

**Black Aesthetic in Literary Expressions: Struggle for Justice in the Novels of
Morrison and Whitehead**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of
Tribhuvan University in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ENGLISH

By

Rishiram Ghimire

TU Reg. No. 49403-91

Ph.D. Reg. No. 206/076

Tribhuvan University

Kathmandu, Nepal

August 2024

Letter of Recommendation

We certify that this dissertation entitled **Black Aesthetic in Literary Expressions: Struggle for Justice in the Novels of Morrison and Whitehead** was prepared by Rishiram Ghimire under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examinations by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

Dissertation Committee:

Prof. Anand Sharma, PhD

Supervisor

Date: August 1, 2024

Prof. Shreedhar Gautam, PhD

Co- Supervisor

Date: August 1, 2024

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Office of the Dean
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Ref. No.:.....

Approval Letter

This dissertation entitled **Black Aesthetic in Literary Expressions: Struggle for Justice in the Novels of Morrison and Whitehead** submitted by Mr. Rishiram Ghimire for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. I hereby, certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore accepted for the degree.

.....

Prof. Kushum Shakya, PhD

Dean and Chairman

Research Committee

Date: August 1, 2024

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind of other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature:

Name: Rishiram Ghimire

Date: August 1, 2024

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the product of my incessant study on black people's struggle for justice and freedom through writing in America. This study is an outcome on the scholarly and incisive supervision of Prof. Dr. Anand Sharma and Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Gautam, as co-supervisor. I am grateful to my supervisors heart and soul who instructed and encouraged me to proceed my research work with care and concern.

I am grateful to the Head of the Central Department of English, Prof. Dr. Dhruva Karki former heads, Jib Lal Sapkota, Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa, and Professors Dr. Ram Chandra Paudel, and Dr. Rudra Paudel. Likewise, I am thankful to Toya Nath Upadhyay for guiding and inspiring me in the time of need.

My Special thanks go to the Dean, Prof. Dr. Kushum Shakya and the Assistant Deans Prof. Dr. Dubi Nanda Dhakal and Prof. Dr. Tara Prasad Bhusal, and the staff, Anita Khanal, Samrit Tandukar and others at the Dean's office of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for their administrative and technical supports. I am equally thankful to my pupil Deepak Raj Silwal for his support providing me with the resources in need from the USA.

In the same manner, I am indebted to my parents, who are always beside me for my academic and other progresses, and my beloved wife, Ganga Gyawali, who always reminded me of my work to do and inspired me to accomplish this research work in time by providing conducive environment with my study. I am equally thankful to my son, Regal and daughter, Reega for their moral support to my work.

August 2024

Rishiram Ghimire

Abstract

This study analyzes black novels such as Tony Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and *The Nickel Boys* (2019) from the perspective of black aesthetic in order to manifest how these texts underpin social justice in black community. Black people are haunted by past oppression, exploitation and violence making it more difficult for them to have peace mind and get committed to ending the brutal past. This research work aims at justifying how these primary texts are the outcome of blacks' experiences and speak against the injustice upon them.

In *Beloved*, Sethe runs away from the Sweet Home and kills her daughter. In *The Underground Railroad*, Cora undergoes an arduous journey and in *The Nickel Boys* Elwood gets nabbed by police and kept in reformatory school. The study focuses on solving the key questions: How do these novels distinctly portraying black aesthetic raise voice against injustice? In addition, it attempts to subsume the specific questions: Why do Sethe and Cora suffer and later decide to escape? What prevents Elwood from being a good boy in Nickel Academy to white authority? To respond to these questions, this study applies theoretical perspectives of black aesthetic envisioned by scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois, who values art and literature that foster political cause, Larry Neal, for whom ethics and aesthetics are inseparable and stresses on the destruction of white things, white ideas and the white way of looking at the world, and LeRoi Jones, who claims the authenticity of black literature when it deals with the question of freedom. With regard to the insights of these scholars, this study concludes that these texts expound the painful history of black people and motivate them to release themselves from the shackles of racial injustice maintaining their history and heritage in the New World.

The experiences of black community are the woes and wounds of slavery, racism and Jim Crow and black literature originates from these experiences on manifest or latent level. Black aesthetic, contrary to western aesthetics, engages with politics and assumes authors as political activists for urging and uniting their people to fight against domination. The insights of black aesthetic manifest good and evil of the society as political fabrication and such political constructions change over time and place when people of the concerned communities become cognizant of labelling people in terms of beautiful and ugly, pure and impure, peaceful and violent, principled and decadent.

Black aesthetic explicitly infers history and historical events of prejudice and injustice to black community. The study, analyzing the texts thoroughly, explores that Morrison mingles black peoples' pain with history in the New World with the Middle Passage to prepare people to revolt against the marks of slavery and racism latent in black community. Whitehead revives underground railroad to inform his people about ancestral history of revolt against discrimination and escape from racial proscription. Whitehead connects American history with academic institutions to unearth the duplicity of whites in Jim Crow and motivate his people for the struggle of justice. Finally, the study asserts the inspiration of black aesthetic in rationalizing the black community 'who they are' and kindling them for social justice and freedom.

In conclusion, the present study evolves the trajectory of struggling for social justice and freedom through literary works. Moreover, the study helps further researchers to explore political cause in literary works by having the insights of black aesthetic for social change.

Table of Contents

Contents	Page No.
Chapter One: Creative Black Aesthetic Assertion for Social Justice and Reformation	1
Overture of the Study	1
Review of Literature	12
From Aesthetics to Black Aesthetic	13
Chapter Two: Black Aesthetic and Social Reformation	70
Black Aesthetic and Its Major Thrust	71
Black Aesthetic: Social Justice for Harmony	86
Chapter Three: Sethe's Manifestation of Racial History and Injustice in <i>Beloved</i>	96
Unearthing Racial History and Injustice with Black Aesthetic in <i>Beloved</i>	101
Morrison's Call for Freedom and Justice	130
Chapter Four: An Odyssey of Cora for Freedom and the Thrust of Black Aesthetic in <i>The Underground Railroad</i>	133
The Revival of Slave History	134
Black People's Sense of Solidarity for Liberation	160
Chapter Five: The Duplicity of Whites and Call for Self-dignity in <i>The Nickel Boys</i>	173
Duplicity of Whites and Elwood's Suffering in Nickel Academy	175
Blacks' Search for Dignity in the White World of Duplicity	189
Chapter Six: Conclusion: Black Writers' Repudiation of Racial Oppression and Cry for Social Justice	209
Works Cited	218

Chapter I

Creative Black Aesthetic Assertion for Social Justice and Reformation

Overture of the Study

This study explores the contribution of three black novels: *Beloved* (1987) by Morrison, *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and *The Nickel Boys* (2019) by Whitehead in rationalizing the black community's struggle for justice and freedom and their efforts to achieve it. By narrating the stories of slavery, racism and Jim Crow forced upon black community these novels challenge white supremacy. The vivid display of history and historical events of suffering and injustice in these texts suggests the need of justice for black community.

Morrison's *Beloved* as a historical document demonstrates how slavery was brutal and for slaves death was more agreeable than slavery. Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* illustrates a girl's struggle to avoid slavery and achieve justice and freedom. Whitehead's second novel *The Nickel Boys* speaks on the imposition of racism upon black children at school and the need for justice for black population. The study claims that these novels, by exploring the historical events of racism and injustice, project the values of black aesthetic for social change.

This study includes black aesthetic and justice as key terms. The phrase "black aesthetic," suggests the principle of black art and literature with social value and "aesthetics" refers to the generic term for the principle of art and literature, apart from history, including broader conceptual and theoretical frames and outlooks of art and beauty across various cultures and histories. They are recurrently used phrases while analyzing the texts and exploring the norms and values of black aesthetic. These terms are interposed in the finding of the struggle for justice and freedom through literature, especially novels. The narratives of the novels serve social systems of

power relation and these "stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mind-set—the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourses take place" (Delgado 71). The principle of black literature challenges racial mind-set and resolves to the deliverance of its people from the shackles of discrimination and segregation, racism and slavery sustained for a long period of time in the New World. Black aesthetic aims at providing its people with knowledge to position themselves respectfully in relation to the world and promotes integrity among them and makes them alert about their experiences in the New World.

To gain the insights of "black aesthetic" it becomes relevant to bring the generic term "aesthetics" into discussion. Aesthetics suggests the value or quality of an art based on its intrinsic beauty which is pleasing to the audience. It is a principle of art that is taken as the domain of the contemplation of forms, implying detachment and distancing from the physical world. The scope of aesthetics in any art or literature entails both outside of the work of art, to the domain of the audience, and within the work of art, to its formal constituents. On the principle of aesthetics, art supposedly arouses and transmits emotion, when it brings people together and enriches their common humanity. Traditional aesthetic concepts, in terms of its form and feeling, are the sublime, the beautiful, and the grotesque. Aesthetics concerns with the issues of form, narrative, language and their effects on readers and their responses.

When aesthetic judgment of art is concerned Immanuel Kant's idea is dominant. For him art does not involve the concept of obligation or freedom, nor does it mark a form of understanding or morality. Art contains the feature of uniqueness and autonomy and these features keep a work of art free from moral values of the society. In support to the Kantian concept of art's autonomy, Stephen David Ross

asserts that “The autonomy of art is attained at an enormous price in Kant, since art can offer neither knowledge nor morality, though it may be conjoined with them in impure arts” (98). Art excludes society and social values as it evolves from the free play of imagination. Art does not include politics and ethics, nor does it see its role in social change. Thus, the Western aesthetics is influenced by Kant whose view of aesthetic judgment excludes the aspect of morality, ethics, and politics from art.

In Western perception of aesthetics, art remains apart from social values and cultural politics. It means that literary works cannot come close to social, political, economic, and cultural phenomena. Social values do not maintain the beauty of art that has universal value and attach the rational nature of human beings firmly in the world. Roger Scruton, on art and its bond with society, argues:

A work of art that moralizes, that thrives to improve its audience, that descends from the pinnacle of pure beauty to take up some social or didactic cause, offends against the autonomy of the aesthetic experience, exchanging intrinsic for instrumental values and losing whatever claim it might have had to beauty. (110)

A work of art aiming at promoting the consciousness of people for social change damages the true essence of art. With regard to the utility value of art, a work of art is free from social wants and goals.

In contrast to the classical aesthetic values, black literary writers have subverted the Western aesthetic assumption by setting new agenda as per the black people's requirements. Black people's requirement involves the correction of white convention and the questioning of the conventional definition of aesthetics has been imagined in black literature. Black aesthetic has an ethical problem with the Western concept; it sees values in the aesthetic domain only if it advances political causes. So

black aesthetic intends to destroy white things and ideas that are set as metanarrative, a body of white values, to look at the world and black community. The black community has undergone the experience of eternal torture caused by racism and its strategic ideas and actions. Their cultural products revolve around the black's real-life experiences, be they racial, political, social, or cultural, in America. In black aesthetic, the idea that "I am black and beautiful" has been vigorously established and it has become the black aesthetic cry. Black aesthetic intends to subvert the Western construction of race that deforms humanity.

The subversion of Western construction tends to protect human values racism is eroding and for this purpose black aesthetic actively disseminates the view that art must be functional, that is useful, and "art for art's sake" is a false doctrine for black writers. In contrast to black aesthetic, Walter Pater, on an art's value, stresses that ". . . the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing by the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (239). Pater assumes that art exists in its beauty and it does not have any social obligation, it stands on the moment it was created. However, black aesthetic assumes that art plays a role to change society and black art must elevate and enlighten the black community for revolution and change. For the black, to accept the white aesthetics is to accept and validate a society that will not allow them to live with dignity. The black community is mindful about what the whites have done in ideas, images and actions to misrepresent them in the New World. So, the sole aim of the work of black artists is to recognize themselves as agents of change and the inevitable demands of the struggle that lie ahead.

This research explores how black aesthetic is a principle to enlighten black people for their struggle for unity and liberation. It revives them, inspires them, and gives them enough courage to establish justice in the society they live in. Injustice is the loss of social morality that creates an abyss in society in terms of center and margin, powerful and powerless. Power is positive as well as negative- positive power is creative, constructive, and constitutive; negative power is repressing, oppressing, and depressing. In racial society, black people have experienced negative power that has created a map in the society to identify black inferior and white superior. White people have fabricated the social position of superior and inferior and created identity accordingly. Regarding the fictitious identity man has produced, Ken Plummer argues that "We invent identities for ourselves and others and locate ourselves in these imagined maps. We create communities of concern and arenas of activity where we . . . practice our politics, got on with our work. We experience our bodies and our feelings, as well as our behaviours and talk" (20). Social identity and the respective behaviors and attitudes are the invention of human mind that have produced and maintained social structure. The identity of white as powerful has affected the hierarchy pattern of domination in the society and thrived discrimination in the distribution of resources. Black aesthetic, in this situation, advocates social morality and the role of black literature in providing moral guidance to black community in shifting outcomes.

Furthermore, black literature is a resistance to human tyranny and dedication to human dignity. The resistance to human tyranny commences by unfolding evidences of the Middle Passage, Jim Crow, Ku Klux Klan, Lynching, and the life of blacks in ghettos and speaks the survival of black people, the story of the captive, and their struggle for human dignity in America. The Middle Passage denotes the

travel and suffering of African blacks as a slave from their homeland to the New World. The ship packed with slaves would travel in tropical water without proper food, water and sanitation causing death and worse than death condition. The journey of the slaves manifests as unbearable:

As the voyage progressed, any who were too sick to eat would be beaten with ropes to force them to eat. Soon they started to die, perhaps from dehydration, or from the dehydrating effects of seasickness, because no one had ever before been at sea. . . . When people died, they were unceremoniously thrown into the sea, probably two, three, or more every day. (209).

The suffering of black population has been persistent from the time they were transported from their land to make them slaves of the whites. The pain and suffering of this community is going on consecutively from the moment they were packed in slave ship. Their killing by beating with ropes as in the Middle Passage continues in the New World in the form of lynching, too.

The modes of brutality of whites over blacks has shifted over time and to accomplish their act of domination different institutions have been formed and actuated. Jim Crow is one which works in humiliating and segregating black people from the whites. Hugh H. Smythe, on the viciousness of the term, evaluates that "The term itself has become so inseparably affixed to the laws separating the races in public places. . ." (45). The law of separation in the public places has connected woes and worries of black community to the Middle Passage and made sorry to them. Whenever black community begins to sigh the breath of relief whites activate another oppressive group. Ku Klux Klan bears the oppressive feature of whites to bother black community and keep them below. "The Ku Klux Klan has seen as its mission the preservation of the institutionalized caste pattern of the South and the promotion

of a patriotic ideology" (Schaefer 143). This suggests that white people tend to sustain racism and when white people feel the threat from blacks Ku Klux Klan like groups are formed as invisible group to terrorize and attack black people. White people do not intend to treat blacks as equal and keep them away from their vicinity to the ghettos.

Black literature explores how the mindset of whites from the time of the Middle Passage and ever since has not changed in terrorizing black people with the notion of white supremacy. The domination of whites over black from the time of slavery reveals hostility towards humanity. In *Beloved*, the schoolteacher and his nephews commit violence upon Sethe, Halle, Paul D, and other blacks at the Sweet Home, and this behavior of the white manifests injustice to black community over history. Such kind of behavior toward the black is allowed by society under the institution of slavery. To end this racial discrimination and gain socio-political status in white society, solidarity and mass mobilization in social, political, cultural, and economic sectors are essential.

The knowledge of slavery and its aftermath has made black community aware of their situation in the society. In *The Underground Railroad*, the atrocities committed upon Cora, the protagonist, by the overseers, depicts the brutality of slavery. Cora, an outcast slave, bears sexual violence perpetrated in the institution of slavery. The wounds of slavery have been bleeding and it has not given them rest and comfort in their lives until they change their condition in the New World. They are aware that "The cause of dissatisfaction with our former condition, was that we were proscribed, debarred and shut out from every respectable position, occupying the places of inferiors and menials" (Delany 208). Black people have lost their respectable position since the whites brought them in America as slaves in 1619.

From the time Africans were brought to America and other parts of Europe as slaves, their resistance began for freedom and social justice.

Their struggle initiated by writers, mindful of their history and heritage, has been going on and will go on until they are treated as human beings in essence. Black writers have defined and redefined the nature of the struggle and sought their meaning in America. In such writings, the domain of black aesthetic is apparent- there's the inclusion of agency, since ". . . the person's well-being will be influenced by his or agency role" (Sen 187), beauty and meaning in the reflection of oppression, despair and death. Injustice and discrimination become the cause of conflict and agitation that never let the society live in harmony and peace. Black people have got to struggle in America because of the imposition of injustice and discrimination upon the black in every walk of life. The end of injustice and the establishment of justice is the fundamental objective of black writers as "The aim of justice, thus understood, is to enable individuals to pursue their well-being and happiness without interference" (Gardner 367). Injustice has obstructed upward movement of black population in the New World and in this condition of black community justice is the potential base of their progress.

The call for justice and freedom, against discrimination and segregation, began at the point when white supremacy was laden on the black. Whites inflicted upon black torture and pain, and got pleasure from such infliction. Solomon Northup discusses on white control over the black and states that ". . . chief delight was in dancing with his "niggers" or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their backs" (190). The sadist nature of whites and their misconduct of keeping their brother in servitude and obtaining pleasure and comfort from the cry of pain could not

remain long. When power is used in repressive and oppressive manner, resistance becomes inevitable since all forms of resistance are an assertion of humanity.

In the act of resistance, if a person resists alone, it attributes heroism of an individual but the collective resistance is the expression of group for identity and recognition in the society and such opposition becomes a culture. The resistance of the black is a collective voice against the imposition of power upon black and such imposition of power upon black has made them aware of their social, political, economic, and cultural status and their sense of self. "Cultural pride is a source of personal empowerment, a building block for pride a blue print for change" (Womack 189). In regard to the realization of self and cultural pride, black writing serves the testimonies of suppression and oppression of its people and develops black community's sense of resistance dormant in this community.

Concerning the release of black community from exploitation and oppression, black aesthetic advocates cultural revolution in black art and ideas. Under this principle, the past is passed on via literature with the commitment of raising voice against injustice by writing about the black by black writers. Laurie G. Kirsznner and Stephen R. Mandell, on the significance of past for the black, point out that "Haunted by a past of oppression and discrimination, blacks in America find life a constant battle to better conditions for future generations. The only way to ensure this situation is for young black men and women to understand the past and to make it a part of their future" (359). Black people are haunted by past oppression, exploitation and violence, and this situation has made it more difficult for them to remain in peace and get committed to ending the brutal past. Morrison's *Beloved*, and Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys* document a past of oppression and discrimination that functions as a means for future empowerment in present-day

American society. They speak out of their pains and sorrows, demands and desires via spirituals and blues, prayers and participation. Moreover, black literature as a driving force for justice and freedom is covered heart and soul in fiction though it is loud and wide in other genres.

Black literature reveals the journey of the black from slavery to the present struggle for justice and humanity. The creeds of black literature concern to portray a past of oppression to empower the living ones, encourage the black to struggle for justice and freedom in *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys* as primary texts to accomplish the research. Black's voice in their writing is melded with their experience, and recorded in black's history and it still remains fresh in the memory of the black community. Pain and penury are the position of the black and the struggle for justice and freedom has an association with the knowledge regarding their position in the society they are living in.

In order to explicate black literature, it becomes instrumental to address the following questions in the primary texts as cry and call for justice and freedom in black literature: Why do Sethe in *Beloved* and Cora in *The Underground Railroad* suffer and later decide to escape? What prevents Elwood from being a good boy in *The Nickel Boys* to white authority? How do these novels distinctly portraying black aesthetic raise voice against injustice? Since setting, characters and the issues are ostensibly connected with the black's position, the burden of slavery, misrepresentation, and discrimination, the major characters' continuous struggle for justice and freedom is implicit in these novels.

This study assumes that to end this gruesome condition of black people, to bring them out of the infected mainstream of American system, and to begin a new era of humanity and social justice, the black aesthetic influences blacks'

consciousness by conveying a message of racial preconception and interdiction and urging for social justice and freedom.

The proposed research work primarily studies the selected texts of black literature and examines them using the conceptual framework of “black aesthetic.” Black aesthetic posits ‘aesthetics’ below politics and suggests a fundamental reordering of the Western cultural aesthetics. It implies the assumption of Larry Neal that entails ethics and aesthetics as one and the same interacting positively. Black literature stresses the use of art, criticism or analysis to discover the role expressive creations and practices play in creating and sustaining the black life-world. Black aesthetic denies the white world and interests in destroying the white things, white ideas, and white way of looking at the world. In this act of creating black life-world, black writers put forward the oppression of black people over history and enlighten them on how they should prepare themselves to end the condition of white brutality. This approach will be used to survey the primary texts on how they speak decently regarding the misrepresentation of the black, and how these texts are politically focused. While going through these texts, the insights of the critics and analysts such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Larry Neal, and LeRoi Jones will be applied.

This research work primarily explores how black aesthetic inspires black community to struggle for justice and freedom by revealing the history of oppression, exploitation and discrimination, and how it entuses solidarity among the black community in America. This solidarity becomes the epitome of a struggle for dignity and freedom with discipline in the history of human civilization. So, this analysis aims at unearthing the genealogy of the liberation of black in America and their reminiscence to bygone days.

This reading delimits its area to the analysis of the selected texts of black literature: *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys*. This study explores the dynamics between politics and aesthetics in their narratives as well as how these narratives impel black community to secure justice. To accomplish this task, it will be dealt with the mentioned texts closely and taken the help of other sources.

This research work has been framed in six chapters. The framework entails introduction and review of literature of primary texts in the first chapter. The orientation of black aesthetic to social reformation has been incorporated in the second chapter. The insight of black aesthetic in *Beloved* with textual evidence has been included in the third chapter. Likewise, in the fourth chapter, this dissertation incorporates the interpretation and analysis of *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys* in the Fifth. The final chapter, conclusion, entails the finding of this dissertation and shows some areas for further research. While undergoing the documentation of this research work, the researcher has used the MLA style sheet.

Review of Literature

This portion attempts to review black aesthetic and the struggle for justice in *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*. Black aesthetic implies value system in literature and focuses on the social practices that privilege and relegate people in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. The major concern of black aesthetic is to relate black literature with black society in America and reveal their history of suffering in the New World. The backdrop of black literature is American chattel slavery and that history which involves the capture of Africans by whites in Africa and their journey to the New World. Any black literary text becomes incomplete until the allusion to slavery is included in the subject matter.

Black aesthetic surmises black life-world in literary production and reveals the account of black life hidden from American history. This principle of black art and literature helps black people know about their position and arouses for the need of struggle any time now. Black aesthetic subsumes ethics in literature and concerns with justice, rights, and responsibilities of society. And these issues are widely concerned with politics.

This chapter primarily, along with the issues of aesthetics and justice, focuses on the politics and the political messages of *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys*. These three primary texts unfold the events where black characters suffer from racial atrocity in the form of slavery, Jim Crow and other white-founded institutions. Racial prejudice is ostensible in these novels and it is urgent to end this situation to guarantee humanity and justice in America. These novels strongly convey the political message of injustice and discrimination from the time black people were separated from their land, legend, myth and culture. The suffering of the black population and their attempts to free themselves from the burden of whites become the subject matter of black literature and means ‘enough is enough.’ In this sense, black literature is the body of writing dealing with a subject of uniting black community in America for social change –freedom, justice, and equality.

From Aesthetics to Black Aesthetic

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy, which is concerned with the study of beauty and truth in art and literature. The word “aesthetics” is derived from the Greek term “aisthetikos” which suggests the meaning of ‘sense perception.’ In art and literature, aesthetics is a set of principles that are fundamental to the work of a particular artist or any artistic movement. “The primary meaning of ‘aesthetic’ is sense perception, as opposed to the intellectual apprehension of a thing. The term later

came to be used more specifically as referring to feeling, that is to the internal perception of sensations” (Kelly 11/12). Aesthetics refers to the pleasing qualities of any creation that subsumes beauty and taste. Under the rubric of aesthetics, various terms like artistic, tasteful, beautiful, pleasing, and appreciative are recurrently used in the aesthetic judgment of any kind of human creation, be it art or literature.

The aesthetic value of any artwork refers to the capacity of the creation to construe pleasure or displeasure (positive or negative value) when the artwork is experienced in an aesthetic way. Likewise, the aesthetic attitude indicates the appreciation of any artwork for its own sake. It does not include the experience to fulfill the goal, but to experience the art itself. Regarding the components of aesthetics, Susan L. Feagin explores four components:

aesthetic attitude- special kind of attitude required to aesthetically appreciate art or nature, aesthetic experience- special type of experience that can be differentiated from other types of experiences, aesthetic value- distinctive value different from other types of values such as economic, religious or moral, aesthetic object— special object that can be called aesthetic. (qtd. in Perry 19)

Aesthetic philosophy is not a singular entity rather it is multifaceted, and it subsumes multiple components that help to be acquainted with aesthetics. These components encompass the quality of the art created, its impact upon the reader/audience, the unique values different from social values, and the unique mode of an object that is different from other creations.

The philosophy of art and literature has been wending from the ancient time to present date. Plato disregarded the aesthetics of poetry from his ideal Republic. For Plato poetry is the imitation of this created world which does not reflect the objects

and events themselves, so poetry is removed from the ultimate realities. Regarding the truthfulness of an artwork, Plato says that “. . . the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets, whether they write in Iambic or in Heroic verse, are imitators in the highest degree?” (40). Poets imitate the world without having the knowledge of it and such kind of imitative art is inferior. An inferior art is thrice removed from the truth. Plato does not see the worth of poetry that may gain entrance to the divine archetypes; rather it corrupts people by persuading them to illusion. Plato nullifies poetry with the concept that it has no real value though it seems to be attractive.

Plato’s disciple, Aristotle in his *Poetics*, promotes the notion of imitation (mimesis) that Plato repeals. Aristotle fosters the idea that art imitates life, and it is truer to reality. Imitation does not only put the action that took place but it imitates the action that may take place in the future. Aristotle defends poetry from Plato stating that poetry offers emotional gratification with its value of imitation. Aristotle observes the high moral dimension of imitation: “Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation” (71). Aristotle regards poetic imitation as the highest of all imitations since, for him, it does not merely copy the existing matters it offers access to the divine archetypes. In this manner, Aristotle’s *Poetics* acts against what Plato claims about imitation and develops the principle of artwork that germinates through imitation.

Furthermore, Aristotle links imitation in this world with beauty that is found in the heavens. What is created through imitation by a man is artificial and inferior, but the beauty created by nature is transcendental since nature is the master artist and the

production of beauty by nature is incomparable. There is the presence of nature on earth and her beauty becomes the source of imitation for an artist. Since the highest beauty is found in the heavens, perfect beauty is found in nature which is not possible to be found in artificial thing. In this regard, Aristotle assumes eternal beauty in heaven and the brilliant beauty in nature on earth. He explains the magnitude of beauty imitating nature on earth. “Because of the essential beauty of nature, we learn to create beautiful objects by imitating the beauty of nature. Human beings do like to imitate, and as we have no spontaneous power or creating the beautiful, we learn to create beauty by catching the clue from nature” (qtd. in Marshall 229). Man does not have the capacity to produce beauty on his own, and his creation of beauty by imitating nature consists of aesthetic value. The beauty imitated from nature does not have the power to provide pleasure to a reader/audience. Aristotle advocates beauty in art which should be like the beauty of nature.

In addition to Aristotle's notion of beauty in art, the concept of aesthetics has further been enriched by the first-century thinker Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime*. In this work, he focuses on the expressive quality of literature in which there is the presence of an author's emotion and intellectual depth. This depth of presence produces poetic excellence, which is sublimity. The sublimity of literature connects the soul of the author with the soul of the reader. If the literary work is truly beautiful and sublime it pleases a man of sense at all times. Longinus demonstrates five sources that produce beauty and sublimity in a work of literature: “(1) the command of “full-blooded” or robust ideas; (2) the inspiration of “vehement emotion”; (3) the proper construction of figures- both figures of thought and figures of speech; (4) nobility of phrase, which includes diction and the use of metaphor; and (5) the general effect of dignity and elevation” (qtd. in Habib 120). These components in a literary work

produce the sublime and this sublime invigorates the emotion which is difficult to control. This view of Longinus on sublime adduces aesthetics with form and feeling.

The dominant figure whose notion of aesthetic is influential to this date is Immanuel Kant. His *Critique of Judgment* (1790) combines the separate elements in expressing literary autonomy or the idea that literature is guided by its own rules rather than outside values such as morality and cognition. Kant's concept of aesthetics is deeply embedded in "disinterested contemplation" theory which alienates the subject from its functionality. This theory does not allow the readers/audience to see a work of art and literature from a value system, rather it encourages the readers/audience to judge a work of art from the perspective of beauty and taste. Its assumption on art is that art is neither a form of morality nor understanding. He opines that aesthetic judgment and taste are not objective but subjective and though it is subjective its beauty and taste should be judged universally. Kant explains that "The Judgment of taste is . . . not a judgment of cognition, is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be *no other than subjective*" (103). The judgment of taste and the judgment of cognition are one and the same and yet they are understood differently. The judgment of taste of artwork is neither logical nor it is from cognition, but it is aesthetical.

Kant's "disinterested contemplation" is a distinctively pronounced phrase which implies satisfaction in aesthetics. Disinterestedness refers to the distancing of the subject that is appreciated from the components of everyday experience, in which all the former experiences are excluded. Kant, on the detachment of art from everyday life, stresses that "Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste. We must not be in the least prejudiced in favor of the existence of the things, but be quite

indifferent in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste” (Kant 104).

Kant’s pronouncement of ‘disinterested contemplation’ suggests that the associations relevant to personal life of an individual are excluded from the aesthetic experience.

Moreover, aesthetic judgment is apart from the day-to-day activities that take place in the world and are imbricated with real as well as moral phenomena. It means that artworks, in some manner, are distinct from other domains of practice. Taste, aesthetical faculty of judgment, or an artwork is ostensible by looking at with attention and thought which is tightly associated with Kant’s popular phrase ‘contemplation.’ Matthew DeCoursey, on the role of contemplation in aesthetics, argues that “Judgments of taste are disinterested, that is, arise solely from the contemplation of their objects without regard to any purpose that can be fulfilled or interests that can be served by their existence” (14). Judgment of taste is an exclusively the matter of alienating intentional purpose from the artwork. When the taste of art is evaluated in connection of the interest of personal life it does not encompass the true artistic features of the work of art.

Moreover, aesthetic experience is a kind of pleasure, in which external satisfaction has nothing to do. Aesthetic experience includes the proper knowledge of form of an artwork where form is the deeply associated entity and purpose of the work that is inherent in the artwork as well. An artwork becomes defective in terms of form and aesthetic value if it attempts to represent a purpose of art in an inappropriate way, which is aligned with the external world. Alzo David West asserts aesthetics as an entity that “. . . esthetic is *not* utility and that aesthetic is *not* ideology” (106). Works of art have their own goal that is justified by the structure or form that that artworks mandate. In a work of art different properties like moral and cognitive are excavated while reading or seeing, but in traditional aesthetics such properties are

nullified. The intentional exposure of moral properties in a work of art is failure of form or aesthetic deficiency. Noel Carroll, on the moral property of aesthetics, claims that “The experiences that are appropriate are usually dubbed aesthetic experience, and moral and cognitive experiences have been traditionally excluded from this category” (169). In traditional norm of aesthetic experience, aesthetic experience is different from what we learn from this material world. The word ‘traditional’ suggests here the modern concept of aesthetics as well. The concept of aesthetics is different in modern time from the traditional one. It means that aesthetic values get switched with the flow of time.

Artwork may offer various types of experience, it means that the works of art are equipped with different experiences like moral, religious, cognitive, political, sexual, etc. In traditional aesthetics these experiences are overridden by formal, expressive and aesthetic dimension of artworks. Such kind of phenomenon means the exclusion of moral and cognitive dimension of art and the emphasis on form and structure. Alan H. Goldman, on form and structure, claims that “Aesthetic properties that do enter aesthetic experience include mainly “phenomenological” (phenomenal?) structural properties, perceived properties of structures or of parts or elements of structures” (324). From outside of form and structure, there comes content which is associated with the context, that is text with context and word with world. The context of an artwork has connection with physical world and results in moral insights and cognitive properties. Such properties include the purpose of an artwork and this inclusion of purpose makes aesthetics defective.

The assumption of aesthetic values has been a tradition in which moral insight has been excluded and the arousal of emotion has been detached from aesthetic experience. From 18th century when aesthetics came under discussion, it has been

deserted moral insight, political inspiration, the acknowledgement of content from aesthetic experience. In the domain of artwork the exclusion and avoidance of such dimensions have been strengthened by the philosophers with their emphasis on form and structures. The historical overview of aesthetics can be made from the philosophers like Alexander Baumgarten “for whom it referred to the science of perception, to David Hume and Immanuel Kant, for whom beauty consisted in perception of forms that gave rise to disinterested pleasure, and to the later formalists tradition instantiated most clearly in Clive Bell, for whom aesthetic experience lay in the peculiar emotion caused by grasp of “significant form” (Goldman 325). The primary focus of these philosophers is on form and beauty of an artwork which can be grasped by hearing, seeing and feeling.

In addition, the work of art is autonomous and it is self-sufficient. The craft and artistic quality are the focus and the formal elements are enough to make the art complete and whole. The beauty of art is its creation in which neither there is aim nor purpose. The aesthetic value of an art is ‘art for art’s sake.’ The highly accepted concept of aesthetics is the universal character of art and that any work of art is not dependent upon the context which is associated with the physical world. On the universal character of aesthetics, Julie L. McGee comments that “. . . aesthetic philosophy is belief in art’s universal nature, its intrinsic “beingness,” a beingness that is the direct result of the human capacity to channel the intellect, to create something new, and thereby to emulate the activities of divine creation” (1179). Universal character of art or literature denotes that the human creations of art are irreducible elements. When a literary text is judged by the reader, this judgment will be concerned with aesthetic qualities. The basic value of aesthetics is its general consensus or the agreement made by the readers rather than the statement or

expression made on art or literature. Since literary work is equipped with intrinsic elements, it is whole in itself without reference to physical and historical world.

However, black aesthetic entails historical and physical world, and any literary work produced in this world is equally historical and equally located within the physical world.

