

**THE STRUGGLES OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN FIGHTING AGAINST
INJUSTICE AND IDENTITY AS AN ILLEGAL STATUS OF AMERICAN
IMMIGRANT IN THE FILM ‘BLUE BAYOU’ (2021)**

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ABSTRACT

Injustice and identity crises still happen in American society, they are mainly for a minority of American immigrants. The film *Blue Bayou* (2021) describes the unfair treatment of Korean American immigrants. This study aims to describe the characteristics of injustice and identity crisis experienced by Antonio. Additionally, it examines how Antonio grapples with an identity crisis and injustice in the film *Blue Bayou*.

This study employs a qualitative content analysis method to interpret the meaning and significance of the film’s content. The primary data is from the film itself, while the secondary data are from books, journals, and other sources. The data is gathered from film scenes, dialogues, and character interactions that related to the concepts of injustice and identity crisis and subsequently analyzing using the theory of injustice by John Rawls and theory of psychosocial development by Erik Erikson.

The study reveals that Antonio LeBlanc’s story illustrated the injustices and identity crises he faces as an immigrant adopted by American parents. Bureaucratic negligence subjected him to racial profiling, wrongful arrest, deportation, exposing systemic racism, abuse of power, and failures of the legal system. Antonio’s identity crisis is exacerbated by his legal and personal insecurities, traumatic past, cultural displacement, and alienation. He struggles against an unjust system, battles psychological turmoil, and faces socio-economic obstacles. This struggle highlights the need for systemic reform and support for individuals facing similar difficulties. This study also advocates for policy changes, increases awareness, and provides support to marginalized individuals who encounter comparable challenges.

Keywords: justice, identity crisis, immigrant

I. INTRODUCTION

Many people wish to live in the United States since it provides freedom, opportunity, and a better life than other nations. The nations, philosophies, and customs that make up American culture are patchwork. Though the country is beautiful on the outside, serious social, political, and economic problems harm its reputation. Differences in the treatment of people or groups according to arbitrary standards are known as discrimination (Pettigrew, 1998).

The unjust or discriminating treatment of people or groups because of particular characteristics, including color, ethnicity, gender, age, handicap, religion, or sexual orientation, which results in uneven chances, privileges, or results, is known as prejudice. Prejudice can make social injustice worse, especially for foreign nationals, adopted children, and members of other minority groups (Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Given these problems, rapid societal reform is urgently needed. Rapid social reform and deliberation are urgently needed as prejudice against foreign nationals, adopted children, and members of other minority groups may exacerbate these problems.

Despite the idea of justice is the foundation of social institutions, its implementation differs. The interests of justice should never be sacrificed for the good of the community at large, especially when systematic injustice targets underprivileged individuals. Aware of their own social and economic situations, all logical members of a society adhere to values they all share (Rawls, 1971). Justice is required to ensure the well-being of every person in society, claims Rawls. He argues that these values usually give way to bigotry and harsh treatment of the marginalized.

The principle of inalienable rights life, liberty, and property was highly stressed by them. A civilization defends the inherent rights of every individual (John Locke, 1689). This mentality fits the challenges faced by adopted children and immigrants who struggle for acceptance and legal status.

Adopted children often face difficulties that can increase their likelihood of seeking mental health treatment. Overrepresentation will emphasize certain psychological requirements and the difficulties that adopted children face in adjusting to their new identity (Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2005). Apart from the difficulty of transformation, people also have to identify their identity in community life which usually highly values changes in behavior that is believed by the community. Due to the fact that, the history in the United States related to racism, colonialism, social exclusion, and discrimination, it is important to address these problems and change society's perspective on this matter.

One important psychological element that can influence people's lives is their self-concept (Rolf Muus, 1996). How well a person can integrate, set goals, and accept who they are influences how they handle obstacles in life. The community is given direction and goals as well as self-identity values in building an inclusive and healthy society.

According to Erik Erikson (1950), people have various choices to make important decisions regarding questions of identity. Psychosocial development of humans occurs in eight stages, from conception to death. Every phase is a struggle between two opposing tendencies that the individual must overcome in order to achieve their highest developmental level.

