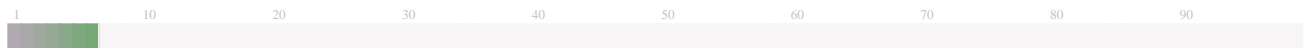


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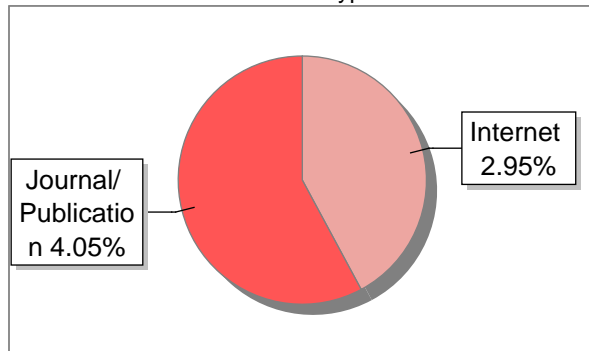
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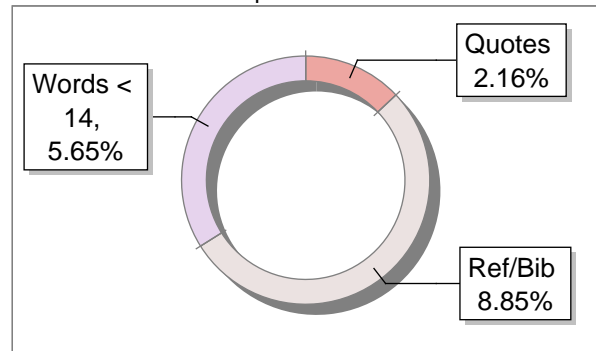
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The Portrayal of Black Women's Discrimination in Toni Morrison's Works

By

Wajiran Wajiran

Abstract

In this paper, the researcher seeks to understand black women's experiences of discrimination in Toni Morrison's novels. The analysis focused on the ways in which Morrison's work highlights the intersectional nature of oppression, black women facing gender and racial discrimination.

This study is a qualitative research where the main data is the discourse reflected in the dialog of the literary works written by Toni Morrison. The discourse is analysed using black feminist theory. By using the theoretical framework, the researcher will find out how black women actually face the discrimination they experience.

The results show that Morrison's works depict black women as victims of gender and racial discrimination. They experience physical and sexual violence, marginalization, exploitation, and cultural imperialism. The novels also highlight the ways in which black women resist all forms of oppression through acts of rebellion and self-empowerment. Morrison's works provide a powerful representation of the struggles and experiences of black women in a society dominated by white patriarchy. The novels are a testament to the resilience and strength of black women in the face of discrimination and violence, as well as a critique of societal norms that perpetuate forms of oppression.

Introduction

Toni Morrison, an iconic figure in American literature, has greatly influenced the literary world with her nuanced portrayals of African-American life, especially through the voices of black women. Her novels are not just stories, but also address profound issues of race, gender and identity. Morrison gives voice to black African women who face systemic oppression and marginalization, while celebrating their strength, resilience, and rich cultural heritage (Mudia et al., 2022; Nurhayati, 2019). This paper seeks to explore how Morrison's works, such as *Beloved* (1987), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and *Song of Solomon* (1977) elevate the experiences of black women, becoming a medium for telling stories of their struggles.

In her seminal works, Morrison often centres her narratives on Black women, exploring their inner lives and external realities in a society dominated by racial and gender hierarchies (Higinik, Elisabeht, & Kumayas, 2023). The novel *Beloved*, for example, depicts slavery that haunts and bequeaths its psychological scars through the

character Sethe. Her experience reflects the collective trauma of African-American women. *The Bluest Eye* mostly outlines the destructive impact of racism embedded with society's beauty standards on young Pecola Breedlove. These novels not only highlight the specific challenges faced by black women but also criticize the broader cultural forces that shape their lives (Wajiran & Septiani, 2023).

