

Social & Economic Conflict Analysis of The Main Character on The Pursuit of Happiness Movie : A Marxism Analysis

Dimas Fisal B¹⁾, Faishal Arkan²⁾

ABSTRACT

Marxism is the system of socialism of which the dominant feature is public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Same as with the problem of this film one of the sociological problem of this film is the father have no money to give his children some happiness, homeless and always confused to eat everyday as we know economical problem is the big problem. While Marx and Engels wrote little on education, the educational implications of Marxism are clear. Education both reproduces capitalism and has the potential to undermine it. With respect to reproduction, it is informative to look at key texts by Althusser and Bowles and Gintis (and the latter's legacy). As far as challenging capitalism is concerned, considerations are given to both theoretical developments and practical attempts to confront neoliberalism and enact socialist principles.

Keywords; *Marxism, Education, Capitalism*

Correspondent Authors;

- 1) Students of Universitas An Nuur, Safitriintan688@gmail.com
- 2) Lecturers of Universitas An Nuur, faishalarkan27@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

This story is taken from a true experience. The story started in 1981. A small family of Chris Gardner with his wife, Linda and his five years old son, Christopher lived in small apartment. Chris was a salesman of a bone scanner machine while Linda worked for a laundry service. However, Chris could not make money as much as Linda hoped because the machines are expensive enough for doctors to buy. Quarrel between Chris and Linda often happened when they had much burden for daily life and for paying the apartment rent as well as taxes. Chris also had to pay the

fine of his careless parking. They did not have enough money to pay. In the hopeless situation, Linda could bear the poverty. She finally decided to leave Chris. In his hopeless hope, still he had to face the problem that Christopher and him had to leave the lodging house because Chris could not pay for the rent. Yet, surprisingly, Chris met a successful stock broker. It made Chris want to be a stock broker too.

Chris got an opportunity to work/training for Dean Witter Reynold, a stock broker company although without any salary. In the very difficult situation, again Chris was expelled from his lodging house.

So, he finally decided to stay in Glide Memorial without any rent. At the same time, for the daily needs he only had to be able the only broken bone scanner machine. To repair the machine, Chris sold his blood for donor. Eventually, Chris was accepted as the permanent employee of Dean Witter. Having made a lot of money on stock broker, Chris was able to establish his own stock broker company, Gardner Rich. Later on, he was able to sell his company's stocks and made a lot of money. He had enjoyed his success after a very long suffer

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Marxist Theory

One of the theory in the film *The Pursuit of Happiness* is the Marxism Theory. Marxist theory is a theory that based on the ideas of Karl Marx in the 19th century where it is identified as a theory of revolutionary communism, in which it is an opposition in the idea of capitalism. It is a political and economic philosophy as to view how things are now and as to where they are headed. It is believed to be a conflict theory for it states that the society is in conflict. Marxism argues that this conflict is between the bourgeoisie (rich) and the proletariat (poor).

2. The Marxist Perspective on Education

Traditional Marxists see the education system as working in the interests of ruling class elites. According to the Marxist perspective on education, the system performs three functions for these elites: Reproduces class inequality, Legitimizes class inequality and It works in the interests of capitalist employers

The reproduction of class inequality

In school, the middle classes use their material and cultural capital to ensure that their children get into the best schools and the top sets. This means that the wealthier pupils tend to get the best education and then go onto to get middle class jobs. Meanwhile working class children are more likely to get a poorer standard of education and end up in working class jobs. In this way class inequality is reproduced.

The Legitimation of class inequality

Marxists argue that in reality money determines how good an education you get, but people do not realize this because schools spread the 'myth of meritocracy' – in school we learn that we all have an equal chance to succeed and that our grades depend on our effort and ability. Thus if we fail, we believe it is our own fault. This legitimates or justifies the system because we think it is fair when in reality it is not.

Teaching the skills future capitalist employers need

In 'Schooling in Capitalist America' (1976) Bowles and Gintis suggest that there is a correspondence between values learnt at school and the way in which the workplace operates. The values, they suggested, are taught through the 'Hidden Curriculum'.

3. How to teach Marxist in the class

Begin with a discussion of the current crisis in our society, illustrated with stories and statistics from the capitalist press, in an effort to reach general agreement on what needs to be explained. Then, I devote at least one session to each of the following: an overview of Marx's analysis to clarify its systemic character and to provide a rough map of the areas into which the course will take us; the dialectic; Marx's treatment of the fact/value distinction; his conception of human nature and theory of alienation; the labor theory of value; the materialist conception of history; the theory of the state; the critique of bourgeois ideology; Marx's vision of communism;

His theories of class consciousness and revolution; and family—if time allows—his method, with special emphasis on its utility for our own research. I cannot hope to repeat my Lectures in this space, or even to mention all the subjects that come up, but it may be useful to go through these

topics one at a time to provide concrete illustrations of my pedagogical strategy. Readers of the following should keep in mind that my intention is not the ordinary one of using a scaffolding to construct a building but of using the building a display its scaffolding.

