

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages



A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and Foreign Languages as
Partial Fulfilment for a Master Degree in English Language: Literature & Civilization

Master Dissertation

**Black Feminist Struggle during the Reconstruction Era in
Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

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Academic Year: 2022-2023

Dedication

At first and after Bismillah, I want to thank Allah for giving me the strength to do this work. I want to thank my family and my friends and all my close people for believing in me. To my favorite people, Zarfa Maria and Tesnim, my sisters and my joy in life, this work is dedicated to you and I'm thankful for faith you have in me. Mom and Dad, thank you endlessly for the support and thank you for being there when I needed.

I'm forever grateful for my supervisor, Mrs Chriet. Thank you for helping me and guiding me despite the short time we had.

To my un-biological brother, Salim, and his kids Hassan and Sabri my favorite nephews. To Yara Amina my favorite cousin.

To my best friends Maroua, Rayane and my two Amiras thank you for believing in me and thank you for being the best friends I could ask for.

Last but not least, thanks to the person who literally was the reason I could finish this work.

Acknowledgment

I'm thankful for my supervisor Mrs Chriet and I wish I had more time of guidance with you. I would also like to express my gratitude to the respectful jury: Dr. Benabderrezek Abdennacer, my teacher whom I'm proud to be one of his students, Ms. Hamed Halima and Pr. Kerboua Salim. Thank you for evaluating my humble work and for your feedback.

Abstract

The widespread embrace of black people's rights nowadays was once a proscribed subject during the reconstruction era that only the bravest could approach. During that era, women were subject to oppression while black women were through unimaginable misery. Toni Morrison took it upon herself to confront society as well as racists and sexists by publishing various novels displaying black feminism. *Beloved* was one that stood out, a tale that celebrates a Black woman's bravery in a culture that has a long history of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination. The female protagonist, Sethe, is one of the strong women who made a choice when there was none to be made. In this regard, this dissertation investigated the way Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* depicts black feminism during the Reconstruction era. In order to respond to the earlier question, the black feminist theory and post-colonial theory were both utilized. Additionally, it highlighted sexist oppression imposed on women of color.

Keywords: Black feminism, Reconstruction, Sexist oppression, Slavery, Struggle.

ملخص

اعتناق حقوق السود على نطاق واسع في الوقت الحاضر كان موضوعاً محظوراً خلال حقبة إعادة الإعمار التي لا يمكن أن يتعامل معها إلا الأشجع. خلال تلك الحقبة، تعرضت النساء للاضطهاد بينما كانت النساء السوداوات يعانين من بؤس لا يمكن تصوره. أخذت توني موريسون على عاتقها مواجهة المجتمع وكذلك العنصريين والمتحيزين جنسياً من خلال نشر روايات مختلفة تعرض النسوية السوداء. كانت روايتها "Beloved" رواية بارزة، حكاية تحتفي بشجاعة المرأة السوداء في ثقافة لها تاريخ طويل من التمييز العنصري والعرقى والجنسي. بطلة الرواية، سيثي، هي واحدة من النساء القويات اللاتي اخترن عندما لم يكن هناك شيء للاختيار. في هذا الصدد، بحثت هذه الأطروحة في الطريقة التي تصور بها رواية توني موريسون "Beloved" النسوية السوداء خلال عصر إعادة الإعمار. للرد على السؤال السابق، تم استخدام كل من النظرية النسوية السوداء ونظرية ما بعد الاستعمار. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سلط الضوء على الاضطهاد الجنسي المفروض على النساء ذوات البشرة الملونة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية السوداء، عصر إعادة الإعمار، الاضطهاد الجنسي، العبودية، النضال.

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General Introduction

The United States of America, since its independence, had a long history with Black people brought as slaves to its lands. From 1776, Black people have been used as slaves and were one of the main reasons behind the development of the U.S economy. Until the abolishment of slavery, a story of African Americans treated no better than animals ended and another story of fighting for equal rights as White men started. Even during segregation, African Americans were seen inferior to White folks.

As Black men were seen inferior to White men, Black women were inferior to both which worsened their struggles in their communities. They found hope in the feminist movement; however, it was more focused on White women issues in a patriarchal world neglecting the special needs of Black women. Therefore, Black feminism rose to fame fighting for women's rights first, but most importantly, shedding the light and presenting the horrific struggles endured by Black women.

Toni Morrison, as a Black feminist, used her novels to depict lives of Black women in different settings. *Beloved*, one of her major works, depicted the story of Sethe, a former slave that was still haunted by the long lasting trauma caused by slavery. Moreover, Sethe faced the neglect of society even after her freedom. Therefore, how does the author present the struggles and sexist oppression imposed on women of color?

Research Primary Question

How was the struggle of black women during Reconstruction in *Beloved*?

Sub- Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the relation between Black feminism and sexist oppression?
- How is Black feminism represented in the novel?
- What is the effect of the Black community on Black women?

Methodology

This dissertation will be adopting the feminist, black feminist and post colonial approach in analysing the work of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It will represent oppression on the Black female characters of the novel during Reconstruction.

This research mainly relies on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a primary source from which the setting, plot and characters are excluded. The rest of the pieces of information were gathered via encyclopedias, websites, articles and online books. This dissertation is academically following the 8th edition of MLA.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation attempts to look after social and economical condition of the 19th century the United States of America as a means to highlight the setting of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Moreover, it is important to Morrison to raise awareness on the struggles of Black people, but mostly Black women in a patriarchal masculine society.

The structure of this study consists of two chapters. Chapter one, as a theoretical framework, will present historical background of African Americans in the U.S.A. From the early stages of slavery until the causes that led to the Civil War and its consequences. Additionally, Reconstruction as a result of the Civil War will be discussed as one of the key elements of this thesis. It will introduce the feminist

movement in the West and its waves and different types. Also, it will study Black feminism as a theory and how it's derived from feminism in general to fight for the suppressed Black women.

Second Chapter starts with a biography of the author followed by the setting, the plot and a description of the main characters. It will also depict the sexist oppression suffered by the female characters in *Beloved*. Last but not least, it will portray a feminist analysis of *Beloved*.