Morrison's narrative style is deeply rooted in the oral traditions of African-American culture, which she uses to give authenticity and depth to the voices of her characters (Andrews, 1996). Her use of fragmented timelines, multiple perspectives, and rich poetic language allows the reader to engage with the characters' experiences on a deep emotional level. This narrative approach not only enhances the realism of the story, but also underscores the interconnection between personal and communal history. By weaving these elements into her novels, Morrison ensures that the voices of black African women are heard loud and clear (Hopkins, 1992; Rasheed & Salahuddin, 2021). The work seems to challenge readers to face uncomfortable truths about race and gender in America.

Moreover, Morrison's exploration of intersectionality—the interplay between race, gender, and class—adds another layer of complexity to her depictions of black women (Kilic, 2021). Characters like Pilate in *Song of Solomon* embody the multifaceted nature of Black women, who navigate a world that often seeks to silence and demean them. Through such figures, Morrison highlights the resilience and agency of Black women, portraying them not just as victims, but as active participants in their own lives and communities (Gomes, 2016; Tasnim, 2020). This paper will analyse how Morrison's portrayal of these characters offers a transformative perspective on Black female identity and contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of American literature.

There have been many studies of Toni Morrison's work, but they have been partial. The researchers mostly focus on one of the novels written by Morrison with various approaches. That is why in this study researchers want to examine three novels by Morrison. It is intended to be able to compare each of these works related to the themes raised. That way the researcher can find a more comprehensive picture of what Morrison expects in the work she has produced.

Research method

This research focuses on novels as the main source of information. The three novels that are the subject of the research are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Beloved* (1987). These novels have received quite a lot of attention in various circles, especially researchers of African-American literature. In addition, these novels are also more appropriate as research subjects because the themes raised are very relevant to the conditions of black people who get unpleasant treatment due to the supremacy of white people. Based on the results of the research, the novels are also not far away as a depiction of the life experiences experienced by the author.

The research was conducted by reading the novels one by one and taking the core themes related to the discrimination against black people in America. There are three important issues that are the concern of this research, namely: racial discrimination, gender inequality and the intersection of race and gender. These three themes are very clearly depicted in the three novels. Although each novel has its own focus, the three topics are reflected in the novels. Because this research focuses on these three major themes, each novel is not presented in detail, but only discussed each case that fits the topic of this research.

The novels that are the subject of this paper were published between the 1970s and the 1980s. The time of writing is very important to understand the issues raised by the novelists. That is why from this time span, researcher also conducted literature studies related to the history of important events related to black people in America. This information is very important in presenting the social facts behind the ideas presented by the author in the literary work. Although society has progressed rapidly in various fields, the issue of racism still occurs frequently in America even today. We still remember the recent death of George Floyd who was strangled by a Minneapolis police officer (Wajiran & Septiani, 2023).

To understand the values implied in Toni Morrison's novels, the analysis in this paper uses the theory of black feminism. Black feminism is a theoretical framework and social movement that addresses the unique intersection of race, gender, and class oppression faced by black women (Crenshaw, 2013). Emerging from the civil rights and feminism movements, Black feminism critiques the limitations of mainstream feminist theories that often ignore or marginalize the experiences of women of colour (Williams, 2022). Black feminism also challenged the male-focused discourse in civil rights activism that ignored the gendered aspects of racial oppression. Black feminism seeks to empower Black women by recognizing their particular struggles and contributions, advocating for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to social justice (Hunter & Sellers, 1998).

Central to Black feminism is the concept of intersectionality, a term frequently used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality describes how different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism and classism, are interconnected and cannot be examined in isolation (Crenshaw, 1989). This theoretical approach recognizes that Black women experience unique forms of oppression that are different from those faced by White women or Black men (Billups, Thelamour, Thibodeau, & Durgin, 2022). Foundational texts such as Bell Hooks' *Ain't I a Woman?* and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* emphasize the importance of examining overlapping social identities and associated systems of oppression and discrimination. These works argue that the lived experiences and perspectives of Black women are critical to a comprehensive understanding of societal power dynamics.

