

God Help the Child: Piercing and Unshrinking Reflection of Childhood Trauma

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Abstract

“Racism” explains the trials and tribulations endured by the characters under the name of Race. It gives a detailed account of the incidents which enrich the concept of racism. Morrison, a lady of numerous aptitudes, comes from a long line of hard-working; diligent black people who energetically fought racial harassment and lower social and economic rank. The story telling art of her parents encouraged Morrison’s growth of imagination. It is the stories that impressed on her the values of the family history and the priority of their people’s language. Also, her parents enjoyed telling thrilling stories. Absorption of these stories inspired Morrison to produce her fiction. Morrison’s all works explore the experience and character of Black American women in a racist, unjust society and their search for ethnic identity. She emphasizes the betrayal of black women due to racial, gender and class conflicts. The horrible experiences of Blacks with regard to the historic racism and bias in the United States are the main sources of aspiration for the creation of Afro- American literature. It explores the problems of rights and equality which had long been denied to Blacks. It was very difficult for blacks to live in a white-dominated community where they were not recognized or considered as a man kind. Morrison argues that races have become a symbol, a way of denoting to force, events, and forms of social decay, economic division and human alarm. Her compiling point is the central characteristic of American literature. She provides a daring perspective that is sure to alter conventional notions about American literature this dissertation is an attempt to study the black female experiences and their empowerment with particular references to Toni Morrison’s God Help The Child.

Key words: Racism, Morrison, blacks, American literature and God Help The Child.

Today, the term ‘racism’ does not come into a single definition. Racism can be found all throughout history. There are many ways to describe racism. It can be defined as hatred towards other people due to their color, job or position and so on. In history all through the

world, racism has taken place in one way or another. It has resulted in wars, slavery, cruelty among people towards one another and so on.

Racism also means disrespect towards a human due to their color or language or their birthplace. Due to racism, there are many unjustifiable things are happening to people. One of the main factors is the inferior or superior clash between one another. Nowadays, our community has transformed into a harmonious society yet in some places racism exists. Many examples are there to state. One of those is the holocaust.

Researchers have found that teaching students about the ‘Holocaust’ may require more in-depth coverage. Racism is the type of weapon which can be easily masked and can pass undetected but has huge consequences when detonated. The blacks have faced with the hard facts and cruel reality of racism. They have realized it right from the days of slavery. Their color, shape and features are considered to be the tribal handicaps and will identify them with a different note. Despite all claims to the contrary: comparing to the white man’s standards of life, behavior and beauty, black life is considered unbearable. Universal codes of social and psychological custom as laid down by the dominant white culture are forcibly trust upon him.

Racial discrimination forms the theme of almost all the black writers of the United States. Jean Toomer, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Ernest Gains write about the blacks whom they know only too well. All their fictional characters are trapped in the internally colonized world of the white man. They are victims of white oppression and racial prejudice.

In this novel, Morrison tries to raise her voice against racial prejudice. “Race doesn't really exist for you because it has never been a barrier. Black folks don't have that choice.” opines Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her book *Americanah*. In Africa, the conditions of the dark race deteriorated under the rule of the white man.

At the beginning of the novel itself, the author highlights the racial discrimination. When a little one enters into the world, sweetness does not feel joyful and revulsion. All that is left to blacks is their African feeling which is also taken away by impressive white principles on them. With the failure of their native principles, they have lost their true self and almost always nurtured feelings of lesser. Whites have created the institutions in which blacks are lastly prepared to live by.

Birth is a symbol of life that reminds the creation of God. It has to see as an independent perspective. But in the novel, people doubt whether the baby will be white or black. They start to digest the situation when the infant was born in the black color. In the contemporary scenario, everybody likes to have a fair complexion baby. The discrimination of race begins by birth. Sweetness says her daughter was midnight black and Sudanese black. She and her husband were light-skinned with good hair. Nobody in her family near to her daughter’s skin color. Morrison manages to describe her characters’ beings with sympathy, humankind, and

comedy. It explores the past of slavery as it has affected the black in individuals and their identity. *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison, the story turns around the life of Bride. She is a young black woman. She overcomes many difficulties in her life. She works in the cosmetic company Sylvia. Inc. The story says about Bride's life situation while flashing back which explores through her and the other characters.