Chapter One: Historical Background of African Americans

1. Introduction

Brought by force to be used as slaves in the most inhumane way, the history of Black Americans in the United States of America has begun. Starting from 1776, African Americans have been through different periods of time working to achieve their personal freedom. Black people in the U.S.A were treated no better than animals whose only purpose was to obey their White masters until they fought to gain their freedom and abolish slavery. However, that was not the end of the struggle due to on-going discrimination and racism imposed on them in different fields. Black Americans became free with restrictions that they knew they had to fight over it again to be as equal as a White American.

On the other hand, the difference between genders imposed by society has been always a concern to women for a long period. Starting from the 20th century, women all over the world revolted to have equal opportunities as men. From claiming for the right of vote for women to the manifestation of a new movement called "Feminism". The latter opts to establish the ground for the same quality of life for both men and women. With every wave of feminism, new perspectives appear to the surface; therefore, different types of feminism emerge. Therefore, this chapter will be a theoretical framework on the background of the novel, historically and socially. A brief history of the early stages of African American history in which the story of the novel took place. It will also include a literary definition of feminism giving space to its three waves. Additionally, it will shed the light on Black feminism and the purposes it serves including intersectionality as a term.

1.2 African Americans during Slavery (1776-1865)

Although forced labor was not unusual — Africans and Europeans had been exporting commodities and people across the Mediterranean for millennia — enslavement was not based on race. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, which began in the 15th century, brought a commercialized, racialized, and hereditary system of slavery. Enslaved persons were viewed as commodities to be bought, traded, and exploited rather than as individuals. Although people of African descent were present in North America as early as the 1500s, both free and enslaved, the sale of the "20 and odd" African people lay the foundation for what eventually became slavery in the United States (Elliott and Hughes).

Slaves in the Americas were identified by their race. African enslavement became a vital component of the triangle system of transatlantic commerce that commercially linked the peoples of Africa, the Americas, and Europe. For four centuries, this trade network aided and maintained the rise and settlement of European colonies in the Americas. Slavery in Africa evolved to suit the labor requirements of agricultural production of commodity commodities cultivated for trade on a global market (Curtis, ch 01).

The revolutionary era saw the first significant challenges to American slavery, as the colonies, then the states, took attempts to address the obvious conflict. The First Continental Congress prohibited the colonies from participating in the transatlantic slave trade in 1774. No new slaves may officially be brought into the country from Africa or the West Indies, and any found smuggled in would be released. Thomas Jefferson criticized King George III in his initial draft of the Declaration of

Independence for imposing slavery on the colonists, fostering the African slave trade, and encouraging slaves to desert to the British in order to take up arms against Americans. Despite being forced to remove this line from the final constitution, Jefferson insisted that "all men are created equal" (Foret).

The Declaration of Independence, which stated in its first lines, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights," did not include slaves in that category (Shah and Adolphe).

Slavery prospered in the tobacco fields of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina at first. By 1776, more than half of the population in those states' tobacco-growing regions were slaves. Slavery spread to rice farms further south. According to census information, South Carolina's population was predominantly made up of African Americans long into the 20th century. (Shah and Adolphe).

At the time of the Civil War, the North's disdain for slavery was a relatively new phenomenon, with slavery remaining in New York until 1827 and Connecticut not totally outlawing slavery until 1848. Slaves were employed to build roads, clear land, and herd cattle, as well as to perform skilled labor like shoemaking, blacksmithing, stone carving, butchering, weaving, and carpentry. In the early seventeenth century, European servants provided the majority of labor in Virginia, and it was only after this labor source began to decline that slaves were imported from Africa in substantial quantities. In Georgia, a rule outlawing slavery was passed in 1735 in response to a widespread notion that the existence of slaves would discourage white laborers from emigrating to Georgia, as well as a fear that the Spanish would use slaves to incite a rebellion. After the smuggling of several slaves into the region

and the desire of other settlers to gain slave labor, Georgia settlers eventually called for the repeal of the prohibition in 1749 (Wagner, ch. 02)

1.3 The Civil War (1861-1865)

Despite the fact that human bondage had existed for centuries, this modern pro slavery philosophy was essentially reactionary. In the face of the violent social upheavals brought about by industrialization, it required a rational conservatism and advised against disturbing the delicate social order upon which progress was founded. The ideas of the abolitionists were portrayed by proslavery intellectuals as giving a utopian picture of unlimited liberty, which could only result in anarchy, disorder, and the ruin of contemporary progress. Thus, the war between abolitionist and pro-slavery groups was fought over the acceptable goal of human growth. Throughout the later decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, it was fought with zeal across the Atlantic world. The victory of abolition during the American Civil War signaled the definitive resolution of this battle and eventually concluded the debate over whether slavery had a place in the contemporary world (Curtis, ch 01).

The simmering conflict over the subject of slavery eventually erupted with the election of Republican nominee Abraham Lincoln to the presidency of the United States in November 1860. Fearing that a "Black Republican" president would try to abolish slavery, the Deep South states seceded. The Confederate States of America were established in February 1861. Confederate forces bombarded Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor on April 12 as tensions continued to rise. The Upper South states seceded in response to Lincoln's appeal for volunteers, and they later joined the Confederacy (Coffey, ch 04).

According to Abraham Lincoln, the civil war was fought to keep America together, not to abolish slavery - at least at first. The southern states said they wanted to secede to safeguard state rights, but in reality they were fighting to keep people slaves. Lincoln's death was probably the first casualty of "a long civil rights movement that is not yet over", the historian Peter Kolchin (guardian)

Every Black lady who lived during that time period had a tale to share. Many were filled with adversity and strife. Some displayed disease, hunger, and death. Others were stories of liberty and trepidation about the future. The common thread was that all African-American women at the time—an estimated half-million free and four million enslaved—found themselves in a significantly different United States at the end of the war than they had at the beginning (Sonneborn, ch 04).

1.3.1 Main Causes of the Civil War

Slavery was indeed the main reason behind the American Civil War. It is true that during the early nineteenth century, the main distinction between the North and the South was slavery. But there were also a lot of other distinctions between the two areas. Some of the variations originate from the colonial era, when every colony was established for various causes ("Causes of the Civil War", ch 01).