Begin the first class by asking students to take out a piece of paper and write for fifteen minutes on why they are or are not Marxists. Rather than collecting these papers, I ask students to keep them until the end of term when I want them to answer the same question (either as part of a take-home final or as an addendum to their term papers), in light of their work in the course and what they have said at the start. My aim is to involve students personally in the subject, to jolt them into a recognition that Marxism belongs to their lives as well as to the curriculum and consequently that they are as much a part of the subject as they are people studied.

4. The Implementation of English Movie in Class

Activity To conduct an attractive English teaching and learning process for Senior high school students, teacher can use English movie. In the implementation, before teacher starts conducting teaching and learn

a. First, teacher should consider the audience of English movie. Since the

- audiences of the movie are Senior high school Students, teacher is expected to choose the movie which is appropriate to watch. Directly, it insists teacher to watch first the movie for making sure whether the movie is suitable for students or not.
- b. Second, teacher should consider the content of the movie. Teacher should be careful to play movie containing certain religious or race issue. If teacher still wants to play the movie in any reasons, before turning the movie on, teacher can give some notes to students. It aims to avoid the misconception and misunderstanding among students in responding the movie.
- c. Third, teacher should consider the appropriateness between movie and the level of students. Since the movie will be played for Senior high school students, teacher can choose movie which does not contain too much slang words and idioms, except for some reasons. There are some English movies suggested to implement such as Groundhog Day, Freaky Friday and Nine to Five. Those movies are considered as suitable movies to use in teaching Senior high school students since besides they do not contain much slang, the movies are funny and easy to

follow. Moreover, they also have deeper underlying messages which can lead to good discussions.

- d. Fourth, teacher should consider the relation between movie and the syllabus of Senior high school. Teacher should be creative in relating the movie and topic discussed based on the syllabus. For example, when the basic competence states the topic discussed is asking for information, teacher can play certain scene which shows how people ask for information. Thus, it is no doubt that the movie really supports the syllabus.

Fifth, teacher should consider time of course and time needed to play the movie. Since it is Senior high school, time allocation for one meeting is 45 minutes. Let's say that in a certain day, English subject has 2 meetings. It means that the subject can be conducted in 90 minutes. By realizing that fact, it is almost impossible for teacher to play the entire movie. It is based on the consideration that commonly movie lasts for 90 minutes

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Picture 1: Crist And His Son Being Homeless

*Children : I make a list for my birthday gift
Gardner : what you write there?
Children : a basketball or ant garden
Gardner : oke, I should sell my bone density*

The movie *The Pursuit of Happiness* portrays a Marxism Theory, where in it shows the struggle of Chris Gardner in life; being a homeless and powerless man. In the movie, he invested his life savings in portable bone density scanner, thus, due to the change of technology in the film, he wasn't to sell it and was not able to gain profit from it. One day, while he was selling one of his scanners he meet Jay Twistle, a manager in Dean Witter Reynolds and impress him using a Rubik's Cube during a taxi ride. His meeting with him pave way for having an unpaid internship in a big company, thus still having trouble financially.

This resulted to them being poor and homeless and because he was not able to

gain profit his wife, Linda decided to work for herself and also left his son Christopher Jr. to him. From this their struggle in life started, they became homeless, they does not have any money. Thus, the film also shows how Chris made use of his resources and was able to gain from his hard work, and since the movie is based on a real life story of Chris Gardner, he is now a successful multimillionaire businessman.

The scenes from the film on the difference of him being homeless and those who work in big companies with suits and ties are all portrayals of a Marxism Theory, the conflict between the poor and rich, Will Smith claims in the film production that the movie reinforces and portrays the conception of the US that the country is based on "the hope that any person, armed with their own will and determination, can create their situation, from the lowest to the highest of the high." emphasis on the idea that nothing in life comes easy and that it

takes courage and a lot of struggle to be able to succeed in life. His relationship with his boss Jay Twistle is an important part of the film, since it cues the change of event in his life.

Jay Twistle symbolized the bourgeoisie, which owns the capital, factories, corporations, land –and therefore “the ruling class” and Chris Gardner is the working class the “proletariat.” But the film shows a different angle and thus contradicts the idea the poor should stay poor, Jay Twistle pave way for the success of Chris Gardner, he was the one that showed him, that he should try, and with this Chris worked hard, Jay Twistle therefore was the one who help Chris Gardner became who he is.

