

Depiction of Social Discrimination in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at giving some certain information about the transitory African American community and the literature of the nineteenth century. And then the Toni Morrison's life, career and it's reflection of racism, discrimination and social issues. later, the fate of the black people at the time of Toni Morrison in the United State of America are mentioned through the novel "*The Bluest Eye*". Even it aimed at giving some certain information about the oppression of the black race in Toni Morrison's community. Moreover, it includes the problem of the study through the investigating the suffering of the black women in civilized country " America ", they were suffered for their skin color and their gender caused them being double marginalized, they were forced to grant their bodies to their owners. Finally, this paper aims to explore the victimization of black females, racial discrimination, motherhood oppression, silence by white society.

INTRODUCTION

Slavery is the brutal and immoral practice of forcing someone into servitude without paying them. The slogan seems to be not with whether black is beautiful or not, but with the need it to be. Morrison affirm the some contemporary African American writers started criticizing black communities acceptance and perpetuation of white notions and values. (Ibid)

Discrimination is the act of making unjustified distinctions between people based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they belong or are perceived to belong discrimination is a central theme of immigrant writing that creates in American literature. Writers take an opportunity to attack and tackle into discrimination and it's sequence from different angel religion, culture and historical. African American literature is a good way for restoring the power of expression and speech of black people has been long suppressed long promising a reversal of trend and reconstructing womanhood. Morrison seek to expose the explicit and the long series of struggle that the black have the exploitative tendencies against the white.

In chapter one, a brief discussion about the theme. Slavery and discrimination will be discussed then, the life and career of the writer Toni Morrison. Chapter two will tackle the theme of discrimination in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison with the reference to the text. Then conclusion will follow. Finally a list of references will be mentioned. (Ibid: 752)

CHAPTER ONE

Light shedding on slavery and discrimination literature :

The beginning of slave trade in America begins in 1619 when the African slaves brought to Virginia and Jamestown colony to be used in farming, to take care of tobacco or rice and cotton crops. The African had been brought on a Dutch ship to British colony "Virginia and Jamestown " colony was the first colony that receives the first group of slaves. The killing work under sever condition and ill –treatment of the slaves pushes them to revolt against their masters, against the merciless whites. The slavery trade extended to encompass millions of native Americans regardless of the origin and color in many colonies in 1730. Small number of Whites was enslaves under many pretexts such as crimes they have committed or debts, they were not able to repay back to the owner. (Powell, 1990: 751)

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They would have taken under indentured servants. The enslavements reasons may be categorized into different aspects such as famine, war, commercial bankruptcy, religious oppression, natural disaster and legal penalty. In the first half of 19th century, abolitionism movement emerged to put an end to slavery trade. The transatlantic slave trade consist of kidnap and sale of millions of Americans to European traders along the west coast of Africa and their transport to the "New World" America. They forced to work in the plantation of sugar, cotton and coffee or as servants in the plantation owners houses. The enslaved people as a result of being captured in war, as punishment for committing a crime or as means of escaping famine. Enslaved Africans were ordinary tortured like "whipped, branded, beaten and chained separated from other family members and change their names. The system of slavery was based on violence. The legal system contains floggings, branding, burning and death sentences to be passed like slaves who run away for 30 days or more could be sentenced to death and Africans who raised their hand to strike whites could have it cut. On the plantation, slaves sought to escape from their owners, they used other forms of resistance including working slowly, sabotaging crops or machinery, armed resistance and even suicide. So African slaves fought for their survival and freedom for over 200 years. At the second half of 19th century, many countries took steps to prevent slavery, law to abolish slavery in French colonies in 1948, and in the United State of America in 1865 (Kaye, 2005 : 1-20).

In Morrison novels, she emphasizes on the discovery and rediscovery of black life of the black woman. She has been lived in America, she understands the point of being black and female is a double marginalization. White are considered superior, more intelligent and virtuous than blacks. Black women have to confront trouble atrocities because of being black and female. They are sexually exploited by African – American men as well as white men. They suffer the racism and sexism. They have double jeopardy. Morrison deals with the women of the first half of the 20 century who brought up in a traditional environment, struggle to liberate themselves and seek their self-identity and independence. She shows their actual experiences, silence, repression oppression which they suffer in the patriarchal, racist society. The basic myth of racism is that white skin color begins with its superiority what the white is more intelligent, more virtuous, more sexually controlled by the mere fact of being white. Being white in color implied a whole series of connotations of being attractive both physically and culturally – desirable intelligent, reasonable and above all Blackness was seen as a negative sign, a symbol of ugliness, uncontrolled irrational, violent sexuality and so on. Black color and black man became firmly entrenched in the psyche of white America. For the black woman racial discrimination together with gender discrimination proves to be lethal combination. The Afro – American woman bore a double – age persecution: one as a worker both in the house as well as in the field, two as an object of sexual exploitation. She was seen as an oversexed, immoral, loose woman who was always available for instant sexual gratification as well as for the procreation of the race. (Ibid).