Throughout the nineteenth century, these divisions grew until the brutal American Civil War between the North and the South broke out in 1861. Tension between the two sides for many years led to the battle. After the founding 13 states established their new nation in 1788 with the passage of the Constitution, additional states entered the Union. However, the burgeoning country was immediately in grave danger of disintegrating. The interests of each state varied. Each state had a sense of obligation to its area. The distinctions between the two sections become more obvious

with time. But slavery remained the most glaring contrast between the North and the South. (“Causes of the Civil War”, ch 01).

The South and the North differed significantly in the nineteenth century. Life moved more quickly for Northerners because of their urbanization and industrialization, and they did not need slaves to work on their fields. Due to high birthrates and rising immigration, the North was a more populous region than the South or Confederacy, whose economy was built on plantations and agriculture.

The Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest were the four distinct economic regions of the nation. The Northeast's (New England's) economy was founded on industrial industry, commerce, and big cities. The plantation system was the backbone of the Southeast's economy, which was in decline in the 1800s. The Northwest agricultural region, which included the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, was expanding quickly as people moved into lush, uncultivated terrain to start farms. As a result of federal policies pushing Native Americans westward, areas were made available for settlement by Easterners and European immigrants. In the 1830s, the expansion of railroads and canals boosted trade and transportation between the Northeast and Northwest. By 1840, many people were using railroads to move passengers, manufactured goods, and raw materials. On the eve of the Civil War, the South was united as a result of commercial ties between the Northwest and the Northeast, which bound the two regions together. (“Causes of the Civil War”, ch 01).

Furthermore, Lincoln and Douglas competed for votes in the North, while Bell and Breckinridge ran against one other in the South, turning the election of 1860 mostly into a regional struggle. Lincoln ended up winning the Electoral College with

a comfortable majority after receiving less than 40% of the popular vote and barely competing in the South. He was the first Republican to hold the presidency of the United States. The people of the South rejected him as their president. With the adoption of a succession act in December 1860, South Carolina took the lead in the opposition to Lincoln. A new government, the Confederate States of America, was established in February 1861 after representatives from seven southern states gathered in Montgomery, Alabama. Lincoln and the bulk of the northern population viewed secession as treason, an act of rebellion, in contrast to southerners' claim that states' rights included the ability to separate or leave from the Union. The president had the power to put down such a rebellion in accordance with the Constitution. Conflict erupted in April 1861 after vain attempts at agreement. The Civil War had been sparked by the 1860 election (“The Election of 1860 - Bill of Rights Institute”)

Southerners were reportedly concerned about the Republican Party's economic policy, which promoted the interests of northern industrialists at the expense of the South, according to John J. Newman and John M. Schmalbach in their book, *The United States History*. Republican triumph in the elections that followed would put their constitutional right at risk since the higher tariff promised in the Republican platform could only benefit northern businesses and punish those in the South (250).

According to Brinkley, "The Civil War was an evitable step in the country's quest for economic as well as spiritual unit " (183). Despite the so many tries to move past the disagreement and the not so useful compromises made, Lincoln still believed that slavery was indeed the main reason behind the Civil War. He once said;

I hate [indifference to slavery] because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites-causes the real friends of freedom to

doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty-criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.
(CHIEN-JU YANG)

1.3.2 Main Consequences of the Civil War

The Civil War, considered the deadliest war in US history, had a significant impact on the history of the United States of America. The devastation caused by the Civil War defined America's post-war period. Many ideas were devised by the states in an effort to repair the damage and rebuild the states. As an alternative, Congress tried to maintain the rights of freed slaves while reconciling the Northern-Southern divide.

One of the significant events that contributed to the creation of the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments was the abolition of slavery. Lincoln, whose goal was to abolish slavery, took the first step in doing so. As a result, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which set free slaves who belonged to the Confederacy. Lincoln's emancipation did not, however, free all slaves; rather, it transformed the conflict into a struggle for black freedom. The Thirteenth Amendment was defined by Vender Velde as a commemoration of the North's victory against slavery during the American Civil War in his essay *The Labor Vision of the Thirteenth Amendment* (Bigua and Rabhi).

All Americans who were born or naturalized in the country are now guaranteed citizenship thanks to the passage of the fourteenth amendment. Furthermore, it establishes that states are prohibited from interfering with anyone's life, liberty, or property or from safeguarding all people equally, including recently released persons.

The congress shall have the power to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper to secure to the citizens of each state all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several state, and to all person in the overall state equal protection in the right of life, liberty, and property.

Along with ending slavery, the amendment enabled and strengthened Congress's authority inside the federal government. After being curtailed in civil rights issues, particularly after the civil rights act of 1866, it also increased the legislative power in the court (Bigua and Rabhi).

By the end of the Civil War, a new era had established new rules and new settings that rooted in African American history making a new chapter for the fight against slavery, racism and their consequences on the American system, but more importantly on the then newly freed people.

1.4. The Reconstruction Era (1865 - 1877)

The Reconstruction era during which the United States dealt with the dilemma of how to integrate millions of newly liberated African Americans into social, political, and labor systems, was a period of major change in the country. Congress passed a series of Reconstruction Acts, which split the former Confederacy into five military districts and established standards for re-admission to the Union (with the exception of Tennessee). Following the Civil War, Reconstruction and the Union's restoration took place across America, resulting in changes that fundamentally altered the idea of citizenship and the dynamic between the federal and state governments. ("History and Culture - Reconstruction Era").

Reconstruction, however, was a period marked by intense political unrest and extensive violence. Many white Southerners anticipated a speedy reconciliation that

would uphold white supremacy in the region. African Americans would be partially free in this scenario, but they would also have little civil rights and no political influence. Many Northerners, including Andrew Johnson, the president who replaced Abraham Lincoln in office, held these opinions.

During that period, Black men's votes and Black women's political activity helped elect about 2,000 African-American men to municipal, state, and federal posts in the old Confederacy. But those political gains were short-lived when Republican lawmakers in the North abandoned Reconstruction. In order to ensure that his electoral victory was certified by southern Democrats, Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South in 1877 (Sonneborn, ch 04). Reconstruction was cut short by violent opposition in the South and a retreat from the concept of racial equality in the North and signaled the end of a period in which southern African Americans could still expect for full freedom, free of discrimination, persecution, and violent retaliation from their White neighbors (Sonneborn, ch 04).