Black feminism has made significant contributions to feminist theory and social activism by highlighting the need for inclusive and cross-border approaches. The Combahee River Collective Statement is an important document that articulates the

goals and principles of black feminism, emphasizing the need for solidarity among marginalized groups (Combahee River Collective, 1978). Black feminist theorists and activists have influenced the broader feminist movement to consider the diverse experiences of all women, promoting policies and practices that meet the needs of women of colour (Sheehy & Nayak, 2020). The cultural and intellectual contributions of Black feminism extend beyond academia, influencing literature, art and popular culture by amplifying the voices and stories of Black women. By challenging dominant narratives and advocating for systemic change, Black feminism continues to play an important role in the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.

Discussion

In the discussion section, researcher divides into three main topics, namely: related to racial discrimination, gender injustice and the separation of race and gender. These three issues are the main themes in Toni Morrison's novels although with different emphases in each work. The analysis is done by determining the main topic by comparing each of Morrison's works. This comparison is important because with this comparison we will find the vision and mission that is being built by the author. With the theory of black feminism, we understand how injustice actually happens to black people and black women living in America.

Racial discrimination

Discrimination against black people is no secret. That is because discrimination against black people has been going on for a long time and many figures have fought to eliminate discrimination against race, ethnicity and identity; including against black people. Racial, ethnic and identity discrimination has a devastating impact on black women. Not only are they discriminated against because of their skin colour, they are also discriminated against because of their gender; as women (Wajiran & Septiani, 2023). For women, even with the same skin colour, race and ethnicity, they still receive unfair treatment. That is why Morrison's works are very important to analyse as an illustration of how Morrison presents her female characters in the works she writes.

Toni Morrison sharply examines racial discrimination through the horrific experiences of Sethe and her community (Herminingrum, 2010). The incident is depicted in the novel *Beloved*, which is set against the backdrop of the Civil War. The novel explores the psychological and emotional scars left by the system of slavery and highlights the pervasive and lasting effects of racial oppression. Sethe's traumatic memories of Sweet Home, where she is brutalized and dehumanized, serve as a reminder of the systemic racism that defines her existence. The presence of the lovers' ghosts can be interpreted as the inescapable grip of the past. The novel also illustrates how the horrors of slavery continue to haunt African-Americans.

The figure of Sethe, the main character in *Beloved* embodies the traumatic legacy of slavery and rampant racial discrimination. His character provides an in-depth exploration of how systemic racism dehumanizes individuals and leaves indelible psychological scars. Sethe's experiences and responses to racial discrimination are crucial to understanding her motivations, actions and the overall narrative of the novel.

Morrison also explores community dynamics. She describes how racial discrimination fosters solidarity and division among black people. Characters like Paul D and Baby Suggs navigate a world where their value is constantly undermined by white supremacy. It drives black people to seek solace and strength in a shared heritage. Through vivid imagery and emotional depth, *Beloved* confronts the enduring legacy of racial discrimination, emphasizing the resilience and strength of those who suffer under its cruel weight.

The *Bluest Eye* is Toni Morrison's debut novel depicting the psychological impact of racial discrimination on black individuals. The story centres on Pecola Breedlove, a young African-American girl who is obsessed with having blue eyes, which she believes will make her beautiful and accepted by white society. The impact of the discrimination makes the main character experience identity loss or what is referred to as internalized self-hatred where the main character Pecola and her family experience intense self-hatred due to dominant white beauty standards. Pecola believes that blue eyes will bring her happiness and acceptance, showing how strong the social pressure is to conform to white standards.

A further impact is structural and institutional violence. The novel also explores how society, schools and work environments discriminate against the Breedlove family, creating a cycle of poverty and social alienation.