Black females are racially exploited, sexually violated and emotionally humiliated. Many of them learn to live peacefully with their visible and invisible scars by making choices. They turn to verbal or physical violence. So they attempted to create exceptional solution to avoid further victimization. The violence in this process become an act of rebellion, a kind of resistance against oppressive. The female characters choose violence to find an escape from the oppression they have suffered from white patriarchal society. They are tormented by social and racial discrimination. (Putnam, 2011: 25–43).

The suffering of black women like violence, rape, motherhood and the most important reason that causes this is racism that is their color. They are discriminated by the white society because of their God given them colors. In Morrison's novels some black females have the opportunity to find their identity and survive in the hard atmosphere of racial identity. Morrison's novels are meant to celebrate a sense of black womanhood and to create awareness of the honor and dignity of the blacks women in the society. (Padhi, 2014 :144 – 146).

Toni Morrison concerns with a kind of slave woman may be understood by reading her book of literary criticism in which she laments the absence in American literature of the ability to understand on African presence in the literature. She analyzed the works of Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe and Willa Gather in playing in the dark and concluded that by the works of those writers regarded most important in American literature. She declares that "It is necessary to analyze the absence of an understanding of African community to complete the history of literary criticism. *Beloved* and *Denver* represent two aspects of history, oppression and joy, forgetfulness and remembering, unforgiving and loving. This novel revises the African tradition of storytelling in which memory and articulation are pivot for the sake of self – understanding and self-claiming. (Mayfield, 2012: 1).

Beloved is the story of pain, suffering and atrocities. It is the tale of black woman who were dominated by their white masters. This novel is set after the end of civil war and during the period of so-called Reconstruction. The white hurt or injure the blacks in many ways: The African are whipped, sexually assaulted and separated from the members of their own family and the physical violence is regarded as strategy by the white used beating, whipping and mutilating against black slaves. Sexual violence also used against women slaves, they wanted to complete domination and control over their slaves. (Kocher, 2013: 537-588).

Beloved centered on the religious and spiritual view point of the African – American at that time. It has supernatural elements like ghosts, an invisible causes Howard and Buglarrun away from the house and through appearing causes breaking and shaking the things in the house. From religious point of view Sethe compared as Jesus Christ who died on the cross for the sins of mankind and was resurrected. So the ghost of the baby has punish her end and continually reminded her of the crime she committed in the past. Toni Morrison believe that "black culture has been built on the horror of the past and it is this history that has fashioned contemporary black culture in the positive way. Morrison has illustrated black culture as resistance , vibrant, independent and determined. The black woman stand as the pillars of strength with that community as guardians and healers. (Dr. Gupta & Mahal, 2014: 242-246) .

Biography of Toni Morrison :

Toni Morrison is a contemporary African American female writer . Between 1970 - 2015 , she was public she eleven novels the first one "the Bluest Eye: and the last one "God help the child : 2015 " . She was 1970 in middle age when she was started writing novels. She was born on February ,18, 1931andshe was given the name of Gloe Anthony Wofford " , born in Lorain in Ohio. She was graduated from Lorain public schools and entered Howard University , She got B.A . degree in 1953 , then after two years , she got M.A. in English from Cornell University . In 1967 she became a senior editor at Random House. (Staggers , 1989: 1-2) .

Her mother's name is Ramah (nee willis) and her father's name is George Wofford . She got the Nobel prize in literature in 1993 , the National Endowment for the humanities, Us Federal Governments highest honor for achievement in the humanities , the National Book Foundation's Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American letters, even she got the pen / soul Bellow Award for achievement in American fiction. (from Wikipedia , the free encyclopedia) .

Morrison's grandfather is a worker in a mine , he left the region of racism and poverty in Greenville in Bringham and established a family in Ohio, while her father came from Georgia's the racial state , she got a strong sense from her its own, As a consequence , this sense made her feel of her own worth and helped her writing about the American African community . She was dealt with black communities in Ohio, she discussed the black identity in her writing because no one can know the history of the literature in the United States without knowledge of the presence of the African Americans . The social issues that she mentioned in her writing are : the relationship between racism and the class exploitation , sexual liberation , imperial , hegemony authority , values , folk and mythical legends , the distinction between good and evil and , the sense of citizenship identity. She is treated with literature not as a beauty and imagination but also as a power full way in treating with social and political issues that concern with individual and community . Her writings are connected to the socio cultural emotion and the deep emotional involvement requirements between the writer and the readers. (Caste, 1999: 9 – 11) .