In regard to the evolution of the idea of aesthetics, black aesthetic is a corollary of Western aesthetics, which contemplates universal truth and beauty in terms of whites, but does not subsume the third world of marginal and minority. In this sense, aesthetics is a European phenomenon which assumes that a work of art is the highest product among human creations. The term 'aesthetic' was first used by German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735. This term was used to identify judgment of taste and later Immanuel Kant gave interest to it in his *Critique of Judgment*. It subsumes the quality of a work of art, the values of the product, the values of structures, and the stimulation of deep thought. It believes that art is self-sufficient and it does not have any moral goal or use outside it. Art in any form ". . . is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or matter. . . ." (Pater 138). The aim of art is to exist in its formal perfection or to be beautiful in its form. In this manner, the philosophical tradition of aesthetics, which is dominant to this day, is rooted in German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whom the subsequent philosophers agree and follow.

In different periods of time, aesthetics has been brought under discussion in various manners like "disinterested contemplation" or "art for art's sake", whose prime focus is the formal property of an artwork. These assumptions of aesthetics do not involve the literary texts and artwork established by social movements in the

Western domain of aesthetics. Social movements have been able to establish judgment of art on social level—value system. While art and literature are judged on value system, it includes society in literary work and matters immediately with social events and experiences. In the 20th century American philosopher, John Dewey added ‘experience’ in the domain of aesthetics. Stephen David Ross, by illustrating John Dewey, observes that “where experience is most thoroughly unified and complete, consummated, there we find art. In this sense, science and politics are also arts” (205). Experience is the knowledge gained by a person or a community by seeing, doing, hearing or reading, and such kind of knowledge is politically influenced. An artwork represents experiences of people who are living in the community the creator represents or whom the creator knows. Dewey includes political dimension, the knowledge of the real world, in aesthetic experience.

In the course of time, the domain of aesthetics has expanded in the artworks such as music, painting, and novels and cognitive properties—memory, reflection, anticipation, and inference— are seminal in attaining aesthetic experience. Without training and historical knowledge aesthetic experience from some kind of artwork is hard to acquire. In this sense, the concept of traditional aesthetic experience has been defined and redefined, and West claims that “. . . “Man’s aesthetic sense has a national and class character” and “The aesthetic tastes of people have a national character because the people and their lives assume a social character” (106).

Whereas traditional aesthetic concept invalidates everyday practical properties in recent approaches social character, history and moral values are included in the aesthetic domain. In the recent discourse of aesthetics, various kinds of experiences including moral, political, cognitive, sexual, and religious ones in an artwork has taken place. The principle of art, Rob Pope says, is not rigid and fixed “. . . every

period or culture develops its own aesthetic principles, often defined against those which precede or surround it” (175). Aesthetics is produced on the basis of the needs of the society in particular time and place and it helps address interests as well as the problems of the society.

In the later part of the twentieth century, with the emergence of different theories, the domain of aesthetics has expanded and the established one has been subverted. The theoretical concepts have invited the discussion of social, political, cultural, and economic experiences in a work of art. The inclusion of these domains in aesthetic experiences is believed to reflect society with moral and ethical values. In other words, the paradigm of recent approaches of aesthetic such as cultural aesthetics, Marxist aesthetics, environmental aesthetics, feminist aesthetics, black aesthetic have supplanted the traditional aesthetic. In these approaches, the worldly matters directly related to a particular people or community, or situations are involved in art and literature. Black community is one that has made the artwork a medium of sharing their pains of social, political and economic exclusion. In this sense, Arun Gupto observes that “Aesthetic is political when it is aimed to “educate” the reader from the point of view of materiality of art and literature” (8). Any art or literature becomes political when it tends to instruct the targeted groups for their social, political, economic promotion. In black aesthetic, black life matters in the New World where their needs and aspirations are suppressed by white racists. Thus, the main concern of black community in America is their recognition with justice, freedom and equality that black aesthetic champions by exposing the suffering of the community from the time they encountered whites.

The philosophy of traditional aesthetics had a stronghold in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the later part of the 20th century, different social and

literary movements took place and these movements became able to sabotage the established values with new ones. The social and literary movements such as feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, new historicism, and postcolonialism have brought a revolution in society by challenging the established practices in art, literature, politics and philosophy. The things which were hidden from history have come in the limelight. In the traditional concept of art and literature, only the male and white values were supposed to be universal in which marginal voices were dominated. Beauty and truth are the construct of European white males and universal values of art and literature subsumed in aesthetics are partial and prejudiced. The exclusion of gender, race, class, and ethnicity cannot represent the world values which traditional aesthetics does not bring into account. The social and literary movements of the late 20th century have replaced partial values with inclusive and representative values.

In feminist aesthetics, art and literature reflect the patriarchal society in which males are presented as sensible, strong, critical and defensive while females are absurd, weak, docile and fostering. Female writers are excluded from the mainstream literary domain since women are outside of universal values. In this respect, the philosophical principle of art and literature advocates beauty and truth by rejecting women's presence. So, Helene Cixous argues that "Women must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement" (573). The cure for women's marginalization from social domains is the writing by women themselves. Women's thoughts, feelings, and conditions have been misrepresented in male writers' texts. The true representation of

women is possible when women begin to write their own stories themselves. The feminist movement incorporates the value system in a literary work and contends the exclusion of women from it. Traditional aesthetics values are the patriarchal values which can never represent the values common to all.

Different from the feminist critics' view on literature as patriarchal values, in Marxist aesthetics, art and literature are the products of socio-economic values and it has a class character. "There is a definite connection between art and the material base, between art and the totality of relations of production" (Marcuse 550). Art cannot be divorced from the economic base since ideas in a literary work are the influence of the society. In a literary work there is the pervasiveness of such voice that is dominant in the society and has ruled the society over time. Michael Ryan, regarding the voice of dominant groups, clarifies:

. . . different ideas were in dominance at different time in human history.

Those ideas usually expressed the interest of the dominant social, economic and political group of the era. They usually made economic inequality seem just and right, and they made the rule of those in dominance seem natural and legitimate. The purpose of the ideas, then, was to ensure that the dominant group or class remained in power. (115)

Social values are key in regulating human behaviors that are established on the basis of power exercise. Those who are in power have domination in art, literature, religion and cultural practices. Any literary work, as claimed in traditional aesthetics, cannot be alienated from society which is driven by social, economic and political groups.

Literary works including value system set social, political, and economic ideas in which dominant groups promote conventional practices in the society as norms and the marginalized people write to change the society. In regard to socioeconomic

domain in literature, Ann B. Dobie assumes that “. . . Marxist critics see a literary work not as an aesthetic object to be experienced for its own intrinsic worth but as a product of the socioeconomic aspects” (86-87). Marxist premises are concerned with socioeconomic elements which focus on the ideas of the dominant group that are imposed upon the marginal in the guise of the principles of art and literature. Marxists always portray the inequalities and imbalances in social groups and point out the injustices they are bearing in power-based societies.

As Marxist premises claim the alignment of literary works with power-based societies and stress on the end of inequalities, so poststructuralism and postmodernism subvert the traditional modes of thought like center, God, and truth. There cannot be the center of anything, and if there is, it is only the claim of those who are always in power and influence. The claim that a text is autonomous is an assumption of the dominant group and such a claim which is imposed upon all and tried to make absolute is a metanarrative, a body of Western knowledge thought to be universal. Jean Francois Lyotard redresses the concept of traditional aesthetics and explains that “. . . modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter of solace and pleasure” (204). Lyotard sabotages the rule bound behavior in art and literature, and implies that modern aesthetics gives space to the Other as a creative force. While the traditional aesthetics excludes ethics from art and literature, the modern aesthetics offers it.

By assuming the values of modern aesthetics, Jacques Derrida challenges the traditional philosophy of truth that truths are universal and ideal in nature. He connects every truth with the physical and historical world. The values practiced in

this physical world are provisional and historical. Traditional values and assumptions are made on the force of hierarchy which Derrida deconstructs. Ryan, on the concept of deconstruction developed by Derrida, states that “The task of deconstruction is to undo such hierarchies and to show that all truth is differential and physical” (70). This view of Derrida is supportive to repel any value that has been claimed to be absolute. Traditional aesthetic values are hierarchical that repeal other values and voices as creative forces. A literary work, which includes form and feeling and rejects the content and context, is beyond the reality of this physical and historical world, and does not subsume the voices as part of this world. In this sense, Derrida's concept of deconstruction supports black aesthetic by annulling the traditional power practice of binary opposition that keeps black values below in hierarchy.

In terms of physical and historical world, new historicism challenges traditional historicism which is concerned with the events that happened at a given time and place. Traditional historicism maintains the factual accuracy of the events as the record of the human past and it is not interested in the hidden part of the historical events. New historicism opposes the exactness of events that traditional historicism claims. New historicism assumes history as a narrative in which power/position plays a crucial role. History fabricates the stories of power holders and ignores the voices of powerless people. Concerning the power practice and fabrication in history, Dobie argues:

. . . all history is subjectively known and set down, colored by the cultural context of the recorder, usually the person of power, leaving the stories of those who are powerless untold. Traditionally history has been recorded by the winners. The losers, or those who lack political or social power, have their stories to tell as well, and although they may not have published their stories

in official documents or textbooks, they have circulated them as separate discourses, ways of seeing and talking about the world. The new historicist would want to hear all the stories, recognize all the voices. (164)

New historicism rejects the biased narrative and focuses on the inclusive study of the events that have been recorded in the critical works and examines the documents which have been excluded and marginalized previously. New historicism entails the voices of powerless people which have been hidden and dominated by the voices of the powerful and winners. This approach provides excluded narratives with a platform to discourses. To think over the assumption of New historicism, the narrative of traditional aesthetics is monological in which the notion of a particular group is meant to rule the world by eliminating the voice of the remaining.

The overview of the philosophy of art suggests that art and literature are outside of time and place. The principles of art and literature are not eternal and they get changed over time and place. The values of literary works are shifting their norms as per the demands and needs of the time and place. While Plato's concept of aesthetic value is ideal and transcendental, the aesthetics of the present time denotes the real and historical world. The aesthetics cannot be divorced from class, gender, and race issues which are strongly embedded in society. Modern aesthetics involves the previously excluded and marginalized voices as an artistic force. Such artistic force plays a pivotal role in changing society with humanistic values which are undermined by dividing societies in terms of race, gender, ethnicity and class.

The flourishing aesthetic concept that has wended as an artistic force is the black aesthetic. Black aesthetic is the principle of black art and literature whose end is to protest against injustice and liberate black people from slavery, racism and Jim Crow laws and practices, be it in physical or psychological form. John O'Neal, on the

role of black literature, asserts that “Our work as black artists is to help our people to recognize themselves and the inevitable demands of the struggle that lies ahead” (53). Black people have a long history of suffering and struggle. The ignorance and the silence of the black people on their situation keeps the essential change of their society so far. Only through the struggle of black people change in their life and condition is possible; and black writers produce literary work to help them be aware and alert of the tradition which conceals social reality in the New World. In this regard, bell hooks intensifies art and literature as a medium which can challenge the so-called artistic tradition, which does not entail the social picture. She argues that “Art practices, canons of art history, and all “great traditions” must be interrogated. Essentialist understanding of identity— gender, race, nationality— must be questioned” (218). An art can challenge and sabotage the malpractice in art, in which people’s values are ridiculed and misrepresented as it is used iron to cut iron. Black aesthetic can correct the wrong way the traditional principle of art has taken to be partial and prejudiced. The principle of black art emphasizes literature as a medium to convey the message against racial practices that have misrepresented and dehumanized black people.

To reveal the misrepresented and dehumanized condition of the black during slavery and the urgency of social change, black aesthetic uses grotesque. The grotesque form has positive as well as negative modes. The negative grotesque intensifies fear and shock and the positive grotesque encompasses renewal and meaning. Such a mode of writing exposes the horror of slavery, which has caused harm to black life and demonstrates the follies of racism. Madhu Dubey, on the contribution of grotesque, explores that “As a means of satirizing white middle-class values, the grotesque mode helps gear the . . . critique of violence and pathology in

the black community toward the target set by Black Aesthetic ideology” (35).

Negative grotesque helps bring the excess of racism and slavery into the publicity.

The majority of middle-class whites have enervated and eliminated black community from the basic standard of life.

On the other hand, positive grotesque spreads hope in the black community that one day in the future they will get liberation and meaning in their life by their own capacity. It envisions the potential of the black population in their body, mind and tradition. On the value of positive grotesque, Susan Corey observes that “In its positive mode of the grotesque suggests the possibility of recovery as the characters become connected to their bodies, their emotions, and their ancestral traditions” (33). The black population is potential in body, mind and heart and the integration of these components has made their culture lively and dynamic. The assimilation of mind, body and emotions has helped black people to be sanguine to their achievement in the future. The use of the grotesque in black literature helps to heighten the state of awareness in black readers and converge them in the process of new meaning.

As the grotesque in black literature helps to heighten the state of awareness in black people, black aesthetic subsumes the black lifeline of music, dance or performance art in spreading the collective voice of blacks against injustice and maintaining their heritage. Black music is pristine in black culture since it existed prior to literary culture. Dubey, on the share of oral forms in literature, explores that “Black Aesthetic theorists invested oral forms with the special power to authorize a pure and untroubled collective voice in black literature” (139). The oral form has sustained a long history with the arrival of black people in America as slaves. After the blacks have been brought to America there have been two musical cultures: one

musical aesthetics of the white West, and another is the musical aesthetics of the black.

The musical aesthetics of the black have the social function of maintaining the black identity and making their voice audible in the New World. In the discourse of black aesthetic, Jimmy Stewart observes that “The music that accompanied the parades, the dances, the music played in the bawdyhouses, and the music played in the bars situated our art as a function in our communities, and as an art it had also a function as entertainment” (86). Black music includes the functional value of art that is created with a purpose. The end of black music is to help the black community gain entertainment and a medium to reveal their thoughts and feelings.

The spirit of black music is democratic and participatory; it encompasses the values of communality that black aesthetic emphasizes. It is the antithesis of the Western aesthetics, which separates one from another and focuses on individualism. Black aesthetic fosters community to promote togetherness and the sense of unity strengthens their power to fight against injustice that has been inflicted in their community. Whether spirituals or blues, work songs or jazz, all these genres of black music include the spirit of communal values. Black people cannot move beyond communal values in whatsoever form, let alone music and dance. James T. Steward, on the significance of black music, asserts:

[m]usic is a social activity. Jazz music in particular, is a social activity, participated in by artists collectively. Within a formal context or procedure, jazz affords the participants a collective form for individual group development in a way white musical forms never did. The symphony, for instance, is a dictatorship. There is a rigidity of form and craft – practice – a virtual enslavement of the individual to the autocratic conductor. (9)

Black cultural practices manifest that the practice and performance of music is collective and spontaneous whereas white practice is autocratic and restraining. While performing on music in an occasion all participants hold equal status and their development concerns. Such practices of black indicate that freedom is their heritage and they cannot live in control and oppression. The togetherness of the black community is their strength and they want to maintain it at any cost.

The togetherness of the black community and their collective voice as black aesthetic promotes is equipped with Afro-American vernacular. Vernacular tradition subsumes the communal activities of black people. Black vernacular consists of songs, prayers, sermons, work songs, blues, secular songs and rhymes, jazz and stories of various kinds. All these genres are associated with everyday practices of black community. In these practices and performances black life-world is ostensible and these phenomena share and permeate their cultural values in the New World. In the New World, Peter Labrie finds these “rhythm and blues, gospels and spirituals, and . . . jazz comprise some of the most significant components of black culture in America. Within their sounds and lyrics, are contained all the hurt, pain, and good times which black people share through. Their daily experiences” (64). Black vernacular has become part and parcel of the community they are away from their motherland. These lyrics and sounds have played a seminal role in protecting their heritage and sharing their pains and moments of pleasure. In black aesthetic, these components are inseparable from art and literature since these are the tradition of black expression. These elements are inherently preparing their people to fight against inhumanity.

In regard to black people's voice against inhumanity, black aesthetic fosters art to promote black community. Black literature, though developed later, intends to

demonstrate the living reality of the community and integrate them with the knowledge, vision and spiritual and revolutionary nature within them. Black aesthetic invigorates the collective psyche which is inherent in their music. The basic tenet of black community is ostensible in their music – functionality and collectivity. Larry Neal emphasizes the nature of music in literature and argues that “. . . our music is something else. The best of it has always operated at the core of our lives, forcing itself upon us as in ritual. It has always, somehow, represented the collective psyche. Black literature must attempt to achieve that same sense of the collective, but ritual directed at the destruction of useless, dead ideas” (654/55). Black scholars like Neal focus on the communal nature of black community that has been developed by music, the soul of the black. Black literature should be lively with the portrayal of the living reality of the black in the New World. Such portrayal of reality enables the community to know who they are and why they have been exploited and degraded. The struggle for justice and liberation triggers if they are committed to protecting their community from outside invasion.

In regard to the liberation of black community, black aesthetic intensifies the functionality of art. Black art, music and literature are working together to orient black community for love and spirituality that can promote their force to end social, political and economic enervation of the community. Black literature is a dynamic force that helps unite people and struggle against the atrocities imposed upon them. Dubey examines curative dynamism of literature that “. . . the Black Aesthetic conception of literature as a corrective force that can induce social change” (32). Literature is a social curative force to bring derailed cultural practices into the track. In this sense, literature functions like politics by unfolding the social ills and rationalizing people against these ills. Artists and literary figures are the construct of

the society that there is the reflection of their society in their creation. Black literature and art explain that society in which black people are exploited, degraded and oppressed. Regarding the position of artist, Neal claims that “The artist and the political activist are one. They are both shapers of the future reality. Both understand and manipulate the collective myths of the race. Both are warriors, priests, lovers and destroyers” (656). In the domain of black literature, the contribution of an artist is to replicate society as it is and cause changes in the society. Artists bear the double role of a creator and a political activist at the same time. The artist links his work with a struggle for the liberation of his/her brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, black literature emerges from black community and it functions to its people. Functional art has its value and it is to give them a sense of racial pride with its history and heritage. Dean E. Robinson, by pointing out an African-American author Haki R. Madibuti, on functional art, affirms:

It should: 1. reveal the decadence of white culture and expose the white man as the oppressor of the Black people; 2. reaffirm the beauty of Black culture and history (obviously whether one meant Afro-American, African, or both cultures depended on one's definition of cultural nationalism; 3. create new and positive images; make Blackness, both the word and the concept, mean beauty; 4. make Black people conscious of the nature of their radical oppression and expose the self-defeating tendencies that have resulted from the oppression; 5. give Black people political and social direction (the proper direction varied from artist to artist. (85)

The revelation of the debauchery of white culture in black literature weakens the whites' claim of being rational, universal and beautiful and promotes the beauty of black culture. It gives its people social and political direction by serving positive

images of their attitude and aptitude. Black literature exposes how oppression has paralyzed them from being innovative and efficient. Such benchmarks of black art and literature concern the strength and weaknesses of the black community and their role in correcting the path toward dignity and racial pride. Black writers in their work revive their history and heritage in order to unite their people for a common goal – freedom and justice.

Moreover, the black aesthetic is concerned with the historical and physical world in which truth and beauty are historical and located within physical universe. The problems of black people are historically and physically constructed to oppress and exploit one group by another group by fabricating the politics of race. Black art and literature struggle to redeem this community from racial oppression and exploitation by developing their own history on the basis of their memories. Black people do not need to leave their own ethos to triumph over the fabricated hierarchy. Leslie Alexander Lacy, on the prospect of blacks' future, asserts that "They would be black and beautiful, most would be brave and all would be free. They would create their own standard of beauty and excellence; create their own history and worship their own memories. And one day they would be men and women; have power and greatness . . ." (21). Black people are capable of producing their own history and sharing it to the world that they have become the victim of racial politics. They are sure to prove and promote themselves from the demonized condition to rational and potential beings. The Western production of race has omitted black people and their disposition from the standard of beauty and truth. Black artists deserve that potential to sabotage such constructed values.

By disrupting the conventional values of the West black aesthetic works with the living reality of black community. Black art and literature, concerned with blacks'

real-life world, excavate the African values which are humanitarian, and propels the community to struggle to protect these values. Such values awaken the community from the slumber of ignorance and make them ready to die if needed. Black people begin to realize that freedom and justice are not divisible, be it for an individual or a community. And to materialize this goal, black art and literature makes their people comprehend the need to study and know the “. . . progressive and socialist philosophies with the intent of creating something which was *African in content, humanitarian in scope and black in spirit*” (Lacy 31). The principle of black art and literature focuses on the root of the black, which is African, in the New World. African ethos is humanitarian, democratic and spiritual which they have lost in the New World.

Black artists are concerned with acquiring freedom and justice with the protection of their heritage. They are rich in their history and heritage – colorful history, art, folklore, etc. As long as they do not feel proud of their values, they cannot come in one place to meet the common goal of justice and freedom. On the need of being one for common goal, hooks speculates:

. . . we have to think deeply about the cultural legacies that can sustain us, that can protect us against the cultural genocide that is daily destroying our past. We need to document the existence of living tradition, both past and present, that can heal our wounds and offer us a space of opportunity where our lives can be transformed. (162)

Black artists and literary figures, by exerting their rich and colorful history, art, folklore, etc., can unite people and lead them to the struggle for justice, equality and freedom.

The main job of such artists and figures, on John Henrik Clarke's view, is to release this community from the shackles of Western values since “For the last three hundred years Africa and its people have been viewed mainly through European eyes and for European reason. The entire history of Africa will have to be literally rewritten, challenging and reversing the European concept” (17). Black aesthetic reiterates the need of rewriting history. This means that black writers should pay attention to their history and heritage and help rewrite the African history miswritten by the West.

Moreover, black aesthetic manifests the world of black people where they have always been oppressed from the time they came in contact with the Western white world. Western practices have undermined the African culture in which their identity is inherent. Black aesthetic does not enervate the African history and culture from the literary work and stresses how the past is pertinent to live in the present and future. Regarding the magnitude of the African past, James Boggs believes that “Identification with the African past is useful insofar as it enables black Americans to develop a sense of identity independent of the Western civilization which has robbed them of their humanity by robbing them of any history” (113). Western civilization which is material in nature has overridden the humanity of Africans in the New World and African history is seminal in providing them with identity without following Western values. Black people, having the company of whites, have lost their culture, language and social backgrounds. Black literature is working on recovering their freedom and identity deeply rooted in the African past.

Furthermore, black aesthetic seeks its strength from the African root of humanity, dignity and collectivity. African history and heritage are inherent in these elements and black aesthetic stands on their fundamentals. So, Julian Mayfield believes

that “The Black Aesthetic, if it is anything, is the search for a new program, because all the old programs spawned out of the Judaeo-Christian spirit have failed us. It is the search for a new spiritual quality, or the recapture of an old one, lost and buried deep on our African past” (27). Black aesthetic is the realization of the loss of their eminence and they have to move ahead with their own values which are rich in their spiritual qualities. Black writers are aware that their African values have been missing in the New World and these values should be revived through artistic creation. Such revived values become a moral force for black community to fight against racial discrimination, oppression and degradation.

The revived values of blacks give strength to black people who have sustained the experience of slavery, racism and colonialism in different generations. Black writers cannot help revisiting history while talking about the present. Painful experiences, they have had, in the New World on Addison Gayle's view demonstrate that “To be an American is to be opposed to humankind, against the dignity of the individual, and against the striving in man for compassion and tenderness: to be an American is to lose one's humanity” (xxii). The black community does not see any human values that are rational in whites. Whites' scorn and oppression of black community have been etched in the psyche of the black community that becomes visible in black art and literature. Black aesthetic props the inclusion of all the social values that black people have encountered and experienced in all generations in the New World.

In the moral and psychological support of the black community, black aesthetic raises voice of social reality and speaks directly to their brothers and sisters, and focuses on the needs and desires of their people. But these needs and desires are, consciously or unconsciously, linked with racism since in this practice white people

are privileged and black people are relegated to subhuman. The privileged position of whites has made them brutal in their customs and practices and such behavior has caused painful life in black community. Black literature revolves around such issues in which law and justice are divisive. They are conscious about the situation and they know that the traditional principle of art and literature does not benefit black community. Hoyt W. Fuller, on the need for black cultural initiation, observes that “The young writers of the black ghetto have set out in search of a black aesthetic, a system of isolating and evaluating the artistic works of black people which reflect the special character and imperatives of black experiences” (8). Aesthetic experience in black art and literature is an experience that displays the black life-world with their characters and manners. Traditional aesthetic experience, distinctive experience from social values, abrogates black aesthetic in which social values are fundamental.

In regard to the meeting of their people with oppressors, black aesthetic presents the dead and dying generations of men and women who witnessed slave ships and cotton fields, the destruction of humanity and dignity. On the revelation of the end of humanity and dignity of black people and on the role and responsibility of black writers, Darwin T. Turner emphasizes:

. . . black literature must contribute to the revolutionary cause of black liberation, not merely in polemics against white oppression but also in reinterpretation of the black experience. . . . literature should not be judged good or bad according to its imitation of the styles and tastes of Europeans, but according to its presentation of the styles and traditions stemming from African and Afro-American culture. (71)

Black literary figures are mindful of the functional part of their work that it should call an action for the liberation of their community. Debates and discussions cannot be

the solution to the racial problem that has been rooted in America for centuries. Black literature should work to exert African roots in order to defy European narratives.

It is the assumption of black literature that the base of any art is value system; and black art speaks the value system of black life. Black people want change and so they are revolutionary in their attitude. Revolution in any society is hard to proceed if the people of that community are not politically conscious. The major concern of black art and literature is to make black people aware by presenting the black society as it is, and the society they are living in does not prove that they are sound in social, political, economic and cultural position in the white-dominated society in America. The deficiency of the ideal value systems propels the black community to fight against white value systems developed by racism, slavery and colonialism. Amiri Baraka points out that black writing and creation make black community discuss and debate on the claim:

Many times people speak of the European world as being advanced technologically, America especially. Modern America. Advanced America. But America, in reality, a very primitive culture. People that cannot solve the basic problems of social organization –how to educate people, give them enough to eat, clothe and house them- have not solved the basic conditions that were upon men in the dawn of civilization. (26)

America does not know the minimum values of civilization where discrimination and segregation are unheard of. That society cannot be civilized where people are divided and oppressed without solving their problems. It is natural to be skeptical of the progress of America, where the children of God are exploited, oppressed and degraded because of divisive law.

In terms of divisive law, the black aesthetic makes a logical connection between artistic creation and black community and intends to unite them. This unity is seminal to fight for freedom with the preservation of their African values – collectivity, humanity and ethics. Stokely Carmichael speculates that “The racial and the cultural personality of the black community must be preserved and the community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity” (128). Black artists, in order to accomplish the dual responsibility of freedom and cultural integrity, have been working in their creation to rationalize the black community regarding their duties and responsibilities toward their community and culture. Their freedom becomes useless until they maintain their cultural integrity. The function of black art and literature is to bring sustainable change in their community and this change can disseminate the message of hope and equality to the world. The concern of black community is not confined to a people, it is the part of whole human race that wants to live with dignity.

The cause of miseries and the loss of dignity of black people is racism. In the domain of black life, black aesthetic has opposed the loss of the dignity of their people and integrated them for struggle, a medium to achieve their lost values. For black populace, Doobie convinces:

. . . a black aesthetic would ease their struggle to find an identity in a world that was not theirs. It would encourage them to honor their own experience, not remake it in the image of white culture. By asserting a racial identity that was separate from and not dependent on white attitudes, principles, and practices, it would renounce the assumption that because the white experience is the model to follow, its rules and standard of judgment must be adopted.

(197-98)

Black aesthetic functions to promote the overall social, political, economic, culture values which they have missed since they were separated from their motherland. This approach bears the strength to defy white way of thinking about this world.

Apart from black aesthetic, various scholars and critics have interpreted and analyzed the primary works of Morrison and Whitehead and these analyses are apparently different from the researcher's argument on struggle for justice in black aesthetic.

Beloved documents a real event in which a runaway slave mother named Margaret Garner tried to kill her four children when slave catchers were chasing her and she was about to be caught. The situation would be more horrible after being caught for a mother, and children were sure to suffer like their mother when they grew up. Morrison wanted to bring such aspect of slavery into the knowledge of black community and it became the subject matter of her novel. Regarding the narrative of the novel, Giulia Scarpa claims that “The narrative pretext of *Beloved* is also an instance of documentary realism, as it draws inspiration from the many cases of infanticide that occurred in order to prevent children born in captivity from suffering like their parents” (91). Black community has borne the history of migration, lynching, work and burden, and violence in the New World, and these aspects of black life-world have supplied material to writers like Morrison to produce a book that reads black history and statistics.

In *Beloved*, Sethe kills her baby daughter to save her from the atrocity of slavery and for this act of murder Sethe did not have right but she did right by murdering her daughter, or else her daughter would become the victim of slavery. This story depicts a post-bellum community of the black in Cincinnati who had the painful legacy of brutal slavery. The traumatic legacy of slavery is ostensible in the

presence of the ghost of an infant named Beloved who was murdered by her mother, Sethe and the murder of that girl was an effort to save her from enslavement. Lisa Garbus, on the move of the central character Sethe, explains:

Beloved's main character is Sethe, who, in order to save her four children, to prevent their return to the life of slavery she knows too well, decides to kill them and herself, so that they can all meet, free of slavery, in the after-life. She manages to kill one daughter, but is prevented from completing her plan. Beloved, whose name comes from her tombstone returns to find out why her mother left her. Toni Morrison's novel, set after slavery in 1873, tells Sethe's story and the stories of those around her. (54)

Beloved reenacts the true historical story in which Morrison uses her creative elements. This novel has been documented in a creative way which speaks about the life world of black people during and after slavery.

The scars of slavery, in black community, have been etched physically, socially and psychologically. *Beloved* is the product of such scars that have been deeply rooted in black community and these scars revive in various forms of art and literature. The physical scars on the back of Sethe remind the community of the violence and brutality of slavery. The return of Beloved signifies the history of slavery and its effect on black people that it is really difficult to forget it. Barbara Schapiro, on the presence of Beloved, observes:

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* penetrates, perhaps more deeply than any historical or psychological study could, the unconscious emotional and psychic consequences of slavery. The novel reveals how the condition of enslavement in the external world . . . has deep repercussions in the individual's internal world. These internal resonances are so profound that even if one is eventually

freed from external bondage, the self will still be trapped in an inner world that prevents a genuine experience of freedom. (194)

Freedom of any individual or community is strongly connected with social and psychological aspects. Freedom from one aspect always lacks the complete form of freedom that is apparent in black people.

Moreover, *Beloved* unearths the wound of racism and shows the effects of racism in black community. In the novel, there is the obvious portrayal of a racially divided society. The victims in this society are the black people who are confined and work in Sweet Home and the one who carries out his crime upon black is Schoolteacher and his accomplice. Racism has produced the agents like Schoolteacher who represents the whole institution. Heather Duerre Humann, on the role of Schoolteacher, speculates:

The racism of Schoolteacher and his nephews comes across as perhaps the most overt of the racisms outlined in *Beloved*. The atrocities that Schoolteacher and his nephews commit upon Sethe, Halle, Paul D, and the other African Americans at Sweet Home can be considered racist because society allows them to perpetrate these acts in large parts, if not solely, because these offenses are done to African American slaves under the institution of slavery. (63)

Teachers can discern right from wrong, but Schoolteacher is such an agent who has permeated the wrong of racism in society. Society derails when educated people, who is responsible to raise voices for grace and harmony, are inclined to divide society from their colors.

The convention of black literature follows the African roots and the aspects of life that revolve around them. African values always propel their community in terms

of collectivity and esteem for their ancestors. They cannot think ahead without remembering their ancestors who contributed to the civilization of the black. Black community is spiritually civilized, so they believe in unity and solidarity. Black writers remember their dead and living ones who cause the preservation of their culture and suffering with the outside world. *Beloved* is a novel of repetition and revision which pays tribute to the ancestors who suffered tremendously in racial traps; and the painful experiences of the ancestors are rooted deeply in the black community. So, the *Beloved* is discussed “As a haunting manifestation of this racial past, *Beloved* displays a tenuous, often willed relation of African Americans to the “sixty million and more” dead slaves of Morrison’s epigraph, a racial relation that is based both on notions of ancestry and on the psychic compulsions of fantasy” (George 117). Whether in oral or literary culture, black people transmit their past to the young generation about what their forefathers did and how they are separated from their homeland and suffered a lot. *Beloved* revises the subject of the Middle Passage and Margaret Garner, which reflects the horrendous past of their people/ancestors.

Furthermore, *Beloved* exerts the African cultural and ritual performances that are the part and parcel of black Americans. African people have their own life and death rites which mean a lot in life and after death rites. The incomplete ritual performances in one’s life are reverberated after death in the form of spirit, and this spirit haunts next to blood and causes a lot of trouble. Fethia El Hafi finds that “According to Morrison, millions of Africans were caught in the Middle Passage. Those who died were denied burial and mourning. . . . *Beloved*, herself is a walking reminder of the improperly buried. . .” (92). The ghost of *Beloved* in the novel resonates disgrace to both ancestors and *Beloved* herself. The proper burial of a dead

body is the African funeral rite which is believed to provide peace and rest to the dead soul. The Middle Passage was so cruel that many Africans, whether revolting Africans or dead ones, were thrown into the sea from ships and these souls are haunting the black community in America. *Beloved* tacitly reiterates the ritual/cultural disgrace to black people from the Middle Passage to post-bellum slavery. Slavery removed African people from their native land and culture, and it denied their values like rituals, African names and kinship.

Black community's past are slavery and racism which have alienated them from their originality, and caused melancholia, loss and psychosis. Their immediate loss was their names that they were named after slave masters. Their suffocation in losing their names is obvious in their reaction after the emancipation proclamation in 1863. As their reaction to the emancipation proclamation, they left the cotton fields and changed their names. One's name is the entity of his/her recognition. Black community was realizing the loss of their name and it was necessary to act to gain it. *Beloved* implies the renunciation of imposed name upon the black and thus Sethe gives her daughter's name on headstone on her own. William R. Handley, on the name of *Beloved*, speculates ". . . Sethe killed her daughter to prevent her being taken as a slave- and hence named as one- "Beloved" is a call that resists slavery's name and that asks for a response. "Everybody" must answer this call and assume what Morrison calls "response-ability" (681). Morrison reminds her people to be responsible for the loss caused by racism and slavery. They should have the ability to respond like Sethe who renounces the Western name and gives on her own.

Morrison, in *Beloved*, demonstrates the aching bodies of communities which have been raped, scarred, ravaged, starved, beaten and burnt. Sethe has an aching body which reveals the painful past of slavery and at the end of the novel *Beloved*

disappears with a pregnant body. The child in her womb signifies the unknown future. Teresa Heffernan, about the disappeared girl, argues that “While at the end of the novel, *Beloved* disappears without a trace, she “disappears,” paradoxically, pregnant, carrying a future, like her own, that will not have been” (562). *Beloved* brings past and future together and this indicates that the past is the driving force of their present and they are worried about the unknown future. Morrison brings the slaves into the limelight who died in the Middle Passage whom nobody thinks about and knows their names. Her dedication to these people suggests her concern for the past; and while talking about the past she is not indifferent to the future. She tacitly suggests her people think about the future too, which is unknown and might be more difficult than before.