1.5 Definition of Feminism

According to the Cambridge online dictionary, feminism is "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state." The word "feminism" is derived from the French word "féminisme." A cultural, political, or economic movement promoting gender equality is referred to as "feminism" in its own right. However, the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not acquire a common connotation until the 1970s, when they began to be more widely employed in everyday speech (Halířová).

According to Andrew Edgar and Sedgwick, " the core of feminism is the belief that women are subordinated to men [...] Feminism seeks to liberate women from this subordination and to reconstruct society in such a way that patriarchy is eliminated and a culture created that is fully inclusive of women's desires and purposes"(124). Therefore, the struggle for women's political and economic equality has been the main emphasis of feminism since its foundation (124).

The Suffragette movement shed lights on feminism in the 19th century. "the twentieth century saw the proliferation of civil rights movements and groups campaigning for economic equality who focused on the issues of state welfare for mothers, equal education and equal pay"(Andrew & Sedgwick 124). As feminism evolved and academics started to pay attention, several subfields of the term, such as feminist theory and feminist literary criticism, started to emerge (Myrrhøj and Pheiffer).

1.6 Waves of Feminism

As a result of this new movement, three waves may be identified in the history of the modern feminist movement in the west. Maggie Humm is the one who identified three "waves" in the creation and expansion of modern Western feminist groups. Different facets of the same feminist themes are addressed by each of the three feminist waves. The nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the beginning of the first wave of the feminist movement. Women raised their voices for equal voting rights and access to the parliament at this time, supporting suffragette movements. One could argue that Mary Wollstonecraft's work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) served as the inspiration for these suffragette movements (Raina).

Professors such as Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski have also talked about the first wave in their book *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (2005) (Myrrhøj and Pheiffer). They claimed that “most women in the United States and Great Britain had no public legal existence. They were either daughters identified by their fathers’ status or wives identified by their husbands” (Kolmar and Bartkowski 62).

The first wave of feminism made it possible for women to vote and inspired other feminist movements around the globe.the initial stages. In the United States, the first wave of feminism was entwined with other reform movements to enable women to participate in the working class in all spheres, not just politics and voting. Black female abolitionists including Maria Stewart (1803–1879), Sojourner Truth (1797–1833), and Frances E. W. Harper (1825–1911) also backed this feminist movement.They participated in this event for Black women, or Colored Women as they called her (Ghorfati and Medini).

In the 1960s , The second wave of feminism movement began. The radical feminism and Women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s were primarily referred to as second-wave feminism. This endeavor is regarded as a continuation of the prior one. In order to underline and highlight that how a woman appears, dresses, and speaks is more significant than how she thinks, believes, and behaves, at this time there was a competition called Miss America Pageants in 1968 and 1969 in which women were exhibited as cattle. This event raged feminists in different countries but especially America. They attempted to prevent this from happening and they put on various forms of theatrical activism (Ghofrati and Medini).

In what is seen as the third wave of feminism, the name "grrls" also became popular at the end of the 1980s (Myrrhøj and Pheiffer). These women had a strong

sense of independence about them. The 1980s came to an end with women continuing "to debate questions that have been with us for more than a hundred years. Though new voices continued to enter its multilayered conversation, feminist theory and scholarship had clearly, by the end of this period, traced out a field of inquiry that has quite thoroughly permeated both what we know and how we know it" (Kolmar and Bartkowski 383).

Beginning in the early 2000s, gender studies began to receive more attention than women studies. The emphasis shifted to respecting differences in terms of gender and identity and valuing one's individuality. The fourth wave of feminism, in which technology holds the power, is thought to have begun at the end of the 2010s. Women use social media and platforms to advance their causes and feminism. This wave's main focal points are sexual harassment, assault, and gender equality.

1.7 Women's Writing (Écriture féminine)

The French word for "women's writing," *écriture féminine*, is used to describe the feminine style of writing. French feminists, according to Ann Rosalind Jones' book *Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of "L'Écriture Feminine"* from 1981 French feminists believe that Western thought has been based on a systematic repression of women's experience. Thus their assertion of a bedrock female nature makes sense as a point from which to deconstruct language, philosophy, psychoanalysis, the social practices, and direction of patriarchal culture as we live in and resist it (Myrrhøj and Pfeiffer).

The expression first appeared in France in a conversation about what makes literature feminine by feminist French scholars Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva during the feminist literary theory wave. The three scholars all strongly

believe that, by their own free will, man is the center of the universe. Women must thus write and take back their bodies (Myrrhøj and Pfeiffer). Cixous says “Write yourself, your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring fourth” (The Medusa’s Laugh 880) believing that the beauty of women can be seen in expressing feminine physical beauty in words.

Écriture Feminine, according to Edgar and Sedgwick their book *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (2007), is:

a form of writing and reading that resists being appropriated by the dominant patriarchal culture. It is argued, developing on the psychoanalysis of Lacan, that patriarchal culture privileges a hierarchical way of thinking, grounded in a series of oppositions (such as male/female; culture/nature; intelligible/sensitive; active/passive), with the male dominant over the female (Edgar & Sedgwick 102-103).

1.8 Types of Feminism

As feminism evolved as a theory, different types were founded that serve different aims

1.8.1 Liberal Feminism

The foundation of liberal feminism is the liberal political idea, which was influenced by the French Revolution and primarily emphasizes equality. Its fundamental principles of independence, all people having the same rights, equality before the law, and democracy are descended from liberal political theory. Liberal feminists claim that society has a misconception that women are inherently less intelligent and physically capable than males (Tong).

To instill liberal principles in women, liberal feminism first appeared in western nations between the 17th and 18th centuries. It eventually spread to the rest of the world. Finally, feminists expanded their justifications for women having equal legal rights to vote and own property in the 19th century. The social and political theory of liberal feminism is the most prevalent among feminists (Mohajan).