“...It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights-if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, “Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes.” (Morrison, 1970: 46)

As in the quotation above, in *The Bluest Eyes* Toni Morrison provides an in-depth analysis of racial discrimination, focusing on internalized racism through damaging beauty standards on African Americans. The novel is set in the 1940s. The protagonist Pecola Breedlove is an African-American girl who yearns for blue eyes. Pecola believes that blue eyes will provide love and acceptance. This yearning reflects the insidious nature of racial discrimination, where societal ideals equate beauty with whiteness. It causes Pecola to hate her own blackness.

Morrison illustrates how these standards are not only externally imposed by a racist society, but also internalized by the black community itself. These actions eventually

lead to self-hatred that gives birth to an identity crisis. Characters such as Pecola's mother, Pauline, and classmates such as Maureen Peal, portray various responses to this pressure, from assimilation to resistance.

Through Pecola's tragic decline, Morrison critiques how systemic racism and skin colour perpetuate cycles of oppression and psychological damage, illustrating the devastating impact on individual self-esteem and community cohesion. The novel's narrative structure includes multiple perspectives and shifts in time. The novel emphasizes the pervasive and multigenerational trauma caused by racial discrimination which makes the novel a powerful exploration of the intersection between race, identity, and societal values (Gomes, 2016).

“What do you suppose white people would think of you if they knew you were so willing to kill other black people? You think they'd admire you, respect you, pay you for it? Hell, no. They'd figure you were weak, spineless. So in love with their white asses you couldn't wait to do their work for them.” (Morrison, 1977)

The line does not directly reflect Guitar's understanding of how internalized racism and violence within the black community is perceived and exploited by white society. Instead, the quote illustrates how Guitar's monolithic and unsympathetic attitude towards white people is a form of race-based prejudice. Guitar's perspective is portrayed as a retaliatory hatred towards all white people, which is seen as a destructive response to the racism he faces.

Meanwhile, in *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison intricately elaborates on the theme of racial discrimination through the journey of the main character, Milkman Dead. The setting and themes in this novel illustrate the broader experience of African-Americans. Set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement, the novel investigates the historical and systemic racism that shaped the characters' identities and fates. Morrison examines how racial discrimination manifests not only through overt violence and segregation, but also through internalized self-hatred and fractured family histories. ***

Characters like Guitar Bains, who joins the militant group Seven Days in response to racial injustice, and Macon Dead, who pursues material success as a way to escape racial deprivation, show different reactions to the rampant racism in their society (Rosenblatt, C., 2014). Milkman's search for identity and self-discovery leads him to uncover his family's hidden past, revealing the deep-rooted connection between personal history and racial oppression. The novel also highlights the spiritual resilience and cultural richness of the African-American community, as seen through the folklore and oral traditions that guide Milkman's journey (Hopkins, 1992). Through its complex narrative and rich characters, *Song of Solomon* powerfully critiques the ongoing impact of racial discrimination while celebrating the strength and resilience of black identity and heritage.

Gender Inequality

Toni Morrison's novels each explore the complicated and pervasive nature of gender inequality. Through deeply personal and intergenerational stories, Morrison illustrates how societal expectations and patriarchal structures shape the lives of her characters, especially women. While each novel differs in its narrative and thematic focus, they collectively reveal the resilience and complexity of black women in navigating a world that often marginalizes and oppresses them.

In *Beloved*, gender inequality is closely linked to the horrors of slavery. Sethe, the protagonist, embodies the double burden of being black and a woman in a society that devalues both identities. Her struggle to protect her children from the dehumanizing effects of slavery leads her to commit acts of profound despair. The novel explores the psychological and emotional impact that gender violence has on Sethe, who lacks autonomy over her body and life. In addition, Morrison also depicts the strained relationships between female characters such as Sethe, Baby Suggs, and Denver, highlighting how systemic oppression disrupts familial bonds and female solidarity.