In contrast to the concern of past and future, *Beloved* is a story of re/memory which provides a chance to make meaning of the past. Sethe repeatedly remembers her rape, milk taken by the white boys, and maltreatment in Sweet Home. The memory of Sethe is tantamount to communal memory or the collective memory which lets all black enter into and experience of racism and slavery. Black community has experienced with dire society of slavery that is remembered and reflected in *Beloved*. Jewell Parker Rhodes, on *Beloved* , argues:

The brilliance of Morrison’s *Beloved* lies in the way it provides twentieth century audiences access to rememory through a written, African-American text. It allows contemporary audiences to move along the same road that Sethe does. Through rememory, individually and collectively, society can become connected again to its cultural memories and history. The rememory of Sweet Home and its desperate attempt to deny the inherent evil of slavery and the

realities of the culture surrounding it, should be kept alive as a part of our collective memories. (90)

Morrison, here, keeps the racial past alive and lets contemporary readers experience how racism and slavery caused loss, psychosis and melancholia in black community. *Beloved* connects the past with the present and promotes collective remembering in both victims and victors. Such memory keeps the victims alert of the past that may revive at any time.

Furthermore, *Beloved* involves mystical and magical elements which are strongly tied to African folk literature. After the murder of baby girl, she reappears in the form of ghost and this spirit permeates wonder and terror in 124 Bluestone. Such an uncanny event in the novel, Morrison makes it look possible in her cultural groups who are used to hearing about it. Regarding Morrison's inclusion of such element in her novel *Beloved*, Cyanthia S. Hamilton reports that "Numerous articles have tried to explain the dynamics and resonance of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in terms of the novel's relationship to various traditions and literary genres. Its debt to the fantastic, the ghost story, the gothic and the slave narrative have all been the subject of scholarly attention . . ." (444-45). Morrison has been able to present the real horrible aspect of slavery by using supernatural, gothic elements. *Beloved* is successful in presenting both ghost of the girl and slavery as horrible for the black community. Gina Wisker further claims that "*Beloved* is historically accepted, politically focused, but also a novel which accepts the supernatural and magic" (52). The technique of fantasy and reality in the novel causes goosebumps in readers about the effect of slavery.

The physical scars on the body of the characters signify the social, political, cultural as well as psychological scars on the black community caused by slavery.

Black people have been beaten, burned, raped, and lynched by means of slavery and such scarred bodies are suffused in the novel. Sethe's back has tree-shaped scars, Beloved has scar on her neck, Paul D has scars on chain on his leg, and these scars of the characters are central to the history of slavery. Cynthia Dobbs, revealing the history of the black's suffering, explains that “. . . these scars also foreground an insistent collective history of slavery. Because scarred bodies are literally marked with the violent history of their past, this past cannot be forgotten. Scars thus function as signs of a narrative of pain. They beg to be read, their originary moments remembered and retold” (575). The scars that are found in the characters of the novel connote the history of slavery which propel the concerned people to remember and narrate.

Beyond being the story of slavery and its scars, *Beloved* includes African ways of expressing their experiences through music. The legacy of African music in spiritual and secular performances is found in black literature. Spirituals, blues, and jazzes are deeply rooted in the black community and their features are vivid in black writing. When the characters cannot read or write and it is difficult to talk about the brutality of slavery they sing song. The conversation between Sethe and Beloved is in call-and-response form. On this form of music Lars Eckstein claims that “Music is everywhere and all around in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. . . . The novel's most intense “musical” moment certainly occurs towards the end of the tale, when 30 community women succeeded in driving out the mysterious and haunting child-woman Beloved from Sethe's home at Bluestone Road 124 . . .” (271). The influential heritage of black is found in music which is enacted even to exorcise the evil spirit.

Another issue of the novel scholars trace in *Beloved* is the defective education system in the USA. When the education system is defective in any nation, it promotes

prejudice and results in misunderstanding, conflict and chaos. The education system of America, under the influence of whites, has divided the society in terms of human and subhuman. In regard of education system in the USA, Linda Krumholz implies:

Morrison depicts Schoolteacher's pedagogical and interpretive methods as morally bereft, and through him she condemns not only slavery but also the United States' education system. Schoolteacher's practices are basic to the institutional educational system of the United States, which may have gotten past the worst of schoolteacher's racial model, but still presents politically motivated versions of knowledge and history while making these representations in a rhetoric of "facts" and scientific methods. (399)

The schoolteacher in the novel represents the racial education system in the USA and displays that the definitions and discourses in education are the tools of power relations. In this power relation minorities are defined by the majority who are socially, politically and economically privileged.

Another exploration in *Beloved* includes Baby Suggs's faith in love and holiness that plays an important role to release the pains and punishments from the psyche of the characters. The prayer and preaching of Baby Suggs help the participants liberate from the burden and aches that they have in their bodies. Examining the act of Baby Suggs, Emily Grieneringer argues that "Following the tradition of black holiness Baby Suggs preaches and prays a strong message of grace and redemption through love. Those who weep, laugh, dance, sing and shout at her meetings in the clearing proclaim a victory over the "sins" of slavery, including the sinful mutilation of their flesh" (689). The evils of slavery that the black bodies have borne are brought under control by the African way of preaching and praying that Baby Suggs performs.

Furthermore, *Beloved* reveals all the horrors of slavery to a black individual of the community. If the horrible past of slavery is repressed and ignored there is a high probability of getting returned to the community and it may cause trouble time and again. It is obligatory to soothe the injuries of the past by narrating them. Andrew Schopp, regarding the role of *Beloved*, observes:

Much of novel's action takes place during the Reconstruction . . . characters spend the novel reconstructing their selves, their community and the relation between the two. In order to reconstruct a sense of subjectivity, these characters suture over their physical and psychic wounds by narrating events from their individual and collective pasts. (357)

The setting and the actions of the characters of the novel join the past with present and rationalize the community or an individual to come out of the physical and mental wounds caused by slavery.

The critics of *Beloved* identify the features of grotesque, an aesthetic form. Grotesque subsumes the overstatement of something in positive as well as negative ways. This form of literary work produces fear and terror as well as humor and renewal. Corey points out that “In *Beloved*, the grotesques aids Morrison in representing the complex social world of slavery and exposing the moral failure of the society which sustained and defended that institution. At the same time it opens doors for change and renewal to those who suffer the effects of slavery” (32). *Beloved* is a mixed bag which displays the terrifying aspects of slavery and its rationale to readers. This institution maintained horror in black community of political oppression, economic exploitation and social degradation. On the other hand, *Beloved* has heightened the sense of awareness in black readers about the suffering of their ancestors and the effects of slavery upon them.

This novel does not only include the feature of grotesque it reenacts the slave narrative, in which the narrator remembers what happened to him/her and what s/he did to overcome the situation that slavery and racism caused. *Beloved* is not the narrative written by himself or herself, it subsumes a story of a fugitive slave and manipulates with fantasy, imagination and emotion. In this sense, *Beloved* fosters new form of slave narrative – neo-slave narrative. Greenbaum, on the content and pattern of *Beloved*, comments that “Morrison uses the trope of memory to revise the genre of slave narrative and thereby to make the slave experience . . . more accessible to contemporary readers” (83). What *Beloved* reminds contemporary readers is a portal to history which was extremely traumatic. Morrison, in the novel, is successful in intertwining the cords of history with fiction, so the readers can experience their journey of fantasy to reality and vice versa.

Morrison, in *Beloved*, uses songs as narrative events and narrative techniques and this signifies how black people can express their thoughts and feelings easily. In a song ‘refrain’ is a technique which produces melody and meaning. At the end of the novel, there is the use of the refrain 'it was not a story to pass on' to connect the black community with history. Regarding the use of refrain in the novel by Morrison, Joanna Wolfe observes:

Morrison uses the phrase “it was not a story to pass on” like the refrain of the song in which she invites the reader to participate. This refrain is modified as Morrison switches from past to future tenses and then finally refers the readers back to the title of the book: It was not a story to pass on/It was not a story to pass on/This is not a story to pass on/Beloved. (277-78)

The song of thirty two women, the songs Paul D learned in Sweet Home and the refrain at the end of the novel have made *Beloved* affluent with melody and meaning. These songs have been earned through the torment to rationalize torment.

Morrison illustrates violence in black community. In the novel, Sethe commits a crime by murdering her baby daughter for which she did not have any right to kill though it seems right. The mother who murders her daughter to prevent her from being recaptured indicates that death is more acceptable than slavery. However, Sethe's act of killing her daughter manifests a more degrading act than bestiality. D. Scot Hinson, regarding the bestial act of Sethe, argues that "In *Beloved*, Morrison reveals that violence within African American communities is originally imposed from outside by oppressors, whose search for scapegoats translates into a similar search within the black community" (149). Communalism and humanity are African heritage. African descendants maintain grace and harmony in their community, but the violent activities promoted by whites have suppressed the humanity inherent in black people and are compelled to act violently to avoid the anguish caused by slavery, racism and colonialism. *Beloved* implies that the primary source of violence within the contemporary black communities is slavery and the violence in black community is reciprocal.

In contrast to violence, *Beloved* demonstrates mother-child relationship during slavery. During slavery black women were forced to get separated from their children since their children were sold or the mothers were sold and sent to another place. In chattel slavery black women and children were their objects that they could sell and purchase anytime they liked. White oppressors could not see harmony in slave families and to break such harmony whites would follow any measurement. In *Beloved* Sethe kills her daughter to save her daughter from being remanded to slavery

and this event suggests the suffering of black women not of an individual. Barbara Christian observes that “Sethe’s killing of her “crawling-already?” baby is not only the killing of that individual baby, but the collective anguish African women must have experienced when they realized their children were cut off forever from their “living dead” who would never be called upon, remembered or fed” (45). Slavery did not let mothers and children live together and once they were separated they were separated forever. They were deprived of the right to love and parental as well as filial responsibility. Like *Beloved*, Colson Whitehead presents his novel *The Underground Railroad* to let the world know about the black in America and critics and scholars analyze it from various angles.

The above critics and scholars such as, Scarpa, Schapiro, Humann, Hafi, Rhodes, Dobbs, Grieninger, Corey have studied and analyzed *Beloved* as a novel of documentary realism, slavery, racism, retrospection of the Middle Passage, re/memory, novel of collective history, African rituals, grotesque, merger of past and future, mystery and magic and so on. However, the researcher examines this novel from the perspective of the principle of black literature which focuses on the revelation of social ills in racial society and liberation of its people from them and the establishment of justice. *Beloved* unfolds the history of black people in the New World which starts with slavery. This novel communicates a radical political message of exploitation and oppression of the black by the whites with the ideological stranglehold of slavery and racism.

As *Beloved* has been studied from different viewpoint, *The Underground Railroad* has been analyzed from the perspective of a liberal market in which the goods flow across the seas, people and produces are commodified, and the workers are alienated from their produces and the profit is controlled by the owner. In *The*

Underground Railroad, people are produces who are transacted and each and all activities are linked with loss and gain of the whites. Adam Kelly, on the novel's economic strength, comments that “. . . *The Underground Railroad* shows this capitalist world to be fully global and to be underpinned by the cotton trade. Terrance Randall, the owner of Cora's plantation, made new contracts in New Orleans, shook hands with speculators backed by the bank of England. The money came as never before” (22). The slaves in the novel have been economically exploited by not paying them proper wages and trading them as property. The whole novel is concerned with the economy in terms of slave-catchers, slaves, and the owners of cotton fields.

Moreover, Kelly, on the global network of economic activities, comments:

The Underground Railroad begins with the story of Ajarry, Cora's grandmother, a choice that situates the reader not in America but on the African Slave Coast. These opening paragraphs adopt a matter-of-fact narrative tone that highlights the economic underpinnings of the vast global networks that allowed (and allows) for circulation of property and people, and people as property. (23)

Colson Whitehead connects slavery, in this novel, with economic concerns influenced by global capitalism in which global slavery is latent.

Furthermore, *The Underground Railroad* is critiqued as a slave narrative in which there is the portrayal of a girl who escapes from her white master. Rebecca Carroll claims that “Whitehead's latest novel is, in its way, a slave narrative; it follows Cora, a young girl and her escape from the Randall Plantation in Georgia after she learns about the Underground Railroad from a newly purchased slave named Caesar” (2). In the slave narrative, the capture and escape are the issues which are

described in detail to draw the attention of readers to the adversity of slaves. Carroll, on the book, observes:

The book begins with the maiden voyage, the well-documented slave ships, the treacherous, inhuman conditions of bodies stacked upon bodies, chained to plank beds, breathing in the stench and existing weeks and month soaked in urine and feces and sick, being forced fed just enough to prevent starvation, brought to the edge of death a punishment for trying to die. Cora's grandmother Ajarry was on one of these ships-torn away from her African village of Ouidah. The men had been taken first, and Ajarry learn before her own capture- that because her father hadn't been able to keep the pace with the others, the slavers "stove in his head and left his body by the trail." (3)

Ajarry and her father's capture and treatment of them leads the black population to the collective memory of the initial days when their ancestors were kidnapped and traded to the New World. During the Middle Passage, many black men, women and children were treated like Ajarry and her father.

In contrast to analyzing it as slave narrative, *The Underground Railroad* has been analyzed as a novel of confusion regarding its genre and the subject matter of slavery. Neither it has followed the pattern of slave narrative nor has it presented the slaves as regarded by the whites. On the pattern of the text, Stephanie Li argues that "The rampant anachronisms in "The Underground Railroad" trouble any sense of truth as related to time, but, more importantly, the novel fails to historicize its own conceit" (3). Whitehead subverts generic conventions in this novel and arouses contradiction with general practices in the narrative of slavery. On the other hand, Whitehead focuses on the escapes of a slave which does not match with the potency of black mentioned in the novel. Li further contends that "Whitehead asks us to

believe in a fantasy that contradicts the need to escape, for if slaves had built this network, they simply would not need freedom” (3). Whitehead, in the novel, implies that all the infrastructures of America have been built by the black and it suggests that they can live on their own without the need of white community. The idea that black population has the capacity and skill and their need to escape as a slave is quite paradoxical.

Moreover, Whitehead in, *The Underground Railroad*, serves a story of a girl which sounds like a familiar story written by a fugitive. It presents a vicious atmosphere of slavery in which slaves are treated in an inhuman way. Whitehead is successful in presenting the story in an effective manner. Eileen Battersby, regarding the matter and style of the novel, asserts:

[t]he narrative is a litany of outrages committed against humans who are regarded as objects by their white owners. So skilful is Whitehead’s handling of material we know or we think we know, from reading life story of the social reformer and one-time slave Frederick Douglass and similar personal accounts, that each insult, each vile beating, every casual killing tossed off by white masters as an extraordinary novel, a rich confident work that will deservedly win- on the basis of literary merit as well as moral purpose. (2)

The Underground Railroad presents the reality of slavery through imagination. Whitehead manages the ideas and events of the story that are common in relation to black community.

Likewise, *The Underground Railroad* reveals America as a Janus-faced country. America promises one but practices another. Mathew Dischinger points out that “*The Underground Railroad* offers a stark, relentless, satiric vision of the US that is itself both true and fantastical” (85). America, in appearance, is progressive,

democratic, and egalitarian, but in reality this country is still practicing the colonial concept of racism and slavery. This country is still conducting the campaign for racial improvement through selective breeding and other methods. Dischinger, further, claims:

The historical real comes into focus through the novel's satire, and the rearrangement of time and space collapses gap between the real and the imagined while also, just as importantly, leaving reader with little question that eugenics movements and horrific medical experiments are implicated in the same logics of slavery that Cora desperately attempts to escape. (91)

The characters, in the novel, are the victim of the American attitude of duality which has been enacted through slavery. Dischinger discusses on the novel that "Insofar as Whitehead's novel arranges time and space, it breaks down Eurocentric notions of progress and development and positions the whole of US racial history as an extension of its colonial economy" (87). Whitehead, in this novel, demonstrates how America is bearing the legacy of colonial attitude to oppress black population and stop them from progress.

The title of the novel *The Underground Railroad* traditionally connotes the network that helps slaves run away from the grip of white atrocity. In such type of escape the role of abolitionists was crucial and so they would pass slaves to the north by using the channel. Whitehead, in the novel, transforms the metaphorical underground railroad into literal one. Kimberly Fain explains that ". . . *The Underground Railroad*, Whitehead reimagines the network of routes and hiding places for escaping slaves as a literal railroad under the ground" (2). This novel of Whitehead materializes the assumption of the railroad that was highly brought into use before the Civil War. Moreover, *The Underground Railroad* presents a black girl

as a main character that Whitehead has not done in any novel. Fain further observes that “He also returns to a narrative with a daring black female protagonist—something he has not undertaken since his first novel” (2). Whitehead brings novel ideas in producing this narrative. In the one hand, he renovates the metaphorical railroad into the material and on the other hand, he produces a female protagonist that he has never done before.

In *The Underground Railroad*, Whitehead manifests the horrendous practices of slavery. The history of slavery is lucid in this novel—it portrays how the slaves used to be treated on the whim of their masters. Michiko Kakutani observes the novel:

One of the remarkable things about this novel is how Mr. Whitehead found an elastic voice that accommodates both brute realism and fablelike allegory, the pain-spoken and the poetic- a voice that enables him to convey the historical horrors of slavery with raw, shocking power. He conveys its emotional fallout: the fear, the humiliation, the loss of dignity and control. And he conveys the daily brutality of life on the plantation, where Cora is gang-raped, and where whippings (accompanied by scrubbing in pepper water to intensify the pain) are routine. (2)

Cora and Randall plantation are the overall picture of slavery, in which black people have been traumatized, brutalized and dehumanized their whole lives. In Randall's plantation, Whitehead re-enacts the whole history of slavery and the suffocation of the black population in the New World.

Whitehead, in *The Underground Railroad*, presents a girl as a central character who survives brutality and inhumanity in Randall's plantation after she is left by her mother. She leaves the plantation to avoid the atrocity of her master and during her escape she encounters numerous hurdles and challenges. Rylee Kirk

explains that "*The Underground Railroad* details a young slave named Cora and her adventurous escapes from a plantation in Georgia. Cora utilizes the Underground Railroad during her escape. In the book the underground railroad is an actual system of locomotives underneath the ground." The adventure of Cora is breathtaking in the novel. From the time she leaves Randall plantation to the moment she moves to the north, she meets with difficulties and overcomes them. It has been shown her adventure by overstating the events and her actions. Kirk explores that "The novel seems to be highly exaggerated account of an escaped slave. There are too many times when Cora gets lucky or has a good break, that it borders on sci-fi." *The Underground Railroad* implicates the elements of adventure that are shown in science fiction by using the method of exaggeration.

Furthermore, *The Underground Railroad* has been analyzed as a long wandering and eventful journey of a slave girl, Cora. National Books Foundation compares *The Underground Railroad* with *Gulliver's Travels* and states:

[l]ike the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different world at each stage of her journey-hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of present day. *The Underground Railroad* is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape from the horror of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share. (4)

Whitehead, in this novel, presents the brutal history of slavery, in which the central character, Cora is undergoing the journey of escape from brutality. She encounters various people and place, and these events make her more alert to complete this

journey. She has been identified with Gulliver, who, during his journey, encounters unusual people and places. Thus, it is not only *The Underground Railroad*, Whitehead offers his another novel *The Nickel Boys* to the world which stuns the world about American institutions and their practices and the critics cannot help writing on it.

The above critics and scholars such as, Kelly, Carroll, Kirk, Li, Battersby, Dichinger, Fain, Kakutani, have reviewed *The Underground Railroad* as a novel of global capitalist market, slavery, adventure, fantasy, novel of outrage, satire, slave narrative of a female protagonist, and a novel of contradiction and confusion. Nonetheless, the researcher's concern on this study is to manifest characters and events of the novel as the mouthpiece of justice and freedom that black aesthetic demands. Since *The Underground Railroad* reveals the history of black people in America which starts with slavery this novel conveys an essential political meaning of oppression, exploitation and degradation of the black by whites with the ideological stranglehold of slavery and racism.

The another novel of Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* has been analyzed by portraying the oppression and nightmarish events and circumstances that are found in Nickel Academy, namely run to bring positive changes in the young offenders. However, the characters encounter torturous experiences at school. Nat Hanson affirms that “The reader experiences the truly Kafkaesque nightmare of Nickel through the eyes of young African American boys who are imprisoned there, the idealistic Elwood and his streetwise friend, Turner, as they try to maneuver their way through sadistic world while trying not to lose their souls” (2). Elwood and Turner, in this school, find the malpractice of power backed by racism. These boys, being black, survive suffering from the school staff. Hanson further comments on the institution in which the boys are kept:

. . . is an unholy combination of the most brutal all-boys boarding school one could ever imagine . . . and Foucault-esque panopticon of white supremacy.

The staff change rules capriciously, which reinforces the captives helpless and tortures Elwood's moralist mentality. Any and all infractions will be meted out using every possible form of corporeal punishment. (3)

The inmates of the academy are vulnerable to the erratic rules of the staff, who represent the institutions and structure of power. There is recurrent abuse of power upon teenagers- rape, violence, harassment and murder, too.

The Nickel Academy, in the novel, stands for the Dozier School for boys run by the state of Florida as a juvenile reform institution. In the Jim Crow South of the early 1960s, one naïve mistake is enough for a black boy to get incarcerated. Elwood, for his ignorant mistake of hitching in a stolen car, is sent to reform school, where he experiences racism, Jim Crow and other penalties. The Nickel Academy dramatizes what the Dozier School did during its tenure. While undergoing examination around the academy run by whites, investigators find the extremes of racism. Joan Baum, on the investigation of Academy, observes:

Further investigation turned up testimony of extensive physical, mental and sexual abuse, and flagrant corruption by administrators and their political enablers. Closed only in 2011, the school warehoused blacks and whites, but in segregated facilities that carried on Jim Crow tradition, despite court rulings. Dozier also maintained dark cells and sweatboxes, which violates the laws.

Dozier School, in the form of a rehabilitation center, proceeds with racial laws that are nullified by the court. Youth from both races are there in Nickel as an offender, but there is discrimination in treating black boys and white boys. Whitehead replays

the power structure in *The Nickel Boys* during the Jim Crow era. This novel portrays how holy places with holy missions are defiled by performing debased and inhuman activities.

Moreover, *The Nickel Boys* manifests the maltreatment of the children in the so-called reformatory school. The beating and abuse of children does not only affect them physically, its repercussion is psychological as well. Such kind of ill-treatment reduces the sensibility of children and its impact on life in the future is unbearable.

Michael Schaub, on the harrowing environment of the school for children, describes:

. . . the brutalities that Elwood and his schoolmates are subjected to are necessarily shocking, and as painful as it is to read about the violence against children, it's somehow even more sickening to read what it does to the young men's psyche. Whitehead writes about the cruelties inflicted by the school's staff with a calm matter-of-factness that actually amplifies the horror (3)

Elwood, while watching TV in Harlem, happens to see the news story about an archaeological dig on the ground of the former Nickel Academy for boys and it makes him vengeful of his repressed youth. The repressed terror is all pervasive in other children who are young now by surviving the atrocity of the school staff and this remains in their whole life as core issues.

In contrast to the brutality of the school, *The Nickel Boys* demonstrates the world where people are guided by their own philosophy. Philosophy results in thought, thought builds up attitude and the attitude guides one's action. The two characters, Elwood and Turner, have their own philosophy of life and they represent the people in the world, so the world people are diverse. While Elwood is sanguine Turner is pessimistic; these two aspects represented by Elwood and Turner are dominant in the world. In the novel, "The most engaging beats are moments of unity

or dismantled by the absence thereof. Elwood is optimistic and believes the world can become a better place if he fights for world's right. Turner is cynical and believes the world will never change. The narrative is strongest when the boys adopt part of each other's philosophy" (Williams 2). Whitehead conveys a philosophical message of the diverse qualities of people and these qualities are adopted as per the demand of the circumstances. The static value developed by a person might be harmful while the situation is otherwise. This has been manifested by Elwood in the novel since his positivity does not let him fight the situation at Nickel Academy.

Whitehead, in terms of *The Nickel Boys*, has been evaluated that he has given a novel of children— black American children who have suffered a lot from racism, oppression and violence. Walton Muyumba, on the survival issue of black children, claims:

. . . The Nickel Boys is an especially necessary novel. Whitehead writes about black American children experiencing and surviving sustained injustice. The cost of survival is high: but even more expensive, Whitehead suggests, is the cost for betraying American moral and political ideals. And, as his fiction details, that degradation resounds across generations, dehumanizing perpetrators and victimized alike. (2)

American moral and political values do not allow her to practice racism but racial violence and oppression have defamed and debased the American spirit of freedom, justice and equality.

Black children have encountered oppression and humiliation be it in school or any other public place. Regarding the projection of black teenage characters Muyumba further argues that "Whitehead's novel also reminds me that African American writers often center black teenage protagonist to express political ideas and

philosophical claims. Those characters compel our attention because they have very little room for error; their public and personal mistakes can be final and fatal” (5). Children are innocent and ignorant whether they are black or white. The racial law of America has not spared black children in their unintended mistakes. Elwood hitches the car because he does not know the car was stolen. He is sent to reformatory school while there is not any matter to reform except being a child of black parents. He is moral, hardworking and positive in thought. Whitehead makes the issue of racism and racial discrimination more severe by presenting innocent black children in Nickel Academy where Jim Crow law has been inflicted upon black children. Many have been killed and the released ones are broken down by abuse and assault in their remaining life.

The Nickel Boys reveals the history of segregation that is inherent in American society even today. In the 1960s, Martin Luther King campaigned to end discrimination and segregation with peaceful movement. Whitehead transfers the legacy of King in Elwood who believes in right action to terminate inhumanity caused by racism. Norah Piehal, on the presence of King in the novel, explains:

The Nickel Boys is, of course, about the particular degradations of the Jim Crow era of segregation in the U. S. South. But it’s also, more or less obliquely, about how the inequalities of that time are still with all of us today, about how it shapes our understanding of ourselves as individuals and as a country, and about how far we have to go to realize the promise of Dr. King’s hopeful word. (2)

The novel recurrently alludes Dr. King through Elwood and it signifies King’s dream of justice and freedom by ending racial segregation without escalating hostility among

people. Whitehead, in the novel, has focused on the problem of segregation and the solution of it with hope that is fostered by Martin Luther King.

Moreover, *The Nickel Boys* exemplifies how black people are vulnerable because of racism and how white people have benefited though they are ordinary in their position. The black community has been exploited everywhere in various forms like education, law, and public life. Aminatta Forna, on the supremacy of whites and the weakening condition of blacks, examines:

. . . racism in America has long operated as a codified and sanctioned activity intended to enrich one group at the expense of another. Racism and white supremacy are the ideologies underpinning the economic exploitation of black people, once given legal force by Jim Crow laws. These laws put power into the hand of ordinary white people. A white person could have a black person arrested for “bumpious contact”- not giving way on the sidewalk, say. The system benefited ordinary white people from the shopkeeper who resold the food supplies meant for the reform school boy. . . . Thus, ordinary white people were invested in sustaining the system, including what took place at schools like Nickel. (4)

The Nickel Academy enacts the racial spirit of oppressing and exploiting the black and promoting whites, though the activities are illegal. The black population, under racism and Jim Crow law, is susceptible to the chances of abuse anytime and anywhere they are present with good faith.

The reformatory institution Nickel Academy is supposed to release juvenile offenders from the school, but they are not sure how it acts. Rules are defunct or keep on changing in terms of liberating black boys from school. This school dramatizes

racial law from which black boys are almost impossible to escape from. Aminatta Forna, on the duplicity of whites in terms of their faithfulness to their duty, illustrates:

At Nickel boys are supposed to be able to advance their release date through good behaviour, but nobody really knows how the system merits and demerits works. With Turner's help, Elwood figures out that all that really matters are the whims of the white person in charge. Nickel is a microcosm of a corrupt world, in which the rule of law is meaningless and the real laws are unwritten.

(5)

Black people, in the eyes of white, can never be good people though not great, since for them black people are barbarous, evil and subhuman. The legal provision produced by whites is incomplete and partial, it does not speak anything about black people. It keeps on changing at the whims of whites.

Whitehead exposes the evil and brutal aspects of human being that take place in Nickel Academy. Whitehead has been celebrated as a writer who is brilliant at revealing social ills mostly concerned with race. Art Edward, regarding the inhuman and shameful activities in Nickel Academy, explores:

. . . Colson Whitehead, whose latest novel, *The Nickel Boys*, conjures the lives of students who are subjected to the Nickel Academy. . . . The segregated Nickel is actually a corrupt den where kids receive savage beatings for minor or nonexistent infractions, authority figures like to watch boys shower, and the staff sell the supplies meant for the African American students to the highest-bidder in the town. (1)

Nickel Academy is hellish to black students who become the victim of white debauchery and experience such events that they have never had in their minds. In the comprehensive study of this novel, Nickel is tantamount to America where impossible

is possible in terms of violating basic human rights which other countries cannot imagine.

Nickel Academy and the staff working there stand for a white orientation toward the black community, and it indicates the meanness of whites though they claim themselves superior to other races. In this regard, Whitehead's writing intends to let the world know what whites have done to the black. Edwards points out that "It is impossible not to feel differently for the Dozier School students after reading *The Nickel Boys*, and this grants Whitehead's novel a purpose beyond more entertainment. The tale reemphasizes the heinous crimes committed against African Americans far too often in this country" (3). Novels are written to provide entertainment to the readers, but Whitehead writes with the purpose of disclosing what is hiding from history.

Furthermore, *The Nickel Boys* dramatizes the principle of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. King is well-known for his non-violent movement against racial discrimination and segregation. Whitehead bridges racial problems and the leader against them in the novel. Ron Charles comments on the novel that "In the trial of young Elwood, Whitehead dares to test the great preacher's doctrine of inexorable love. "Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities after midnight hours, and drag us out into some wayside road, and beat us and leave us half-dead," King promised white oppressors, "and we will still love you." In the comfort of his grandmother's house, Elwood found that audacious promise powerful and inspiring." King is still relevant in black community to end racial atrocity and establish brotherhood and harmony. Elwood replicates King in his manner and thought but his demeanor suffers when he encounters racial people and the system.

Overall, *The Nickel Boys* has been reviewed as a novel of children, racism, crime and corruption, and the betrayal of America towards moral and political ideals by various critics and reviewers such as, Piehal, Forna, Edwards, Muyumba, Hanson, Baum. However, the researcher studies this novel from the perspective of black aesthetic, which claims the functional value of literature—social change. *The Nickel Boys* manifests that there is still the impact of Jim Crow law in various institutions and this law has been a hurdle to changing society with human values. The philosophy of black literature believes in the honesty of authors in revealing social ills that helps people know about them and prepare them to struggle against it. *The Nickel Boys* causes aggression in readers and a kind of agitation to establish justice in American racial society, where black people have been excluded from national system for a long period of time.

The research gap between the primary texts: *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys* and the researcher's study of these novels can be validated from the reviews of the critics and scholars. The novel *Beloved* has been studied as a novel of documentary realism, slavery, racism, retrospection of the Middle Passage, re/memory, novel of collective history, African rituals, grotesque, merger of past and future, mystery and magic. Likewise, *The Underground Railroad* has been studied as a novel of global capitalist market, slavery, adventure, fantasy, novel of outrage, satire, slave narrative of a female protagonist, and a novel of contradiction and confusion. In the same manner, *The Nickel Boys* has been studied as a novel of children, racism, crime and corruption, and the betrayal of America towards moral and political ideals. However, the researcher has studied these novels as a medium of political message for social justice having the insights of black aesthetic.

Chapter II

Black Aesthetic and Social Reformation

The proposed research work studies the selected texts of black literature and examines them using the theoretical concept of “black aesthetic.” Black aesthetic suggests a fundamental reordering of the Western cultural aesthetics by ranking aesthetics below politics. Art, criticism or analysis are the domain of black aesthetic to discover the role art and literature play in generating and sustaining the black life-world. Black aesthetic denies the white world and interests in destroying the white things, white ideas, and white way of defining the world. In this act of creating black life-world, black writers put forward the oppression of black people over history and enlighten them on how they should prepare themselves to end the condition of white supremacy.

This approach will be used to survey the primary texts on how they speak decently regarding the misrepresentation of the black, and how these texts are politically focused to reform society. While going through these texts the concept of black aesthetic envisioned by critics and analysts such as W. E. B. Du Bois with his *The Souls of Black Folk*, Addison Gayle, with his *The Black Aesthetic*; Paul C. Taylor with his *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*; *Black Fire* by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal; *The New Negro: An Interpretation* by Alain Locke and the reviewers are used. These scholars focus on black life-world—social, political, economic, cultural, and historical domains of black art and literature. With this theoretical insights and ideas, the researcher analyzes and interprets to explore and examine the novels intended call for social justice and freedom for social reformation in white-dominated American society.

Black Aesthetic and Its Major Thrust

Black aesthetic is closely associated with Black Arts Movement that took place in the 1960s. It was formally expressed by the critics and scholars, Addison Gayle, Hoyt W. Fuller, and Stephen E. Henderson, and explained in the writing of the artists and activists, Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, Askia M. Toure, Sonia Sanchez and Maulana Ron Karenga. This movement explored creative possibilities in black writers which were not realized till those days. Michelle M. Wright quotes Larry Neal that “The Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the Western aesthetics. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology” (139). During this movement, it was suggested and found possibility leaving the mainstream literature that was supposed to be contaminated.

In regard to rejecting the ground of Western aesthetics that would never include politics and the discourse of power and ideology in literature and its link with the world, the two books *Black Fire* edited by LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal, and *The Black Aesthetic* edited by Addison Gayle played logically seminal role to flourish the concept of black aesthetic. Fuller clarifies the relation between literature and life in terms of black life and asserts that “Literature, after all, is not separate from life, although many white critics seem to want to separate black literature from the realities of black life” (330). The strong claim of black aesthetic is its radical move of connecting literature with life.