The liberal feminist movement is credited as beginning with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal feminist work *"A Vindication of the Rights of Women"* in 1792. She demonstrates how logic can lead to women becoming as independent and ethically robust as males. The nation will have "artificial and weak characters" if men and women are required to attend different educational institutions. This is not only unfair, but it is also harmful. She makes the case for women and men having equal access to school because of this. She contrasted the women who married wealthy, successful businessmen and professionals and had no desire to labor outside the home to the "feathered race," or the caged birds that do nothing except plume themselves. In order to improve society, both sexes should be educated to increase their rationality (Wollstonecraft)

The 19th amendment to the US constitution granted women the right to vote in 1920 as a result of the liberal feminist movement. With respect to social, political, economic, and religious freedom for all people, liberalism has evolved into an intellectual tool (Herouach).

Liberal feminism's main tenet is that every woman should have the same degree of freedom to choose her social role as does a male. Therefore, it was necessary for feminism to abolish the historical patriarchal legal system that denied women's civil rights. The main focus is on equal rights for women before the law,

access to education and employment, changes to marriage laws, property rights, fair divorce, equal pay for equal work, protection from rape and wife abuse in the house, and freedom from any forces that dehumanize people. In essence, it seeks to end gender inequality within the confines of current social structures while remaining silent on the fundamental causes of women's subordination (Ghorfati and Medini).

1.8.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxism, often known as the economic theory of history, is a political ideology that is primarily held by left-leaning individuals. It was created and influenced by the two great German philosophers Karl Marx (1818–1833) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895). The elite class applies this political ideology, which deals with breaking the ties of oppression, employing frameworks like the law, religion, race, and the means of production (Mohajan).

Marxism holds that the state serves as a tool in the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat classes. Women should fight the bourgeois system under capitalism, which is a joint effort of working-class men and women, rather than men (Khan et al 77-84). The 1970s saw the emergence of Marxist feminism, which aimed to liberate women by destroying capitalism and explaining the causes of women's oppression from a class perspective (Vogel). Mohajan states that because of the rise of capitalism, Marx never created a theory of gender, and his contribution to feminism is therefore indirect. Marxism has supplied the concepts and methods that enable society to think about gender and class, feminism, and anti-capitalism collectively (Federici).

1.8.3 Radical Feminism

A movement known as radical feminism holds that the only way to eradicate sexism from society is to do away with the idea of gender. T. Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone, two well-known leaders, helped it begin to emerge in the late 1960s. It refutes the liberal assertion that women's oppression is brought on by a lack of political or civil rights (Ghorfati and Medini).

The *Dialectic of Sex*, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and other now-classic feminist works were all produced by the radical feminism movement, despite the fact that it peaked briefly before soon dying off and being replaced by cultural feminism, suggested that sexism would be eliminated once racism and classism were eliminated, or that they did not matter. The women's liberation movement split into factions and transitioned into cultural feminism in part as a result of the racism, or at the very least, insensitivity, of some of its members to racial concerns. As Echols points out, radical feminists came under fire from women both inside and outside the movement for failing to sufficiently recognize the inequalities in color, class, and sexual orientation among women (Echols 293-294).

Radical feminists could not address the oppressions of women that were a result of their race or class because they focused on gender as the fundamental form of oppression, the very foundation of radical feminism, "as a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life, and rejected as sexist the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values" (Willis, 117) (qtd. in Mann)

1.9 Black Feminism

Black feminist movement was a response to black liberation movement and the women's movement in an effort to meet the needs of black women who femi-

nized themselves. Black feminist movement is a range of social, sexual, and political movement to establish the personal, sexual, and political value and honor the experience of black women (Maamoun & Benhammouda).

Black women have historically been in the vanguard of the fight for civil and human rights, pouring their blood, sweat, and tears into the cause in order to support their families, communities, and lay the fundamental foundations upon which the United States is formed. The "titans of the Abolitionist Movement" were women like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth (Murray, 187) (qtd. in Tate).

Women everywhere suffered, were killed, and were subjected to rapes and other forms of violence, but no one suffered as violently or painfully as black women. Black women were categorized as being of a lesser class of women by both men and white women. These are the reasons why many Black women began to rebel against this discriminatory categorization, leading them to develop another branch of feminism known as "Womanism," a term coined by Alice Walker in one of her outstanding articles collection (Ghorfati and Medini).

The word "womanism" was derived from the word "womanish," which Afro-American mothers frequently used. Acting in ways that "freed them from the conventions of long-limiting white women" is what is meant by acting in a womanly manner. As she puts it, "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." A womanist is defined as a black feminist or a feminist of color (Andrea)

This philosophy, known as "womenism," placed special emphasis on the difficulties and demands of Black women, yet it was unable to stand against male dominance and unjust White Feminist practices. Black women were unable to turn

this hypothesis into a theory because womenism was unable to provide its fruits in a way that was useful (Ghorfati and Medini).

Because it was difficult for black men to hold leadership positions in the same group as black women, black women had to create their own groups. (Guy-Sheftall, "Introduction"). When Maria Miller Stewart wondered "How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?" In a pamphlet she published in 1831, she was the first to note the erasing of African women (Collins, 1). All women of color were challenged by Stewart to further their education, reject subjugation to men, and get involved in community building (Guy-Sheftall, "Introduction," 25) (qtd in, Tate). Audre Lorde says:

Black feminism is not white feminism in blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as [B]lack women, and addressing those issues does not make us any less [B]lack. To attempt to open dialogue between Black women and Black men by attacking Black feminists seems short-sighted and self-defeating...Black feminists speak as women because we are women and do not need others to speak for us. (Sister 60)

Deborah King contends that using the adjective "multiple" encompasses a variety of oppressions as well as the connections among them. Multiple means that oppression experienced by a black woman can be caused by racism, classism, and sexism all at once. She cites one instance of this entangled relationship as the sexual exploitation of the slave woman. Black female slaves frequently underwent the same physical abuse and toil as black male slaves. But female slaves were also subjected to mistreatment that was specific to women (D. King 297; Murray 187)(qtd in, Tate).

. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor and social activist, initially introduced the concept of intersectionality in her 1989 work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of*

Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist and Antiracist Politics. The paper covered the experiences of black women as they were framed inside the American Criminal Justice System as well as black women's exclusion from White Feminism and Anti-Racist Politics. Technically speaking, the term "intersectionality" refers to a conceptual framework for comprehending and reshaping the numerous forms of oppression, experiences, and disadvantages, which ultimately result in various forms of discrimination. These experiences are influenced by a young person's identity, including factors like race, sexism, social classism, physical appearance, sexual orientation, religion and identity (Maamoun & Benhammouda). Many academics have also developed theories about race-sex comparisons using intersectionality as their basis. 1860 quote from Elizabeth Cady Stanton that "prejudice against color, of which we hear so much, is no stronger than that of sex" is credited to the first wave of feminists (D. King 295)(qtd in, Tate).