Toni Morrison is a sophisticated cannot limit herself to delivering a literary product confined within the narrow walls of a strictly historical phenomenon. She intends to use slavery and consequently, racism as the perfect argument for the board's psychological spectrum of emotions experienced by the modern black selves and by the former slaves. She invites the reader into her literary world where preconceived ideas are stripped bare, Verdicts are forbidden, and the characters are invested in a unique manner of transmitting the artistic message.

Toni Morrison wants everyone to know the pathetic plight of the dark-skinned baby and its transformation in life through her novel, *God Help the Child*. It is not merely about annoyance, she says, it is about something powerful, about children's anger "about what adults have done to them and how they tried to get through it and over it and around it and how it affected them." (Morrison).

God Help the Child, elaborates on the situation of an African-American lady who has no plan why she has given childbirth to such a black-skinned baby. The mother of Bride, Sweetness is uncomfortable by her daughter's blackness and wishes to maintain a distance from the baby. Young girl with blue-black skin is ignored and ill-treated by her light-skinned parents who feel ashamed about her. In this novel, the main protagonist Lula Ann Bride is so dark-skinned that she is very much scared. Her mother Sweetness is light-skinned and her mother wonders why she gave childbirth to such a black-skinned baby? Even the mother could not accept her baby, she exclaims; she hates to say it, but from the very beginning in the motherhood ward the baby, Lula Ann, self-conscious about her. Her childbirth skin was pastel like all babies', even African ones, but it transformed fast.

Sweetness thought she was going crazy when her child color turned into blue-black right before her eyes. The persons of Africa have more physical variations than any other continent. Africans are known for their dark complexion. Their attires are mostly made of their traditional handmade ornament. Physically they have larger lips, chest and broad forehead. They are especially noted for their curly hairs. The shortest persons in the world, the Pygmies, live in Africa. Sudanese pupils are among the highest persons in the world, the average height of a man is six feet and four inches, where as for women it is six feet. The Surma tribe in Southwestern Ethiopia is popular due to its women wearing lip plates.

Wodaabe people do not name their children until they reach twelve years old. Lula Ann Bride well, who calls herself as 'Bride', is blue-black beautiful, the kind of woman who turns heads

wherever she goes. She is high and elegant in appearance. She wears only white color to consider her beauty. But Bride is unaware of her beauty. She does not know how to deck herself.

Sweetness is very cruel to her daughter for her dark skin. She shows her anger towards the daughter. Racism is so much worse that even her father does not accept his daughter. Louis blames his wife for given birth to a dark-skinned baby. He treats the baby as though it is a stranger and more like an enemy. He never touched the baby.

Sweetness too does not try to convince him. They think that the birth of the dark-skinned baby makes the separation in their life. Their marriage breaks apart. Sweetness is very strict towards her daughter and says “We had three good years,” Sweetness tells us, “but when she was born, he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger, more than that, an enemy.”(5). The mother asks her daughter to call her by name. “I told her to call me “Sweetness” instead of “Mother” or “Mama.” It was safer.”(6). She feels humiliation to take Bride outside so she hires a baby sitter to pay attention to Bride.

Bride is experienced terrible hunger and shame, she is craving for love and acceptance. “Distaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me,” (31). Bride says of her mother that she longs for the love and affection from her parents.

Especially Bride needs the tender care of her mother. She made mistakes knowingly so her mother may either slap her or spank her. She may feel her mother’s touch at least by getting a slap from her. These little brides yearned for her mother’s warmth. But her mother disgusted and punished her without touching her skin which she hated. She made Bride locked up in her room without supper. Normally the mother is the caretaker of the family. She is the personification of the sacrifice. In this novel, Toni Morrison has highlighted the cruel attitude of the mother, named Sweetness. She does not touch the baby who is in black colour by birth. The child is like an Australian tribal. She maintains the distance to the baby. She does not show any love for her baby.