Though the assumption of black aesthetic is linked with the movement of 1960s, some scholars argue that the base of black aesthetic began with Langston Hughes when he wrote “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” in 1926. It was the time of the Harlem Renaissance, when there was no concept of black aesthetic, but what Hughes argues, later becomes the close concept of black aesthetic. Harlem

Renaissance awoke black community from the deep slumber of ignorance of their potential in cultural activity. Wayne Cooper, on the scope of Harlem Renaissance, comments:

. . . flowering in literature called the Negro Renaissance gave voice to the new spirit awakening in Negroes in the twenties. In addition, the Negro Renaissance became a part of the general revolt by the writers of the decade against the gross materialism and outmoded moral values of America's industrial society. Negro writers found new strength in their own culture.
(297)

The dormant cultural potential of black people exhausted by slavery and racism emerged with the mass migration of black people from the South. Once the creative strength suppressed in the New World takes its space during the Renaissance in the twenties does not wither, rather it occupies the commanding position in American literary history. The creative strength of the black looms as a potential threat to white poetry, drama, fiction, music, dance, painting and moreover to white social convention.

Harlem Renaissance on black literary history sets a foundation stone on cultural construction by capturing the general sentiments of the American blacks of all times. Hughes focuses on the black cultural construction in the New World and points out that “. . . to my mind, it is the duty of the younger Negro artist if he accepts any duty at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering “I want to be white,” hidden in the aspirations of his people, to “why should I want to be white? I am a Negro-and beautiful!” (1323-24). On the desire of his people for being white, he further points out that “So I am ashamed for the black poet who says, “I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet,” as though his own racial world were not as

interesting as any other world” (1324). In these remarks, the spirit of black aesthetic, art and politics, is latent and suggests that the concept of black aesthetic was not the latest in the 1960s. Though black aesthetic as a literary movement appeared in the sixties, Harlem Renaissance sustains through literary medium to discover the way of life they can conduct in America.

Black aesthetic animates cultural revolution in black art and ideas. Under this principle, the past is passed on via literature with the commitment of raising voice against injustice by writing about the black by black writers. Black life, in America, is a struggle that has been going on and will go on until they are treated as human beings in essence. This struggle for civil rights has always been triggered by writers who are mindful of their history and heritage. Askia M. Toure speculates that “We must identify and struggle against the ignorant and confused within our rank who become unwitting tools for our continued oppression. A determined, informed, courageous people can take the lead in “breaking de chains” forever” (48). Black writers have defined and redefined the nature of the struggle and sought their meaning in America. Black aesthetic redefines the way black literature lacks and works in solidifying black community for the public good.

Similarly, black literature is identified with innovative African literature, which is claimed to have three characteristics – collective, functional, and committing:

Collective, in that it had to express a whole people, that it had to come from a whole people, that it had to speak to a whole people. Functional, in that it had a use, it was specific; a specific use in the struggle to liberate ourselves. Committing, in that it committed us to the struggle; it committed us specifically to the struggle. (Baraka 24)

Black aesthetic defends the didactic aspect of the artwork that functions to wake the community from the slumber of ignorance. Any literary work that emerges from the cultural groups means to enhance the commitment of this group to struggle against the values that help to exploit and oppress rather than liberate them.

Human beings are political in nature and their activities are constructed around political influences and models. Politics is the medium of exercising power, which is the process of controlling and regulating society. And it is through the use of power, in society, dominant groups create hierarchy, pattern of domination and uneven distribution of resources. The exclusion of power and politics as the content of mainstream literature is inherent in black literature. Morrison, in her “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” asserts that “the best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time” (1071). Creative production has its own beauty and this beauty is fortified by politics. Such a kind of production is rooted in the physical and historical world; it does not transcend the world.

The historical dimension of literature suggests that the truth we experience in literature is not ideal or transcendental, but rather moral. Literature documents the experiences gained in particular time, place and situation, and so literature reflects concerns of the people. By contending the ideal and transcendental trait of literature, Belinda Edmondson asserts:

The cognizance of the political dimensions of African American Art is commonly held to have begun with the Black Art Movement heralded by Amiri Baraka, Addison Gayle, and Larry Neal in the 1960s, but recently some African American scholars have been arguing very persuasively that the very genesis of African American arts was itself political. (78)

Black literature is a cultural expression and any form of art is connected with its creator. The creator of an art is the product of that culture which inculcates him/her and what s/he expresses in art is the manifestation of his/her cultural values. In this regard, Asian art suggests Asian life, European art suggests European life, and African art suggests African life. It means that black literature is “based on its culture, its history, and the artistic strategies the works employ to negotiate the world it inhabits” (Morrison 1085). Black literature demonstrates the world in which they are living with their communal history and culture.

Moreover, black aesthetic is ideological, i.e. it has its own beliefs and attitudes that the chasm between black and white is the Western production for dividing people in terms of color. There is political interest in this division that whites are pure, beautiful, and rational while the black are impure, ugly, demonic and decadent.

Regarding such political division of mankind Imani L. B. Fryar explains:

A Black aesthetic surfaced to challenge the traditional language of American literature, which had become the albatross around the neck of the black artist. Belief in the slave master’s interpretation of the Bible and the acceptance of Eurocentric mythology were the basis for a white aesthetic in which beauty was always pure, divine and white, while ugly was associated with black, sin and unrighteousness. Covertly, such Western terms and values were used to convey society’s mores. (451)

Black aesthetic creates an agency in black people and invigorates them to efface the misconceptions that have misguided the society to hostility, inhumanity and chaos. Black people are to be politically aware of how they have been forced to assimilate to the tendencies which are beguiling and misleading. Black aesthetic value is charged with political motives that the practice of power through the formation of race can be

shattered by means of artwork. Political enlightenment help them know who, what, where they are and what they should do now and in future for their liberation from the shackles of injustices.

Along with political enlightenment for their liberation from injustice, black aesthetic cannot disengage African life from literature as the traditional philosophy of aesthetic strongly supports contemplative detachment. In this sense, black aesthetic is a resistance to Western aesthetic value which does not see anything outside the text except form and feeling. Black scholar Taylor points out that “. . . to do “black aesthetics” is to use art, criticism, or analysis to explore the role that expressive objects and practices play in creating and maintaining black life-worlds” (6). Traditional aesthetics celebrates the life and works of whites, Europeans, males, and classical writers, and other artworks are abrogated from the domain of creative work. In this way, black aesthetic questions the established values and assumptions and establishes new values in literature.

Black aesthetic as a new value in aesthetic domain claims the progress of society through literature. Literature has its purpose to change society by revealing political, social, and economic problems/issues that help aware the concerned group for reformation. hooks, on the relation of art and politics, asserts that “Conscious articulation of a “black aesthetic” as it was constructed by African-American artists and critics in the sixties and early seventies was an effort to forge an unbreakable link between artistic production and revolutionary politics” (67). Any artist is a part of this society, so s/he produces literature within the social, political, economic, and cultural spirit of the time. A literary work reflects of the society that is created within and around that community, but such kind of assumption is nullified by Western aesthetics by intensifying the concept of ‘art for art’s sake.’

To think over black aesthetic, 'art for art's sake' is a false doctrine which excludes the functional value of art, i. e. art is useful. The seminal claim of black aesthetic is the functional value of art. An art that provides pleasure to the audience or reader but does not instruct bears low esteem. It suggests that art plays a role to change society by elevating and enlightening the community for revolution and change. John Henrik Clarke examines that "For the last three hundred years Africa and its people have been viewed mainly through European eyes and for European reasons. The entire history of Africa will have to be literally rewritten, challenging and reversing the European concept" (17). Black literature has its own motivation to sabotage the Western perspective that has always kept the black at bay. Black aesthetic sees the value in aesthetic domain if it enhances the political causes, or art and politics are inseparable in black aesthetic. John Lindberg, on the base of black aesthetic affirms:

Because of its political base, "black aesthetic" aims at a black audience, and includes the music of blues in its territory as well as literary forms, and indeed, the phrase encompasses anything in black experience that might be considered a cultural expression of a life-style- patterns of speech and dress, the nebulous conception "soul", any practice that distinguishes the black from white. (48)

The basis of black aesthetic is politics and it is associated with any black cultural production. These productions pop out from the souls of the black and they are distinct from the experience of the oppressors. The black cultural artifacts with their political message draw the attention of black audience to notice how their experiences and expressions are different from whites.

The knowledge that the experiences and expressions of black people is different from whites connects American politics and ethics in aesthetics to make a

literary real and authentic to life. The separation of politics and ethics from aesthetics is to weaken the strength of literary work that aims at shattering inhumanity rooted in any community. Inhumanity is manifest in American society because of Western construction of race that deforms humanity. So, Neal, on the goal of black aesthetic, explains:

The motive behind black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas, and white way of looking at the world. In black aesthetic, ethics and aesthetic are inseparable and they are one, and they must interact positively. The contradiction between ethics and aesthetic, in Western society, is symptomatic of a dying culture. (274)

It is the Western production of race that claims white superior and black inferior.

Western values have demonized the black, and their experiences with whites are odd and unusual. For the black, to accept the white aesthetics is to accept and validate a society that will not allow them to live with dignity.

Black writing revolves around the black community and intends to unearth their history and the emotional development of the community. The study of literature encompasses the study of the history of literature and the history of culture; literary history is an aspect as well as a part. The history of black community in America unfolds the evidence of slavery and its aftermath. The horrendous experience of slavery and its aftermath is apparent in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, which was published in 1987. Such kind of black literature explores how blacks' minds at the time of slavery and ever since can be haunted by the horrors of slavery. Baraka on the elements of black literature claims that "The "Black Aesthetic" is the form, content, style, history, and psychological development of a particular nationality, the Afro-American" (11). Black aesthetic, contrary to the traditional aesthetics, subsumes the

components of history, politics, economics, culture to help black community know their 'self' that grew out of slavery.

Black aesthetic reveals the oppressive history of slavery and wounds of oppression and hostility are residual in black community and are the contents of their creation. Colson Whitehead's 2016 novel, *The Underground Railroad*, unfolds the wounds and insults given to black community during slavery. Such novels use grotesque forms in order to amplify the events of brutality. For Dubey "Each grotesque incident in the novel is securely linked in a causal chain that invariably leads back to racial oppression as a source of the grotesque" (35). Grotesque not only makes the reality uncanny it helps bring viciousness and moral deviation in limelight that was prevailing during slavery. In this regard, black writers use grotesque in order to address the political and moral issues of slavery that have engulfed the whole population of the black. The novels with grotesque images and actions intensify the horror and fear of slavery and heighten the state of awareness in readers and involve them in the process of the struggle for justice. Similarly, the knowledge of slavery and its aftermath becomes the dominant force to make black community aware of their situation in society. The severe past of the black motivates them to break the chain of discrimination by raising their voices to end racial injustice and brutality in the society.

In this regard, the major concern of black artists is to rationalize their community to recognize themselves in terms of their society and the unavoidable demands of struggle that are latent to move ahead. Black literature is that world which is created out of the real experience, in which the creator uses his or her unique mode of consciousness. In black literature content and its message are inherently associated with history. Without the knowledge of history black community cannot recognize

themselves in terms of social, political, economic, and cultural aspects. Black aesthetic implies the enlightenment of the black people that black life has always been struggling for unity and liberation. Baraka, on freedom as the main thrust of black aesthetic, argues that “It cannot be an authentic reflection of the main thrust of the African-American aesthetic without dealing with the Question of Freedom” (109). Black aesthetic puts its people in action again, inspires them, and gives them enough courage to face any disappointing day that black community will have to suffer because of the injustice in the society they are living in. Black literature unfolds the evidences of slavery and speaks for survival of black people, the story of the captive, and their struggle for human dignity in America. In this regard black literature is a resistance to despotic behavior of the whites and devotion to human dignity. The domination of whites over the black from the time of slavery reveals hostility towards humanity which is known as racial discrimination.

The value of black art is the expression of African life, and that life is enormous in the new land, America, inflicted by discrimination and segregation. The concern of black community in America is their social, political, economic, and cultural issues. In this context, the major interest of black artists is to develop black aesthetic in terms of cultural experiences and attitudes. In black aesthetic scope, black theorists refused the literary work created before 1960s and focused on the issues of the black that are avoided in black literary works. In terms of black literature David Lionel Smith illustrates Larry Neal and LeRoi Jones that “Black literature must become an integral part of the community’s life style. And . . . that it must also be integral to the myths and experiences underlying the total history of black people” (100). Black aesthetic implies that literary work cannot be alienated from the real-life experiences of the people. In literature all aspects of culture – history, religion, myth,

creative motifs and ethos – come hand in hand by portraying the community the creator belongs to.

The principle of black literature advocates the component related to the black life-world that is the vernacular tradition which is organically associated with the black community. Black vernacular does not exist in the abstract form but rather it lives in the community and performance. As vernacular is substantial for performance and belongs to community black aesthetic thoroughly suggests the experiences and performance of the group and the instant effects of the artwork on the audience. On the importance of vernacular in black literature, Smith discusses that “The emphasis on vernacular performance implies that literature should become an immediate, communal form to be experienced in public, contrary to the private experience of reading a text” (101). Vernacular tradition is the concern of the public that experiences immediately and their participation in performance is pivotal.

The vernacular includes spirituals, secular rhymes and songs, ballads, work songs, the blues, and folk tales, and these aspects of vernacular are the life style of black community. The nature of vernacular is communal, so black aesthetic stands for vernacular by subsuming its communal nature. Regarding the function of black vernacular in black community, Abu Abarry explains:

The blues, the spirituals and the work songs have historically reflected the collective woes, outlook, courage, aspirations, and humour of their creators in their encounters with an alien and hostile culture. While secular songs portray major episodes in mundane individual and communal lives, the spirituals express the spirituality, inner strength, and collective unconscious of the people. The special songs have always held importance, especially during periods of enslavement, persecution, or hardship, for they provide ecstatic

vision of an alternate world of solace and hope. The spirituals also have functioned as an efficient system of communication, bearing concealed messages of inspiration, insult, or revolt as well as instructions and directions for escape and freedom of enslaved or persecuted Africans in America. (380)

Black vernacular culture is the stout feature of the black life which demonstrates the historical events of pain and pleasure, delight and distress and hope and solace. Black aesthetic is committed to liberating its people from pain and distress, weeping and wailing by reflecting the faulty history and remaking new history in the New World. Black vernacular exists in a text in the form of expressing or curing the pains caused by oppressive institutions.

Moreover, black writers get spurred to find insight from their ancestral history and heritage and from the ghetto community. The ghetto community of black is not monolithic, so black aesthetic domain is not limited and it covers all aspects of black life that the black community experiences. Though black aesthetic does not respond to a single domain its theme is inspirational for unity and action, exchanging information with their race in the ghetto. Regarding the content and message of black art and the solidarity, Elsa Honing Fine believes that “Black art and black artist (as opposed to those artists whose skin happens to be black) are committed to: 1. Use the past and its heroes to inspire heroic and revolutionary ideals. 2. Use recent political and social events to teach recognition, control and extermination of the “enemy.” 3. To project the future which the nation can anticipate after the struggle is won” (374). Black artist review the past, deliver the urgency of the present, and anticipate the life of black community in the future. In black literature it is vividly articulated the prospect of their brothers and sisters in the future on the basis of the actions that took place in the past and are taking place at present.

In terms of the future of their brethren, black writers assume that they have a sense of duty and responsibility to their community. Their community should be revived and restored from the damage made by white supremacy. White supremacy has demolished the humanistic values of love, mercy, kindness, generosity, and justice and debased human practices. The writers are on the frontline in correcting the deviated human values. Regarding the position of an artist in society Lindberg asserts that “. . . the artist is a moralist because he demands “a moral construct of the world” based on an original vision of a clean society” (49). An artist produces his work in an attempt to reflect the values of society and puts his position on what should/not be there. These values cannot be isolated from the community and detached from the reaction of their work from the community. The arousal of unity in their people from the margin and achieving dignity and respect remains at the core of their work. They are mindful about the Anglo-American way of writing that writing following the Western tradition does not let them reveal their needs and necessities in American society. Only the politically motivated art form can give a political message of equality, justice, rights, and freedom to a people.

Lack of equality, rights and freedom, and the brunt of injustice are the basic experiences of black community. Black experience in the New World interprets the mass experience of the race. In this respect black art articulates the features of popular art, on the other hand, such kind of art comes from black community and is used by black people. It is an artwork or literature of a people whose history and heritage are rooted in Africa. African art is revolutionary art and so is black art because of its African base in art and literature. Such kind of art drives a community toward unity, collective work and responsibility, faith and harmony, and cooperative economy. Black aesthetic rejects individual interest which avoids communal concerns and

practices that are deeply rooted in African tradition. In this tradition literary work cannot be indifferent to life, and the life of people revolves around social, political, economic influences and models. Baraka stresses the connection of art with historical and physical properties and asserts that “. . . we know that aesthetics is the same as ethos. We know that aesthetics and ideology are the same thing. What you think is good is a political good. What you think is beautiful is a political beautiful. What you think is negative is a political negativity” (29). Good and evil, virtues and vices, beauty and ugliness are the production of society and the mis/representation of any people is changeable and can be changed through literary work.

Black literary assumption makes a thought of releasing black community from the shackles and subjugation of white supremacy. White society is racist and oppressive, and the victims of this society are black people. Black community, for centuries, have been dehumanized physically, psychologically and culturally; and as Ralph Ellison says “nothing is worse for a black man than to be humiliated by white folk” (144). Black literature aims at helping this community to know white folk and head forward with positive thought of change and advancement. Black aesthetic develops its capability to resist cultural subjugation, and frees them from mortification in American society. As long as the cultural subjugation persists in America, the historical, political, and economic institutions of black community get fettered, and the progress of that community undergoes status quo ante. In different periods of time black community has got agitated for all kinds of freedom and for “black freedom struggles, black expressive culture mattered to blacks because culture work allowed them to escape, to some degree, more than aspirants to success in business or politics could, the yoke of white supremacist exclusion, and to achieve at a level commensurate with their talents” (Taylor vii). The strength of cultural productions for

social change with meaning and essence has been a weapon for black people to be included in democratic values.

To sum up the above assumptions, black aesthetic asserts that aesthetics cannot be separated from ethics, so they are one and the same. Alienation of aesthetics from people's lives disregards the essence of art and literature. Fuller, on literature, speculates that “The literature of any people grows organically out of the experiences of that people, informed by imagination and wit—the gift, in short, of artistry. Black literature in America is, and always has been handicapped by literary colonialism” (349). The literature of the black uncovers the history of the communities that is full of turmoil for centuries. Black aesthetic concerns with the factors which are seminal for the black in shaping the rationality of them, and in this concern Du Bois comments that “if white people need college to furnish teachers, ministers, lawyers, and doctors, do black people need nothing of the sort?” (50). Black literature addresses directly the black problems and experiences and reviews over phenomena of exclusion to enlighten black community politically. Political awareness is a strong medium to change society and reverse misrepresentation. White assumption of representation is partial and oppressive causing the exploitation of minorities by the majority. White in the majority developed art as per their culture which is racist, exploitative, and imperialist. So, black scholars stress on the cultural revolution which helps to shatter social, political, psychological, and economic subjugation upon the minority and guarantee social justice.

The substratum of black aesthetic is the social and political turmoil that affected the black in America in the 1960s. Black people were demanding their rights and had caused confrontation with white racism. The black critics and writers included such issues in their literary work and assimilated politics with literature.

Black literature inheres to the needs and demands of political rights- the end of racial injustice. Justice is the battle cry of black community in America in whatsoever form of artwork, primarily in literature. Justice denotes the rights to have, to do, and to be, and black community was excluded from these components of justice. Without the consciousness of a people they cannot claim their rights to be, to do and to have. John H. Lash, on the consciousness in a people as an essential part which helps them in uniting them for their goal, focuses on :

. . . the formation of cultural enclaves, which may then be implemented with weapons of social control. When the enclaves are fortified with strategic ideological and emotional battlements, so that individuals within the social configuration compute their security and their interests in group terms, the resulting entity is presumably geared for what it regards as cultural competition. (26)

Consciousness in black community results in group identification and makes them realize an individual's sense of attachment to a social group. The way the victims have a sense of group identification, it fosters self-awareness and pokes them to know why they are the victim of inhumanity. The sense of group identification caused by consciousness leads them to fight against inhumanity. In this regard, black aesthetic unfolds the history of injustice that the community has borne from the very first day of the practice of slavery, racism, and colonialism and arouses black community to fight against the oppressors who have destroyed humanity.

Black Aesthetic: Social Justice for Harmony

Social justice is strongly tied to democratic values—justice, rights, freedom, and benefits. Any society that practices such democratic values is strong in social justice. America, though advocates such values all over the world, lacks the practice

of these values in terms of black community. The principles of social justice "provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriated distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation" (Rawls 4). Just society distributes benefits and burdens of responsibility equally and establishes human values by incorporating all for social harmony but American society has assigned black people burdens only and created chasm in the society.

Black community has been excluded politically, socially and economically. This exclusion of black community has resulted in deprivation, poverty, unemployment and dependency. The urgent need of black community is to release them from racist organizations and enjoy the nectar of social justice. Social justice can promote self-esteem in a person since "Justice is a matter of treating everyone equally, where equality is correlative with an equal entitlement to what is one's due" (Boucher and Kelly 6). Justice reduces the chasm existing between the black and whites and promotes equality by ensuring equal rights and opportunities that the black community has been missing for ages.

However, the white racists have produced knowledge and practices for the benefit of their own by dehumanizing and subordinating the black. The social, political, and economic organizations are working to elevate the position of one aspect of society and push down another. David Boucher and Paul Kelly, the political theorists, argue that "Certain classes or group monopolize money or civil rights, which leaves other groups deprived and therefore unequal. The task of social justice becomes one of breaking these monopolies" (10). In American society, whites have exercised exclusive control of services and held a grip upon them; the result of such kind of monopoly of whites has deteriorated social, political and economic condition

of the black. Black artists are aware of this situation and replicate their community in literature and artwork to help their people know who/how/where they are.

As black artists are concerned with their community, black aesthetic aims at establishing social justice in a society where black community is oppressed and exploited. Racial discrimination has been a prime factor in social, political and economic exclusion of the black. Exclusion does not let a person or group progress and achieve their position as a human being. Tariq Modood, on the aspiration of excluded people for social dignity, concludes that “Excluded groups seek respect for themselves as they are or aspire to be, not simply a solidarity on the basis of a recognition of themselves as victims; they resist being defined by their *mode of oppression* and seek space and dignity for their *mode of being*” (206). Living with respect and dignity is the essence of life which the black people are seeking in their black community. Justice can provide black people with equal opportunities and so they can prove to the world they are efficient and effective in the society they are living in. They want to survive on their own and for that justice is the primary condition that manifests:

We ask not charity but justice. We no longer want perquisites but wages, salary and commissions. Much has been said anent that white man’s burden. We admit to having been a burden, just as an infant that cannot walk is at one time a burden. But in the natural order of things the infant soon ceases to be a burden and eventually grows up to be a crutch for the arm that once carried him. We feel that now we are able to take our first, feeble different steps, and we implore the white man to set his burden down and let us try to walk. Put us in your counting rooms, your factories and in your banks. (Norvelle and Tuttle 218)

White people have removed black people from justice and claimed that they are bearing the burden of black people. Black people are demanding justice not the oppressors' providence. They can make their future on their own by using their traditions and values and end socio-economic problems and disadvantages.

Moreover, in black community, a group is more important than an individual. Their concepts of social justice focus on social, political and economic equality of the community along with generosity, hard work and cooperation. They want the progress of society with understanding and reciprocity, and the public good is at the center of this community. Racial discrimination has hindered the progress of this community and made the realization of a movement for social justice. However, racial discrimination has worked in positive way to unify black people and cause a struggle for their political rights. Elizabeth A. Ferguson, on what discrimination has done to black people, surmises :

Discrimination in its manifestations in every phase of life is undoubtedly the most potent factor in the development of group solidarity. It is the only unifying force which the race has, and thus, while it is tragic for the individual, it has become an asset to the race, compelling unity and accelerating progress. It is the one factor which cuts across all social distinctions within the Negro group and which stimulates a race consciousness from the group as a whole. (35)

Many factors are responsible for uniting and dividing people in society. In black community, discrimination has caused a lot of loss of their people and their common problems have brought them to one place. When the issues are one and the same people do not find differences in their concerns and become united to end the cause.

The woes of black people, by bringing all members in one place, have made them conscious of race history and race pride.

The cause that has reduced the status of black community and brought a people in one place is racial injustice. Racial injustice has discriminated and segregated black people and resulted in the realization of the loss of dignity. Alienated black community from mainstream society aims at “Striving for dignity is at the core of social justice movements. Activists involved in social justice movement believe that oppressed people have a right to fair treatment and a share of the benefits of society based on their human rights and equality of all people” (Loewen and Pollard 5). Social justice movements and civil rights movements concentrate on the rights of oppressed people who are deprived of just and fair behavior and the share of the benefits of society. Social justice keeps dignity on top of any material gains since self-respect is connected with the human psyche and an achievement becomes meaningless when the position of an individual is obviated from social status. Black people can have dignity in the New World when they become able to terminate social evils caused by racism and slavery.

In terms of getting dignity to blacks, black aesthetic is committed to subverting racial inequality and establishing equality, freedom, and social justice. In black aesthetic, artwork and politics remain in one space and social justice as the socio-political entity works to liberate the oppressed and exploited people from the injustice of racial discrimination and segregation. Fuller, on discriminatory act of America, illustrates:

America is a racist society. That is, opportunities and rewards apportioned, for the most part, according to race and color. The preferred and the privileged are white; the rejected and degraded are non-white. The whites, who are in the

majority and hold the power, proceed under the very natural assumption that the nation's vaunted principles, creeds, and institutions are both valid and operative. The non-whites understand that much of "the good life" for white Americans is bought at the continued subjugation. (330)

Black literature is a political campaign to end the social evils of racism, sexism, and classism that have divided society as superior and inferior. As long as the divisive society persists the material as well as social progress of the country as a whole stagnates. The white majority needs to change their history of attitudes, behaviors, laws, and social policies which have discriminated against the same human species in terms of their color and never let them awake from the deep slumber of racial prejudice.

Black writing is concerned with black experience which revolves around their trials and tribulations. Black people were happy with their own heroes, legends and myths, but ever since they were brought to this country in chains, they lost their happiness, freedom, and their heritage. They got entrapped in slavery in the new land and their horrendous experience of slavery has been the history of black community. On the painful experiences of black people, Harold Cruse claims that ". . . the Negro suffers in varying degree from hunger, illiteracy, disease, ties to the land, urban and semi-urban slums, cultural starvation, and the psychological reactions to being ruled over by others not of his kind" (41). Black community exists as a storehouse of suffering and deprivation. They have been deprived of family as well as their belongings. In just society, people have right to possess their achievements but black people are alienated from this right and done injustice.

One of the indications of injustice to black community is the dispossession of property. The origin of Justice is concerned with property, so ". . . for Locke, justice is

an attribute of property. Understood in the broad sense, property is "a right to anything"; injustice is "the invasion or violation of that right" where there is no property, there is no injustice." By implication, justice is the honoring and protection of the right of property" (Gardner 363). Black people are always poor in front of whites as black people have been exploited and excluded from the property rights for which they have afforded their blood and sweat.

The researcher's choice of primary texts is the concern over these people, whose basic needs and goals are freedom, justice, and equality. Black aesthetic reveals the history and psychological development of black people that are manifest in Morrison's *Beloved*, and Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*. These three texts by projecting characters and events develop the agency aspect of black individuals to converge for common goal—justice and freedom. Amartya Sen, on the agency aspect of an individual, explains that "A person's agency aspect cannot be understood without taking note of his or her aims, objectives, allegiances, obligations, and—in a broad sense—the person's conception of the good" (203). These three novels by revealing the history of injustice, brutality, and discrimination against black community have made the victims know their obligations to their community.

The history of injustice and brutality and its memory makes them conscious of their condition. This consciousness is always reflective and responsive to the environment created by racism and slavery. The three primary texts help black community to be mentally aware to distinguish between themselves and all the other things and events that have taken place in their life world. In this sense, these three texts help black community face the history, so they can transcend it by struggling for

justice. Black aesthetic integrates its people for common goal, justice, by collecting the history of racial oppression, which are ostensible in these texts.

Black aesthetic strengthens a sense of “We” consciousness in the black community which tends to wake its people from the deep sleep of the ignorance of their social, political, economic and cultural position and their sense of self. It gives them the knowledge why they have been oppressed and what they should do to end that oppression. Such knowledge of oppression uplifts the community in the understanding of their status and promotes race consciousness. Race consciousness, as Lash explains, is:

. . . an attitude or feeling of race loyalty or affiliation which arises in the presence of threats to cultural status. It originates as a defense attitude among the individuals of an identifiable racial group and derives primary meaning from the real or putative social pressures. . . . Race consciousness is adhesive and emotive, since the unity of behavior and thought involved is imposed by external forces. (26)

Black people are conscious of their status means they are cognizant of the external forces that have stagnated causing the status quo. The familiarity of the situation identifies them as members of a collectivity who share common problems and cultural location. Collectivity and integrity are the forces of black people who can wage action campaign and struggle against injustice.

To think over the campaign against injustice, *Beloved* is a novel about black life-world which is set in post-Civil War years and this novel connects the history of slavery with the present, so it is the relationship between past and present. The subject matter of *Beloved* is based on the documented event in which the fugitive mother commits infanticide to prevent the child from being captured as a slave. *Beloved*

recurrently returns to the memories of slavery that forced black community to forget their African self and imposed terror, humiliation, physical, emotional and sexual violence upon them. This novel is a call for justice by unfolding the injustices inflicted upon the black.

Likewise, *The Underground Railroad* reveals the history of slavery that was full of injustices and inhumanity. An example of injustice and inhumanity is chattel slavery which expresses one of the many forms of white supremacy. This novel reminds us of the past whose traces are still prevail in the modern era. Cora's life is the manifestation of whites' brutality upon the black during slavery which is imperative to end for good. In the same manner, Whitehead's another novel *The Nickel Boys* demonstrates an intelligent and hardworking boy Elwood Curtis who witnesses brutality in a reform school and is ultimately killed. The boy, who listens to Martin Luther King and his civil rights movement, has been shot, and this incident indicates that the racism of America suppresses the voice of justice that is rising up in American society.

All these three novels unfold the harsh history of social injustice. The recurrent revelation of atrocious history in a literary text suggests a cry for justice by black community. Since black aesthetic relates the past with the present for the result in the future, these three novels are seminal in spreading the message of the horrible racial past in order to fight for a peaceful and justifiable future. Louise Rolinger, on the peaceful and justifiable future to enable the black to speak with strength and confidence, believes:

I can with truth and sincerity declare, that I have found amongst the Negroes as great a variety of talents, as among a like number of whites; I am bold to assert, that the notion entertained by some, that the blacks are inferior in their

capacities, is a vulgar prejudice, founded on the pride or ignorance of their lordly masters; who have kept their slaves at such a distance, as to be unable to form a right judgment of them. (108)

When black people get justice and a peaceful environment to debate and discuss the ideas and images made upon them they can defy the white construction of their inferiority. Black people are born with the capacity and they are talented like whites but whites are always expending their time in making the black decadent and parochial and so they can hold the position of superior. The prejudiced whites are responsible for producing chaos and anarchy in the New World by keeping the black at a distance in terms of civil rights.

To sum up, black aesthetic uses art, criticism or analysis in order to sabotage white things, ideas and the way of looking at the world. In this regard, black aesthetic bears the functional value of literature with the motive of reordering the Western cultural aesthetics. Black aesthetic does not detach and distance literary work from black people's experiences and thus it hoists and enlightens its people toward consciousness. This consciousness helps them struggle for justice and freedom by maintaining the unity of their race. Freedom and justice for black people means the grasp of power since "A person's freedom may well be assessed in terms of the power to achieve chosen results: whether the person is free to achieve one outcome or another; whether his or her choice will be respected and the corresponding things will happen" (Sen 208). The insights of black aesthetic in primary texts explore how these texts align black community in the extermination of injustice and the need of justice and freedom. Therefore, black literature by ending psychological, sociological and economical fabrication of race and racism reiterates the urgency of justice and freedom.

Chapter III

Sethe's Manifestation of Racial History and Injustice in *Beloved*

This chapter revolves around the specific question why Sethe in *Beloved* suffers and runs away from Sweet Home, focuses on racial history and injustice prevailing in black community and explores the voice of resistance for justice in the narrative. Morrison, in this novel, unearths black history and heritage and inspires her people, through characters and the stories they tell, to be culturally one for their liberation.

Beloved, with its complicated chronology, multiple plot lines and shifting points of view, is Morrison's historical novel which incorporates a documented event of the murder of a child by her fugitive slave mother, Margaret Garner in 1856. Garner is a role model for the black population in terms of refusing to comply with white orders and commandments and escaping from enslavement. She is a role model since what black population needs to enact in order to release themselves from being enervated is the path of Garner.

By glorifying the step taken by Garner, Frederick Douglass in his autobiographical writing *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave Written by Himself* clarifies how Garner takes the position of a role model in their community. He asserts that “. . . if one slave refused to be corrected, and escaped with his life, the other slaves would soon copy the examples; the result of which would be, the freedom of the slaves, and the enslavement of whites” (347). Black history has documented such events which are inspiring for black population to learn and act since the learning process of good or bad begins from the imitation and the good is copied ostensibly by the mass. Such incidents of a struggle for justice and equality stir the victims to simulate if justice and freedom are the demands of the

community. The presence of role models from history encourages oppressed people to follow their heroes and legendary figures. With reference to the act of Garner's escape, this chapter analyzes how Morrison's novel *Beloved* unearths black history and their struggle for justice.

As far as the history of black's struggle for justice and freedom is concerned, in *Beloved*, Morrison expounds a character named Sethe based upon the historical figure Margaret Garner. Sethe commits infanticide to avoid the child's slave life when she grows up. To think over Sethe's malicious act "Sethe's killing of her children can be read as an animal act of desperation or as a desperate human solution to the problem of saving beloved children from torment" (Greenbaum 86). Sethe's killing of her daughter does not mean that her child is a burden to her. In some incidents the purpose of the action justifies the event why it has taken place. Superficially it seems that mother Sethe is brutal to her children, but in depth she loves her children a lot and she does not want her children to suffer like her. She seems to be aware that fate is more throbbing than death itself. This historical event suggests that slavery in America is more painful than death since death ends life once but slavery kills a person many times in his/her life. *Beloved*, to array the theme of slavery and its impact upon the black population, revolves around Baby Suggs, Sethe, Paul D, Denver, Schoolteacher, Beloved, and the events take place in Sweet Home, Kentucky, Bluestone 124, Cincinnati, Ohio. Baby Suggs in Clearing connotes the African way of managing community with trauma and torment caused by any human/nature induced situation.