The American film *Blue Bayou* (2021) had Antony LeBlanc portrayed the difficulties of an adopted child. Antonio was adopted when he was a baby by his American parents, but now he has to fight against injustice, self-discovery, and the immigration system he experiences. Antonio is threatened with deportation because of the negative impact of his legal violations, and he has also just discovered that his legal status is unclear. This also highlights the difficult reality that adopted children whose legal status is unclear must face.

The challenges faced by adopted children in the US are similar to Antonio's story. The issue of unfair immigration laws and discrimination experienced by people without legal

status must be confronted and reformed. The film *Blue Bayou* (2021) shows the prejudice, trauma and identity problems that adopted children often face. It also inspires demands for awareness, sensitivity and institutional change.

The main focus of this study is Antonio LeBlanc's struggle against injustice and the identity issues he experienced. In an effort to situate Antonio's struggles within an American cultural framework, this study investigates the relationship between legal issues and self-identity. As shown in this film, identity crises and an unjust justice system impact American society, but it is individuals who experience it.

II. METHOD

The researcher used content analysis to categorize information into themes of identity crisis and injustice. This qualitative method focused on interpreting the significance of the film's content. Scenes, dialogues, and character interactions related to injustice and identity crises were analyzed to provide insights into the film's portrayal of these issues.

The data for this study comes from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the film *Blue Bayou*, while secondary sources include journals, articles, and online content to provide context and multiple perspectives. This combination aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the film's treatment of injustice and identity crises. Data collection involved repeatedly watching *Blue Bayou*, analyzing and categorizing scenes, dialogue, and visual elements. The researcher gathered information from secondary sources, like journals and articles. This study applies John Rawls' theory of justice and Erik Erikson's psychosocial development.

Justice emphasizes fairness, equality, and protection for disadvantaged groups in society, and ensures that socio-economic disparities can only be justified if they help the most disadvantaged groups (Rawls, 1971). The characteristics of injustice from the perspective of Rawls' theory are violation of equal basic liberties, inequality disadvantaged

the least advantaged, lack of fair equality of opportunity, and systemic discrimination. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1950) holds that people go through eight phases of development over their lives, each marked by a particular psychosocial conflict that has to be resolved if healthy growth is to result. Identity crisis is a period of intense exploration of different ways of looking at oneself. In adolescence, a strong foundation for adulthood and a distinct sense of identity emerges. An identity crisis has many characteristics, including role confusion, emotional turmoil, and identity diffusion.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Characteristics of Injustice and Identity Crisis that Antonio LeBlanc Experiences in *Blue Bayou* (2021)

As outlined in the theoretical framework, there are characteristics that associated with injustice and identity crisis. In this study, researcher found that these characteristics correspond to the experiences of Antonio Leblanc, the main character in the movie *Blue Bayou* (2021). The following is categorization of which scenes have characteristics of injustice and identity crisis experienced by Antonio.

1. Characteristic of injustice

1.1 Violation of Equal Basic Liberties

1.1.1 Antonio's Arrest and Racial Profiling



Picture 1. NOPD cops arrest Antonio

This scene reflects a violation of Antonio's basic liberties, as he is unjustly targeted and detained due to racial profiling and the abuse of power by law enforcement. The dialogue illustrates a clear power imbalance and misuse of authority, where racial profiling and personal biases exacerbate the situation. The officers, particularly Denny, display a lack of professionalism and respect, further highlighting the systemic issues within law enforcement. His demands for respect “sir”, refusal to allow Antonio to leave, and use of forceful language illustrate a pattern of behavior that disregards Antonio's rights and dignity.

The dialogue in the film portrays a chaotic and unjust scenario where Antonio is aggressively targeted and arrested. Denny's insistence on asserting dominance and disrespect is met with resistance from Antonio, leading to an escalation that ends violently. Ace's attempts to de-escalate are ineffective, showing a failure in handling the situation professionally and respectfully. This scene encapsulates the broader issues of racial profiling and the misuse of police power. Antonio's basic liberties are trampled upon due to personal biases and systemic racism, making it a poignant example of the struggles faced by individuals in similar real-life situations.