Several scenes from the movie showed the defiance of gender roles. In the movie, Chris Gardner is struggling in life since he invested all of his life savings to buy for portable bone density scanners but actually doctors and medical organizations are not interested with it since there are much better equipment rather than what he is selling. In result, he wasn't able to sell it and that's where he became broke. When her wife realized that Chris could no longer support them, she decided to leave and work for her sister's boyfriend restaurant in New York and bring their child with her. However, Chris opposed it and insisted that he should be with his son. From there, the

struggle of a father and son started. Since the image of a mother figure was lost to his son, Chris started to become a father and as well as a mother to his son.

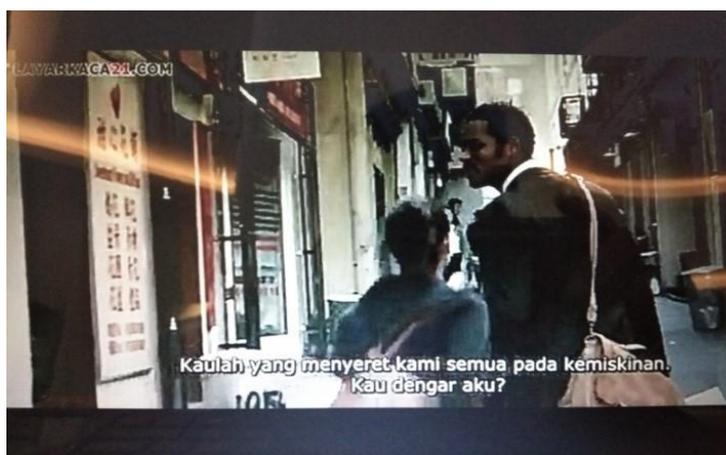
He was the one who walked with his child on his way to school and who also fetched him after class which her wife does before. In mealtime, he always prepared the food for his son. He washes his son's clothes and even prepares milk for him before bedtime. In a deeper picture, when Chris can no longer afford to rent an apartment, they became homeless. There is a scene from the movie wherein at one point; the two of them are forced to stay in a restroom in BART station. His son was crying since the restroom floor made him cold and he never expected that they would come to a point like that. When his son is asleep, he tried to make a mat out of tissue papers and hold him tight.



Picture 2; Homeless Crist And His Son Sleep On Toilet

In the society's perspective, these kinds of situations or gestures are pertained or expected with a mother and child relationship. Fathers are expected by the society to support their children financially and viewed as a parent who is not that showy of their affection towards their child. They are sometimes perceived as the type

of parent who is less caring while the mothers are the one who does the work. However, in this movie, it defied the gender roles of a mother and a father or a woman and a man since the main lead of the movie, who is Chris, is a type of father who cared so much for his son and made him feel that he is both a mother and a father to him.



Picture 3; Anger Of Crist's Wife

Gardner : don't ever take my child from me. Do you wanna leave?

Wife : yeah, I wanna leave

Gardner : but, Christopher stay with me

Wife : you bring us to this poorness, you understand? I'm not happy anymore

The expression from the Gardner's wife showing that theirs family has so many big problem on the financially. She showed these expressions not because she not loves her husband again, but she feel tired with theirs families condition that always

confuses when they should pay something like school, house rent and everyday needs.

But, Chris no without some effort, he always try to make his small family happy, one of his business is never give up to sell his health product because of he can sell one product the money can used to being their life for a month Because this problem all of the condition of this family be broken, the wife choose to go to leave her husband with this condition and thee wife get some offer from her sister to take the job in restaurant in new York city, she think if he take this chance it will make the her family be better



Picture 4; The Disappointed Of Crist On Wife Decision

Chris : I'll go home late

Wife : Chris, I should go to work on time

Chris : yeah, I know. Do you with Christopher are good?

Wife : Chris, I'm leaving. I have anything and I will bring my son

Another problem appears because some poor condition is the wife feel that have anything and can get anything without her husband it is because Linda feel her

husband is useless she feel Gardner only give some poor life for her and Christopher. Linda have opinion that he will be better if she go from Gardner and life happily with Christopher only. Linda only need her children not her husband because she don't want to accompanied her husband when Gardner was falling down.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on a Marxian conflict analysis, the Pursuit of Happiness director, Gabrielle Muccino illustrates that there is an upward social mobility on the main character of this movie, Chris Gardner. Chris always treated badly from people around him, because he is on poverty, and there are so many conflicts because of it. Yet, all of the conflict makes Chris Gardner make more effort to be what he wants, to get a better job and better life with his son. He always works hard and dedicates his life to reach his success. He believes that happiness comes when he can be successful in the material side.

The researcher concludes that conflicts which comes to Chris Gardner's when he is on poverty make him make more effort and more hard work to achieve the happiness and be a successful people. Chris Gardner also wants to prove to other people who treated him badly that he can get what he wants, that he can get the happiness, and makes an upward social mobility in his life. English as foreign language is implemented as the compulsory subject to learn in senior

high schools in Indonesia. The aim of the implementation is to achieve the informational level of literacy which is expected from students to be able to use English

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