Furthermore, Morrison, in *Beloved*, connects past and present in terms of their life from the Middle Passage to contemporary slavery in America. Morrison remembers her ancestors who suffered and died during the Middle Passage and in

America. Lynda Koolish, on Morrison's concern of her ancestors, speculates that "Morrison . . . was not captured in Africa . . . could have no rational explanation for remembering in vivid detail her own ordeal on a slave ship during the Middle Passage, *Beloved* repeatedly returns to memories of the Middle Passage, the primal scene for sixty million Africans, the slave ships on which captives suffered and died" (170). Such replay of the past in her novel indicates her concern over African American history in her writing that contains suffering, violence, rape, burning, lynching, exclusion, discrimination and segregation.

Likewise, *Beloved* unfolds historical events full of atrocity upon the black population to share and remember in the artistic model. Morrison practices her own principle for writing in which she connects writing with the black life-world that demands the reenactment of history. The writing practice of Morrison manifests:

Morrison is both participant and theorist of black aesthetic of remembering, and she has recently set out some of the mandates for establishing a form of literary theory that will truly accommodate African-American literature – a theory based on an inherited culture, an inherited “history,” and the understanding of the ways – that any given artistic work negotiates between those cultural/historical worlds it inhabits. (Rushdy 568)

Morrison's writing revisits the past and history of black people which is throbbing with the realization of lost African culture and suffering of slavery and entrapment, and such cultural and historical world of black population can be found in Morrison's *Beloved*. Her novel includes the incidents—what happened to her people, what is happening and what may happen if the situation remains the same. Black literature entails the black life-world connected with social, political, economic and cultural issues.

Black literature has its own attitude— black aesthetic— which does not separate art and society. Black aesthetic associates text with context, words with world and emphasizes ethics and aesthetics as one and the same. The goal of literature is to change society by pointing out the evil practices society is enacting. Du Bois, on the goal of black literature, argues that “. . . the aesthetic realm has value only if it furthers a political cause . . .” (xiii); and he further concludes that “. . . all Art is propaganda and ever must be. . . . I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda” (qtd in Conner xiv). Such assumption of Du Bois suggests that black literature tends to help people to know themselves and prepare their people to struggle for political change at any time. Black writers, to accomplish this goal, feel the need of understanding the history that lets them know how they have been reduced to cipher and what their ancestors did to manumit from slavery. Sarah Webster Fabio states that “The move toward liberation from slave to serf to self, for Black folk, has meant a long, arduous trip. The history of this development, which we might call “The Black Experience,” has been chronicled in the annals of black literature” (173). Black literature documents the experience of the black population from the time of the Middle Passage to contemporary society. In such type of literature, there is a record of black life from Africa to the New World, where they are feeling the loss of their heritage and freedom.

In regard to the events from the time of the Middle Passage to now, black aesthetic focuses on politically motivated creation that helps black population have a deep understanding of the experience and leads them to the struggle for liberation from the shackles of racism and slavery. Dubey comments on black aesthetic that “. . . Black Aesthetic theory: its opposition of the oppressive past and the free future. Black aestheticians optimistically relegated negative stereotypes of the black to the historical

past” (95). Black aesthetic resists inhumanity imposed upon its people and spreads hope of emancipation in the people. Black writers, while producing a work, use a mode of consciousness to embed their people's reality with creation. *Beloved*, as the assumption of black aesthetic, is the product of historical moment in which Morrison presents the African American historiography.

Morrison, in *Beloved*, exerts a historical perspective that was missing before, and puts history moving backward and forward at the same time. In term of serving history in a literary work with purpose, Elsa Honing Fine claims “Art as propaganda, art to create national heroes, art to glorify historical events, art to dignify a people, art to interpret mass experience to the masses” (375). Art is created with the purpose of spreading certain kinds of information which helps promote ideas and achieve the goal. Black literature is goal oriented and the goal is to liberate the whole society from prejudice and proscription. So, it germinates from the mass and it is for the mass because black literature allows black readers to enter into and experience the same. When the mass does not take the problem of injustice as common problem change becomes impossible. In this regard, black writers include the events of mass experience which propel the victims for the urgency of unity and action.

The major thrusts of black aesthetic are black history, black culture, commitment to cultural revolution, political orientation and social engagement of literary work, psychological development of black population, functional value of literature for social change. These themes are associated with black literature and so these themes revolve around *Beloved*. *Beloved* allows black population to enter into the history and enables them to think and act about the present, where there is no justice, freedom and humanity, for social change.

Unearthing Racial History and Injustice with Black Aesthetic in *Beloved*

Beloved reenacts the past of racial violence and injustice to link the history of slavery. Black aesthetic advocates to feel the meaning of the history of their race and present the theme of cultural alienation, suffering, and violence in their writing. The motivation of the black aesthetic is to uncover the foe (slavery and racism) and support the action for change. Karenga, on the essence of black aesthetic emphasizes that "Black art must expose the enemy, praise the people and support the revolution" (32). Slavery, an enemy of blacks, has engulfed numerous Africans from the time they were kidnapped and bought in Africa to the contemporary time of chattel slavery. Morrison finds herself inalienable from her ancestors and pays homage to "Sixty Million and more" unknown ancestors who lost their lives in slavery. The epigraph of the novel not only remembers the ancestors it also makes contemporary readers realize the need of the past to help them know their history and feel the demand of struggle for justice. Heffernan, on *Beloved*, observes:

. . . Morrison's dedication to *Beloved* puts it –"Sixty Million and more" who died as slaves, many in the Middle Passage. Referring to those who died en route, she writes: "nobody knows their names, and nobody thinks about them. In addition to that, they never survived in the lore; there are no songs or dances or tales of these people. The people who arrived-there is lore about them. But nothing survives about . . . that. (560)

Morrison's dedication to sixty million and more ancestors who died and remained unknown to the black populace indicates the revival of the history of suffering. These people have been deliberately removed from American history in order to make them unknown. The oppressors are mindful of the impact of the loss of their ancestors. The reference to the loss and suffering of the ancestors is vicarious in the black

community, which is still in the form of slavery and racism though not in the pattern of the Middle Passage. The literary text like *Beloved* replays the totality of the history of alienation from their motherland and her values.

In this sense, *Beloved* links Africa to the New World to imply the suffering of her people and the end of this situation as soon as possible. The need of the black community today is to gain justice and freedom from oppressors, who assume slavery a god-ordained institution. The recurrent issue of slavery and injustice in black literature connotes the demand for justice and humanity. On the need of justice and freedom Assata Shakur insists that “We must defend ourselves and let no one disrespect us. We must gain our liberation by any means necessary” (75). Liberation of any community is promising when this community is committed to defying the insult and humiliation enforced upon them in whatsoever form. One of the necessary means of coming out of this condition is writing with the replication of true social practices. The characters, plot, and setting in *Beloved* imitate the unjust society, where black people have been ground by slavery and racism and propagate the idea that slavery and racism are to be eliminated soon for justice, freedom and equality by uncovering the experience of black people.

Moreover, *Beloved* provides evidence for the racial past that has haunted black population in the present. A baby girl has been murdered because of the stark brutality of slavery and her spirit has haunted her family and community and caused havoc. When the black community is followed by a racial past, their present becomes chaotic. Stephanie Li argues that “. . . Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), the resurrection of a murdered baby, or perhaps only the mother’s desire for dead child, offers a rich metaphor for how past traumas haunt the present” (3). The revival of the dead child metaphorically means the return of the wounds of slavery and racism. It

keeps on returning if the problem created by institutions is not cured in time. What cannot be cured must be endured but black people cannot withstand the torture of discrimination and segregation, so they are uniting their people to fight against oppressors. Morrison, through the character Beloved, wants to implicate that the history of the black population in America is traumatic and the whole community should act to heal the injury caused by racism and slavery. Ralph D. Story, on the pain of slavery, reports that "The trauma of slavery touches all of *Beloved's* characters—even the originally innocent" (25). The thirty women's attempt to exorcise the ghost is tantamount to a communal effort to end the extreme brutality of slavery, which has been etched in the plaque of black history in America.

Beloved switches from past to present and vice versa. The novel presents unjust, wicked and cruel aspects of slavery so the readers can understand the predicament of the black population. Memory guides an individual's action and for present action or the action in the future s/he needs to have knowledge of the past. Arthur A. Schomburg, on the connection of past and future, claims that "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future" (945). The awareness of the past can make a projection of the future. The knowledge of the past, for American blacks, is very pivotal, for it helps them to recover what slavery grabbed from them and the social damage caused by slavery can be repaired by the present generation.

The transmission of the events of slave trade to the present generation in *Beloved* signifies the importance of justice to black community to soothe their wounds of slavery. Sethe knows about her mother from Nan, a friend of her mother and finds out:

. . . her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew. “She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The others she did not put her arms around. Never. Never. Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe. (74)

The transport of the slave was horrible and they were compelled to throw their children not because they were wicked and cruel but because slavery was ruthless. Sethe’s mother threw many children off the ship and it seems to be very brutal. Nan’s account of this moment is inhuman and vicious which no human race can imagine. The inclusion of such account of the Middle Passage in fiction intensifies black history of misery in the past. Morrison seems successful to enliven the history of loss be it people, history or heritage in this novel.

Moreover, *Beloved*, to meet the political goal, informs black population about their past, history and heritage. By alluding to the Middle Passage, Morrison, on one hand pays tribute to thousands of black people who suffered and died during the Middle Passage; on the other hand, she transfers painful black history to the younger generation. History can propel the oppressed to terminate the evils imposed upon them by the oppressor and to achieve the goal of freedom struggle is a precondition to them. “If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up” (11). Remaining silent on oppressors’ activities of exclusion does keep the oppressed stagnant and change becomes impossible. Paul D has the opinion that black people should use body parts to keep them active or else they remain idle in life accepting the situation that is not in their favor. He implies the never-ending agitation against injustice, if they remain silent on injustice and brutality

the oppressor thinks that they are satisfied with the status quo ante. Historical events of injustice and brutality are the striking forces, which do not let them remain silent and satisfied, to invigorate black population to move on without losing the spirit of action for change.

Black people are not content with the present situation because of the deprivation of the natural rights of their body. Regardless of psychological, economic and cultural matters, white people have grabbed everything from the black in physical form. In *Beloved*, Morrison manifests how Sethe was robbed by the white boys by taking her milk. Black children have their natural right to have their mother's milk, but they were deprived of it, too. Sethe describes this event while she is talking to Paul D:

. . . those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak. . . . Them boys found out I told on them. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still." "They used cowhide on you?" "And they took my milk." "They beat you and you was pregnant?" "They took my milk! (19-20)

Sethe knows the boys who steal her milk and reports but she gets whips of cowhide from the Schoolteacher in return. Moreover, the welts of the whip are there on her back in a tree shape, and this tree on her back is the live history of atrocious slavery against humanity. The projection of such historical event in the narrative stresses the violation of the rights of blacks and agitates them to speak against injustice.

Black aesthetic reveals the enemies of black population and such hostile elements are limpid in black writing. Schoolteacher, in *Beloved*, stands as an enemy of black population who is committed to maintaining racism and racial violence. The

Schoolteacher has been projected as an epitome of brutality and a medium of cultural aggression who puts evil ideas, evil institutions and negative values into black community. In Paul D's experience "Nothing in the world more dangerous than a white schoolteacher" (314). Schoolteachers are believed to be the extinguisher of ignorance and evil but here, schoolteacher leaves black population benighted. Such people teach black people to be white racists on television, radio, commercials and in school by putting false assumptions that whites are superior and the black inferior, and they should comply with the whites.

The Schoolteacher is the agent of racism and slavery that teaches irrationality to benefit racism and slavery. The more he misguides black community the longer racism and slavery benefit them. The agents of racism and slavery keep beguiling the black and maintaining their so-called norms. His role of misguiding ignorant blacks demonstrates as:

Schoolteacher was teaching us things we couldn't learn. I didn't care nothing about the measuring string. We all laughed about that-except Sixo. He didn't laugh at nothing. I didn't care. Schoolteacher'd wrap that string all over my head, 'cross my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth. I thought he was a fool. And the questions he asked was the bigger foolishness of all. (226)

The schoolteacher, here, implants the ideas that black people cannot agree to take as knowledge. Education fills the gaps among people that has been created on the whims. It unifies people as a single human race and helps promote harmony. The schoolteacher, in the novel, does the opposite because he delivers education with a vested interest- maintaining the gap between the two races and benefiting the whites. White people classify black people as lower creature and primitive by measuring body parts and organs. The education system in America has complied with a racial

ideology that remains an obstacle for the liberation of black people. However, black community resolves to end defective education system for social justice by documenting such events in the storylines.

Furthermore, the education system with racial ideology has divided society in terms of quality and skills. Education system in America has produced blue collar workers and white collar workers on the basis of what race they belong to. White people are intended as white collar workers and black as blue collar. Maya Angelou, in her essay "Graduation" discusses on discrimination in education:

. . . one of the South's A & M (agricultural and mechanical) schools, which trained Negro youths to be carpenters, farmers, handymen, masons, maids, cooks and baby nurses. Their future rode heavily on their shoulders, and blinded them to the collective joy that had pervaded the lives of the boys and girls the grammar school graduating class. (46)

Black boys and girls are trained to do only the physical work since they are excluded from the table work. In racial society black people are assumed proper in physical work and improper in mental work.

Such kind of education system is certain to produce different citizens in different races. So Angelou further contends "The white kids were going to have a chance to become Galileos and Madame Curies and Edisons and Gauguins, and our boys (the girls weren't even on it) would try to be Jesse Owens and Joe Louises" (51). Angelou means here that American education system is classifying the society in which white children are having the education that makes them artists and scientists and black children, only male, are groomed merely for physical work. This education system sustains as long as black community does not raise voice against white supremacy being united.

Education in just society mediates peace and harmony. However, when the means of education triggers knowledge by expressing preconceived opinion, its consequences become pernicious. The schoolteacher, in the novel, is implanting poisonous tree of race which benefits whites immediately but it is malicious in term of establishing graceful relation between black and white. Wisker explores that “Schoolteacher’s misuse of knowledge gives him and the white man power over their designated as only fit for scientific categorization rather than human relationships and respect” (50). The harmony and progress of the society evolves when education system proves to be fair and just. Fair and just education develops wisdom in people and it is concerned with the happiness of the people living together. Proper education practiced in daily life is the linchpin of altruism which is urgently needed in racial society. People like schoolteacher help add ghee to the fire of racism than putting off the flame of prejudice. Morrison, in this novel, raises question against racial education and makes her people aware in replacing this knowledge system by scientific education for justice. In reference to black writers, black aesthetic nurtures questions of some practices that the rational society quashes and demands the establishment of human values— love, compassion, benevolence, generosity, and justice.

In this regard, black aesthetic champions social change and helps involve the process of undoing racial injustice by overwriting the events of racial violence and brutality. The revision of the subject of racial atrocity in any form of art indicates the severity of the matter. Many literary texts have been written on racial issues and Morrison repeats the same and replays the historical events to communicate the urgency of change in *Beloved*. Baraka, regarding the role of the artists, argues that “We must be political activists, whose art is our weapon, our tool, our contribution to

worldwide African liberation” (29). In black literature, writing tends to fortify black community with the knowledge of how they have been oppressed, exploited and degraded. Black writers are supposed to be political activists who exert art and literature to strengthen their people for achieving the goal of emancipation.

Morrison, here, arouses her community for change by serving the novel of racial past as the black aesthetic focuses on the past of brutality and the act of revolt against the oppressors for social justice in the present. Slavery is so brutal that thousands of black families have been dispersed, maimed, lynched, and lost. White people, for Baby Suggs, are the most ferocious beings in the world. No one can become happy and prosperous as long as white people are there: “Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed,” . . . and broke my heartstrings too. There is no bad luck in the world but whitefolks” (104-5). White people have grasped life, land, family, culture, happiness that are the basic things in the life of the black in the New World. Black people have never been happy being in the company of white. White people intrude in black community with racism and it has always caused a kind of damage in their community. Poverty and deprivation in black population is caused by racism and racial laws. Morrison means that slavery and racism and their agents are hindering the progress of black community by monopolizing justice, freedom and equality. Black writing as an advocate of social morality posits the hurdles of black advancement that have gone rancid while the white oppressors have grown unnaturally.

Black writing is concerned with the account of black life that has haunted the black community of which they are unable to escape from. *Beloved* serves the content of the history and psychological expansion of black population in the absence of peace and justice. Black people, in any historical period, do not have the record of

living peaceful life. From the day black people encountered whites, they have experienced brutality and inhumanity and the loss of freedom. Paul D's experience in terms of his brothers manifests:

During, before and after the War he had seen Negroes so stunned, or hungry, or tired or bereft it was a wonder they recalled or said anything. Who, like him, had hidden in caves and fought owls for food; who, like him, stole from pigs; who, like him, slept in trees in the day and walked by night; who, like him, had buried themselves in slop and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollers, veterans, hill men, posses and merrymakers. . . . He saw a witless coloredwoman jailed and hanged for stealing ducks she believed were her own babies. (78)

Black people, in any period of time, have been tormented and yet they have tolerated. The history of Negro survival in America shows that they have borne severe punishment for trifling events. Bite and sip are rare even if they have given life and labor to the country. They have always the fear of oppressors from whom they can be caught, jailed or lynched. What Paul D experiences and sees about his people is the common thing happening recurrently in black population. Such kind of situation in black population indicates the wild condition black people are bearing and witness their brethren undergoing maltreatment in racial society.

Moreover, black writing explores black life-world that are intricately connected with slavery and injustice, the aftermath of racism. The injustice in racial society is so severe that black population is vulnerable in each and all moments. They cannot look straight or walk in front of an oppressor, let alone opposing them. They have to bear big punishment for small mistake. The tree on the back of Sethe is the result of her glance of the oppressor. Denver points the marks on the back and

wonders how it happened, “Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. What God have in mind, I wonder. I had some whippings, but I don’t remember nothing like this. Mr. Buddy had a right evil hand too. Whip you for looking at him straight. Sure would. I looked right at him one time and he hauled off and threw the poker at me” (93). Seeing, walking, speaking are the natural rights of human being which no one can restrain but in racial society natural rights have been seized by the whites. Black people in the New World have lost their natural rights and the oppressors raid them if they practice natural rights without the permission of the oppressors. Sethe and Denver’s conversation manifests how fragile the black population is and how law and action are controlled by the oppressors. Sethe is carrying the marks of injustice and such marks of atrocity have infiltrated black community. These wounds of discrimination are bleeding all the time and black community cannot take the breath of relief as long as they are not cured.

Black aesthetic cannot ignore the marks of the painful past since its substratum is the painful history of slavery. Black aesthetic excavates the oppression and suppression imposed upon the black and reveals the mutilations its people are bearing. *Beloved* manifests the scars of slavery on the bodies of black characters. Almost all characters are carrying scars on their bodies and these deformities arouse the consciousness of black community that slavery is monstrous, which is recorded on victims’ bodies. Sethe has a scar on her back and Corey draws attention on the scars of Sethe that “the scar is an emblem of Sethe’s suffering, degradation, and fear which has marked her psychically and physically” (36). These scars are the wounds of slavery that keep on bleeding in black population. These scars of discrimination are fresh and black writers make their people aware of how these wounds can be cured. In the novel the characters who are from the black population and the victim of

slavery remind the history of brutality in their bodies. These wounds in black character force black population to think about taking action against such institutions that have abused the law to continue maiming and injuring the black.

Similarly, in the novel, Morrison uses scars on the bodies of the characters as tropes which connect the characters with slavery. These blemishes intensify situations that the mutilations of slavery have deeply embedded in black community and they revive over time. Baby Suggs has injured her hip and walks with a limp “when she hurt her hip in Carolina she was a real bargain. . . . Because of the hip she jerked like a three-legged dog when she walked. . . . Her hip hurt every single day-but she never spoke of it” (164). Sethe’s mother, Ma’am has a burned mark of a cross in her skin “Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin” (72). Nan has lost her one arm “Leave her in the yard with a one-armed woman?” (240). Ella has a mark of rope around her waist; and Paul D is carrying a mark of iron collar on his neck.

Morrison by portraying characters' wounds tactfully reminds her people of the wounds of insult and humiliation that human civilization cannot forget at any moment in history. Cynthia Dobbs, on the scars of the characters, examines:

The crucial interface between body and story throughout *Beloved* is marked by the scar. Scared bodies are everywhere in the novel . . . these scars also foreground an insistent collective history of slavery. Because scarred bodies are literally marked with the violent history of their past, this past cannot be forgotten. Scars thus function as signs of a narrative of pain. They beg to be read, their originary moments remembered and retold. (575)

The scars on the body of black people are the story of slavery and they have been imprinted in American history. American history has not been written about what

people said and thought about the events. What America has hidden in American history is evident in the bodies of black people which are engraved with the scars. All these scars indicate the slaves' bodies as a canvas on which slavery and racism has been etched. These scars are the marks of slavery that can be analyzed as the complex social world of slavery and its moral failure.

The scars of slavery and exclusion are the recurring themes of black literature. Morrison begins the novel with an apparent example of excluding black people from social network and identity. It begins with a place which has a code "124 was spiteful" (3). This number is an address of the place which does not have any name. This number signifies the loss of identity of Sethe and her community. Whites are hesitant to give anything basic to the life of black population. But they have not spared anyone or anything in use from black people. Martin R. Delany, regarding the exploitation of his people, contends:

Our fathers are their coachmen, our brothers their cookmen, and ourselves their waiting-men. Our mothers their nurse-women, our sisters their scrub-women, our daughters their maid-women, and our wives their washer-women. Until colored men, attain to a position above permitting their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, to the drudgery and menial offices of other men's wives and daughter: it is useless, it is nonsense, it is pitiable mockery, to talk about equality and elevation in society. (210-11)

There exists long history of exploitation and oppression of black people. The exploitation of the black ranks from children to adults, on the basis of the need of the whites. Any society, in the world, moves ahead with the principle of give and take but black people have been forced to give only and excluded from the system of the nation. Delany's voice, the voice of all black population, nullifies the probability of

equality in America as long as his brethren are fixed in status quo ante. It is the norm of black aesthetic which contends the discrimination forced upon powerless black and stresses elevation of its people by sharing people's horrendous past.

So, black aesthetic emphasizes sharing past and experiences of their people so that they can know present political events and project the future of just society. Baby Suggs has long experience of a slave and freedom. She shares her experience with Sethe and Denver that white's ferocity is really intolerable and she wants the end of this situation. She puts her painful experience as a lesson she has learned from white in front of Sethe and Denver that ". . . she had learned from her sixty years of a slave and ten years free: that there was no bad luck in the world but white people. "They don't know when to stop . . ." (122-23). White people, as a disaster, make black people homeless, hopeless and helpless. The presence of white people in black community is the end of their happiness, hope and fortune.

Suggs's experience with whites has been repeated in the novel and this repetition signifies the magnitude of justice the black community has needed, but they do not know when this brutality stops. Du Bois, on the exploitation of black people, claims that "The exploitation of black population in slavery is long and condemnable. "White man sits down whole year; Nigger work day and night and make crop; Nigger hardly gits bread and meat; white man sittin' down gits all. It's wrong" (71). Work and food go side by side and workable people never suffer from food and drinks but racism violates the rights of food and drink in order to maintain gaps and the position of superior and inferior. The injustice towards black community is inherent in this practice and Baby Suggs transfers her experience to another generation and implants the idea of eliminating it.

The experience of the black in the face of oppression causes to sprout black aesthetic in which the whole way of the life of black population matters. Black aesthetic is genial in making the invisible black life-world visible. The black's experience of despair and death in America can be understood from Sweet Home where men are working as slaves. Sweet Home can be judged from two angles: one the time of Mr Garner and another the time of Schoolteacher. One is liberal and another is brutal and inhuman. Sweet Home shares common ground, though run by two people with different nature, of chattel slavery. Black slaves are the property of the white owner which they can sell and exchange when they think is needed. There is not value of slaves in person, especially after the Schoolteacher takes over the farm. The Schoolteacher's practice of handling black people in the farm after he takes over shows:

It was schoolteacher taught them otherwise. A truth that waved like a scarecrow in rye: they were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home. One step off that ground and they were trespassers among the human race. Watchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses whose neigh and whinny could not be translated into a language responsible humans spoke. His strength had lain in knowing that schoolteacher was wrong. (147-48).

The name of the farm signifies a good place to live in but it is ironical. Sweet Home is parallel to America, which is assumed to be the most democratic country in the world but blacks are the victims of American democracy. And moreover, Sweet Home is corresponding to white people who look fair and clean in their appearance but they are decayed and rotten within. In contrast to them, black people look sable, dirty and backward but they are innocent, trustworthy, loyal and humane in nature. The Sweet

Home and Schoolteacher manifest the contrasting nature of two races and the suffering of good which is sardonic.

In response to the suffering of black community, black aesthetic provides an occasion with serving the idea of social morality in relation to political ideals. American democracy, in terms of black population, is untenable since democracy in content does not rule the society by dividing it. Democratic society believes in egalitarian social order in which justice, rights and opportunities are evident to all children of God but America has monopolized these values in term of white people. Because of dual standard of America, American democracy has been challenged by different critics and scholars. Malcolm X contends on the position of America that “You and I have never seen democracy; all we’ve seen is hypocrisy. . . . We don’t see any American dream. We’ve experienced only the American nightmare” (84). America is a land of opportunity as well as progress but it is only for the privileged groups. Excluded groups, such as the black, from the mainstream have been shattered in every domain of life and the quality of life is dwindling. Morrison, through *Sweet Home*, presents the reality of America that all men are not treated equally in terms of their qualities, but rather in their color. The fact of America is different from its appearance as claimed by Malcolm X.

Each individual whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white, man or woman, religious or pagan has their value in society. But American democracy has been spoiled by racial ideology where people, other than whites, have no value, or their value or position has been relegated below animals. They compare human (black) value with an object and its monetary value; and such objectification of human body is obvious in *Beloved*. “Unlike a snake or a bear, a dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own dead weight in coin” (174/75).

The comparison of the black with animals in terms of monetary value is the extreme of materialism. Such incidents suggest the spiritual sterility of America where human values are trifle. In chattel slavery, the value of a slave is his/her worth and the dead body of the slave is worthless since neither its skin nor its bones are useful after death. The relegation of human values below animals in a democratic country ridicules the system.

Furthermore, history and historical events are recurrent in black literature and black aesthetic deals with black history in literary production. *Beloved* offers data and time when black people are under the attack of white people. As Baby Suggs says white people are bad luck of black population in the world, the approach of whites is a sign of disaster in black life-world. One such disaster took place in 1874, which Stamp Paid explains:

Eighteen seventy-four and whitefolks were still on the loose. whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing. The stench stank. (212)

In American history terror and violence are consecutive and its victims are the black. Black people and their institutions are ravaged, demoralized and damaged in order to suppress their voice of equality and justice. Such events demonstrate how brutal racism is, and how irrational its actors are. In a short period of time, so many black people become victims of racial violence and atrocity; and moreover, it is really

inexplicable how many women are raped, people are killed, lynched, burned, and maimed in a long history of racism and slavery.

The use of violence by white people upon black is the racial norm. They behave as if black needed action to be changed and corrected, not the words. “White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle” (234). Dark skin for white oppressors is a benchmark of naivety. Barbarity and bestiality are labelled as characteristic traits of black people. Humane behavior is rare to be shown to the black population. Corporal punishment is an initial step of correcting a black person. The Schoolteacher indicts Sixo of stealing and eating a shoat but Sixo defends it that it is not stealing but improving his property. He reports the beating of the Schoolteacher that “. . . schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers, not the defined” (225). Black people cannot say what is right and what is wrong. Right or wrong is defined by the whites. Those who are in power have the privilege to give meaning to anything.

Moreover, racial ideology has made white people deaf and blind to the voice and condition of the black and the black people dumb because the agents of racism have used violence and terror to shut them up. Such agents are here and there in American society who abuse the law and the black. Hafi illustrates that “Schoolteacher is the representation of the dominant ideology and the political power that uses authority and the physical force against the “defined” the powerless, the marginalized, the bestialized” (95). Here, Schoolteacher means that Sixo does not have any position to define because he is a slave and the Schoolteacher his master. On making definition, Baraka explains that “The person who defines is the person who has the power. Definitions are made with guns; the persons with most guns give out most definitions” (23). Definers are born from the barrel of guns and the defined are

controlled and destroyed by those guns. However, the definers do not seem aware that this situation can be reversed and they can be controlled. Black aesthetic envisions mutability of time and the inversion of power. Black aesthetic is engaged in shattering the authority of oppressors by educating them that power achieved through gun does not cling to a person or group long. Morrison, in the novel, projects the Schoolteacher in order to unearth extreme of oppressors and give good reason for the end of this situation.

Like the Schoolteacher, the extreme of the agents of racism and slavery is all pervasive in black life-world. Racism and slavery are infiltrated in all domains of black life in which black women are deprived of maternal love and care. They are compelled to bear children as the property of the master. Mother and children are separated as if they did not have any emotional attachment. “Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that, but they have to have as many children as they can to please whoever owned them” (247). Slave women bear children to make their master happy since many children for the master is the promotion of his/her property. Baby Suggs had eight children from different men but she is empty now. She says, “I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody’s house into evil” (7). Mother and children get separated with tears after they are sold and they never see one another, “The sold one never returned, the lost one never found” (147). Family is the most important part of life in which happiness is guaranteed but black people are deprived of the happiness in family union.

In racism and slavery, happiness of intact family and their union does not matter and so the oppressors sell children and their parents to different customers from different places. Such kind of trading of slaves violates the natural right of

people living happily with family or whosoever. Racial law and practices are devoid of humanity and the adequacy of savagery. Sethe, after she leaves Sweet Home, realizes and describes that “I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn’t love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t mine to love” (190). Maternal love to their children is a crime while they are in master’s vicinity. As black aesthetic champions honesty in writing, Morrison is speaking honestly to the reader that slavery and racism are atrocious and black community should struggle against them for dignity and humanity.

Since dignity and humanity are basic values of human race, blacks have the right to bear and practice them. In order to alienate black population from the knowledge of such values they have been deprived of education and health. Education and health keep the mind and body sound to think and act properly. Racism and slavery are dealing with black strategically. Regarding the strategy of whites Nathan Hare observes that “Once we had only the land. The white man came and brought us the Bible. Now we have the Bible, and they have the land.” To accomplish this piracy- and retain the loot indefinitely-it was of course necessary to control the minds and bodies of the subjugated blacks” (178). The entrance of white people in Africa was a deliberate scheme of whites to control land and life of black people by imposing religious creeds upon innocent and ignorant minds. They have succeeded in making black people the slaves of whites and perpetuating this practice. Slavery has been sustained with the strategy of education and religion. Physical and mental health of a Negro is related to the benefit of the master, not the health of a slave. Physical fitness for menial work and mental health are concerned with the submissive and docile nature of the black. Education makes people confident and decisive and this

could be counteractive to racism and slavery, so oppressors prevent the black from education to control the mind.

Morrison, in *Beloved*, notes the same strategy of depriving black population of education that “The colored population of Cincinnati had two graveyards and six churches, but since no school or hospital was obliged to serve them, they learned and died at home” (291). This provision indicates that slavery wants black community to be living in ignorance, since the more ignorant blacks are the longer the racism and slavery survive. White people seem to be active and concerned over those things that benefit the whites and stagnate the black. Hare, on the dishonesty of whites, states that “Blacks were taught to worship a god who was always painted white, and then, to sing that they wanted to “be more and more like Jesus” who would be riding six white horses when He comes” (180). White people mean to make the black people realize that the creator was white and white people are close to the creator. They need to serve whites and make them happy in order to make the God happy. Black people, from all around, have been indoctrinated that whites are superior, they should be served and obeyed for redemption from suffering.

The condition of slaves is always topsy-turvy whether they are still a slave or have got freedom. They do not have life in person when they are slaves. A slave is an object that is transacted at the whim of the master. When they buy their freedom anyway, there is no fixed place to go and work to do. They spend all their lives in uncertainty. Morrison speculates that “Slave life; freed life – every day was a test and a trial. Nothing could be counted on in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem” (302). Slave life is full of riddles and when a solution is found the solution itself becomes a problem. The law of nature is replacement and the chaos in a slave’s life should/will be replaced by order and harmony. For order and harmony

black people should learn from the past, so Morrison reveals painful history in the novel. The revelation of history intends black community to learn and feel, or “If we don’t learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it . . .” (Carmichael 127). The repetition of racial history is sure to damage black population more. It is the cleverness of the black to replace the history of savagery by revolting against racism and slavery. Black aesthetic rationalizes black population how violent and discriminatory events have recurrently repeated in racial society and caused social, political and economic damage. This novel moves readers from the past to the present in order to inform them the loss of rightful position they are bearing in the New World.

Along with the knowledge of suffering of its people in different periods of time, black aesthetic not only makes black people aware of their social, political, economic condition in the New World, but also connects their souls with African practices. Black people all over the world are of African descents and in art and literature African roots, humanity, collectivity and myths are embedded. Morrison, in *Beloved*, presents an old character Baby Suggs who works for the community by exerting African practices. Baby Suggs serves her people by “Giving advice; passing messages; healing the sick, hiding fugitives, loving, cooking, cooking, loving, preaching, singing, dancing and loving everybody like it was her job and hers alone” (161). Baby Suggs is an old timer who can connect past with present, motherland with the New World. She is mindful about her people and their mutilations caused by slavery and racism.

Black population is traumatized by racism and slavery, and to release them from traumatic disorder she collects them in the Clearing and uses spiritual way of managing it. In the Clearing “It started that way: laughing children, dancing men,

crying women and then it got mixed up. . . . In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart” (103). Baby Suggs is not only an individual she is an African heritage and so she is responsible to her people. She adopts a holy way of bringing people together and heal their wounds made by racism and slavery. Roxanne R. Reed, on Suggs, explains that “Though she was advanced in age and physically worn when she was liberated, Baby Suggs used what she had left to help the people in the community, her heart; she became a preacher” (56).

Communality is an African legacy which does not let any individual ignore their people in need. While American individualism has shattered family life African people are still attached to their community for integrity. Baby Suggs is a responsible member of black community who can help people in the community become liable with their sources.

Baby Suggs, as an agent of African heritage, reminds her people about their responsibility to prop in the progress of their community in the New World. Black aesthetic prides on African roots: communality, spirituality and humanity as African heritage. Going back to African roots, for black people, is not savagery but a culture. Morrison’s character Baby Suggs bears the spirit of communal responsibility of healing in the African way which is getting forgotten in New World. Baby Suggs teaches her people to love themselves where they have been mortified and ignored. When they love themselves they learn to love others and liberation of the community becomes possible. Baby Suggs chooses Clearing for privacy and blacks are inherently connected with nature. This Clearing is away from oppressors and her teaching to her people emphasizes:

Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and dance; backs that need support; shoulder that need arms, strong arms I’m telling you. And O my

people, out yonder, hear me they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight.
 So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. And all
 you inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them.
 The dark, dark liver- love it, love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that
 too. (105)

Charity begins at home; no one can help anyone unless they help themselves. Blacks are to struggle in future for justice and so they should keep their spirit high for changes in future. What Baby Suggs produces here is her experience of being a slave and a free woman. She knows that being slave as well as a freeman in the New World is a struggle. No one knows how long they should suffer and struggle. Suggs counsels her people to remain fit physically and emotionally so that they can beat the hurdles ahead.