1.2 Inequality Disadvantaged the Least Advantaged

1.2.1 Denied Bail and Detention



Picture 2. Antonio's bail denied

Antonio's detention by ICE underscores the intersection of criminal justice and immigration enforcement, where immigrant people like Antonio face greater vulnerabilities. His basic freedoms are further compromised by the system's failure to recognize his humanity and his right to due process. These scenes highlight the broader implications of immigration enforcement policies that prioritize detention and deportation over individual rights and due process.

1.3 Lack of Fair Equality of Opportunity

1.3.1 Childhood Flashbacks



Picture 3. Antonio told his wife about his childhood stories

Antonio's emotional recounting of his childhood experiences provides a powerful insight into the profound impact of systemic failures on his life. His story highlights the severe lack of fair equality of opportunity, demonstrating how his upbringing in a neglectful and abusive foster care system deprived him of the stability and support that other children might receive. This dialogue sheds light on the deep scars left by his past and underscores the broader societal obligation to ensure that all children have access to nurturing and supportive environments, aligning with the principles of fairness and justice.

1.4 Systemic Discrimination

1.4.1 Receiving the Deportation Order



Picture 4. Antonio received a deportation order

A fundamental aspect of Rawls's concept of basic liberty contained in this scene is Antonio's right to security and stability, which is violated due to the threat of deportation he receives. His adoptive parents did not carry out proper naturalization procedures, leaving her vulnerable to the threat of deportation, highlighting gaps in the legal system's protections for individuals experiencing similar conditions.

Rawls's principle of liberty holds that everyone should have equal access to basic liberty, and Antonio's situation demonstrates a failure to guarantee those rights. He had lived for years in the United States, when suddenly he was threatened with deportation. This case underscores the need for legal reform to protect adopted children. Ensure that such monitoring does not result in severe consequences such as deportation, thereby upholding the principles of fairness and justice in society.

1.4.2 Final Court Hearing and Abduction



Picture 5. Antonio was kidnapped and assaulted on the day of his trial

This scene illustrates the three principles of justice. Antonio's kidnapping prevents him from attending court hearings. Therefore, he did not have the opportunity to access legal aid and defend himself. These attacks and absences deprive Antonio of his basic freedoms. Including the right to a fair trial and physical freedom. This situation underscores systemic failures in protecting the most disadvantaged groups or people. Antonio, already marginalized, increasingly becomes a victim of those in power. This shows how the system fails to uplift and protect people like him. Antonio's story of struggle highlights the urgent need for systemic reform to ensure fairness, justice and protection for all individuals, especially those who are most vulnerable.

2. Characteristics of Identity Crisis

2.1 Role confusion

2.1.1 Self-reflection by the lake



Picture 6. Antonio sits by the lakeside

As a representation of reflection and self-examination, the lake represents Antonio's inner battle to come to terms with his identity and make sense of his history in light of his current situation. The calm surface of the lake gives a sign that Antonio is experiencing inner turmoil and confusion. A major component of local geography and culture, the Louisiana swamp. Which means Antonio's separation from his past and his relationship with his current environment.

The possibility of deportation and his Korean identity exacerbate his identity dilemma. As he tries to reconcile the American identity he acquired after being adopted with his Korean identity. In accordance with Erikson's idea that overcoming the crisis is a dynamic process. This scene is a symbolic reminder of Antonio's unresolved past and the uncertainty of his future. Important emotional and story turning points in this film are marked by important events that emphasize the themes of role confusion and the search for identity.

2.2 Emotional turmoil

2.2.1 Losing Job and Friendship



Picture 7. Antonio was fired and broke off his friendship with Parker

Antonio's meeting with Ms. Jacci and Parker describe the complicated struggles he faces. Fired for unpaid debts. Losing his livelihood marked a moment of personal and professional devastation. This scene powerfully highlights Antonio's growing despair and isolation. Lack of support structure to provide a fair opportunity for its stability and growth. This is evidence of the impact of system failure on individuals like Antonio.