The novel also clearly depicts the issue of gender discrimination that occurs in the main character, Sethe. Sethe's life vividly depicts the harsh reality of gender inequality associated with racial oppression. As the protagonist of the novel, Sethe's journey provides a deep insight into the struggles faced by black women in a patriarchal and racist society. Her life story encapsulates the ways in which gender inequality impacts identity, relationships and survival strategies.

The backdrop of Sethe's experience as a slave girl in Sweet Home highlights the unique gendered dimensions of slavery. While all slaves were dehumanized, Sethe faced specific forms of exploitation and violence because of her gender. She is subjected to sexual violence and reproductive control, which is symbolic of the broader systemic use of black female bodies for labor and reproduction. The abuses Sethe endures under her schoolteacher and nephews underscore the brutality of gender-based slavery, in which black women are reduced to their physicality and lack autonomy over their bodies.

Sethe's role as a mother is central to her identity and actions throughout the novel. Her harsh protection of her children, especially her decision to kill her beloved daughter in order to save her from slavery, underscores the extremes she feels as a mother under duress. These actions, while born out of desperation and love, also reflect the limited options available to her in a society that provided little protection or support for black women. Sethe's motherhood is a source of tremendous strength and vulnerability, highlighting how gender roles are intensified under oppressive conditions.

Song of Solomon explores gender inequality through dynamics within the Dead family and models the wider African-American community. Female characters such as Pilate,

Ruth, and Hagar each face limitations imposed on them by their race and gender. Pilate, in particular, stands out as a symbol of defiance against patriarchal norms. He is portrayed as living independently and rejecting societal expectations. In contrast, Ruth's life is portrayed as one of obedience to **her husband and her** longing for affection. It reflects the traditional roles assigned to women. Hagar's obsessive love for Milkman and the emotional devastation she experiences highlights the destructive consequences of societal and familial pressures on women's identity and aspirations.

Pilate stands out as a character who explicitly rejects the traditional gender roles imposed by a patriarchal society. Unlike other women in the novel who conform to societal expectations, Pilate leads an independent and self-sufficient life. She is introduced as a woman without a belly button, which symbolizes her non-attachment to conventional femininity and societal norms of womanhood. Pilate's rejection of marriage and her decision to raise her daughter and granddaughter alone further emphasized her independence. By living on his own terms, Pilate challenged the gendered expectations of his community and asserted his right to determine his own identity.

Economic empowerment is an important aspect of Pilate's resistance to gender inequality. ³² **In a society where women are often** dependent on men for financial stability, Pilate's ability to support himself and his family through winemaking sets him apart. This independence not only allowed him to live free from male control, but also allowed him to provide for his family in a way that defied traditional gender roles. Pilate's economic independence is a testament to her strength and resilience, showing how breaking away from patriarchal structures can empower women.

Pilate's character symbolizes female empowerment in *Song of Solomon*. Her life story and actions offer a critique of the limitations caused by gender inequality and present an alternative model of womanhood rooted in self-determination and strength. Pilate's influence extends beyond her immediate family, impacting the wider community and the readers. Her legacy in this novel underscores the importance of challenging and redefining traditional gender roles to achieve true empowerment and equality.

Intersection of race and gender

During the Reconstruction period ⁴¹ **after the end of the** Civil War, African Americans loudly demanded the right to vote and protested segregation in areas such as public transportation and education (Gomes, 2016; Rasheed & Salahuddin, 2021). Nonetheless, large numbers of whites, especially in the South, engaged in acts of racial violence against blacks, and feelings of war weariness kept **many national political** leaders from advocating for the rights of African Americans. ²⁹ **Fearing that they would** lose votes and support, there were protests everywhere. This led to the consolidation of segregation passed by the Supreme Court in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (1896), which stated that blacks would have “separate but equal” facilities (Gomes, 2016).

Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved* offer profound insights into ¹ **the intersection of race and gender**. Each novel presents a unique

exploration of how these two forms of identity and oppression interact. The novels also depict the lives and experiences of African-American women and men. Morrison's narrative highlights the challenges faced by the characters in the novels. The characters receive unfair treatment as they are portrayed as marginalized. Through their stories, Morrison critiques societal structures that perpetuate inequality and emphasizes the resilience and agency of black individuals, especially women, in the face of such adversity (Ogene, 1966).