Morrison, through her characters, conveys the message that black people cannot live in peace and happiness as long as white people are not distanced from them. The fear of black is slavery which is more intolerable than death. Paul D is concerned with Sethe if she is able to bear the loss of a daughter, who is dead, and two sons have left home. Paul D wonders "Your boys gone you don't know where. One girl dead, the other won't leave the yard. How did it work?" (194). Sethe is happy that "They ain't at Sweet Home. Schoolteacher ain't got em" (194). Black community seems to be aware of the two aspects of life: death and fate. Death gives pain but it can be momentary since people begin to forget with the course of time but fate torments the whole life. The encounter of black people with white oppressors is their fate that has haunted the whole community of the black. Sethe seems to be satisfied with the loss of her children because they are not vulnerable to the fate caused by slavery. Morrison's characters know the significance of freedom and the

horror of slavery. Sethe does not have moral liberty to murder her daughter but she has done right by killing her daughter since slavery for them is more dreadful than any other losses.

In regard to black community, black aesthetic, as Neal posits, opposes and annihilates white things, ideas and the way of looking at the world. *Beloved* lambasts white assumption that black people are barbarous, violent, evil, impure, ugly and parochial since there is jungle under black skin. Black people cannot be tantamount to white because whites are rational, pure, good, civilized, beautiful and universal.

Beloved contends:

But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks plant in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse that even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. (234)

Black community sees jungle under white skin and it sounds logical since in human history white people have involved themselves in such a brutal activity that civilized society cannot imagine. White people have strategically ascribed their guilty behaviors to black and so they can claim to the world that they are civilized and black people primitive. The rationality of black people has uncovered the hypocrisy of the oppressors.

Furthermore, it is the psychological condition of whites who try to cover their evils by indicting the black. Whites are guilty in terms of their maltreatment to the black and it is deeply rooted in their unconscious. They are afraid of their culpability and they want to keep such things in their unconscious otherwise they haunt and

torment them. One process of handling such guilt is projection which helps repress those feelings which cannot be held. Lois Tyson discusses about projection and defines it as “. . . *Projection* (ascribing our fear, problem, or guilty desire to someone else and then condemning him or her for it, in order to deny that we have it ourselves)” (15). It is obvious that projection is the way of denying ones guilty behavior that they have done and strongly placed in the unconscious. White people have tormented black community and it is the remorse of the whole race. In the record of racism and slavery black people “. . . had been killed, maimed, or cut or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stamped or raped or cheated . . .” (183). Such events of crime are boiling in the psyche of whites and to soothe them they are labelling the black as violent, barbaric and uncivilized—grown from jungle. In reality such manners and maltreatment towards human beings have never been done by the black. The white assumption of jungle is the negative connotation that black people carry and helps white to misrepresent African descents. But jungle is a heritage for the black; their lives become incomplete while missing jungle, river, and farm from their lives. Blacks grew up with jungle and it has taught to be calm, natural, and developed the quality of being tolerant.

Black aesthetic, Karenga says, praises their people and supports revolution. *Beloved* revolts against slavery and its evil practices that have been pernicious to black population. In slavery, slaves got their names from their masters. Name is the collective identity of one's own community. But racial practices deprived the slaves of their own family name as per their culture. After Emancipation Proclamation, what slaves did first was the change of their surname. Shakur stresses on such incident and explains:

After slavery, many Black people refused to use the last names of their masters. They called themselves “Freedman” instead. The name was also used by Africans who were freed before slavery was “officially” abolished, but it was mainly after the abolition of chattel slavery that many Black people changed their names to Freedman. (33)

The encroachment of whites upon black essence is intolerable and black people are always waiting for the moment of gaining it. The change of names means that slaves want to be free and identified on their own culture.

Morrison, in *Beloved*, alludes the historical events of blacks’ yearning for the revival of their cultural values and their action. When Mr Garner says that he took Baby Suggs out of Carolina, Whitlow called her Jenny Whitlow and it was written so in the bill. Baby Suggs responds “No, sir. If he did I didn’t hear it.” “. . . but Suggs is what my husband name.” . . . “Suggs is my name, sir. From my husband. He didn’t call me Jenny” (167). Baby Suggs rejects the name that was given to her by her white master. Baby Suggs herself is the history of savage slavery, which has detached black population from their African language, territory and culture. Suggs’s rejection implies that black population’s liberation from injustice becomes possible to achieve and maintain if they reject racial values and cling to their own culture.

In addition, in *Beloved*, Morrison implies that the frequent misuse of power results in resistance. Slavery has been documented as an institution of atrocity and inhumanity and because of the extreme behavior of whites black people, though uneducated, have learned the value of justice and freedom. Black people cannot do anything except running away whose aftermath is really horrendous if unfortunately they are caught and remanded in slavery. Black people resisted white extremity by running away, whatsoever the result it would bring. Paul D cannot withstand

Schoolteacher's abuse in Sweet Home and runs away. "For many years Paul D believed schoolteacher broke into children what Garner had raised into men. And it was that that made them run off" (260). Situation teaches one to decide what to do and what not to do. Black population is proceeding ahead to liberation because of the brutal behavior of racism and slavery. Paul D's escape from South to North is the progress from injustice to justice, savagery to freedom, and inequality to equality. Mass migration of the black from South to North in the twenties is the black community's rationality for freedom, justice and equality.

Besides, Morrison, in *Beloved*, uses vernacular, which is one of the aspects of black aesthetic, and it is performative and public by nature. Vernacular includes spirituals, ballads, work songs, the blues, folktales, secular rhymes and songs. Her characters sing when their heart is filled with woes. It is the African culture that sings rather than speaks to express their pains. Capuano, on the inclusion of song in *Beloved*, asserts:

Often in *Beloved* when characters cannot read or write or even talk about the brutality they experience as slaves, they sing to affirm their participation in life and defend their status as human beings. Song offers slaves the opportunity to express their personal testimonies while remaining within the framework of their larger cultural experiences. . . . (96)

Songs are African heritage which are found in public rather than on the pages of a book. Paul D sings a song which he learned in prison farm, Sweet Home or after Civil War.

Paul D sings song on the condition of black community upon whom only the work is imposed but the basic right of a person has been eliminated. Food and work go side by side and the avoidance of apt food from a worker is an injustice.

Little rice, little bean,

No meat in between,

Hard work ain't easy,

Dry bread ain't greasy. (italics original 48)

This is the song of his painful experience in Sweet Home which indicates the imposition of hard work without proper diet. It is an act of inhumanity of slavery to give work without food and diet. As Du Bois said white have the choice of food and rest, black people have only the work day and night without any gain. Such a bias does not end until black population gets its status in racial society.

Black literature intends to create and share collective experience. Morrison's *Beloved* artistically presents collective experience of slavery and racism and their learning from the situation. Morrison considers collective experience as a driving force to liberate black population from the shackles of slavery and racism. She feels the need of passing story of experience to another generation and she ends the novel with "It was not a story to pass on" (323), which is really tricky. Stories have been passed on in literary text like *Beloved*, and it will be passed on in future, too. She changes the tense "It is not a story to pass on" (324), to mean the need of continual transfer of the past of slavery and racism, in which black population can involve into collective memories that motivate for the struggle of justice, equality and freedom. Regarding Morrison's share of history or the past Robert L. Broad observes that "For the benefit of anyone who might need convincing that history of African Americans qualifies as suppressed, destroyed or denied, Morrison lays down her evidence before her book even begins with her dedication of the novel to "*Sixty Million or more*" (193). Telling hi/story helps find information of their ancestors from the ash heap of American history, which has not explained the victim of African genocide. American

history has totally forgotten the contribution of black people, who have played crucial role in building America a developed country, rather they have been demonized in their history.

Morrison's Call for Freedom and Justice

Black aesthetic asserts that art is political and socially engaged so it aims at helping black population and world know the history of racism and slavery and motivate them to fight for justice. Black aesthetic does not detach and distance black population from African history and heritage. It is the duty of black writers to promote political movement for change without damaging their cultural values whose roots are in Africa. The principle of black literature labels a literary work as infected if it does not have any political element. Black writers work with pride upon their ancestors, myth and legend to achieve their political goal. Black aesthetic nullifies the contradiction between ethics and aesthetics, which is dominant in traditional aesthetics. In black literature writers are the leaders who work on their writing to change society. Black literature should be a tool to liberate black population from the oppression and exploitation of racism and slavery in which black writers cannot be independent of their people.

Black and white characters, representing their community, have acted in the novel. Black characters remind the history of their motherland and slavery, and struggle for their identity and justice. History (slavery in America) and heritage (African) revolve around these characters. These characters are literal as well as metaphorical in terms of the problem they are bearing for a long time. On the other hand, white characters are projected successfully to demonstrate the terrific example of racial evils. Such racial evils represented by white characters have caused hellish life of black community.

In summing up, *Beloved* involves the components of black aesthetic and intents to establish justice and freedom. This novel as a whole is an initiation to set black community free from the shackles of servitude and gain justice. On the struggle of black for freedom and justice Alex Zanlin claims that "*Beloved* reveals the importance of unconditional forms of assistance for racial justice" (210). There is widespread dehumanizing characteristic of slavery in the novel. The murder of daughter by Sethe retrieves the historical event, in which Margaret Garner escapes with her family but the approach of slave-catcher makes her attempt to kill her four children though only a baby girl dies in the end. The cruel behavior toward slaves in Sweet Home demonstrates the power exercise of whites backed by all the institutions that monitor and maintain rule of justice. Black people, in the novel, suffer from social degradation, economic exploitation. They have been politically excluded and oppressed.

Moreover, Baby Suggs rationalizes her people by sharing her experience, works by maintaining the communality, the African heritage. Black people as an individual can and should help their people, like Baby Suggs, protect their spirituality and protest against the viciousness of slavery. *Beloved* makes black community aware to gain physical liberation as well as psychological liberation. Physical liberation is the freedom from racialized society which has shackled them from gaining physical and political power in the society. The psychological liberation is deeply associated with black culture because culture is the foundation of all thoughts and actions. In this novel, Morrison is successful in promoting physical as well as psychological dimension of the black.

In this way, as black aesthetic focuses on the past and concerns over the future of black community, Morrison, in *Beloved*, projects characters and historical events

and their connection to African heritage in the New World in order to help her people realize the need of justice and freedom with the fortification of their African roots. Suggs connotes the history of slavery, racism and the exertion of African heritage, and the projection of Sethe rationalizes black people how slavery and racism were inhuman and brutal and still they are. The retelling of the black's stories challenges established values of whites and extermination of the enemy.

Chapter IV

An Odyssey of Cora for Freedom and the Thrust of Black Aesthetic in *The Underground Railroad*

This chapter focuses on why Cora suffers and runs away from white masters. This section manifests the revival of underground railroad, a network for the liberation of black people, and projects a girl, Cora, to convey a message to black community that the path of freedom from racism and slavery is not easy but possible. Black aesthetic serves arduous journey of its brethren who were not disheartened by the hardships in the goal of manumission and their ultimate achievement—social justice. *The Underground Railroad* reveals whites' strategy to stagnate the black and their awareness to whites' opposition toward their elevation.

The Underground Railroad is Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about a girl who, though the consequences are threatening if she is caught, tries to escape from a plantation in Georgia. The girl, Cora becomes ready to run away from the enslaved condition when she comes in contact with a boy, Caesar. Cora, while escaping from the South to the North, uses the literal underground railroad and encounters a lot of hard times but remains intact in her goal. During her attempt to escape she comes in contact with many people and places that help her know more about her people, whites and white institutions in the land of America. In this regard, this story revolves around people like Ajarry, Caesar, Ridgeway, Stevens, Ethel and Mabel and places like Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Indiana, the underground railroad and the North. These people and places connote brutality, suffering, secret agents, slavery, racism, and hardship of a people.

The phrase 'underground railroad' refers to the series of networks to help release black freedom seekers from enslavement. It was a deliberate and organized act

of resistance to enslavement and an escape from brutality of slave owners. The underground railroad denotes literal as well as metaphorical meaning— literally it means man-made tunnels and tracks for transportation, and metaphorically suggests the channels used by black freedom seekers to reach safe places like, Canada, Mexico, and Caribbean etc. in support of agents, conductors, Native Americans, and freed slaves as well. These mediators used rivers, canals, bays as secret routes for enslaved African Americans to escape the bondage of slavery and racism as well. Eric Foner, clarifying the form and function of the underground railroad, describes this network as "operating in the decades before Civil War , the "railroad" was a clandestine system of routes and safehouses through which slaves were led to freedom in the North" (A-93). The secret routes were sought massively after the Fugitive Slave Act 1850 as civil disobedience to chattel slavery; and many achieved their goal of safety and freedom in new places. In terms of the title of the novel, *The Underground Railroad* indicates both literal as well as metaphorical meaning as the central character, Cora uses secret routes and tunnel to move from the South to the North. The concern of this chapter is to seek answer why Cora and Caesar prepare such a long journey via underground railroad in literal as well as metaphorical sense, and how this novel exerts the principle of black aesthetic.

The Revival of Slave History

The Underground Railroad, entailing the principle of black literature, opens with the history of the black suffering that they were traded and transported to the New World. The history of the black has a journey from slavery to Jim Crow to the path of justice and freedom. Black people's escape from South to North via underground railroad has etched the mark of liberation. It is an arduous journey full of

challenges and a teamwork among liberal whites and black brethren. On the use of underground railroad by freedom seekers, Mari J. Matsuda argues:

I titled this chapter "When the First Quail calls" in reference to a signal used on the underground railroad to mark the time of departure to freedom. I imagine the fear and the courage of slaves who dared to leave the South and the fear of free blacks and the white who chose to help them. They were all ahead of their time in thinking they could run a freedom train in the darkest hour of slavery. (34)

The path of freedom is not easy and any writer who thinks about the escape of black from slavery causes goose bumps in his/her body. The severity of the cases makes slaves think about flight from slavery. *The Underground Railroad* produces the events of brutality slavery has caused during transportation of slaves and enlightens black community through various characters.

One of the characters Ajarry, the grandmother of Cora, explains the hardships of her father during transportation “. . . when her father couldn’t keep that pace of the long march, the slavers stove in his head and left his body by the trail” (3). Ajarry’s information regarding her father suggests the brutality of the slavers and their attitude towards black people. From the day whites came in contact with Africans, they have behaved them as an object to be transacted and the way of transaction suggests the vicious character inherent in whites. The killing of a man who cannot walk and follow his friends ridicules humanity that is supposed to be an essential quality in a man. Ajarry was bought like many blacks but she does not know the price. She cognizes the incident well that “. . . she was part of a bulk purchase, eighty-eight human souls for sixty crates of rum and gunpowder . . .” (3). Here, the human body is bartered with the object that causes violence in harmony and divides them. Communalism is African

heritage and the supply of alcohol and weapon weakens this strength and white can play foul game among them. The knowledge of this history in the black community is essential to proceed with black's action against injustice that has been hidden in American history.

Black literature, as Karenga claims, reveals the enemies of their community by bringing the past into account. The past of the black unfolds the days of slavery, which has atomized them from their people and places. The moment of separation was intolerable to them; death was much easier for them than the fragmentation from their heritage. The stories of the slaves who chose death are recurrent in the slaves' history and this history, Whitehead, replays in the novel. Whitehead reiterates the events during the Middle Passage that “. . . forty slaves, shackled together on a ship, who jumped overboard en masse rather than live in bondage” (125). Why the slaves chose death over slavery during their transaction compels that community to know the pain of their ancestors.

Such stories of ancestors add fuel to the fury of young generations who have been crippled by slavery and racism. Ajarry also tells her story that “She twice tried to kill herself on the voyage to America, once by denying herself food and then again by drowning” (4). Ajarry and her father's case is not an individual case, it covers the whole history of slavery. The history of slavery indicates the plight of the black during the Middle Passage and their inability to withstand whites' inhumanity towards the black. The traded slaves were “chained head to toe, head to toe, in exponential misery” (4). White people could make Africans slave without giving them corporeal pain, but white people have troubled and injured them physically, psychologically and culturally. The loss of African life in different modes is irreparable and they are to retell that history in order to recover their loss. Black literature shares the history of

suffering with their brethren which motivates them to revive their lost culture by struggling against the hurdles created by slavery and racism. Social justice guarantees the maintenance of harmony by giving space to their culture and heritage.

In the sense of the history of slavery, Ajarry explains a scene of an auction in which slaves were traded. A slave would be transacted many times in a short period of time and the life was more painful after the slaves were separated from their family and friends. The value of a human being is not on his/her body but on the quality of his/her life – humanity. White people judged the quality of Africans on their bodies on the principle of whether they could perform physical work well or not. Ajarry's description of the sale reminds the auction market of human goods that took place in African countries and manifests whites' journey to Africa to collect blacks as slaves:

Traders and procurers from up and down the coast converged on Charleston, checking the merchandise's eyes and joints and spines, wary of venereal distemper and other afflictions. . . . The slaves stood naked on the platform. There was a bidding war over a group of Ashanti studs, those Africans of renowned industry and musculature, and the foreman of a limestone quarry bought a bunch of pickaninnies in an astounding bargain. (5)

This scene of the auction shows that Africa is an industry to produce people of muscle and work whom white people can use in production. White people's assumption regarding African blacks is the tool with life which can help them in production and profit. White people entered Africa with the mentality of business and this mentality was fortified by the color of African. The relegation of the black to subhuman and their transaction with Western goods has created a deep gap between two races which has become impossible to fill for a long time now.

Likewise, this novel entails more events of the auction to suggest the slavers' concern over slaves and their way of collecting and keeping records of the slaves. Africans are not people for slavers, they are commodities to make a fortune for the slavers. Slavers' attitudes towards slaves have not changed and do not want to change because changing attitude of whites makes them humanistic which does not help them make good fortune:

List upon list crowded the ledger of slavery. The names gathered first on the African coast in tens of thousands of manifests. That human cargo. The names of the dead were as important as the names of the living, every loss from disease and suicide – and the other mishaps labeled as such for accounting purposes – needed to be justified to employers. At the auction block they tallied the souls purchased at each auction, and on the plantations the overseers preserved the names of workers in rows to tight cursive. Every name an asset, breathing capital, profit made flesh. (219)

The sight of the Middle Passage and the treatment of whites toward Africans is extreme even to the animals. Such animalistic behavior of the slavers raises questions about the characters of human beings.

During the transportation of Africans from Africa to the plantations of the New World, many slaves starved to death, died of diseases and committed suicide. The loss of the lives of slaves as human beings is not slavers' concern but the loss of their merchandise. Such a picture of the slave trade is poignant to all human hearts but it is a business of whites who make money and fortune by staining human civilization. Black literature discovers such events of brutality that white traders imposed upon black people who are humane, spiritual and communal. These values, though they are

scattered, are intact in the New World and are struggling to recover them. Their struggle for justice is concerned with the protection of African values, too.

In addition to the values of black people in the New World, the black literature focuses on the history and psychological development of black community. The events this novel describes from Africa to America manifest the painful history of the black community and its impact upon them. Black population, as black aesthetic assumes, becomes aware of the suffering of their ancestors and this might be repeated anytime during their lives. *The Underground Railroad* unfolds history via the characters of the novel in order to know the ruthless nature of slavery and racism that has paralyzed them in the New World. Regarding the stagnated situation of the black population, Maria W. Stewart asserts that “I have learnt, by bitter experience, that continual hard labor deadens the energies of the soul, and benumbs the faculties of the mind; the ideas become confined, the mind barren, and like the scorching sands of Arabia, produces nothing; or like the uncultivated soil, brings forth thorns and thistles” (184). The potential of black people has totally been suppressed by the shackles of slavery, but white people are propagating the idea that black people have no art, imagination and creativity. It is their propaganda to dominate and exploit black people by spreading their lack of skills to become equal to whites. Such rumor has helped them make the black slaves and engage them in menial works. This has impacted the black population on the negative values of life because of its rule of exclusion. Black writers are committed to revealing the history of domination and exploitation their people have undergone.

Moreover, the evil fruit of slavery has been tasted by all generations and the memory of atrocity is still fresh in their minds. What blacks were and are is the outcome of slavery. Slavery has designed black people to criminalize, harass and

defame. Slavers know that the exclusion of the black from justice, opportunities and freedom results in a felony. Black people are involved in criminal activities not because it is African heritage but because oppressors have prevented them from basic rights like, food, cloth and shelter. Regarding this condition of the black after they have been detached from their motherland and culture, Robinson examines their condition that “. . . slavery had stripped black people of their heritage and culture, they had no “knowledge of self.” With no knowledge of self, black people did misguided things – used drugs, engaged in crime, and so on” (111). Black people are not innately criminals and druggists. When people do not get space and opportunity in the society they are living in they become transgressive. Man is constructed from the influences and models around him and accordingly he performs his role. Black community is influenced by the lack and loss of basic needs and this community is aware of the factors that have misguided them. Slavery is the collective memory and the cause of the suffering of black community, so the artists and writers include this historical event in their writing. Whitehead, in this novel, includes the history of injustice as a bleeding memory of his people. Memory guides an action of a person and in order to be guided properly for their liberation black population is brought back to the past by black literature.

In terms of the communal memory of the black population, black aesthetic replays past and its heroes who suffered and can cause revolutionary thought in the young generations. Whitehead, in this novel, expends a lot of time to figure out the black people from past to present. The reflection of the past of the black demands immediate freedom of this community. The black community, Kakutani argues, “. . . rememorializes the yearning for freedom that spurs one generation after another to persevere in the search for justice – despite threats and intimidation, despite reversals

and efforts to turn back the clock” (3). Since human beings learn from the past black people have learned a lot from their history which manifests loss and damage in their people. The recurrently discussed loss of black population is justice and freedom and the loss of these phenomena has made this world hellish to them. It is their need to survive being human and that is possible by gaining justice and freedom. The road of justice and freedom, black people know, is thorny and wild, it might be long and worn but leads to the destination full of hope.

In terms of hardships borne by black people black writers intend their people to learn from the people who have encountered hard times. The presence of old characters in the black novels does not mean the history only, it suggests how they are tormented by the oddities. Whitehead projects an old black man named Jockey in Randall plantation as a slave who has borne all ups and downs in his life. “It was enough that he was the oldest colored man they had ever met, that he had survived every torment big and small white men had concocted and implemented” (25). Old characters bear history as well as the wounds given by racism and slavery. These people connect the past with the present and make it easier for the young generation to avoid hopelessness and helplessness.

Jockey, the oldest character in the novel, has spent an epoch on a plantation whom other slaves think him the oldest one. “She was sure he had claimed a hundred and one years at his last party. He was only half that, which means he was the oldest slave anyone on the two Randall plantations had ever met” (25). The projection of the old character in the novel means the living history of slavery and its marks left upon him. The occasion of Jockey’s birthday celebration and the reference to his age reflects the age-old slavery and the suffering of the slaves. Whitehead, in the novel, is mindful of presenting the past of pain, so younger generations can grasp the suffering

of their ancestors. The careful projection of Jockey in the novel is associated with the purpose of black aesthetic which rationalizes as well as prepares its people for any action needed to change the society.

In addition, Jockey's birthday celebration is accompanied by gathering, feasting and dancing. Black aesthetic stresses on vernacular tradition which is performative in nature. The performative nature of the black reflects their communal values and the ways of managing their everyday grieves. Music and dance are African heritage that the black in the New World are still attached to. They have rhythm in their blood which they cannot control. During the birthday party of Jockey:

Noble picked up a tambourine and tapped it. He was a fast picker in the rows and joyful instigator outside of them; he brought both kinds of dexterity to this night. Claps hands, crook elbows, shake hips. There are instrument and human players . . . all are put in servitude to the song. So it was when George and Wesley picked up their fiddle and banjo on days of carousing. Jockey sat in his maple chair, tapping his bare feet on the dirt. The slaves moved forward and danced. (28)

Jockey is more than a hundred years old but he cannot help tapping his bare feet. It indicates that African heritage is flowing in the blood of the black though it is old and forgotten in the New World. The song and dance on any occasion release slaves from the hard times. The songs and dance work as a catalyst regarding their place and situation. The songs of the black, in the New World, germinate from their suffering and when they are performed they help relieve their sorrows. Since songs and dance are the lifestyle of black community these people cannot distance them from songs and dance regardless of their mood.

To such an extent, music and dance, as black aesthetic implies, are inherent in black community and they are always beating in the blood of this community. Black aesthetic, as Smith asserts, entails vernacular as an important component of black life. Slaves' orientation to music and dance indicates their clinging to their African heritage and on the other hand, a sure medium of sharing their pains and penury and rationalizing them. Douglass maintains that "The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears" (343). Songs have a healing quality and thus these songs heal the pain in any form. Black people's songs in their motherland mean collectiveness and communality but these songs in slavery are the medium to relieve their wounds caused by slavery. Such moments of singing indicate that though they are away from home, they are not away from their cultural custom.

Black community in the New World gathers, sings, dances and cracks jocks in order to maintain their heritage and relieve them from their sorrows. Moreover, the performance of "African American culture— through mediums such as church, music (particularly rap songs), black newspapers and magazines, literature, storytelling, film (including music videos), soapbox speeches, and convention gatherings—facilitates intraracial communication" (Butler 289). Black people have developed their own medium of communication, sense of humor and togetherness as the part of their lives. These qualities have helped them withstand any turmoil that has infested their community. Black people lighten their heavy heart in the New World by singing and dancing because they have neither justifiable law nor government to listen to the sound against injustice. Black literature, having said the natural disposition of its people and their condition, revives their heritage and links black people to the struggle of freedom and justice so black people can enjoy their pristine life in the New World.

As black aesthetic does not ignore African heritage so it subsumes the avoidance of political rights in black community in art and literature. In this sense, the basic concern of black aesthetic is political rights of its people which allows them to be free and happy; it aims at black audience to make ready for the struggle for justice and freedom. White people accuse them of being kidnappers and murderers, being armed and robbers. White people lynch them in mass and they witness the atrocious behavior of whites upon their people. Cora describes a scene in Georgia of how black people have been treated in a bestial manner. She gives an account of the scene that “She had seen men hung from trees and left for buzzards and crows. Women carved open to the bones with the cat-o’-nine-tails. Bodies alive and dead roasted on pyres. Feet cut off to prevent escape and hands cut off to stop theft. She had seen boys and girls younger than this beaten and had done nothing” (34). Black people have lost their brethren in the flame of slavery and the living ones have carried scars on their bodies. Whitehead demonstrates the atrocity of the oppressor through the character Cora and makes it real for those who could be skeptical of the issues.

The issues of oppressor have been equipped with terror, violence and inhumanity. Mary L. Duziak, on the tools of oppressor's inhumanity explores that “. . . 'lynch law,' segregation, racial discrimination, deprivation of political rights, etc., . . . a picture of an America in which Negroes are brutally downtrodden with no hope of improving their status under the existing form of government” (141). Black literature has recorded dark history in its creation and it is bleeding on the pages of the books. The blood of slavery has made black community understand the end of their condition in America. Black population stays vulnerable to the brutality of whites as long as such events are not swept by the oppressed community's struggle for justice. Cora

happens to catch a bleeding sight in North Carolina that mocks so-called rationality of whites:

The corpses hung from trees as rotting ornaments. Some of them were naked, others partially clothed, the trousers black where their bowels emptied when their necks snapped. Gross wounds and injuries marked the flesh of those closest to her, the two caught by the station agent's lantern. One had been castrated, an ugly mouth gaping where his manhood had been. The other was woman. Her belly curved. (155)

The revision of such sights in the novel indicates that the brutality towards slaves is pervasive in America. Cora does not feel good at this scene, but she is helpless that she cannot do anything to save her brethren. Such events have charged the soul of the black with disgust and when it becomes full it will definitely explode against the oppressors. Many slaves have been lynched by hanging and immolating and such activities of the whites have made them black sheep in the history of human civilization.

The cruel behavior of the whites has rationalized black people and made them realize the need of freedom and justice for their community. On the other hand, black people have the sense of freedom and equality promised by the Declaration of Independence. Terrance, the master of Randall plantation, remembers a black boy, Michael who would recite the document. "Then I recollected James telling me about a nigger he had down here," Terrance said, "could recite the Declaration of Independence" (31). The major thrust of the Declaration of Independence is that 'all men are created equal and everyone has the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' On the other hand, Michael's capacity to recite the document indicates black people's ability to learn and memorize. ". . . if a bird could be taught limericks,

a slave might be taught to remember as well. Merely glancing at the size of the skull told you that nigger possessed a bigger brain than a bird” (32). Black people are potential in learning and knowing the situation they have survived. They are lagging behind because of the policy of exclusion imposed upon the black. They are tantamount to whites in all domains but white people have presented them self-indulgent and inferior tactically. In American history black people have recurrently been treated very badly. They are seeking the implementation of the Declaration of Independence that “The Declaration of Independence was their masterpiece. “A history of repeated injuries and usurpations” (32). The Declaration of Independence includes the spirit of all but its implementation is feeble and creates an abyss in the society. As long as the document is exerted in the case of all people black population does not need to be alienated in America.

Moreover, *The Underground Railroad* depicts the betrayal made by whites in the document The Declaration of Independence. This novel shows that black people are cognizant of the content of this document and that it was not written keeping the black community in mind. They are mindful that the words and the intention are contradictory. The words on the page are inclusive but the implementation of these words is exclusive. Michael has been repeatedly submitted in the novel in terms of The Declaration of Independence and it signifies the magnitude of the idea:

The white people came to this land for a fresh start and to escape the tyranny of their masters, just as the freeman had fled theirs. But the ideals they held up for themselves, they denied others. Cora had heard Michael recite the Declaration of Independence back on the Randall plantation many times, his voice drifting through the village like an angry phantom. She didn't understand the words, most of them at any rate, but *created equal* was not lost

in her. The white men who wrote it didn't understand it either, if *all men* did not truly mean all men. (119)

The level of understanding of the black community has increased regarding freedom and equality, and they also know that all men are created equal but white people do not know or pretend not to know 'all men' means all the children of God. In this manner, black literature digs out whites' irrationality and exposes the consciousness of the black in America.

Black literature is not separable from the realities of black life so it speaks honestly about social evils. Baraka manifests consciousness in black literature and believes in his people's awareness to white caused hardships. The evil in the racial society are whites on whom the black people find the roots of all hardships in their lives. "The southern white man was spat from the lions of the devil and there was no way to forecast his next evil act" (52). Black people find white men a bag of evil acts and only the determined, informed and courageous people can break evil acts. Such determination is obvious in Caesar when Cora tells him to hold the escape from the plantation:

Cora suggested they wait for full moon. Caesar countered that after Big Anthony's escape the overseers and bosses had increased their scrutiny and would be extra vigilant on the full moon, the white beacon that so often agitated on slave with a mind to run. No, he said. He wanted to go as soon as possible. The following night. The waxing moon would have no suffice.

Agents of the underground railroad would be waiting. (50-51)

The escape from the South is a resistance against slavery but the one who does it first is threatening. The determination of Caesar to escape with Cora is the capacity of making decision to cope with the situation. Black literature intends to produce

hundreds of such Caesar and Cora who can break the fear rooted in the black community and the compliance of their ancestors to oppressors. Whitehead's creation of *The Underground Railroad* revives the history of misery and educates his people not to prevail in this situation anymore.

The history of racial misery, in the South, outsmarts any kind of suffering human kinds have undergone. Whites have practiced their power in order to become the master of the black. South is so brutal to maintain slavery that the oppressors follow any strategy that keeps the slaves ignorant and blind. In the South "Antislavery literature was illegal in this part of the nation. Abolitionists and sympathizers who came down to Georgia and Florida were run off, flogged and abused by mobs, tarred and feathered. Methodists and their inanities had no place in the bosom of King Cotton" (53). A society which prohibits reason and rationality keeps the rule of justice and rein of freedom at bay. Escape from such a society is only a way of freedom and a medium of struggle. Black literature is resolving to make the black community committed to the struggle for social change. Whitehead's characters in *The Underground Railroad* convey the message of commitment to change their society by undermining whites' assumptions about the black.

The motive behind black aesthetic, Neal claims, is the destruction of white ideas. White ideas develop from whites' narratives to prove non-whites less advanced and inferior in their social, economic and belief systems. In whites' narratives, all the constructive and creative ideas, images and actions are of whites and destructive, deviating and mean things are of non-whites, especially of the black. Whites have fabricated such ideas in terms of the construction and development of America. Whites claim that modern America is built up with their labor and skills regardless of other immigrants. However, the deviated fact of the nation has been abrogated when

Cora sees the underground railroad and wonders “Who built it?” (69); her wonder has immediately been quenched by counter question “Who builds anything in this country?” (69). Such questions and counter questions ironically imply that modern America has sucked the blood and sweat of her black population. Derrick A. Bell, on the sacrifice of black ancestors in building up the nation and in reference to his "The Chronicle of the Space Traders, examines that " *And just as the forced importation of those African ancestors had made the nation's wealth and productivity possible, so their forced exodus saved the country from the need to pay the price of its greed-based excess*" (italics original 12). It further means that the builders of the country have survived exclusion, exploitation and oppression.

The extension of the tunnel and time that has taken to build it indicates the presence of black people in America for a long time. The question “How far does the tunnel extend” (68), and the wonder “It must have taken years.” (68), suggests how long black people have been engaged in the construction of developed America. The exclusion and exploitation of black people, the builders of modern America, is obviously an injustice to them and discredit to their skill and labor. Black writing speaks the facts of American history which white people want to conceal and motivates them to get committed to ending such deviated and hidden fact from the history. Black writers unify their voice in the modification of American narratives in which black people's contribution to the nation has been undermined and black values have been debased.

Moreover, black aesthetic concerns over black life-world which is directly connected with slavery and racism. Adam David Miller, on the writing of black life-world, observes that "When we write about ourselves from a point of view that takes black life seriously, that views it in scale, with human dimensions, then we are

creating a black aesthetic" (380). Black literary expression takes black life seriously and exposes human values intrinsic in black community; however, their humane quality is undermined by the oppressors. It reveals how America has stagnated black people because of their color and though they are humanistic and communal in nature they are not able to be the part of the society they live in.