From her grandfather "George Wofford "and her grandmother "Ardellia Willis " Morrison inherited the love of ghost stories that became intimate with miraculous at an early age and till this days , she believes in the world of spirits .Her special interest in spiritual being is like a Subversives symbolic trick in which the writer's creativity used it as a means of reviving memory and here the dialogue occurs between paralyzed characters with traumas to enhance the local community , even through fiction Morrison's novels intertwine in a regular mode with memoryand saturated with past demons and fantasy desire on one hand besides remind people of their cultural heritage and show to them as it they were in a social connection . Indeed , Morrison was traumatized because of overlooking of the white community and she felt that she was as a foreigner in her homeland under the American patriarchal community. This marginalized situation made her write in linguistic heritage like other black women writers about the male white culture dominate the black society. (Lee, 2002 : 195 – 217).

Morrison is a fictional character and literary critic , she has role in partial revising the history of African Americans . In her novels , she discussed the main issues such as the trauma , slavery , racial prejudice that suffered by African Americans, the effects of this experience on cultural traditions , the sense of identity and the means that used by African Americans to maintain their history and culture Morrison has used a strong historical and cultural base to write her novels , even she used her imagination to express literary tradition of the African Americans . She transformed strategies through the use of African American novelists she used an unconventional listing techniques by collection between the vernacular symbolic poetry and modern language , Morrison used an innovative dialogue in writing she gave voice to multiple characters who have created themselves in multiple settings of time and space . There are many elements that made Morrison's writing ideal as follows : the exodus and alienation , positive relationship between the author and the reader , the oral quality of the text voice and the quality music in writing , these elements continued together expand the imagination of the reader and make him contribute in the text and this is what Morrison's aims in her writing. (Ibid).

CHAPTER TWO**The Bluest Eye Synopsis**

Nine-year-old Claudia MacTeer and her ten-year-old sister, Frieda MacTeer live in an old house in Loraine, Ohio. It is 1941, near the end of the Great Depression, and their family struggles to make ends meet. Although there is a tremendous sense of love in their home, their mother, Mrs. MacTeer, is strict and punishes them often, but out of a sense of concern and love for her children. Their father works hard to keep the family afloat. To help financially the MacTeer's take in a boarder named Henry Washington, who the girls call Mr. Henry. They later take in a young girl named Pecola Breedlove because her father, Cholly Breedlove, burned her family's house down and ended up in jail. (Patrice, 1992: 44)

Claudia and Frieda like Pecola, but feel sorry for her. Pecola and Frieda love Shirley Temple because of her beauty, which stems from her white features, but Claudia disagrees with them. Eventually, Pecola moves back into the storefront apartment where her family lives and her life continues to be hard. Her father is an abusive alcoholic and her mother is neglectful and self-righteous. Her parents fight on a regular basis and these altercations lead to physical violence. Pecola's brother Samuel, copes with the violence by running away but Pecola being a young black girl, is unable to escape. She believes she is fated to live her sad life because she is ugly, which is confirmed by the way she is treated in the community. She prays for blue eyes because they will make her beautiful and allow her to see the world differently. The reader learns that Pecola's parents have both had tragic lives, which has led to their dysfunction as adults. Her father, Cholly Breedlove, was abandoned as a baby and later turned away by his father after searching him out. During Cholly's first sexual experience, two white men stumble upon him and the girl he was with and force him to continue the sexual act as they watch. This humiliating incident leads Cholly to develop a hatred for women. He lives a dangerously free life, and feels tied down after getting married. Pecola's mother, Mrs. Breedlove, has a lame foot and has always felt isolated and ugly. As a young woman, she loses herself in movies. The beautiful white actresses exacerbate her belief that she is ugly. (Ibid)

After having children, she takes on the role of a martyr, believing her relationship with Cholly is a cross she must bear as a good Christian woman. She works for a white family, and spending time in their home makes her despise her own. One day during the spring of 1941, Cholly returns home drunk and finds Pecola washing dishes. He experiences a fury of emotions as he watches her. At first, he feels tenderness and hatred fueled by guilt. He knows he is unable to care for her, and hates her for loving him. He rapes Pecola, and leaves her on the kitchen floor. Afterward, Mrs. Breedlove beats Pecola when she learns of the rape. In an act of desperation, Pecola visits Soaphead Church, a local charlatan who claims he can work miracles, and asks for blue eyes. Soaphead Church tricks Pecola into poisoning a dog he has long wanted to kill, stating that if the dog acts funny it is a sign she will receive her wish. When summer arrives, Claudia and Frieda begin selling marigold seeds to save for a new bike. (Ibid: 45)

As they make their way around the neighborhood, they learn that Pecola has been impregnated by her father. Unlike the rest of the community, the girls want the baby to live. They sacrifice the money they have made, burying it by Pecola's house, and plant the remaining marigold seeds in their backyard. They believe that if the marigold seeds grow, their prayers have been answered and the baby will live. In the end, however, the seeds do not grow and Pecola's baby dies. Afterward, Pecola goes mad, and in her psychosis, believes she has received blue eyes. The community disowns her and from then on she lives isolated in her own world.