The concept of "intersectionality" describes the dynamic, irreducible, diversified, and variable outcomes that emerge when several axes of distinction—economic, political, cultural, physical, subjective, and experiential—converge in historically specific situations. The definition states that different facets of social life cannot be separated into distinct and pure standards (Maamoun & Benhammouda).

Eventually, "womenism," placed special emphasis on the difficulties and demands of Black women, yet it was unable to stand against male dominance and unjust White Feminist practices. Black women were unable to turn this hypothesis into a theory because womenism was unable to provide its fruits in a way that was useful.

1.10 Conclusion

Black women suffered as all people of color did in the USA during the fight for freedom; however, it was a more intense struggle knowing that they were also exposed to more duties and pain than men, including sexual harassments. Women of color and their endless struggles were represented in different novels to celebrate their bravery and honor their aim to free themselves of slavery.

Chapter Two: Beloved in Context

2. Introduction

As a Black author and feminist, Toni Morrison has succeeded in earning a spectacular reputation with her works like *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. In her novels, she aimed to focus on the struggles of Black people in general and Black women in specific. The Nobel Prize's winner depicted the life of her characters in *Beloved* during and after slavery. This chapter highlights the biography of the author as well as a brief summary of the novel *Beloved*. Also, a description of the main characters and their contribution to the story is included. In the end, a feminist analysis of the novel will be discussed as a purpose to this chapter.

2.1 Toni Morrison's Biography

The National Book Award nomination for *Sula* in 1975, the Ohioana Book Award in 1977, and the National Book Critics Circle Award and American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters award for *Song of Solomon* in 1977 are just a few of the accolades Toni Morrison, a 1993 Nobel Prize winner, has received for her books. She received National Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award nominations for her book *Beloved*, which was published in 1987 and 1988. The book also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. Morrison's writing is characterized by a sense of the paranormal, with "ancestors" or the dead appearing in the neighborhood. In addition, she has created plays like *Dreaming Emmet*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, and *Beloved* and has had her work adapted for the big screen. Her work on *The Black Book*, which she edited for Random House, has impacted Morrison's writing (Kranz).

Her experiences as a black or female author have affected Morrison's writing, and she has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In addition, she has authored

children's books, developed plays, and had her work adapted for the big screen. Morrison reached 75 in 2006, and *Beloved*, one of her novels, was named the best piece of American fiction to be released since 1980. *A Mercy*, Morrison's tenth book, was released in 2008 and was hailed as the most in-depth study of American history (Kranz).

2.2 The Setting of *Beloved*

Although the majority of *Beloved*'s action takes place in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1873, the book also frequently flashes back to the Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky and an internment camp in Alfred, Georgia. Although the exact dates of the flashback sequences are not always obvious, we can infer that they took place roughly eighteen years ago because that is how long it has been since Sethe fled Sweet Home and traveled to Ohio. Around 1855, Sethe managed to flee while slavery was still legal in the southern US. But slavery is no longer accepted in the novel's present. There seems to be a division between the past and present in the work as the narrative switches between flashbacks and the current. However, this movement also establishes a sense of continuity that demonstrates how slavery's legacy endures even after it was formally abolished. Morrison intentionally divides his book across two time periods to demonstrate how the effects of the past frequently influence the present (“*Beloved: Study Guide | SparkNotes*”).

2.3 The Plot Summary

Beloved is the story of Sethe, a 13-year-old slave who comes at Sweet Home, an idyllic Kentucky estate. She falls pregnant with her husband, Garner, and has three children. Following Garner's death, the harshness of the schoolteacher motivates the slave men to prepare their escape. Sethe confronts the schoolteacher, who is bound in

an iron collar as punishment for his role in the escape attempt. Sethe flees through the woods, gives birth to her fourth child, and crosses the Ohio River into freedom with the help of Stamp Paid. In Cincinnati, she is reunited with her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, and her children. She is apprehended, however, by the schoolteacher, the sheriff, a slave catcher, and one of the schoolteacher's nephews. Sethe is sentenced to death by hanging and is released from her imprisonment after 28 days. Three months later, Sethe is freed thanks to the efforts of Quaker abolitionist Edward Bodwin and the Colored Ladies of Delaware, Ohio. She trades sex for a "Beloved" gravestone to mark her daughter's final resting place (*Book Summary*).

Beloved's ghost appears immediately in Baby Suggs' residence. Sethe is granted clemency from her death sentence, but the black community rejects her. She obtains job and establishes a stable existence with the assistance of Mr. Bodwin. Sethe's sons flee, terrified by the appearance of Beloved's ghost. Years later, Paul D returns to Cincinnati and re-establishes his friendship with Sethe. Beloved establishes herself as a dominant influence in Sethe's home, forcing Paul D out of his bed and seducing him. Sethe's body and intellect weaken as Beloved grows stronger. Sethe quits her job and moves in with her mother. She escapes Beloved's influence with the help of Denver and other female neighbors in a violent incident (*Book Summary*).

Denver, who is working toward attending college, has a job, is well-connected to society, and has finally emerged from her shell amid the falling action. After Denver blesses their relationship and Paul D returns to Sethe, he tells her he wants to spend the rest of his life with her and helps her regain her ability to stand up straight. The Sethe, Denver, and Paul D., as well as the town, are released from the pursuing

ghost of Beloved in the resolve and start to live a new life (Maamoun and Benhammouda).

2.4 Main Characters

2.4.1 Sethe

Sethe, a proud and honorable woman, struggles with her past and her identity as a slave. She believes she is different from the other blacks in her neighborhood and steals food from a restaurant. Despite her independence, Sethe accepts Paul D and his company. Her love for her children is striking, and she attempts to murder them as an act of maternal love. Sethe's dread of the past persists, even after accepting Beloved's identity. To liberate herself from the past and live freely, calmly, and responsibly, she must confront and assert herself in its presence (“Beloved: Study Guide | SparkNotes”).