On the other hand, white people are the part of their society though they lack humanity and rectitude. Black people, in order to avoid whites' brutality, escape from the chain of exploitation and oppression, and white masters engage the aggressive youth to discourage them from running away and impose the most brutal act upon them. Ridgeway maintains white character in controlling blacks:

Ridgeway commanded his appetites in those days withdrawing before his confederates' more egregious displays. The other patrollers were boys and men of bad characters; the work attracted a type. In another country they would have been criminals, but this was America. . . . Other patrollers carried guns and eagerly cut down any rascal dumb enough to flee . . . Ridgeway ran them down as if they were rabbits and then his fists subdued them. (77-78)

Ridgeway sneers at a civilized society where mercy, kindness and justice prevail. Such society abrogates violence and injustice since violent activities are punishable in any civilized society, but America is morbid with slavery that patronizes crime if it is to oppress black people. In black literature the inhuman behavior of whites upon the black is manifested in reference to black history and political orientation. In racial society whites are made politically good and black people are made politically bad and this situation persists as long as the rule of justice and reign of freedom is undermined. Narrating the evil traits and practices of whites propel black community to realize the end of white supremacy that commences the life of justice and freedom.

Whitehead, in this novel, explores the African language, and its present situation after black people have been brought to America from Africa. When Cora reaches South Carolina, she joins a class and notices Howard's pidgin tongue, developed from a lost African tongue and slave talk, which he favors. Right at that moment she remembers her mother who told her about what has happened to their language in the New World. She explains what her mother Mabel told her:

In the old days, her mother had told her, that half language was the voice of plantation. They had been stolen from villages all over Africa and spoke a multitude of tongues. The words from across the ocean were beaten out of them over time. For simplicity, to erase their identities, to smother uprisings. All the words except for the ones locked away by those who still remembered who they had been before. "They keep 'em hid like precious gold. (97)

The black population has lost its language and identity in America for which whites have worked strategically to omit their identity and suppress their rebellion against whites. The omission of blacks' language and the spread of Anglo-American language upon black community is the pre-condition of evading black people from being united against whites. It is the success of whites to make black population speak English language in field, farm and family. However, black people are aware of whites' scheme and still save their heritage as treasure.

Black aesthetic assumes that the liberation of black population does not count if their culture does not revive. Freedom with identity becomes real when cultural authenticity remains intact in black community. Individual identity aligns group since "Man's nature causes him to seek the assertion of his identity. Individual identity can only be successfully asserted when man capitalizes upon the cohesive strength of particular group" (Wade and Wade 395). The communal nature of the black relates

personal identity with their community and heritage. White people are free in America but they do not have their own authentic heritage. Happiness brought by freedom without ancestral roots is transient and swollen like balloon which may explode any time leaving no entity.

Black aesthetic, for Taylor, always concerns creating and maintaining black life-world, and their position in the society they are living in. Black people as slaves in the New World do not possess any right that a normal human being deserves in any society. Slaves are not the being but a machine to perform a work. They have value if they are thought to be useful in production. The cure of their sickness is conducted on the basis of whether the death of the slave causes any material loss for the master in terms of a helping hand. “On the Randall plantation, the doctor was only called when the slave remedies, the roots and salves, had failed and a valued hand was near death” (102). Black bodies are highly valuable as property and working hands but they are worthless as human beings, and so their care/cure by the masters is determined by the calculation of loss and profit. Cora’s visit with a doctor in South Carolina reminds her more severe condition of slaves in Georgia.

Cora’s visit of different places manifests how black people have been puppets in the hands of oppressors. Slaves have been relegated to a tool by imposing slave law which insists:

“Slave shall be deemed, sold, taken, reputed, and adjudge in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owner and possessors, and their executors, administrators and assigns, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever.” A slave is one who is in the power of master to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, and his labour. (Brown 271)

In chattel slavery, slaves are traded, executed, and exerted at the whim of the master and this master has been empowered by law to deal with slaves in whatsoever way. The law of justice has been manipulated and abused if it does not favor the oppressors to exploit the black. All the world knows that white people have practiced the law to abuse the law. Whites claim themselves all in all in front of the black and moreover they make law in order to enact unjust law. Such unjust law, which is not law at all, makes black population mean, helpless and hopeless to the future world of freedom and justice.

Furthermore, white people are the snatchers of life, culture, prosperity, and future of a people, black people, in the guise of slavery and racism. They stole the black in Africa, the land of Indians in America. On the extremes of white people, Robinson discusses that “. . . slavery had robbed Africans of their identity. Slavemasters had changed African names and religions, and thus severed connections with the past” (73). Black people are careful about it that this robbery persists unless they get united and fight for their rights. They know what is of whites now is all from other people. White people have made their fortune by grasping the personal as well as natural resources of the black. Cora explores that “The land she tilled and worked had been Indian land. She knew the white men bragged about the efficiency of the massacres, where they killed women and babies, and strangled their futures in the crib” (119). The achievement of whites in the new land is through violence and cruelty and they are proud of their bestial manner.

They robbed the land of native people in America and the land, labor, and natural resources of the black in Africa. The substratum and the peak of the oppressors' fortune are the African people who were robbed and ravaged from their land. Cora further speculates “Stolen bodies working stolen land” (119). White

people have not invested any money and matter for their progress but treachery. They stole black people as worker from Africa and actuated them in the land that was impinged from Native Americans. Cora's knowledge about American history and the present situation suggests the awareness of people who have been exploited and oppressed for a long time. White people have nothing but the satanic mind that causes trouble for innocent blacks. Black community has known the facts of their trouble, so it has become easier to navigate their struggle. The younger generation has been aware of all about the causes of their suffering and realized the annihilation of them.

In addition to this, black people have also been stolen after death if the white men are benefitted. A gang of people is recruited to accomplish the task of grabbing the dead bodies of the loved ones of black people for medical dissection. Black people are exploited while alive and robbed from the grave after death to make money. Death is not peaceful, for the black, in a grave. No authority pays any attention to stop it and black people are hopeless and helpless:

The niggers did not post any sentries over their dead. Niggers did not pound on the door of the sheriff, they did not haunt the offices of the newspapermen. No sheriff paid them any mind, no journalist listened to their stories. The bodies of their loved ones disappeared into sacks and reappeared in the cool cellars of medical schools to relinquish their secrets. (141)

In any culture death rituals are associated with people's culture as culture forms the psyche of people. Almost in all cultures dead bodies are cremated or buried and they are managed culturally not to let the departed soul stray, but the departed soul of the black in America has not got space to rest.

Black people do not seem to give rest to the departed souls of their nearest and dearest ones because of whites. In the novel, the grave robber is an Irish man who

does not spare the dead body of the black to make a fortune. White people make a fortune on others' bodies and land. As long as a black man survives he is worthless regardless of his labor and, here, "In death the negro became a human being. Only then was he the white man's equal" (142). The oppressors never think of equality for black people socially, economically, culturally and politically because it causes loss to them. The live body of the black is always worthless and demonized but the dead body becomes a human body in the lab for the study of white students which is ironical.

Black aesthetic traces the moment of how black people have been used and misused by whites. Black people are the commodity who, they see, have only use value. In hospital, they become useful in vivisection after death but they are worthless while they are alive. Moreover, white people use the black as a source of entertainment by ridiculing their language, gait, accent, dress up and so on. Cora, in North Carolina, observes a minstrel show in which white performers act in the guise of a black man. The show manifests as:

Two white men, their faces blackened by burned cork, capered through a series of skits that brought the park to exuberant laughter. Dressed in mismatched, gaudy clothes and chimney-pot-hats, they molded their voices to exaggerate colored speech; this seemed to be the source of the humor. A sketch where the skinnier took off his dilapidated boot and counted his toes over and over again, constantly losing his place generated the loudest reaction. (160)

From a racial perspective black people are the subjects to be ridiculed, mortified and demonized. White people caricature Negro people, to give pleasure of their people, through gait, language, accent, get up and appearance but black people are strictly

prohibited to imitate and parody white oppressors. Disgrace and humiliation to black people is the source of entertainment to white. Black people are such handy objects to white people that they can operate them in need or their rash. They use black people in work, entertainment and their economic promotion. Black people remain like a machine which needs operation and cannot move and work without operator. White people operate them on the basis of what the situation demands. They assume that black people are the beings in their contact and they do not deserve any identity and dignity.

As long as the slaves have power in their bodies they are needed in the farms and fields of white masters. They find the black highly valuable when they become the source of labor and property. “The ruthless engine of cotton required its fuel of African bodies. Crisscrossing the ocean, ships brought bodies to work the land and to breed more bodies” (164). Africans have been alienated from their motherland in order to fulfill the demand of working hands in America. The procreation of the slaves is not their natural right, but rather the production of more slaves as working hands. For white masters, in the New World, “More slaves led to more cotton, which led to more money to buy more land to farm more cotton. Even with the termination of slave trade, in less than a generation the numbers were untenable: all those niggers” (164). The number of the black is a sign of whites’ affluence regardless of their demand of justice and freedom. The opulence of whites suggests the deprivation of family, happiness, freedom and natural rights of black population. Regarding the plight of black population in America, black writers are candid to serve in their literary work which helps generations know the exploitation of their ancestors and the stagnation of the progress of their people.

Black literature not only explores the exploitation of their ancestors it reveals some heroes who did not care about their lives to end this situation. It is the principle of black literature that uses past and its heroes who are inspiring to proceed heroic and revolutionary ideals to exterminate their enemies. Whitehead, in this novel, alludes a historical moment of revolt against whites though the consequence was reversal. Regarding the imprisonment of Cora in his attic in North Carolina, Martin goes back to the history of mutiny and observes “Before the Southampton rebellion was smothered, Turner and his band murdered sixty-five men, women and children. Civilian militias and patrollers lynched three times that in response - conspirators, sympathizers, and innocents - to set an example” (164). Nat Turner, for black population, is a warrior who fought for the cause of his people in 1831 in Virginia. It was a rebellion of the slaves to free their people from slavery. Turner collected trusted slaves and free men and went on killing the whites and releasing his people from bondage. The rebellion of Turner and his friends against the oppressors is an inspiration for the younger generations to fight for their people. This event indicates that the result might be anything but the protest against injustice, exploitation and oppression is needed to make the oppressors realize the demands of the oppressed.

Thus, black aesthetic speaks the voice of the oppressed who want to end the situation created by racism and slavery. Oppressed black people are getting aware of whites’ extremes be it in religion or politics. Cora, in the attic time, is provided a Bible by Martin that was read by Ethel, his daughter, in her childhood. She reads a line “Slavery is a curse, though, that is much is true” (186). She wonders that “Slavery is a sin when whites were put to yoke but not African. All men are created equal, unless we decide you are not a man” (186). Cora is sure that God’s creation is not partial that making whites slave is a curse and African a reverence to God. She

remembers Connelly in Georgia who would shout at Africans “Niggers, obey your earthly masters in everything and do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord” (186). White people are exploiting the black in the name of God. They mean to embed an idea in the mind of the black that white people were created as the masters of the black and they should be faithful to their masters; betraying their masters is a crime against God.

White masters are taking the name of God to do evil and puzzling the black by writing the document that all men are created equal. Black population is not so credulous to believe whites' assumption as God's orientation. Their instinct is pretty smart to evaluate whites' intention and their scheme: “. . . Cora blamed the people who wrote it down. People always got things wrong, on purpose as much as accident” (187). Whitehead, in the novel, has developed Cora in such a way that she makes her people comprehend the reality and react accordingly. Cora's understanding of whites' scheme indicates that what is written or said about the blacks is whites' fabrication to rule them. *The Underground Railroad* demystifies such forgery upon black people and rationalizes them to go against it.

White people believe that they were born to rule. It has become American character to rule and annihilate the so called lower races. "American" norms and cultural practices equal "white" norms and cultural practices" (Newman 180). White corresponds America and vice versa, and it is an American attitude to undermine the people of color. Ridgeway, a slave catcher, feels proud of being white and controlling the black. He justifies the role of whites in America that “All these years later, I prefer the American spirit, the one that called us from the Old World to the New, to conquer and build and civilize. And destroy that what needs to be destroyed. To lift up the lesser races. If not lift up, subjugate. And if not subjugate, exterminate. Our destiny

by divine prescription – the American imperative” (226). The American character, in terms of other people and country, is to keep under them or eliminate them if they do not comply with them. They have inherited this character from Europe and have outsmarted predecessors in this matter. Ridgeway alludes how American character has connected with Europe by referring to his father. Ridgeway, by remembering his father’s remarks, asserts the obligation of whites from Europe to America to lift up the lesser races but they are incorrigible, and so they should be controlled and ultimately destroyed. Whites assume that they have been entrusted by the God to civilize the world and destroy what needs to be destroyed.

Moreover, Ridgeway puts the logic that black people’s survival is necessary for the prosperity of whites. The more black people die while working or bearing children the better the white people hold position. White people are grateful to black mothers who bear strong sons, however, they are ungrateful for their skin color. He opines that black people have to make whites better, richer and fuller by killing themselves. Ridgeway, arguing what kind of black people are worth for white and why white people need them, discusses:

People like you and your mother are the best of your race. The weak of you tribe have been weeded out, they die in the slave ships die of our European pox, in the fields working our cotton and indigo. You need to be strong to survive the labor and to make us greater. We fatten hogs, not because it pleases us but because we need hogs to survive. But we can’t have you to clever. We can’t have you so fit you outrun us. (227)

White people are grateful to black mothers because they suffer in giving their children to white. They have lost their lives in order to make them rich and happy. Whites want good health and strength of the black for their labor that makes them affluent.

Ridgeway's voice represents American voice that black people cannot take the position of whites since they are fit to labor and this benefits both. Besides, white people have fear of black people that if they become educated, rational and smart they may outsmart the whites. What white society needs from the blacks is labor regardless of their rationality and cleverness. These two qualities make the black greater and causes damage in white's prosperity, happiness and progress. Such oppressive attitude of whites are denuded in the literary works of black writers, be it Morrison's *Beloved* or Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*.

Black People's Sense of Solidarity for Liberation

Black literature originates from black life-world and as a pursuer of black aesthetic. Whitehead projects Cora as a central character who is determined physically and mentally to escape from white's chain of slavery and oppression. What she does for her might be trifle but what message she gives to her people is direct and obvious. She runs away from Randall plantation in Georgia, undergoes a lot of blights but remains unbroken in her goal of freedom. She is caught by the slave catcher, Ridgeway and chained and yet does not lose hope. "Cora jumps on Ridgeway's back and strangled him with her chains, twisting them tight against his flesh. Her scream came from deep inside her, a train whistle echoing in a tunnel" (231). Cora's counter attack and her cry of woe from the depth of her heart makes readers wonder how she collected such power to attack the oppressor and produce monstrous sound. Her muscles have tightened with anger and it is beyond control.

The projection of Cora as a girl from black community, in this novel, intends to produce numerous girls like Cora against slavery and racism. The success in escalating the number of girls like Cora who can challenge white convention of oppressing and exploiting black makes the goal of achieving justice and freedom

white have captured possible. Her strength to fight against stronger slave catcher reverberates the afflictions of her people known and unknown as:

She wanted every bad thing for Ridgeway and Boseman. . . . Cora kicked Ridgeway in the face three times with her new wooden shoes. She thought, if the world will not stir itself to punish the wicked. No one stopped her. Later she said it was three kicks for three murders, and told of Lovey, Caesar, and Jasper to let them live briefly again in her words. But that was not the truth of it. It was all for her. (232)

Cora is in a long wandering and eventful journey that demands lots of hurdles and barriers. She is preoccupied with such situations that may come during her journey. Her heart is heavy with apprehension but she is determined to face and tackle. Like Cora, the heart of black people is charged with anger of the loss of their people. The release of such anger of black population is sure to lighten their heavy heart and result in freedom, justice and equality. Freedom, justice and equality are the bottom line of the campaigns black community has conducted.

Likewise, another seminal character Caesar disseminates the importance of freedom. His scanty education during his childhood interests him to read but it is rare. Education lets people know right from wrong. Schools are rare for black people; they have been built but they are empty and have become lovers' stay. In Randall plantation, there is a dilapidated schoolhouse where Caesar went to relieve him from the woes of him. "He went to schoolhouse to read the book Fletcher gave him after much protest; he went when feeling low, to weep over his burdens, he went to watch the other slaves move about the plantation" (235). The sensitivity of black people has been held in due to the mechanism of the world where there is no one to care. Caesar is so sorry to his people's condition that he cannot control his emotion and weeps

alone. He knows that freedom at any cost may help to get relief from the burdens imposed by slavery and racism. He convinces Cora to run away and, though he is killed, he shows Cora the path of freedom.

Black aesthetic is connected with the concerns of the black community in the literary works of black writers. The plot and characters reflect the problem and struggle against what racism and slavery have done to them. The two characters, Cora and Caesar, of this novel can drive black population to the way of liberation. They help their people to develop the willpower to challenge and ultimately win the struggle for freedom. Since the goal of black is freedom and justice all writers and scholars are one in conveying the message of their unity and commitment to achieve liberation. David Walker enhances the morale of his people by depicting the reality of the creation of black and whites. He tells his people about the intention of God and the perception of whites:

. . . they cannot conceive how God can have an attribute of justice, and show mercy to us because it pleased Him make us black – which colour, Mr. Jefferson calls unfortunate!!!!!! Fear not the number and education of our *enemies*, against whom we shall have to contend for our lawful right; guaranteed to us by our Maker; for why should we be afraid, when God is, and will continue, (if we continue humble) to be on our side? (167)

Black writers and scholars boost up their people to continue the struggle against slavery and offer the hope of victory on their side because their demands are just and equitable. They spread the message to their people that God is the creator of both races and justice and equality are concerns of Him. Good and evil, pure and impure are only the fabrication of white people who are indoctrinated by the racist like Jefferson. The ultimate source of justice is God and He is happy of creating them

black. Walker convinces his people not to have any fear and care from the whites and their number and education. The mercy of God is upon them, justice is their right and it is sure. Black people are spiritual and Walker, here, tacitly calls his people to have patience for the victory in their side.

The reliable source for promoting the struggle for freedom is education, which the black population is deprived of. The deprivation of education in black community suggests the liberation of black community in limbo. Having the long history of slavery and racism and their struggle against oppression and exploitation has become futile because of the strategic removal of education from the black. Education wakes people up from the deep slumber of ignorance and ignites them for their rationality. In Malcolm X's experience, ". . . education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America" (643). White supremacy has kept black population in darkness making them unable know right from wrong and gagged their mouth speak against injustice. Cora realizes the strength of education that whites have feared its access to black community in the Valentine farm.

During Cora's stay in Valentine's farm in Indiana, she gets a chance to read books of different genres in a library. Valentine farm is an underground railroad where fugitive slaves remain and get trained in different matters. This place is really antithetical to white institutions, which keep the black ignorant about the world. But here they know "Master said the only thing more dangerous than a nigger with a gun," . . . "was a nigger with a book. That must be a big pile of black powder, then!" (278). For white masters education to black people is tantamount to gunpowder that may explode anytime against them. White masters have the fear of black history that has

been hidden from them. Education reveals all that has been hidden from reality. The Valentine Farm library manifests:

Cora read the accounts of slaves who had been born in chains and learned their letters. Of Africans who had been stolen, torn from their homes and families, and described the miseries of their bondage and then their hair-raising escapes. She recognized their stories as her own. They were the stories of all the colored people she had even known, the stories of black people yet to be born, the foundations of their triumphs. (279)

The history of any black man is the history of all black men. They bear such stories of separation and suffering as their own. The stories of the ancestors are the base of struggle in future and the liberation of their people. Since black history is equipped with pain and penury, black aesthetic uses past events of alienation and afflictions to inspire revolution in future and project the future of emancipation.

The immediate need of black community is liberation. Black literature, as Baraka argues, deals with the question of freedom. So, black literature explores the absence of natural rights in black community after they are kidnapped and traded from Africa, let alone their political rights. The children who are under five or so in Valentine farm know the significance of liberty. One of the children, Georgiana defends liberty that “Liberty make a body fertile” (251). Body and mind work properly while the freedom is available there. There happens the free flow of thoughts and actions when a person finds himself in a free society. The impact and reaction of freedom is more direct and obvious in black people. “A free black walks different than a slave. . . . Walks different, talks different, carries himself different. It’s in the bones” (266). The happiness of a person from a free and just society is inexplicable regardless of black people suppressed all around in racial society. The main thrust of

black aesthetic is the question of freedom and the touchstone of authentic black literature is whether there is the question of blacks' liberation or not. *The Underground Railroad* is genuinely a black literary text in which the issue of liberation is recurrently projected through various characters.

Moreover, the title of the novel *The Underground Railroad* connotes the attempt and support for slaves' freedom. The escape from the farms and fields of masters is a revolt against brutality. Black population is communal in nature and they praise their people and support revolution. The network of agents, conductors, stations and depots is truly a support for escapees who have challenged slavery and risked their lives for the freedom of their people. Valentine farm is such a place for fugitive slaves that "By that autumn, his farm was the latest office of the underground railroad, busy with fugitives and conductors. Some runaways lingered; if they contributed, they could stay as long as they liked" (270). The underground railroad is concerned with helping pass fugitives to North and get rid of slavery and racism. It is also a place where the escaped slaves gather and share their experiences of slavery and ponder what they can do to alleviate their people from the extremity of the oppressors. The gathering of such people culminates that North is safer and conducive to them. The choice of North of the fugitives and the slaves indicates that North shows kindness to the black though not in absolute standard of democracy.

Life in the North is not easy but easier than in the South, the brutality of white masters is not as ferocious as in the South. The major entity of the North is commerce and the black people are exploited in wages but the life is not so much intolerable like in the South. Southern states like ". . . Tennessee was fire, disease, and violence. . . ." "Lot of folks, they fond of Canada now" Though it's awful cold" (250). Fugitives could endure any turmoil but racial atrocity. The elements of nature are not

for one community or race so it does not afflict as much as anthropomorphic causes.

All are equal to nature but racism is targeted to one group and that group cannot withstand partiality to the same children of God.

The world knows that the primary need of black people is their freedom and so the black people and the liberals get associated to rescue fugitives. “Sam drove runaways to Boston and New York, hunkered over the latest surveys to devise escape routes, and took care of the final arrangements that would save a fugitive’s life” (274). The integration of black people from different parts to help their brethren is the demand of the condition which is harsh in their lives. Such association and support of underground railroad agents indicates that the black community should be released from slavery as soon as possible. These people are concerned with the horrendous situation of black population caused by slavery, the American sin and the shame.

Likewise, the part of underground railroad, Valentine farmhouse has become a hush harbor for fugitives and abolitionists who discuss and debate on the concerns of the black in America. The experience and suffering of the fugitives and the knowledge of the scholars are shared and the discussion on common issues helps them find out the settlement of the problem. They are mindful that ‘the ends justify the means,’ and so their prime concern is to release their community from the shackle of injustice and inequality. They discuss on the urgent need of the community and the situation of being enervated, and how this situation can be eliminated. They discuss as:

Valentine’s kitchen table started the culture of debate on the farm, when Valentine and his friends – and later, visiting scholars and noted abolitionists- stayed up past midnight arguing over the colored questions. The need for trade schools, colored medical schools. For a voice in Congress, if not a

representative then a strong alliance with liberal-minded whites. How to undo slavery's injury to the mental faculties – so many freed men continued to be enslaved by the horror they'd endured. (280)

Black people from all domain of life are engaged in the mission of freedom and justice to their people. They discuss on how the freedom of their people becomes real and sustainable because black people have trouble while they are in slavery and they suffer a lot more after they get released from the shackles of the bondage. Since black people have no proper education and economic strength, they become hopeless and helpless after freedom. Such concern toward the black, their brethren, indicates the high level of consciousness of the population.

Black people unanimously endorse their voice that black community needs to be connected with economic empowerment and the trade schools can support on this goal. Once a slave is freed, s/he, because of financial crisis and lack of opportunities, gets trapped in slavery again. Likewise, many are deprived of medical services which could release the black from mental and physical injuries slavery has given to them. The worry of scholars and abolitionists is on all aspects of lives of slaves, who could live their happy life after freedom. The gathering and the discussion focuses on the ends rather than on the means. They think of making alliance with liberal-minded whites in order to make their voice audible politically.

Such consciousness also suggests that such an understanding of the problem is leading them to the path of liberation through struggle. Valentine stresses “We have a legal right as American to be here.” But the Fugitive Slave Law was a legal fact as well” (282). As American citizen, black people have legal right to gather, hold meetings, build libraries and provide education, but they are also aware that they have been prevented from doing all these by imposing Fugitive Slave Law. Sharing the

experiences, being together help each and all to the social reality and become united. During discussion, Valentine identifies that “Talk is good. . . . Talk clears the air and makes it so you can see what’s what. We’ll see what the mood of the farm is. It’s mine, but it’s everybody’s, too. Yours. I’ll abide by the decision of the people” (283). Black people are developing brotherhood and unity through discussion and it is sure to result in revolt against oppressors. When they gather, discuss and debate on their issues of their struggle for common goal of justice and freedom they can find the way out and the success becomes closer than farther. Whitehead, by producing such incidents in the novel, is preparing his people tacitly what they should do to defeat their common foe.

The unity and solidarity among black brothers is baneful to whites. Black people have been one in such a way that they support their brethren even if they do what the society signifies evil but its impact is positive on their community. On the rationality of blacks on solidarity, Regina Austin observes that "Black criminals are pitied, praised, protected, emulated or embraced if their behavior has a positive impact on the social, political, and economic well-being of black communal life" (390). The unity and solidarity of black people is concerned with the progress and promotion of black community that racism and slavery has enervated.

Black literature envisions the events and circumstances that rationalizes the need of solidarity of black community for the ultimate goal—justice and freedom. Whitehead, in *The Underground Road*, provides with farmhouse named Valentine farmhouse which conducts meeting with scholars and abolitionists and provides library to the fugitives. Their meeting and discussion germinate hope of achieving goal in black people. “. . . every one of her enemies, all the masters and overseers of her suffering, would be punished, if not in this world then the next, for justice may be

slow and invisible, but it always renders its true verdict in the end” (285). This hope is a strength of black people which does not allow them to stagnate. They are yet to suffer a lot since “White people aren’t going to change overnight” (289). And “The Great War had always been between the white and the black. It always would be” (294). Black people are predestined to fight war with whites; in the past they fought with European whites and now they are fighting with American whites, and it will be the same in future. They have been struggling against the oppressors for a long time and it may take more time to achieve the goal. Achieving goal is not easy but the hopeless condition of black is sure to end.

In the sense of achieving the goal of justice, they are affirmed that though the path of struggle is long and difficult, the condition of the black will not remain the same. The realization of unity and solidarity is everywhere for the common goal that “We are organized for the absolute purpose of bettering our condition, industrially, commercially, socially, religiously and politically” (Garvey 989). They are, in every means of the society, committed to promote their situation for the achievement of final goal – freedom and justice. The togetherness of black nationality has made white people over reactive, so they look aggressive to black activities that help them fight against oppressors.

For white masters, the most dangerous thing for their racial institutions includes a book in the hand of slaves. Slave with book, for them is a gun with powder. And the oppressors’ reliable weapon to control black population is slavery since “Slavery has twisted their minds, an imp filling their minds with foul ideas” (288). Slavery has been a medium for oppressors to enervate the black from civilization. It has made it easier for whites to deviate their mind from the virtuous matters of life. Black people are deprived of schools, hospitals, and business in order to maintain

their superiority to the black. The example of this is Valentine farm, where there is a library of books with blacks' history, but it is burned down by whites. "The windows of the library shattered and Cora saw the books burning in the shelves inside" (294). The destruction of blacks' books may relieve the oppressors immediately but they cannot annihilate the consciousness in their community.

The burning of books and the destruction of libraries may give whites immediate satisfaction that they have got success in oppressing and keeping them in the gutter. But black people are getting more alert from the ways white people are behaving toward them. Regarding what the oppressors have done to them, Shakur shows in her autobiography:

We had been completely brainwashed and we didn't even know it. We accepted white value systems and white standards of beauty and, at times we accepted the white man's view of ourselves. We had never been exposed to any other point of view or any other standard of beauty. From when i was a tot, i can remember Black people saying, "niggas ain't shit." "You know how lazy niggas are." "Give a nigga an inch and he'll take a mile." "Everybody knew what "niggas" like to do after they eat: sleep. (45)

White people's way of inculcating black community is to make them accept white values, which they claim, are universal and standard. It is the trick of the oppressors to impose their values upon black children and eliminate all the values of black community. The imposition of such values has relegated the black from their African values and disseminated anti-black values, like they are lazy, rapacious and decadent. However, black scholars and writers are in one place to rationalize their people about what the oppressors think and do to their people not to move ahead.

From the survey of the novel, *The Underground Railroad* having the major thrusts of black aesthetic in black literature, reflects authentically the question of freedom of the black. The title of the novel itself suggests its literal and metaphorical routes for fugitives to escape to the safe place where there is the absence of inhuman/brutal slavery and racism. This novel has projected Cora, a central female character who is determined to achieve freedom from slavery at any cost. She escapes from Randall plantation in Georgia and she is a role model to other slaves who may copy her as she copied her mother, Mabel. Such role models have been followed in different periods of time for freedom and justice. Max Stanford, the leader of RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement) observed in history such models who could be the inspirer of the movement of liberation. Robinson manifests that “Stanford looked to slave revolts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for guidance and inspiration, and wanted to “follow in the spirit of black revolutionaries” like Denmark Vesey, Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, and others” (61). Such heroes are the guiding forces of black population who can ignite their community to fight for humanity and dignity. Cora’s escape, in the novel, may be a trend to refuse slavery and escape with life and other slaves copy her example and the result is bound to be the freedom of slaves. In this sense, black literature entails black life in association of its history. *The Underground Railroad* encompasses past with its heroes and heroic deeds; the present social and political events and the projection of future with freedom, justice and equality.

In this way, *The Underground Railroad* involves the replay of blacks' history of escaping from slavery, as black aesthetic uses the past, its recent political and social events and projects the hope of victory, in which Cora accomplishes a long journey for justice and freedom. Dealing with the question of freedom and justice this

novel maintains the functional value of literature—to reveal the enemy, praise the people who become the role model of the society and inspire for change—social reformation.

Chapter V

The Duplicity of Whites and Call for Self-dignity in *The Nickel Boys*

This chapter manifests a promising black boy Elwood Curtis who cannot save himself from white supremacy. Racism infiltrated in all walk of life of black people and whites' fraudulence over black community does not value Elwood as a good boy and thus he suffers in Nickel Academy. Black aesthetic reiterates helping black people to know where they have been oppressed, exploited and degraded, and causes the logical end of their adverse condition. Whitehead, in *The Nickel Boys*, reveals events and circumstances of whites' duplicity and imposed racism upon the innocent black children and the urgency of justice and the guarantee of self-dignity of black people.

The Nickel Boys is Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about a boy named Elwood Curtis and his experience at Nickel Academy, a reformatory school, in Florida. This novel has enacted the harrowing history of America during the Jim Crow era, when even academic institutions practiced racism against the innocent and ignorant children of the black community. Whitehead, in the novel, dramatizes racism in academic organizations like Nickel Academy to demonstrate the monstrous aspects of whites who are in the habitual procedure of sexual abuse, corruption and corporal punishment. Two black boys, Elwood and Turner, are the medium of the novel to reveal the American history of racial extremity during Jim Crow. This novel expounds how two black boys in Nickel Academy, a reformatory school in Florida expose racism, abuse and corruption of the academy, to give justice to the black community by ending duplicity of whites in their saying and doing. Duplicity has been a medium to whites to continue racism and rule and ruin black community.

Duplicity of whites and the perversion of law and justice to enervate black community draw attention of the black community in *The Nickel Boys*. The term duplicity refers to the two-facedness in which people intentionally hide their true intention of troubling others and show their righteousness to the world. It is a kind of deception having the two elemental parts that are essentially opposites of each other. Duplicity in terms of American whites is commensurate. They claim themselves rational, humanitarian and righteous, and preach human rights—equality, justice and freedom to the world. Conversely, their two-facedness is indubitable in America where they have confiscated the basic rights and human values from black people.

Such kind of duplicity of whites has caused the loss of dignity, fundamental human value, in black population. Dignity is a state of being esteemed, honored and worthy and self-dignity entails the sense of having an individual's importance and value and other people's respect. In order to end whites' duplicity and maintain self-dignity, as John Rawls points out "All social values—liberty and opportunities, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to be everyone's advantage" (54). Self-dignity emerges from justice and equality and promotes self-confidence, self-esteem and the sense of worthiness. Self-dignity is crucial to develop the capacity to be resilient in the adverse situations and manage psychological as well as emotional anguishes and conflicting interests. White people have weakened black community by grasping fundamental human values and made them realize inferior to whites because they have never experienced self-dignity in the racial society. Two-facedness of whites is evident to two modes of law, education, attitudes and actions. Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* uncovers whites by exposing their duplicity and assumes the attainment of blacks' self-dignity by ending injustice.

Duplicity of Whites and Elwood's Suffering in Nickel Academy

The Nickel Boys, to exhibit the vices of America, accentuates whites' duplicity of behavior in advocating equality to the world and relegating black community to a stagnant group. Such behavior of whites is penetrative in all domain of life and so there is a big crevasse between black life and other groups living in America. It is the irony of America that black people who are prominent in making modern America have been weakened by discrimination and segregation while the whites are making upward mobility.

The discriminatory act of America has impacted on the lives of different groups; some are moving upward in conducive environment and blacks are lagging behind. Such variation in this land manifests the white's behavior towards the black. Robinson, by comparing the black with Jews, demonstrates blacks' condition in America as:

Jews prospered partly because of their thirst for education. Marital breakup was less common among Jews, and the Jewish parents' control of their children resulted in significant "neurosis" but "less psychosis." Blacks, by contrast, had been crippled by slavery. The peculiar institution weakened black family structure, and that weakness had important effects. One was that black lacked the clannishness that other ethnic groups had used to create and sustain separate economic markets and clientele. (113)

Black community has been fragmented and maimed since black people were brought to America as slaves. Slavery has become the cause of discrimination and segregation and it has got institutionalized in all social and political institutions. Black life is always at risk and has become the lagging community in the country where other communities are improving their condition geometrically. Injustice has been a cause

of uneven progress of black communities in comparison to other communities in America and black people are aware of this situation.

Since the arousal of the feeling of justice in black community is central motive of this novel, Whitehead expounds discrimination, domination and brutality as an implicit feature of whites in Nickel Academy. At Nickel Academy, there is a shed, which was used as a utility shed and now it is used for beating students. Black and white students have named it differently, Ice Cream Factory and White House. "The white boys bruised differently than the black boys and called it the Ice Cream Factory because you came out with bruises of every color. The black boys called it the White House because that was its official name and it fit and didn't need to be embellished. The White House delivered the law and everybody obeyed" (66). The White House, in the novel, is metaphorical which signifies oppressors' law and action to their people. The law and action are different in terms of the color of the people.