Social Discrimination in *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye is a novel that brings to discussion themes such as discrimination establishing a dialogue with the 1960s debates over such subjects. These topics are analyzed by Morrison through the novel's plot formal devices and characters. Therefore, all of those elements are examined in the present chapter, in order to understand what the novelist may be suggesting about identity, the discrimination. Morrison's concerns about identity the discrimination is not transmitted exclusively through plot and characters in *The Bluest Eye*. (Powell, 1990: 747)

In *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison has created two thoroughly radicalized communities. Both communities are crippled by racism but in different ways. Morrison has created a dualistic tale of the oppressors and the oppressed. The novel illustrates how the discrimination which exists within the African American community can be seen as an effect of the oppression and racism its members have been subjected to by whites. The discrimination, oppression and marginalization have corroded the character's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Most of the African-Americans portrayed in the book feel contempt for their own blackness. Morrison is using one atypical African-American family to demonstrate what the affects could be of this phenomenon. She has deliberately created an extreme situation to prove a point. All of the characters are affected to some degree, but Pecola succumbs to the difficulties she is facing. This was deliberate. Morrison wanted to show how the most unprotected member of society would be affected. I

focused, therefore, on how something so grotesque as the demonization of an entire race could take root inside the most delicate member of society: a child; the most vulnerable member; a female. (Winfrey O Magazine March 2001: 185).

The novel is cleverly structured around an opening story from the standard elementary school Dick and Jane readers of the 1940s, which is harmfully inculcated an inferiority complex in black children of their inner city by promoting the values of the homogenized white suburban middle-class family. Dick and Jane story sharpens the contrast between the ideal experience of the white world and the actual experience of blacks portrayed in the minichapters. As the story continuous, this repeated quotation which portrays white America by degrees loses its capitalization and punctuation, and all grammatical structure. From this Morrison wanted to make her readers visually see the difference of what it was like to see the white life style as another civilization from the view point of blacks. The story of eleven years old black girl Pecola Breedlove, who wants blue eyes, because she sees herself, and is regarded by most of the characters in the novel, as ugly. The black girls in America not only suffered from whites but also they suffered with in their community people. Pecola's own mother reinforces the message the girls have been receiving about the superiority of whites.

Pecola has no other person or place were she is safe and valued. The community uses Pecola as a reference against which they measure their own worth and develop a sense of superiority. Pecola's mother is happy to have her newborn baby but she knows Pecola is ugly. The children at School would freeze her out and tease her primarily because she was dark skinned. (Bryce, Patrice. The Novels of Toni Morrison).

Pecola walks to the grocery store to buy candy. She wonders why people consider dandelion ugly. She decided to buy Mary Jane, but she has difficulty while communicating with Mr. Yacobowski a white immigrant store owner who seems to look right through her. He does not understand what she is pointing at and speak harshly to her. Geraldine, is another black woman, takes special care of her body and her clothes. She feels affection only for the household cat, which is as neat and quiet as she is. Her son Junior is one of the boys in Pecola's school. Pecola embodies the ugliness of racial self-hatred. She moves with her mother to the outskirts of town, representing symbolically how the community has pushed her to the fringes of society. The community uses Pecola as a reference against which they measure their own worth and develop a sense of superiority. Claudia is the main narrator in the novel and she only one who does not agree with the doctrine that white is better. Claudia knows that these comparisons are used as an attempt to cover their own self-contempt. The idea discrimination is complicated at the end of The Bluest Eye. The most popular girl in school is Maureen because she is half white and has the lightest skin of the colored children. Claudia the narrator describes her as a 'high yellow child'. Maureen gets the best treatment from students and teachers alike. . (Powell, 1990: 749).

CONCLUSION

The discrimination is a black point in the American history. The black women suffered twice from the masculine community and from their husbands. Toni Morrison succeeded in presenting the fear and suffering of black race who are at the hands of white people and they are slave. Toni Morrison introduced the problems of black women who are treated badly by whites as well as the black men. They faced many kinds of violence such as physical , sexual , verbal and psychological. The constant concern of African American women about the future of their children and their fear of exploitation of the white society toward them as it happened to them like abuse exploitation , rape make them unstable and advocate many of the mothers to kill her children for the absence of any natural rights for the blacks men and women to conduct their lives as human being , they are treated as animals working in the plantation from the dawn to the night, they are not allowing the black men to marry white women. The African American black people struggled to achieve their quality between the black and the white community . Morrison said about her novel that she wants her readers (white and black) to feel the victimization of Pecola's life, not for the purpose of congratulating themselves for having compassion but rather for accepting their own responsibility for it.

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