the United States, most of whom are Caucasian or can be called the white race. With various strategies for Asian people to fight for their lives in the United States, such as for example reporting if they get a crime or hatred, carrying out the Stop Asian Hate social movement is also

one of the important strategies to fight against the acts of racism that are experienced.

With the many strategies carried out by Asian people there, Rich Brian, who does not come from black or white race, was able to create and perform music with the Hip Hop genre that made his name famous in America. Even though it is not his goal to become a rapper, with this it is Rich Brian's strategy to show the Asian race to the world through the music he creates and also through social media through content.

Based on the background above, cultural studies brings together many existing disciplines. In the study of cultural studies song lyrics can be used, because they focus on existing problems. There are many issues that can be studied as examples of politics, social change, and power.

Among other things, how the social changes that occurred in the United States when Asian people entered, how the actions of the American people to interact with Asians, the issue of different political views of Asian voters which continue to develop in elections, and also among them how the representation of Asians in modern American society as seen in the lyrics of American Hip Hop songs and how the struggle of the Asian race as a minority immigrant group in American society can be seen in the seven songs, three songs from the album *The Sailor: The Sailor, Yellow, and Kids*; as well as four songs from the album *Amen: Amen, Occupied, Arizona, and Flight*.

## **B. Scope of the Study**

The research focuses on how the life of Asians in America is portrayed, and the stereotypes of Asians from different perspectives as reflected in the Hip Hop song lyrics: three songs from the album *The Sailor: The Sailor, Yellow, and Kids*; as well as four songs from the album *Amen: Amen, Occupied, Arizona, and Flight*.

## **C. Problem Formulation**

Based on the scope of the study above, the writer formulated the following questions:

- a. How are Asians represented in modern America society as seen in American Hip Hop song lyrics from the album *The Sailor* and *Amen*?
- b. How did the Asian race as a minority immigrant group struggle for their existence in modern American society as seen in the album *The Sailor* and *Amen*?

## **D. Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a. To find out representation of Asian people in modern American society as seen in American Hip Hop song lyrics from the album *The Sailor* and *Amen*.
- b. Analyzing Analyzing the Asian race struggles for their existence in the modern American society as seen in American Hip Hop song lyrics from the album *The Sailor* and *Amen*

## **E. Review of the Relate Study**

Several researchers have conducted researches to analyze similar issues. Studies which are similar to this study are presented in the following section:

The first study was written in 2019 by Derli Elsa Putri et al, entitled "Analysis of Taboo Words in Rich Brian's Song Lyrics". This study examines taboo words in Rich Brian's song lyrics. A researcher explains the types, functions, and meanings of taboos in Rich Brian's lyrics. This is because most of the lyrics in Rich Brian's songs show disrespect for other people and insult situations or the environment. And the least used function of taboo words is mocking authority. The similarities between this article and this study are related to the use of words in the lyrics to show expression and attitude through the lyrics. This research discusses how taboo words work. Meanwhile, this study focuses on discussing the image of Asia that is packaged in the lyrics of Rich Brian's song.

Another study was written by Malik Stewart in 2022 entitled "Rap Music on Trial": Examining the Consequences of Rap Lyrics Being Admissible at Trial. In this article, rap lyrics are considered acceptable. to go to court to convict someone accused of a crime. Malik Stewart discusses the impact of confessing rap lyrics as evidence to prove the guilt of defendants, potential First Amendment violations, efforts to prevent prosecutors from using rap songs as evidence, and the way prosecutors target rap music. As explained above. both in the article and in this study, song lyrics are used to express this expression. The difference is, in this study the researcher examines how Asian life is described in the lyrics of a song sung by Rich Brin.

The third study was written by Maria Sisilia Sinta Saputra, et al. in 2022 with the title "Analysis of Female Masculinity as a Form of Rebellion in Song Lyrics by Ramengvrl Musicians", this research looks at how Ramengvrl writes lyrics as a medium to express what he feels and thinks. In addition, this study aims to find the concept of female masculinity that is reflected in the lyrics of Ramengvrl's song because he works in the hip-hop industry where male dominance is still quite strong. This article and this research have in common, namely describing or expressing the expression of a song lyric. The difference is, in this study the author discusses more about the description of the Asian Race from Rich Brian's point of view.

All these references inspired researcher to come up with the same concept, but with some changes. This study focuses on the development of Asian culture, way of life and the factors that influence it. And also analyze the symbols that contain meaning.

#### **F. Method of Research**

Qualitative description method is used in this study. Descriptive qualitative research, means the researcher is interested in understanding a person's individual experience in a unique context. This type of research requires a flexible, inductive and dynamic research process, but does not change the material of the phenomenon being studied (Ormston et al., 2014; Sandelwoski 2010).



**a. Data and data sources**

This study uses seven song lyrics: *The Sailor, Yellow, Kids, Amen, Occupied, Arizona, and Flight* as the main data. In this study, researcher obtained songs through the Spotify and YouTube platforms. Secondary data sources, to complete the main data were taken from previous researches which can be in the form of journals, articles, and related documentation. Sources used by Google, Google Scholar, Spotify and also YouTube.

**b. Method of collecting data.**

The way to get data and information was done by listening the song and reading the lyrics of seven songs: *The Sailor, Yellow, Kids, Amen, Occupied, Arizona, and Flight*. In one song the researcher listens two to five times to get the lyrics which will then be discussed in this study. To read song lyrics, in this study the researcher read it two to three times. What the researcher did when listening to and reading the lyrics was to record the lyrics which are related to the purpose of this research and will also be used in this study, then also look at the YouTube platform to get clear pictures and visualizations.

**c. Data Analysis Methods and Techniques**

After the data collected, the writer analyzed the data, which require the following steps:

i. Identification.

Finding data sources is the first stage in data analysis, such as on Google, Google Scholar and also YouTube.

ii. Selection

The data collected is selected and grouped according to its purpose, the description of the struggle of the Asian people and the self-image as a rapper from Asia, to be precise, Indonesia living in the United States.

iii. Description.

Describe or explain the data using words that are clearer and easier to understand, because in research there is explicit and implicit content.

iv. Interpretation

Then the next, interpretation, where they will look for definitions of key terms and try to deduce the meaning of the information.

**G. Presentation**

This research consists of four chapters. The first chapter (Introduction) consists of Background, Topic Selection, Problem Formulation, Study Objectives, Scope, Description of Study Topics, Research Methods, Meaning of Research and Presentation. Chapter two (Approach and Theoretical Framework) consists of Theoretical Approach and Theoretical Framework. The third chapter (Analysis) consists of the subtitles of the work. The fourth chapter (Conclusions and suggestions) consists of Conclusions and suggestions.