2.4.2 Denver

Denver, Sethe's daughter, is a quiet, clever, contemplative, and sensitive character who spends time alone in her "emerald closet." She is in close contact with the supernatural and her mother believes she is a "charmed" child. Despite her age, Denver's emotional stunting stems from her years of isolation and a flimsy sense of self. She sees herself in terms of her sister, the Beloved, and feels intimidated when not receiving full attention. Due to Beloved's growing malevolence and her mother's submission, Denver is forced to leave the realm of 124. She seeks community assistance and takes care of her sister and mother, who become self-absorbed. Denver takes lessons from Miss Bodwin and considers enrolling in Oberlin College (“Beloved: Study Guide | SparkNotes”).

2.4.3 Beloved

The novel revolves around the enigmatic Beloved, who may be an ordinary woman imprisoned by a white man and never allowed outside. Her limited language, neediness, and emotional instability may lend credence to the belief that Beloved is Sethe's deceased daughter. She carries the baby's gravestone's name and appears to be freshly born and drenched in water. Beloved may also represent Sethe's deceased mother, as she describes her journey from Africa to America in Chapter 22. By Chapter 26, Beloved and Sethe play the roles of mother and kid, possibly highlighting Beloved's role as a symbol of the collective unconscious of all slaves who have been subjugated by the history and legacy of slavery (“Beloved: Study Guide | SparkNotes”).

2.4.4 Paul D

One of the Sweet Home men was Paul D. He has also suffered tremendously and has reacted by suppressing any strong emotions. He appears at 124 and attempts to establish a relationship with Sethe. He is helpless against Beloved, who seduces him in order to dominate him and separate him from her mother. He is still confused of the root of his manhood and humanity after nearly two decades of independence (GradeSaver).

2.4.5 Baby Suggs

Sethe's mother-in-law. Halle purchased her freedom, which she gladly accepted after seeing how much it meant to him. She had no idea how much it would mean to her while still a slave, believing that she was too elderly to appreciate freedom anyhow. But liberation changed Baby Suggs, giving her a new perspective

on what it meant to be alive and transforming her into a sort of holy lady for Cincinnati's black community. Sethe's tragedy, on the other hand, destroyed Baby Suggs' spirit, and she spent her final days bedridden and depressed (GradeSaver).

2.5 Black Feminism in Toni Morrison's novels

With her revelation of her ambitions to examine the sense of self and the creative recovery of black women's history, Toni Morrison has established one of the most significant goals of current black feminist literary theory, which is the resolution. investigating and exposing the worst aspects of racism and sexism. Morrison emphasizes key ideas that became the cornerstone of black feminism in her book *Beloved*. Additionally, it demonstrated how the isolation of black women's thoughts and desires had a negative impact on their mental health and led to reconciliation as a result. (Matus, Jill L, p. 03) (qtd in, Maamoun and Benhammouda)

2.6 Sexist Oppression in *Beloved*

The commodification of black women's stolen bodies as a resource for America's development, which resulted in the devaluation of black womanhood. The theme of choice versus no choice dramatizes the story of what happens when enslaved African women are kidnapped from their homes, raped to condition them to submit, impregnated against their will, and forced to give up their children to fathers who support white America's economy in *Beloved*. Morrison's female character's role in this savage crime is hinted at, along with its consequences. A decision made by Sethe alone leads to the terrible crime of infanticide and isolates her from society for over two decades (Maamoun and Benhammouda).

The community's envy of Baby Suggs, their refusal to celebrate life, and their resentment of her generosity reveal their worries, their fears, and their disgust with a female slave who tries to present herself as an individual self in the community. The community was also largely to blame for Sethe's infanticide since, out of resentment, no one told baby Suggs that the schoolteacher was coming to arrest Sethe and her kids. Because of their animosity toward Sethe, a female slave who attempted to defy social convention, Denver and Sethe were forced to live alone and not ask for help from the community for many years (Rashid and Rana).

Sethe also appears in *Beloved* as an undervalued black woman who is subjected to a great deal of abuse. Her white bosses and other people of society take advantage of her affluent status as well. Sethe looks to have no right to defend herself.

Morrison stresses the degrading impacts of slavery, particularly on female slaves, in *Beloved*. Sethe is abused, violated, and sexually assaulted. She writes:

After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That is what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and could not speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed, it made a tree. It grows there still. (Morrison, p. 16).

The dual patriarchal policy meant that whereas female slaves experienced both race and gender discrimination, male slaves endured racial prejudice. The majority of the work done by male slaves was in the fields, although both domestic and plantation work was assigned to female slaves. They had the option to rape one of the female slaves in addition to beating the other female slaves as punishment (Rashid and Rana).

2.7 Feminist Analysis of *Beloved*

Morrison's novel is set right before and during the Reconstruction Era in America. It tells the story of the former slave Sethe who fled away from her White Master while being pregnant towards freedom in Cincinnati while her children awaited her with their grandmother, Baby Suggs. As the story develops, horrific events happen to Sethe that adds to her trauma and struggle as a Black woman. Sethe preferred death over handing her own children over to become slaves again, so she tried to kill them to save them a lifetime of dehumanization. Only one child dies, and her ghost keeps haunting Sethe's house making it unbearable to get over the past. Almost two decades later, the baby gets resurrected as Beloved.

In addition, the story of *Beloved* shows the terrible wounds that slavery left on black women since they are female, black, and helpless (Davenport). As a representation of the wounds that they carried with them for life was Sethe's tree on her back. Morrison wrote: "Whitegirl. That's what she called it. I've never seen it and never will. But that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know." (19). Sethe was beaten so bad that a scar was left on her back hinting that slavery trauma is both physical and mental and it remains unhealed.

When Morrison's narrator describes how Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, found her life governed by slavery, some of the worst circumstances for black women are clear

In all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought out, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. (Morrison 23)

Due to what Baby Suggs called the "nastiness of life," the slavery system rendered interpersonal relationships arbitrary. The peculiarity of Sethe's situation is that, as a slave, she has little control over her sexual partner (Hooks 25).