“I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it.” (Morrison, 1987)

In *Beloved* ¹ the intersection of race and gender is clearly depicted through the experiences of Sethe and other characters who experience the brutal reality of slavery. Sethe's identity as a black woman makes her experience extreme dehumanization, sexual violence, and exploitation as a mother. The novel emphasizes how the institution of slavery specifically targets black women, reducing them to property and breeding tools. Sethe's desperate actions to protect her children from these horrors reveal the intense maternal suffering caused by racial and gender oppression. Morrison also examines solidarity and support among black women, such as the presence of Baby Suggs who provides spiritual and emotional guidance. Morrison also highlights the strength and resilience needed to survive under oppressive conditions.

Meanwhile, in *Song of Solomon*, the intersection of race and gender is explored through the lives of Matthew's family and their community. The novel depicts how black women, such as Pilate and Ruth, navigate a patriarchal society that demeans them because of race and gender. Pilate's resistance to traditional gender roles and his independence are in stark contrast to Ruth who is submissive and longs for validation from men. Hagar's character further illustrates the destructive impact of this intersecting oppression, as her unrequited love for Milkman leads to her emotional and mental breakdown. Morrison also illustrates how black men, like Guitar and Milkman, are shaped by the same social forces, dealing with their own forms of racial and gender expectations, and how their interactions with black women are affected by these dynamics.

The character of Pilate Dead defies racial and gender norms, illustrating the different kinds of oppression faced by Black women. Her existence challenges the societal expectations placed upon her because of her race and gender. Pilate lives independently, rejecting the conventional roles of wife and mother that are usually expected of women. Her rejection of these roles was not just a personal choice, but a radical act of resistance against a society that sought to define and confine her. Her independence and strength made her an outlier in a society that often adhered to more traditional roles, thus placing her at the intersection of racial and gender oppression.

Pilate's marginalization is compounded by her race and gender, making her an outcast in his community. She faced suspicion and contempt not only because she was a strong and independent woman, but also because she was a black woman who did not

conform to societal expectations. This double marginalization reflects the concept of intersectionality, where different forms of oppression intersect to create a disadvantageous experience. However, Pilate's response to this marginalization is one of resilience and inner strength. She maintained a strong sense of identity and purpose, serving as a moral and spiritual guide to others, especially her nephew Milkman. Her ability to remain true to herself in the face of conflicting oppressions underscores the strength and resilience of black women.

Morrison's way of portraying injustice is through the contrasting lives of white and black people. In addition, the way the characters interact depicts a striking discrimination where white people are depicted as full of luxury and enjoyment of life. It is also what makes black people aspire to be like white people in many ways: including lifestyle, sometimes even wanting physical changes that are actually very impossible for them.

“Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. “Here,” they said, “this is beautiful, and if you are on this day ‘worthy’ you may have it.” (Morrison, 1970: 20)

The description above shows the dissatisfaction of black people with their own lives. They want to have the body shape or beauty that white people have. In fact, it is not possible for them. That is why in *The Bluest Eyes*, Morrison wants to give awareness to black people that they must be themselves. Black people must be themselves and strive for aspects that they can change. One of these aspects is the issue of economic independence. If black people can succeed in the economic field, they can improve their lives without losing their own identity as black people (Gomes, 2016; Martinez, 2022).

Toni Morrison explores the intersection of race and gender by revealing the complex and multifaceted nature of interrelated forms of oppression. Each novel presents a unique narrative that highlights the particular challenges faced by black women and men. She emphasizes the pervasive impact of societal standards and expectations. The characters in her work demonstrate resilience and agency. Often finding strength and solidarity in their communities. Even as they navigate hardships compounded by their identities. By diving into these themes, Morrison not only criticizes the structures that perpetuate inequality, but also celebrates the enduring spirit of black individuals to resist and overcome such adversity.