2.3 Identity diffusion

2.3.1 Adoption Revelation



Picture 8. Antonio was aware of the adoption issue

The identity crisis that is closely related to Erik Erikson's theory of identity diffusion can be seen from Antonio's story about his adoption status and lack of citizenship. His permanent identity is disrupted by the revelation of his adoption by his parents. It was revealed that they never carried out the adoption procedures properly. He finds it difficult to define who he is without the social and legal identity he thinks he has.

This led Antonio to have feelings of identity uncertainty and separation. His identity issues are exacerbated by his fear of deportation, which also leads to tension, anxiety and possibly depressive symptoms. Antonio experiences stress and emotional turmoil that puts strain on his marriage and possible isolation that affects his ability to interact with his loved ones and the community.

B. The Struggles for Antonio LeBlanc's Main Character in Facing the Identity Crisis and Injustice in *Blue Bayou* (2021)

In the movie *Blue Bayou*, Antonio Leblanc, the main character, also struggles with injustice and an identity crisis. His experiences encapsulate challenges that highlight the systemic issues within the legal and social structures of American society. The following is an analysis of the difficulties faced by Antonio in the movie *Blue Bayou* (2021).

1. Struggling to Afford Legal Representation



Picture 9. Antonio is struggling to pay for lawyers

According to Rawls, social and economic inequality must be regulated in such a way that it benefits disadvantaged groups in society. In this case, Antonio is the most disadvantaged group, because he faces potential deportation. Antonio's inability to pay legal fees highlights the systemic inequities that hinder his access to justice. Expensive attorney fees added to the burden on Antonio and Kathy.

Rawls argues for the need for policies that can reduce this gap. For example, through subsidized legal aid or reforms that guarantee fair access to legal representation. This scene underscores the need for a broader societal structure that upholds the principles of justice. Antonio and Kathy's struggles reflect broader societal challenges in which economic inequality hinders the realization of basic freedoms and justice, which are important principles in Rawls' philosophical framework.

2. Attempting to Support the Family through Crime



Picture 10. Antonio and his friend stole some motorcycles

Antonio's desperate actions highlight the inequality he experiences. As well as the lack of opportunities to get a job that he faces. He didn't have enough money to pay for a lawyer's services. He is forced to commit theft and it could risk him being arrested. This situation is in sharp contrast to the principles of justice put forward by John Rawls, which states that everyone should have fair access to legal resources and opportunities without engaging in illegal activities. This scene highlights the illegal actions that Antonio is forced to take. His act of committing a crime reflects the harsh reality faced by people who are marginalized and deprived of equal and fair opportunities. This scene therefore highlights the urgent need for a more just and just system.

3. Impact on Family Life



Picture 11. Antonio and his wife Kathy arguing

In this scene, Kathy's emotions reveal her frustration. Feelings of isolation and disconnection from her husband because his secrets and lies were revealed. The presence of Kathy's mother, Dawn, and her insistence that Kathy leave, further emphasizes the breakdown in family relationships due to the burden of external pressure. Jessie, who is in the center, represents the innocent victim of injustice.

A simple question from Jessie, "Coming, Daddy?" highlighting the normalcy she seeks amidst the chaos. This scene underscores how inequality and the threat of deportation not only impacts individuals but also impacts families. Ruining the order of their relationships and daily lives. This is in contrast to the difference principle,

which advocates that social and economic disparities be regulated in such a way. Thus providing benefits to disadvantaged groups. Here, Antonio and his most disadvantaged family experience enormous personal suffering and instability, revealing deep moral and ethical failures in the system.

4. Childhood Trauma Flashback



Picture 12. Antonio and his mother's childhood memories

Antonio often sees his mother, especially the bad memories of his mother that almost drown him. This memory represent unresolved childhood trauma that is an obstacle to the development of his identity. This scene shows that because Antonio has not yet processed his past experiences, he is experiencing emotional turmoil and confusion. The images of water and drowning symbolize his suffocating agony and the unresolved mental anguish caused by those memories. The psychological and emotional conflicts emphasized by the struggle between life and death hinder Antonio's efforts to understand his emotions and form a strong identity.