After making her way from Kentucky to Cincinnati, Ohio, Sethe has "twenty-eight days—the travel of one whole moon—of unslaved life" (Morrison 95), which gives her ample time to free herself from the constraints of slavery. In those 28 days, Sethe starts to come into her own as a person. She meets and gets to know people, learns new things, and all of that "taught her how it felt to wake up at dawn and decide what to do with the day" (95). Bell Hooks sees Sethe as an example of a black woman demonstrating her value by engaging with her new community (Hooks 70). By re-enslaving Sethe and her children, Sweet Home's white master Schoolteacher tries to take away this fresh and liberated sensation, but he just strengthens Sethe's resolve to stay free (Davenport).

Morrison's *Beloved* blatantly exposes how women were treated as the targets of racism and misogyny in the United States. Sethe and other female characters have personal experience with slavery. Sethe recalls her own enslavement on the Sweet Home plantation all too clearly. She remembers that when the nephews of the schoolteacher raped her, she didn't have much of a choice. According to Sethe, "Two boys with mossy teeth,...suck[ed] on my breast, the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up" (Morrison 70). Sethe's body is further abused by the flogging Schoolteacher administers to her, adding insult to injury (Davenport).

Morrison acknowledges black women for their role as pillars of their families' strength, significant contributors to their communities, and defenders of their own

right to exist in this culture. The choices of the female protagonists, who essentially have no choice but to make them, are significant because they represent the female hero—the "shero" (Davenport).

By introducing the ghost of the "crawling already?" infant, a mythical element of the supernatural, the author convincingly depicts a female hero. Sethe does not save the world by killing the baby, but she does free one child from servitude (Davenport). "there was nothing to be done other than what she had done" (Morrison 89), Sethe believed she did what has to be done to save her child, and by making this sacrifice, she did what any mother wouldn't do. In fact, Sethe probably loved her children more than a person can imagine. She rather sees them dead than witnessing them back in Sweet Home going through the same unbearable pain she endured.

However, Sethe wasn't the only woman who suffered. Most Black women back then had their own share of traumatic events and dealt with the pain differently. Ella, another Black woman Sethe met in Cincinnati, was shared sexually between a White father and son. She was also so impregnated against her own will that she decided not to love anything or anyone, even her own babies. Sethe's decision to rescue herself and her children from slavery is too audacious for the Cincinnati ladies, including Ella and Baby Suggs. By killing her child, Sethe goes beyond the bounds of kinship and self-preservation (Davenport).

Due to misogyny, black women have never been in command of choosing their own life decisions. Furthermore, black women have never had a choice in how others perceive them. Sethe paid a price for her desperate decision to kill her kid, a loss for which there is little solace, and an 18-year period of exile from the black community.

On the other hand, other Black women who didn't have the strength like Sethe's had to live a life they weren't happy with. Morrison, talking about Lady Jones, says: "Lady Jones was mixed. Gray eyes and yellow woolly hair, every strand of which she hated— though whether it was the color or the texture even she didn't know. She had married the blackest man she could find" (Morrison 247). The simple fact that Sethe loves her kids enough to want them dead rather than enslaved like she was previously is evidence of free will and choice. Her choice of "thick" love is all she is familiar with and the one emotion that is uninfluenced by others. Sethe is aware that not loving, or loving in different ways as Paul D has advised, is the only option. She says, "Too thick? ... Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all" (164) (Davenport).

Through what appeared on Sethe, the black lady was thought to be the lowest group of human beings, and she received the worst form of treatment from her white master. Several dimensions and cultural, social, and political levels were centered on anything from the history of African minorities in America (Khudhair)

White lords routinely subject women to exploitation and objectification. They are even subordinated to trade concepts. Beloved's price, on the other hand, would be high because she was mulatto and gorgeous. Mulatto women are more exploited and objectified than white women. Sethe's experience, which will be mentioned later, reminds her that women are objectified and viewed as beings. As a result of this future perspective, she murdered Beloved. Hence, Sethe's identity made her kill Beloved (Khudhair)

Due to being a slave from birth, Baby Suggs has few alternatives for the future. She feels that she has no business passing judgment on Sethe's decision to kill

everything she has given life to in order to prevent their enslavement. It's possible that Baby Suggs chose the same course of action. Baby Suggs only chooses to "quit the Word" in the "Clearing—a wide-open place cut deep in the woods" (Morrison 87)—a place where black people put down their burdens. Following that, she makes the decision to "go to bed to think about the color of things" (177). Under the same conditions, her conduct represents the submission of a black woman who has had enough of being battered by life (Davenport).

As a result, black women have little options. The solution to what black women must do in order to have choice is not revealed until the last episode. Ella makes a decision that unites the group of black women who have gathered to support Sethe. The two characteristics that have kept them apart for 18 years—being female and being black—become those that bind them (Davenport).

2.8 Conclusion

In the end, *Beloved* earned a spot as a high rank novel for representing the lives of former slaves during the Reconstruction especially the roles of Black women in the Black community and the sacrifices they had to make to actually have the right to live as a free human being without being discriminated based on their race and gender.

General Conclusion

Women of color have played a major role in the black American history; however, their value and contributions to their society were neglected for ages. Black women were considered to be less than humans for being women and black. Even the feminist movement did not pay attention to their needs and struggles; it mainly

focused on the rights of white women. Black feminist as Toni Morrison sought writing novels that tell the story and show the struggles of black women as a way to represent them and to be spoken for.

Beloved is one of the major works that's main characters are women, black women. Sethe, the female protagonist, ran away from slavery to save herself and her children from the horrors of slavery. Sethe, in a time where women had no right to choose, chose to take her children's lives instead of giving them back to slavery. Her community condemned her for her this choice, yet, she had no regrets justifying her act out of "thick" love. Sethe's sacrifice and past haunted her as her late daughter was resurrected. Sethe faced racism for being black, but also her community looked down at her for being a woman. Morrison made it her duty to fully represent Sethe's struggle as an example of black women's rights that were taken from them. Also, the author emphasized on how Sethe's community saved her after all.

By using the black feminist approach, Morrison glorifies the sacrifices of Sethe; the evolution she undergoes and the strength she gains are the outcome of the injustice she witnesses. In order to draw the line at the sexism endured by black women, Morrison criticizes the treatment done to black women resulting in taking away even their basic rights.

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