The intersection of race and gender in Toni Morrison's novels, particularly in *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved*, is an important theme that highlights the complex and interconnected nature of forms of oppression. Some key points about the intersection of race and gender in these novels include: First, Morrison's works often explore the intersection of race and gender. They emphasize how these categories interact with and affect black women's experiences. For example, in *The Bluest Eye*, the character Pecola Breedlove faces discrimination due to race and gender. The

characterization highlights how these forms of oppression intersect and compound each other's effects. The protagonist Pecola experiences both racial and gender discrimination, which contributes to her feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. This intersectionality is a central theme in Morrison's works, which emphasizes the need to consider race and gender in understanding black women's experiences.

Secondly, Morrison's novels also explore how internalized oppression can result from the intersection of race and gender. For example, Pecola's desire to have blue eyes is a manifestation of internalized racism and sexism. This internalized oppression is often a major theme of Morrison's work, which highlights the ways in which individuals can be affected by the dominant narratives and stereotypes around them.

Thirdly, Morrison also illustrates the ways in which black women can resist. For example, in *Beloved*, Sethe's experience is characterized by her resistance to the trauma and oppression she faced during slavery. This resistance is Morrison's attempt to emphasize the importance of agency and empowerment in overcoming the intersection of race and gender oppression. Morrison often uses intersectional analysis to examine the ways in which race and gender intersect and influence black women's experiences. This intersectional analysis is a key methodological approach in Morrison's work, highlighting the need to consider both race and gender in understanding black women's experiences.

Overall, the intersection of race and gender in Toni Morrison's novels is a complex and multifaceted theme. Morrison highlights the ways in which these forms of oppression interact with and affect black women's experiences.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Beloved* offer deep and multifaceted explorations of racial discrimination, gender inequality, and the intersection of race and gender. Each novel provides a unique narrative that offers the complexity of the African-American experience. They highlight the pervasive impact of systemic oppression and the resilience of black individuals, especially women, in the face of the challenges of such discrimination.

Song of Solomon illustrates the intersection of race and gender through characters like Pilate Dead, who defies societal norms and embodies strength and independence. Pilate's life challenges racial and gender expectations, demonstrating the combined effects of intersecting oppressions. Her role as a cultural anchor and her economic independence highlight the ways in which Black women navigate and resist oppressive structures. It offers a powerful critique of the social norms that seek to limit them.

The Bluest Eye is a sharp critique of internalized racism and the destructive impact of society's beauty standards on black girls. Through the tragic story of Pecola Breedlove, Morrison illustrates how racial discrimination and gender inequality combine to

destroy individual self-esteem and identity. The novel emphasizes the harmful impact of these intersecting oppressions on the most vulnerable members of society. It also demonstrates the need for a deeper understanding and dismantling of the pervasive norms of such discriminatory acts.

Beloved explores the lingering trauma of slavery and its impact on the lives of black women. Sethe's experience underscores the brutal reality of racial discrimination and gender-based violence. Her desperate actions to save her child from the horrors of slavery reflect the extreme measures historically taken by black women to protect their families. The novel also highlights the importance of communal support and intergenerational transmission of trauma, emphasizing the need for collective healing and solidarity in overcoming the legacy of racial and gender oppression.

Across the three novels, Morrison not only depicts the deep suffering caused by racial discrimination and gender inequality but also calls for black women's resilience and agency. Her characters navigate a world that seeks to marginalize and silence them, yet they remain steadfast in asserting their identities and reclaiming their narratives. Morrison's work underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the intersectionality of race and gender, offering powerful evidence of the enduring struggle for equality and justice.

Through her storytelling skills and deep empathy for her characters, Toni Morrison makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the complexities of race and gender in America. Her novels are both critiques of systemic oppression and celebrations of the strength and resilience of black individuals, especially women, in their relentless pursuit of dignity and freedom.

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