Sweetness develops in-depth love towards her daughter, as the novel progresses. Morrison has indirectly depicted the pure love of the mother. Because her psychological insights stress that if the baby is black, the child has to bear immeasurable trials under the name of racism. She always knows how black people are distinguished and separated.

Morrison says that she wanted to separate color from the race in her latest creation. Many nations have dominant groups. They have a strong section and weaker section. The empowered people enjoy a greater degree of freedom, social position and protection on life.

The weaker sections experience extreme distress due to fear, insecurity and injustice. People are created equal by God who does not show any inequality towards humanity. But later divisions came in the name of race, nation, religion, economy and profession by the same

people. Here, in this novel, the sufferings of the black persons are explained clearly. God is the omnipotent who never shows partiality towards people. People always find separation among them.

Morrison explores the inhuman activities of people who are acting differently. They have a different bible for black and white people. Sweetness is very much disgusted by this indifference, she says; “The Bible! Can you beat it? My Mother was the housekeeper of a rich white couple. They ate every meal she cooked and insist she scrub their backs while they sit in the tub and God knows what other intimate things they made her do, but no touching of the same Bible.”(4). The readers are given an image of Bride as a daughter longing for her mother’s love. She wants to achieve something in her life and seeks real love. The black woman faces greater problems than the white woman. If the white woman has been considered inferior, the black woman is even lower in the social scheme that is dominantly white and male.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), says the Nigerian children suffer because of violent abuse. It says that the abuse starts before their fifth birthday. Child misuse cuts a pointed scar through Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*, a brisk modern-day fairy tale with shades of the Brothers Grimm: imaginative brutalities stayed on children. Bride expects her future life will be happy and decides to shower all her love on her future life partner but he too deserted her. So she psychologically unstable and seeks solace in drugs and indulges in a sexual relationship, but she’s haunted by Booker-“I spilled my guts to him, told him everything: every fear, every hurt, every accomplishment, however small. While talking to him certain things I had buried came up fresh as though I was seeing them for the first time.” (53).

Racial exploitation has been described by various names; ‘apartheid’ is only a new name for an old process. Because of the stigma attached to it, the word ‘apartheid’ is no longer fashionable. Apartheid has evolved from a doctrine of white supremacy to one of ‘separate development’ and recently to ‘plural democracy’. It is based on irrationalities and paralyzes action toward a superior world.

The apartheid system, with its absolute racial discrimination and exploitation has to be maintained by monstrous repressive laws. It also rests upon rigid security legislation for its implementation. The government shows partiality towards the people. When the South African authorities could arrest anyone upon suspicion and hold effectively for an indefinite period. Thus, apartheid as a form of racialism has been the stamp of the Afrikaners and their historic situation in the socio-economic development of South Africa. Morrison is conscious of the political-racial issues that affect the people of South Africa. The problem of apartheid is very typical to South Africa.

Racial misinterpretation is loudly marked in her different novels. Morrison refers to a number

of crucial measures of apartheid including the Mixed Marriage Act, Apartheid in public transport and buildings, the language ordinance splitting Afrikaans and English speaking children in schools.

God Help the Child, the main protagonist Bride always finds it hard to understand the distinction made by her mother. In Bride's quest for Independence, she becomes deeply involved with Booker and starts living with him. She realizes that for the whites nothing has changed and they continue to live in their world of comfort and leisure.

Throughout the novel, Morrison has always pitted the blacks against the whites. She deliberately chooses a theme in which she can illustrate the differences between the world of the blacks and the whites.

In her novels, Morrison presents different manifestations of 'apartheid', through which her disapproval of racial discrimination is empathetically revealed. Morrison is conscious of the politico-racial issues that affect the people of South Africa. The problem of apartheid haunts her mind without end. She is a representative African novelist who successfully depicts the contemporary realities in her fiction in artistic terms.

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