These scenes have a deep impact on Antonio's thinking and often resurface due to unresolved issues. Starting from the early stages, memories of the past emerge and have an impact on current identity problems. As a result of these traumatic and emotional memories affect self-perception and interactions with the outside world. Antonio finds it difficult to develop a coherent sense of self and experiences ongoing emotional instability and role misunderstandings.

5. Suicide Attempt



Picture 13. Antonio attempted to commit suicide

After he was assaulted by Denny, and then he couldn't attend his trial, he was distraught. He drove his motorcycle to a swampy lake, attempting suicide.

Analysis: Antonio tried suicide as a symbol of his mental anguish and hopelessness brought on by his incapacity to handle the mounting pressure and unsolved issues in his life. Denny's attack and his absence from the hearing turned into turning points that made Antonio feel even more confused about his role and more powerless, powerless, and experiencing identity crisis.

Water is typically representing unconscious thoughts and mental states, the marshy lake represents Antonio's agony and emotional upheaval. When family problems, legal disputes, and the moments of his past combine, these issues become even more vulnerable to Antonio's emotional collapse. Antonio feels imprisoned by his current circumstances and unable to see a way forward. This scene is a major component of emotional distress related to role confusion, loss of hope and purpose.

6. Immigrant Community Event



Picture 14. Antonio is visiting a family gathering at Parker's house

Antonio faces his fears by coming to Parker's house. There he interacts with the Parker family, Vietnamese immigrant, to be fully immersed in their customs and life experiences. Antonio recalls moments from his past. This makes him consider his family history and memories. The dinner moment becomes a symbol of acceptance and the collapse of cultural boundaries. Antonio admits to missing his mother and losing his sense of belonging. He is emotionally attached to the moment. The complexity of Antonio's story reveals through the identification of cultural identity, belonging and memory, and the impact of his background. These identifications show how deeply and significantly Antonio explores and discovers himself in this story.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the film *Blue Bayou* (2021), Antonio LeBlanc's story is depicted through his experience of injustice and identity crisis. The injustice that he experiences is shown through racial profiling and mistaken arrests. These circumstances highlight systemic racism and abuse of power by law enforcement. The failures of the legal system are further exposed when Antonio's bail is denied. He must face deportation because his adoptive parents never completed the naturalization process. This bureaucratic negligence puts him at risk, adding to his sense of injustice and vulnerability to the threat of deportation. In addition, Antonio's struggles with economic instability and discrimination underscore the broader social injustices that exacerbate his situation.

Antonio's identity crisis is closely linked to this experience of injustice. The incomplete adoption process leaves him in a state of legal and personal limbo. As a result of these problems, he questioned his place in the world. Antonio's crisis identity is deepened by the memories of his traumatic past that haunt him. The haunting memories of his mother's attempt to drown him continue to disrupt his emotional balance. His cultural displacement further fuels his identity crisis, as he feels disconnected from his Korean heritage and the American society he grew up in. The feeling of not belonging anywhere magnifies his internal conflict and alienation.

Antonio's struggle in the face of these challenges is multifaceted. Legally, he is caught up in a struggle against an unjust system. It threatened to deport him, even though he had lived in the United States for a long time. This legal battle was not just about his status but also about fighting for his right to have citizenship status.

Emotionally, Antonio grappled with intense psychological turmoil. It is evident from his frequent mental breakdowns and moments of despair. Such occurrences reflect the heavy burden of unresolved trauma and hardship he is currently experiencing. Socially and economically, he faced major obstacles, including job loss and financial difficulties. These factors further isolated him and limited his chances of securing a stable future for his family. This struggle paints a vivid picture of an immigrant from Korea, adopted by American parents, struggling against systemic injustice. He tries to reconcile his fractured identity due to these factors. It highlights the urgent need for systemic reform and greater support for individuals experiencing similar difficulties.

V. SUGGESTION

This study is meant to help everyone who reads it. This study should be a useful resource for individuals who need information to help further their study. It can also provide readers with new ideas and a deeper understanding of identity crisis issues. As well

as to those who are interested in topics such as deportation, the experiences of adopted Korean Americans, and injustice.

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