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## Racial Element in the Novel of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye"



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Racism is belief of doctrine that differences in physical appearance between people which determine culture or individual achievement. It carries connotations of race-based bigotry, prejudice, violence, oppression. Racial element is the most explosive issue in Afro-American life which forces to confront the tragic facts of poverty, paranoia, despair and distrust. Toni Morrison has often been regarded as the foremost American literary voice for both pre-slavery and post-slavery African-American culture. In her novels, she deals the position of the African-American person in the contemporary world. She is especially concerned with the way that African-American individual and communities are expressive or silenced within a dominant of culture which historically has been intolerant of racial difference.

Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, deals everyday African American life. It shows the situation of the years of some of the most dynamic and turbulent transformations of Afro-American life. After centuries coveting white doll and decades of logging to look like Caucasian Hollywood stars, Black-American began to argue for a new standard of beauty. This new standard was meant to be racial inclusive, allowing blacks to see black as beautiful but the need to argue for this new standard of beauty was entrenched. In *The Bluest Eye*, there is a working -class urban black family during the 1930's and 1940s. The novel focuses on the disintegration of the family and particularly on the flight of a young black girl named Pecola Breedlove. Growing up in the midst of a white dominated culture, Pecola is eventually driven mad under severe assimilatory pressure cultural assimilation through school primers, movies and almost every other cultural item from cups to candies shows the violence of sameness.

Being black, Toni Morrison knows the hardships endured by a black girl Pecola Breedlove growing up in 1940. Pecola Breedlove suffers from an internalized racism that is upheld and maintained by social and cultural structures. Pauline and Pecola become the embodiment of world sickness of social pathologies as they become increasingly alienated from their bodies.

Both Pecola and Pauline experience a self-hatred that is the result of internalized racism. For Pecola, it manifests itself as the loss of her mind; for Pauline, it can be seen in her extreme self-mutilation. Through them, Morrison critiques the insidious and ultimately annihilating aspects of the North American worship of white skin and blue eyes which is the basis of racism.

It is important to look not only for the effects of racism, but also on the ways that effects are resisted as well. The effects of racism are horrible and crippling; the power of survival in oppressed communities has maintained traditions and continued throughout a history that has been committed to their erasure. In *The Bluest Eyes*, the Breedlove family has moved from the rural south to urban Lorain, Ohio and the displacement, in addition to grinding work conditions and poverty, contributes to the family destruction, told from the perspectives of the adolescent sisters, Claudia and Frieda MacTeer. Morrison's narratives weaves its way through the four seasons and traces the daughter's descent into madness. Through flashback and temporal shifts, Morrison provides readers with the context and history behind the Breedloves' misery and Pecola's obsessive desire to have *The Bluest Eyes*. Toni Morrison emphasizes on the effect of beauty standard of the dominant culture on the self image of the African female adolescent. Pecola Breedlove is most affected by the dominant culture beauty standard because it is she who is the poorest and consequently the most vulnerable. Having been treated very badly by most people surrounding her, Pecola yearns to have blue eyes in the hope that people will love. She does not have blue eyes, these social symbols of white beauty; she cannot come anywhere near to the ideal of white beauty.

Morrison is also conscience of the role economics plays in the Africans having a wholesome self image. For it is Breedloves fight for survival that weakens the family structure and make the family members more venerable to the propaganda of the dominant culture. Still it is clear that in *The Bluest Eye* Morrison regards racism as the African's primary obstacle. Describing the Breedlove, she writes, "Although their poverty

was traditional and stultifying. It was not unique." This comment makes it clear that in the late 1960's, when this novel was written, Morrison's level of consciousness about the primary cause of the nature of the African's oppression in the United States as well as in the rest of the world was considerably weak, for she not only subordinates the role of economics to racism, but also neglects to show a causal relationship between them, that an exploited economic system gives rise to racist ideology. The theme of race is portrayed through the lives and stories told by the characters, Morrison provides us with an extended portrayal of how whiteness is the standard of beauty, which distorts the lives of black women and children, through messages everywhere that whiteness is superior. Whiteness is related with beauty and purity, specifically with Geraldine, but also is associated with sterility. On the other hand color is connected with happiness. As Mrs. Breedlove shows most noticeable in the rainbow of yellow, green and purple memories she sees when making love with Cholly. Morrison uses their imagery to accentuate the destructiveness of the black community's privileging of whiteness. While suggesting that vibrant colour, rather than the pure absence of colour is a stronger image of happiness and freedom in the end. The theme whiteness is superior is portrayed through the lives and stories told by the characters mostly in the Breedloves family and through Pecola and a few others. Along with the struggles those people have endured.

The title of this novel opens up the question of

cultural indoctrination and how it affects an oppressed people. Pauline and her daughter Pecola are victims of this disastrous situation. It becomes acute in Pecola the little black girl who wants to: "Rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes." 2 Morrison also recognizes that if whiteness is used as a standard of beauty anything else, then the value of blackness is diminished and this novel works to subvert that tendency. In demonstrating pride in being black, these writers do not simply portray a positive image of blackness. Instead, she focuses on the damage that the black women characters suffer through the construction of femininity in a radicalized society. Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes*, reveals the profound effect that inter and intra-racial oppression has on the psyches and spirit of the characters, but subjugation from within creates an environment where African-Americans are forced to assume dual and conflicting roles. Morrison couples their disintegration of the self and the community with the pervasive image of the destabilized Flora's loaded phrase used in association with racial, religious and sexual perversion and the characters' roots to their past. Flora's images are woven throughout the experiences of nearly every black character and illustrate racial and cultural displacement. Ironically, Pecola, the protagonist and scapegoat-savior, embodies true African heritage; other black characters deliberately placate white expectations so as to remove themselves from the others. In doing so, such characters assume the role of oppressors against their own - an adoption that proves disastrous for the cohesion of the African-American community.

## **REFERENCE**

1) [www.Britannica.Com/ebchecked/topic/276139/west](http://www.Britannica.Com/ebchecked/topic/276139/west), August 10, 2008. 2) Morrison Toni, "The Bluest Eye", Published by Random House Ltd., 1999, p. 137.