Both black and white boys are beaten here but the manner of beating varies regarding their race. Elwood is beaten here so seriously that he cannot say what happened there when others ask him. "There was a new pair of denim pants on the chair next to Elwood's hospital bed. The beating had embedded bits of the first into his skin and it took hours for the doctor to remove the fibers" (72). This White House is tantamount to the administrative building of American president from where discrimination, segregation and oppression are officiated. Discrimination is obvious here that white boys get bruised only but regarding black boys, there is no system at all and Elwood witnesses blood in the mattress and different measures to suppress victim's cry.

The duplicity of whites in Nickel Academy is intense and has resulted in discrimination. Such discriminatory practices of whites have the vested interest in

keeping the black community in status quo. While getting black students at university white would propagate happiness but the reality is different. Patricia J. Williams manifests whites duplicity as "everyone was running around telling black people that they were very happy to have us there, but after all they did have to lower the standards and readjust the grading system . . ." (102). Such duplicity of whites is pervasive in all walks of life and it has obviated black population from quality education and life.

Moreover, black people are suffering from poverty and deprivation since all institutions of America have fostered such discrimination and helped their people move ahead in progress and prosperity. Their bias toward black means to say that the fall of black people is their progress. One example of American government's prejudice toward black demonstrates:

The government policies that helped build the suburbs included home financing plans that made housing accessible to millions of Americans.

Unfortunately, "racially discriminatory practices all but eliminated black access to the suburbs and to government mortgage money, and thus locked blacks into ghettos. (Robinson 36)

Americans foster racism and segregation and intent to proceed such practice in order to limit black community in ghettos and depend upon them. Whitehead, in the novel, presents White House very tactfully so that the readers can link this White House with the administrative building of America and understand its practice of partiality.

An attack on blacks by government institutions and individuals is widespread in black life-world. Harriet's husband, Monty, was killed by hitting on his head when he tried to save a dishwasher. Her husband loses his life from the whites since they realize that they are not safe from him and free to do whatever they like:

Harriet's husband, Monty, got hit in the head with a chair while breaking up a scuffle at Miss Simone's. Some colored GIs from Camp Gordon Johnston is a rumble with a bunch of Tallahassee crackers over who had next on the pool table. Two people ended up dead. One of them was Monty, who'd stepped up to protect one of Simone's dishwashers from three white men. (70)

During the time of discrimination and segregation, physical attack on the black was extreme and it would end up with the death of the black. Many black men, women and children have lost their lives in America from lynching and the assault of whites, who have been fortified by racism and Jim Crow.

In black literature, lynching is the repeatedly documented issue. The repetition of lynching in black literature intensifies the awareness and unity of black people to end it. In lynching, many innocent blacks have lost their lives in a brutal manner and it has left dirty marks on whites. In American history "Lynching was part of an ongoing, systemic campaign of racialized and ritualized violence and intimidation designed to perpetuate a prior system of racial subordination under which only African Americans lived" (Brooks and Widner 508). Such concerted attacks on the black is not an ignoring matter for the community destined to justice. Black writers cannot ignore it in their writing on it because of its penetration in black community and the loss of innocent brethren, and this issue gets space in any literary work to energize the anti-lynching movement.

In American history, lynching is the barbaric and disgraceful practice for which racism and segregation are responsible. Lynching, in the US, is one medium of keeping the black population down since white people never want the progress of the black. Regarding lynching as a tool of whites for keeping blacks in size, Whitehead reports that ". . . everybody knew white boys were lynching black men in uniform, but

he never believed he'd be a target. Not him. Bunch of white boys jealous that they didn't have a uniform and afraid of a world that let a nigger wear one in the first place" (71). White people are jealous to the progress and achievement of the black and it is obvious that lynching is the policy of oppressors to keep the black inferior, and their inferior position helps them hold their superiority. Lynching, in new form and function, has intimidated the black community that "Drive-by shootings and random street crime have replaced lynchings as a source of intimidation, and the culture of terror practiced by armed crack dealers and warring adolescents has turned them into the urban equivalents of the Ku Klux Klan" (Austin 390). White people do not want to end their violent attitude toward the black because their violent ways help them in keeping their supreme position and stagnating the black.

Whitehead, in this novel, ridicules their assumption of superiority that they are rational, civilized and the champions of humanity. Elwood, in the Nickel Academy, happens to meet white children and surprises to see their demeanor. He finds them different from what he was and has been indoctrinated by different media about whites. Whitehead illustrates white children in the academy:

Some of them were rough characters. They stole money, cussed at their teachers, damaged public property, had stories about bloody pool-hall fights and uncles who sold moonshine. They were sent to Nickel for offense Elwood had never heard of: malingering, moper, incorrigibility. Words the boys didn't understand either, but what was the point when their meaning was clear enough: Nickel. (74)

Oppressors' communities are infested by such criminal activities that the so called barbarous people are unfamiliar with. Elwood, who represents sincere and

hardworking black children, shocks greatly that white children are so evil individually and in public.

Moreover, fraudulence and duplicity of whites have grown in their people as their heritage. The widespread fraudulence of whites has not left any sector untouched, be it school or any institution. The misappropriation of black students' supplies indicates the meanness of whites and their crime toward humanity. The operation of Nickel Academy and their behavior toward black children at school exposes the hypocrisy of whites and their concern over things that are of the black. Elwood witnesses exploitation of black children by selling their provision outside:

Sometimes they unloaded notebooks and pencils, sometimes medicine and bandages, but mostly it was food. Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas hams disappeared into the hands of fry cooks, and the assistant principal of the elementary school opened a box of erasers and counted them one by one. Elwood wondered why the boy had no toothpaste – now he knew. The first day, when the back of the van was empty, Elwood assumed they'd return to Nickel, but they headed to a clean, quiet street that reminded him of the nicer parts of Tallahassee, the white part. (91).

The personnel of the school are involved in the fraudulent appropriation of provision supplied to black children. Elwood, now, knows what they did and where they supplied food and stationery provided to school. Such embezzlement, in the novel, presents the duplicity of whites, different from their claim in the world and victimization of the black in the institutions operated by whites. Black literature denudes whites that they never are the friends of the black and are swollen by exploiting and grasping what is of the black.

Whitehead expends few paragraphs to reveal how black children are deprived of the nutrition that has been shipped by the state, Florida. When the van is parked down the alley, Elwood is curious to know the contents. “. . . Elwood got a look at the van’s cargo: cartons and crates of Nickel’s kitchen stores. Cans of peas, industrial tins of peaches, applesauce, baked beans, gravy” (89). This provision of Nickel Academy has been supplied outside, to earn profit, by preventing black children from their rights of good food and health. Harper, supervisor on the Community Service Work team, uses Turner and Elwood to help sell food and supply illicitly to white townpeople. “. . . they unloaded a store of canned vegetables at the Top Shop Grocery. Harper folded each envelope of cash in half, snapped a rubber band around it, and tossed it into the glove compartment before the next destination” (90). The administration of the Academy is involved in making profit by selling government’s supply meant to black children. Whitehead projects such people and events in the novel to let the world know how the institutions run by whites have deprived his brethren of food, medicine and “. . . would’ve sold the air you breathe if he could’ve” (90). Black people have been exploited and will be exploited if black literature does not make their people alert of such practice of duplicity. White duplicity is apparent in Nickel Academy and this institution ignores the potential of colored boys though it is established to reform and restructure the deviated children.

Furthermore, Nickel Academy has been practicing discrimination and segregation upon the innocent black children. Elwood is positive in thought and believes that this world can be changed. He is studious and interested in literature. “Elwood went through the book one by one during school hours while the boys around him stuttered and stumbled. He had intended to study British literature at the college” (84). Elwood bears the potential of being a great man but he becomes the

victim of racism. Because of racism he gets arrested and sent to reformatory school, for whom there is not anything to reform. At Nickel, ironically, he experiences oppression and discrimination worse than ever. His experience, there, reveals that “. . . there was no higher system guiding Nickel’s brutality, merely an indiscriminate spite, one that had nothing to do with people” (85). The hatred that Elwood bears in the Nickel Academy is the product of prejudice and discrimination promoted by racism.

Just society revokes prejudice and restrictions, distributes fundamental rights and duties and fixes the share of benefits. But Nickel maintains racial horror that “Nickel was racist as hell – half the people who worked here probably dressed up like Klan on weekends – but the way Turner saw it, wickedness went deeper than skin color” (105). Academic institutions foster love, mercy, kindness, generosity and justice, but white people have made Nickel hellish – where all the human values are defunct. All the practices, in the institution, are guided by racial values. “The racist division of the school recreated itself in the gym, with white boys taking the south half and black boys claiming the north” (106-7). Nickel Academy, in the novel, has created the border between black and white students and promoted hatred among them. Such a customary way of racial behavior does not propel American society to peace and harmony and causes loss to both races.

The borderline created between black and white is transparent in this novel. The borderline of race is extremely charged upon the black boy when he excels the white boy in boxing. Black boy Griff and white boy Big Chet participate in a boxing championship and Griff beats Big Chet. Since he has won the competition, this competition is taken racially and Griff becomes the victim of it. “The black giant battered the white boy without mercy, absorbed his opponent’s counterassault, jabbed

at the kid's face as if punching his way through the wall of a person cell. When blood and sweat blinded him, he maintained an eerie sense of Big Chet's position and fended the boy off' (112). The racial practice of the school does not take the competition between a black boy and a white boy as individual but racial. The strength and skill of Griff becomes the matter of shame to whites and they take revenge of loss by taking the life of Griff and bury it, which is recovered by state after fifty years:

He was all of them in one black body that night in the ring, and all of them when the white men took him out back to those two iron rings. They came for Griff that night and he never returned. . . . When the state of Florida dug him up fifty years later, the forensic examiner note the fractures in the wrists and speculated that he'd been restrained before he died, in addition to the other violence attested by the broken bones. (114)

White people cannot withstand and acknowledge any success of black people in any form, and the law of discrimination has increased hatred and prejudice. The efficiency of black people is a great challenge and obstacle to oppressors and they lynch their assumed rival to be safe and superior to the black. Whites take the life of Griff since he is a hurdle for his rivals to be winner and prove their superiority.

Such case is not one in the life of black community. Racial practice has made it more difficult for black people to reveal their quality in the society they are living in. Skills and qualities are rewarded in the society where law and justice prevails. But the society where law and justice is stagnant, these qualities suffer and penalized. Gloria Naylor, about another example of humiliation because of the superlative performance of a Negro student at school, reports:

I remember the first time I heard the word nigger. In my third-grade class, our math tests were being passed down the rows, and as I handed the papers to a little boy in back of me, I remarked that once again he had received a much lower mark than I did. He snatched his test from me and spit out that word. . . . I didn't know what a nigger was, but I knew that whatever it meant, it was something he shouldn't have called me. This was verified when I raised my hand, and in a loud voice repeated what he had said and watched the teacher scold him for using a "bad" word. (481)

A little boy calling a girl nigger does not mean a jealousy an individual has, it suggests whites' sense of jealousy to the black. As long as people can use their logic and reason, they never use physical force and gutter words, but violence and humiliation become the weapons of those people who lose their rational. White people do not take black people as fellow beings, so the success of black people becomes a burden to white community. White children have been indoctrinated to take black people/children as subhuman and they assume that being beaten by the lower kind is the loss of their dignity. As long as black people excel whites in any domain of life white people cannot be superior to them and this forces them to attack the black physically and verbally.

In terms of raising voice against racial injustice and keeping them alert for the struggle of justice, black aesthetic uncovers the brutal manners of oppressors upon the black and replays such behaviors in various literary texts. *The Nickel Boys* is affluent in presenting such cruel practices of whites and the reading of this text keenly distresses the mind of all people who are concerned with the humanity. Racism has blunted the heart of whites for whom "To be a black is equated with being unworthy of love, kindness, and basic human rights" (Dobie 31). This novel manifests the

institutionalized racism imposed upon black community and their children that they can never be equal to whites and cannot claim love, mercy as their rights though they excel whites in every way. Elwood and Turner have been projected in the novel in order to reveal all the criminal attitudes of the oppressors.

From the diverse characters, Whitehead, in the novel, presents various aspects of oppressors' duplicity and atrocity. School has maintained codes of conduct but they are defunct in terms of black students. All the time, these codes are recurrently pronounced but they are dead in practice. The codes of school are equivalent to the codes of law in American society. The codes of law have provided justice to American Negroes but they are not available for the black in American society. Martin Luther King, in his famous speech 'I Have a Dream,' illustrates what America has done to the black in terms of law and justice:

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. So we have come to cash this check— a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. (74).

America has freed black people from the shackles of racial injustice and segregation in document time and again but black people remained crippled with injustice and discrimination in practice. Whites are showing in document to the world that they favor justice and humanity but in their mindset black people hold lower status and enjoy servitude. King, here, refers to the devious act of whites that has kept freedom and justice of the black in limbo.

Likewise, Whitehead, in order to relate the insincerity of America, presents the codes of Nickel Academy in the novel. Jaime realizes that the codes of school are stagnated at school in the manner the justice has been made inactive. “His constant dorm reassignments notwithstanding. Jaime kept a quiet profile and conducted himself in accordance with the Nickel handbook’s rules of conduct— a miracle, since no one had ever seen the handbook despite its constant invocations by the staff. Like justice, it existed in theory” (118). Any theory that is said and written does not have its value as long as the harmony between words and conduct evades. America has enacted a lot of laws to end racism and segregation but principles of law do not help the oppressed realize their freedom and justice. Whitehead alludes this tendency of American society in the novel and it demands the conformity of theory and practice.

The contradiction between theory and practice of law and justice is infested in the Nickel Academy. Black boys, different from their understanding of a reformatory school, experience and witness whites’ meanness, and an escape from there becomes the last resort. However, their escape from there results in the end of life. “Most often runners were captured, taken for a tour of the Ice Cream Factory, and then ushered into a dark cell for a couple of weeks of attitude adjustment. It was crazy to run and crazy not to run” (146). The situation of ‘to run and not to run’ connotes the whole life of black community in racial society. The Nickel Academy represents that racial society in which black boys’ lives are not safe and easy since they are deprived of food, security and other rights and an escape because of threat is more threatening than before. Many, from Nickel Academy, run away in search of security and freedom, but, unfortunately, they get captured and killed. “These deaths were never investigated. The archaeologists at the University of South Florida noticed that the death rates of those who attempted multiple escapes were higher than those who did

not” (146). Black boys, in Nickel Academy, have been enforced in such a situation that they lose their lives whether they escape or not. Nickel is distorting in every way in terms of dealing with the black children.

Black students would be losing their lives by the situation caused by school but it never accounts the incidents as disaster or administrative errors. The school is never responsible to the death of students. Death of black student, in any form, is not repulsive, “You could die. Of “natural causes” even, if abetted by unhealthy conditions, malnutrition” (145). White oppressors see value in the dead skin of animals and the feather of birds, but never see value in blacks’ lives. They have been indoctrinated by racism that human value is in color, not in feeling and emotions. Many agents are involved and trained to terrorize and traumatize black population and the one, out of many, is the Nickel Academy, which practices all the measures possible to cause sudden and severe physical as well as mental injuries in black community. Whitehead, in the novel, has aroused the racial events that have long-term negative effects in black population. These events can never be justified in sane societies.

The injustice practiced by Nickel in America is not one, there are many Nickels. In these places blacks are devalued— America does not give any human position to black community. The widespread evil behavior of whites toward the black is manifested in black cultural productions. Whitehead, in this novel, provides with the ill treatments of racism that black population has undergone in American society for a long time. This novel makes it easier for reader to know the extreme behavior upon the black. Whitehead portrays the pervasiveness of injustice the big country has enacted upon black community and points out:

The country was big, and its appetite for prejudice and depredation limitless, how could they keep up with the host of injustices, big and small. This was one place. A lunch counter in New Orleans, a public pool in Baltimore that they filled with concrete rather than allow black kids to dip a toe in it. This was one place, but if there was one there were hundreds, hundreds of Nickels and White Houses scattered across the land like pain factories. (175)

The big land of America sustains prejudices and injustices. Nickel and White Houses suggest the pain and suffering of black community spread in the land for which the ancestors of victims have expended their blood and sweat. It is the norm of black literature to serve the irony of America that the creators of modern America have been annoyed chronically in color line.

As discussed above, Whitehead depicts duplicity caused by discrimination and segregation in the school with food that has been served to Elwood and other black boys. The real taste of oatmeal has been covered with the smell of cinnamon and this incident of food denudes the reality of whites. “The oatmeal had a bunch of cinnamon dumped into it to hide a lousy taste” (56). The food that the school provides to black children suggests the unmasking of white people whose saying and doing are contradictory. They label the black of lesser importance and unfit for human being to hide their culpability. White people ascribe their fear, problem or guilty desire to black people and condemn them for it in order to deny that they have the demeanor of the black. This novel intensely reveals the Janus-faced whites who are confusing the black community by recurrently demonstrating whites pure, good, universal, and the black impure, evil and parochial. Black literature needs to expose such duplicity of whites to the world and Whitehead, in the novel, bears the black aesthetic value that intends the political change with the help of authors and their texts.

Political change becomes impossible as long as the injustices in the society are not revealed to propel the victims for struggle. As far as America is concerned, the intense unfairness of this country for a long time is racism. Racism and segregation are solely concerned with color and color has become a puppet in the hand of oppressors. It is the decision of the oppressors to fix the position of a person, and while they are practicing on a person the very person loses their position or status. Whitehead has understood this situation of the people of different races, mostly the black. He has projected a character named Jaimie as a Nickel student to manifest confusion created by school:

. . . his mother was Mexican, so they didn't know what to do with him. On his arrival, he was put in with the white kids, but his first day working in the lime fields he got so dark that Spencer had him reassigned to the colored half.

Jaimie spent a month in Cleveland, but then Director Hardee toured one day, took a look at that light face among the dark faces, and had him sent back to the white camp. (61)

White people are so rash and impulsive to the sensitiveness of other races that they cause the loss of their entity and identity. Black community has lost their identity because of the rash behavior of whites. They are hostile to the black and they cause the social, emotional, psychological, political and economic loss in this community as much as they can. Such losses are embodied in black literary texts and so the struggle for change is getting inevitable in black community.

Blacks' Search for Dignity in the White World of Duplicity

Black population has become victim of whites' two-facedness in legal provision, schools, hospitals and public places. Black community has urgently needed justice to save black life, culture and maintain dignity. Whitehead, in order to meet

this need, produces a character, Elwood, who follows strongly Martin Luther King, an initiator of civil rights movement for racial justice, freedom and equality to the children of God. The principle of black art- black aesthetic- is to make the extremities of racism and such movement for justice visible, and promises radical political message in a literary text that Whitehead follows. In this regard, this novel interposes political goal of liberating black population from racial atrocity by dramatizing injustice and oppression in the novel.

The recurrent allusion of King and his speech intensifies social change in America. King's speech at Zion Hill is handy for Elwood. "Elwood received the best gift of his life on Christmas Day 1962, even if the ideas it put in his head were his undoing. *Martin Luther King at Zion Hill* was the only album he owned and it never left the turntable" (11). King, in his speeches, advocates direct action for justice without violence and this call indicates the patience and the sense of brotherhood of black community which whites lack. Black aesthetic implies change in prejudice rooted society in order to elevate the devalued group in American society.

So, black aesthetic develops black literature as a literary arm to struggle against segregation and humiliation black population has undergone during and after slavery, and achieve dignity and honor. This novel begins with the reference of King's speech at Zion Hill where King talks about new type of slavery- segregation and its evils. Whitehead puts forward the evils of segregation via the central character Elwood Curtis that "Elwood saw it all: Africans persecuted by the white sin of slavery, Negroes humiliated and kept low by segregation . . ." (11-12). The wounds and insults of slavery in black community are inherent and these marks of slavery are dramatized in this novel. Whitehead alludes King's speech on segregation and humiliation how such kind of injustice has impacted raw heart and soul of their

children. Furthermore, King in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” surmises on segregation that “All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives a segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. . . . Hence segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful” (810). King’s speech on segregation on all occasions suggests how badly segregation has damaged his people.

Furthermore, King, in his speech, germinates the sense of dignity and self-respect in his daughter; and it manifests black leaders’ commitment to their brethren for liberation. Whitehead demonstrates King’s speech in the novel that “He counseled his daughter to resist the lure of hatred and bitterness and assured her that “Even though you can’t go to Fun Town, I want you to know that you are as good as anybody who goes into Fun Town” (12). King solaces his daughter that whites’ restriction from going to fun town does not mean that she is evil. Black aesthetic elevates the awareness of black population that they are not dull and idiot as labeled by whites and leads them to resist against hatred of bigotry. King, here, appeals his people to develop and maintain the sense of dignity and self-respect that they are productive, resourceful and responsible. Black community needs to believe in their souls that they are as significant and worthwhile as others.

In regard to their significance, black children are rational that their content of the quality does not get any recognition as long as they do not fight against injustice. Elwood is one among them who believes in the quality of their souls but futile because of the evils of segregation. Children of his age are engaged in the mission of terminating the injustice of bigotry. Elwood notices photos of the Negro’s struggle in a magazine that took place in Frenchtown. The photos focus on the sight of struggle:

Life's photo essays conveyed him to the front lines, to bus boycotts in Baton Rouge, to counter sit-ins in Greensboro, where young people not much older than him took up the movement. They were beaten with metal bars, blasted by fire hoses, spat on by white housewives with angry faces and frozen by the camera in tableaux of noble resistance. The tiny details were a wonder: how the young men's ties remained straight black arrows in the whirl of violence, how the curves of the young women's perfect hairdos floated against the squares of their protest signs. (22)

Black children's participation and determination in the struggle for justice and the treatment of whites with brutality is abundance in American history. Black writers unfold racial history to illustrate brutality of white and prepare black youth in the struggle for justice. Black aesthetic helps black community inspire and give them enough courage to face any situation to come. The events of resistance in the novel contribute to revolutionary change.

Black writing, for revolutionary change, arises the confidence of their people that they are intelligent, hardworking, resourceful and compassionate, too. Without knowing oneself, it becomes difficult to lead the world for change. Whitehead hints here the speech of King at Zion Hill which guides his brethren how they should present themselves in front of oppressors. "*We must believe in our souls that we are somebody, that we are significant, that we are worthwhile, and we must walk the streets of life every day with this sense of dignity and this sense of somebody-ness*" (italics original 28-29). This language of King helps Elwood realize that big and small forces are working on to keep them down. He realizes the need of black community to keep their spirit high in order to fight against oppressors. The sense of dignity of Negroes is the surest weapon to outsmart the tricks of oppressors. "These are people who trick

you and deliver emptiness with a smile, while others rob you of your self-respect. You need to remember who you are” (27). White people attack black people from all around and to defeat it, they need to know and show that they are as good as anyone.

Oppressors always practice trickery in terms of law, education, providing information upon the black to keep them down as Elwood has been defrauded by providing empty encyclopedia. Since Elwood desires to get information about the world he feels happy to get encyclopedia but the dishonest mind of white makes Elwood's effort for knowledge futile. Elwood's happiness with encyclopedia at home reports:

At home, he cleared Hardy Boys and Tom Swifts from the green bookcase in the front room and unpacked the boxes. He paused with *Ga*, curious to see how the smart men at the Fisher company handled *galaxy*. The pages were blank—all of them. Every volume in the first box was blank except for the one he'd seen in the kitchen. He opened the other two boxes, his face getting hot. All the books were empty. (16-17)

Such events of white fraudulence keep going in the life of black people as long as black community hold their equal position in racial society and stand up straight and maintain their sense of dignity by establishing justice and freedom.

Furthermore, black people are aware how white people have defrauded them like Elwood and what they should do to establish their dignity in front of the oppressors. King is only a seen driver who tells his people not to lose a sense of dignity and pride of their race; there are other hundreds of rational blacks who inculcate their children to maintain self-respect. Shakur, in her autobiography, remembers what her grandparents told her when she was young and identifies her:

Over and over they would tell me, “you’re as good as anyone else. Don’t let anybody tell you that they are better than you.” My grandparents strictly forbade me to say “yes ma’am” and “yes sir” or to look down at my shoes or to make subservient gestures when talking to white people. “You look them in the eye when you talk to them,” i was told.” “And speak up like you’ve got some sense.” I was told to speak in a loud, clear voice and to hold my head up high (27)

The words one speaks and gesture, posture and movement of a person reflect what they think themselves in front of their enemies. Black people’s ‘ma’am’ and ‘sir’ after each word indicate their undermining position in the society. Senior people have a coffer of experiences which become guideline to their children. What was restricted and suggested to their children are the mantras to escalate their dwindling glory. Shakur’s grandparents have taught her to respect her own self so she can expect respect from others. Likewise, Baby Suggs, in *Beloved*, teaches her people to love their bodies and so they can get love from others. Such senior people from black community prepare their children/people to stand against prejudice and for dignity.

It is the scheme of the oppressors not to let black community have the sense of dignity and self-respect. Social degradation is everywhere, be it at school, hospital, shopping center, bus, train or any public places. Whitehead demonstrates school where black innocent children have been mortified by the indoctrinated white children. White children, from the very beginning of their learning, have been taught to insult and humiliate. Black children behaved as sub-human at school on the first day implies the extreme whites as:

On the first day of school year, the students of Lincoln High School received their new secondhand textbooks from the white high school across the way.

Knowing where the textbooks were headed, the white students left inscription for the next owners: *Choke, Nigger! You Smell. Eat Shit. . . .* It was humiliating to open a biology book, turn on the page on the digestive system, and be confronted with *Drop dead NIGGER. . . .* (29)

White children curse and cuss black children for no crime but black skin. White children are sure that used books go in the hands of black children, so they write bad words to demoralize black children. Humiliation to black community is strategic in racial institutions and such strategy, they think, helps them keep black community lower in American society.

Furthermore, Patricia Williams, in her “The Death of the Profane” talks about the humiliation caused upon black community by whites. She observes that “Blacks, for so many generations deprived of jobs based on the color of our skin, are now told that we ought to find it demeaning to be hired, based on the color of our skin” (264). White are not still realizing their extreme view on the black and are saying that black people do not deserve the rights white people have and it is a demeaning act to demand work as their right. Such words under the influence of color line indicate the severity of the evils of segregation.

The more the white people have segregated and the black people have written about it, the more black community has got its strength to raise index finger against the oppressors. The events of segregation and the documentation of such events have brought black people together to remind their rights of equal opportunities. White people label black people’s demand of rights is demeaning, but black people are defying starkly whites' attitude toward black community and contend:

What is truly demeaning in this era is . . . to stand on street corners unemployed and begging. It is down-right demeaning to have to explain why

we haven't been employed for months and then watch the job go to someone who is "more experienced." It is outrageously demeaning that none of this can be called racism, even it happens only to, or to large numbers of, black people; as long as it's done with a smile, a handshake and a shrug; as long as the phantom-word "race" is never used. (Williams 264)

The behavior of the racists toward black community is derisive and belittle. They are humiliating and discouraging black people from gaining their rights and justice. All the rightful activities of black people are immoral for the racists. Racism is a phantom-word produced to enervate the black from basic rights of humans. White people are engaged in immoral act by betraying their black brethren and maintaining their supremacy in inhuman manner.

Principle of discrimination is a moral blemish which black authors articulate in their literary works, and such expression appeals directly the senses of the oppressed and calls forth a spontaneous action against barbaric attack of the so-called superior race. Whitehead demonstrates more of such situation in *Nickel Academy* that "Worse than the secondhand textbook at Lincoln High, all the Nickel textbooks were from before he was born, earlier editions of textbooks Elwood remembered from the first grade" (59). Black children have been conspired in all places they reach since the oppressors' intent is to stagnate the progress of black people. The secondhand texts provided by white institutions indicate that black student do not deserve purity and freshness and germinate a sense of degradation and humiliation in black children's psyche. The children groomed in this environment lose self-esteem in their lives.

Moreover, white oppressors' practice of discrimination has divided American society and its institutions. Black people, who do not have access in such institutions, become the victim of social values abused by whites. The segregation in education

system and the deprivation of quality education has caused immediate as well as long-term loss in the community. The reason that black population is unable to rise from the present situation is the prejudice and segregation in education system. Such discrimination in education and its impact on black community has made black writers serious and use their pen incessantly. Shakur, regarding the behavior of whites upon the black, explains:

Of course, our school was segregated. . . . Our schools were inferior. The books were used and torn, handed down from white schools. We received only a fraction of the state money allotted to white schools, and the conditions under which many Black children received an education can only be described as horrible. (41)

Fair and sound education produces fair and quality citizen. Quality education generates a sense of competition, confidence and self-dignity in people. Segregation in education is white's strategy to keep black down the level of their people.

Whitehead and Shakur are unanimous in the issue of segregated education and the terrible condition of the black. Both these writers include the incident of providing black children with secondhand textbooks with mutilated condition. The worn books on the first day of school do not help black children motivate on education and feel their dignity. Such books are not only worn out physically, their contents are also shabby for the raw mind of black children. They are labelled as uncivilized, decadent, violent, and inferior. These books cannot produce that community which develops self-respect and bear the spirit of competition. As a result, the children in their youth doom to illegal acts and again they are proved to be druggist, rapist, and robber. And moreover, Shakur further mentions that the budget for black children's education entails only the small residual amount from white

schools. The scant budget does not produce enough schools, let alone books with quality contents.

Black aesthetic assumes that literature grows from the model and environment people are surrounded by. It speaks on the cultural practices of particular age. Black literature entails the subject matter of the suffering of their people and loss of dignity during slavery and racism. Such books are handed down from one generation to another in order to let them know the suffering of their ancestors and realize the need of social change. Elwood gets a text of James Baldwin from his teacher Mr. Hill that manifests his agitation:

Mr. Hill gave him a copy of James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* on the last day of school, and his mind churned. *Negroes are Americans and their destiny is the country's destiny*. . . . he had marched for everyone's rights, even those who shouted him down. My struggle is your struggle, your burden is my burden. (37)

Baldwin's phrase stirs him up that black people are the part and parcel of America. He understands that the nation can be protected by protecting black population who made the foundation of the country.

The reference of Baldwin's 'Notes of a Native Son', in this novel, manifests the awareness of black population regarding their status in American society and commitment to fight against. They have understood that they have been discriminated against, politically oppressed, economically exploited and socially degraded. Here, Baldwin shares his experience and it is everyone's experience. ". . . I had discovered the weight of white people in the world. I saw that this had been for my ancestors and now would be for me an awful thing to live with and that the bitterness which had helped to kill my father could also kill me" (401). None of black population is safe in

America until the racial atrocity is ended. Whitehead's allusion of Baldwin in the novel is the demand of justice for the black. Baldwin, in this text, insists that ". . . one must never, in one's own life, accept these injustices as commonplace but must fight them with all one's strength" (413). Such phrases in black literature appeal all emotionally to get involved in the struggle of justice. It is the tenet of black literature to put the experience of suffering of their ancestors in front of younger generation and prepare them for struggle in future for social change.

Moreover, black authors are cognizant about the problems of the black in America. In America black people are regarded as foreigner, the guests of few days which is really an American fallacy. Baldwin, in his "Stranger in the Village," clarifies that "He is not a visitor to the West, but a citizen there, an American; as American as the Americans who despise him, the Americans who fear him/the Americans who love him . . ." (259). Black people are not the strangers but the citizen of the country. Black authors inculcate their people that they deserve their position of a citizen in the country and what is barricading for their position needs to be eliminated. Regarding the hurdles that stagnate blacks' progress, Baldwin further explores:

At the root of the American Negro problem is the necessity of the American white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to be able to live with himself. And the history of this problem can be reduced to the means used by Americans – lynch law and law, segregation and legal acceptance, terrorization and concession – either to come to terms with this necessity, or to find a way around it, or (most usually) to find a way of doing both these things at once. (258)

White people have fabricated different means to control and live with them such means are lynching, Jim Crow laws of segregation and degradation. As long as these means remain active American Negro keeps on suffering from whites' extremities. Black authors are cognizant about this situation and their writing is imbued with social change.

Black literature serves the preoccupied version of position of the black and whites that the oppressors have developed. They equate pure, good thing with white and the impure, evil with the black. Black population is associated with crimes in American society and so are they behaved. The demeanor of the black is evaluated on the basis of their skin color, which is against moral law. Black people are wise enough to put their disposition in front of the world. On the capacity and resources of black people, Robinson observes :

Just as the English, French, Irish, German, Italian, and Jewish people have "their native or inherent peculiarities," so too did the African. In fact, the colored races had the "highest traits of civilization": they were civil, peaceful, and religious. . . . "in ethics, metaphysics, theology and legal jurisprudence; in plain language – in the true principles of morals, correctness of thought, religion, and law or civil government, there is no doubt but the black race will yet instruct the world." (17)

Black people are the descendants of spiritual heritage, and their humanistic values are being undermined after being controlled by the material whites. White equates evil aspects of life and society with black color which black scholars recurrently raise in their critiques. Black writers and scholars are proud of their heritage and deserve dignity though they have been labelled otherwise.

Such labelling of whites makes Elwood, in the novel, the victim of his color and suffers a lot in his life when the unrequited viewpoint of whites dominates the society. In the New World, the human features of the black are hidden strategically to degrade and oppress black people. Elwood gets lift in a car from Rodney to South since his bike chain breaks. This car is caught by the white deputy who is equipped with gun. The deputy remarks “Only a nigger’d steal that” (42). The car was stolen but Elwood, a sincere and sensitive boy, is innocent, later he’s sent to Nickel Academy, a reformatory school, by a judge indicting him a guilt. His culpability, here, is none other than his race. Elwood, in the novel, represents millions of black people who are criminals, thieves, rapists, drug addicts for white people.

The oppressors’ way of seeing black population as violent and crime mongers is alluded in the writings of the black. Brent Staples, in his essay “Black Men and Public Space,” illustrates his experience of being a thug for a white woman and states:

My first victim was a woman— white, well dressed, probably in her early twenties. I came upon her late one evening on a deserted street in Hyde Park. . . . As I swung on to the avenue behind her, there seemed to be a discreet, uninflamatory distance between us. . . . She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man – a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket-seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest. Within seconds she disappeared into a cross street. (267)

White people do not feel confident when they are alone and they see black people in front of them. Their family members have implanted in their mind that black people have no heart of humanity and they are the grabbers of whites. Black community has

piles of such experiences and the involvement of such issues in a black literary text arouses the community that 'enough is enough.'

Such 'enough' situation is the point to be noted in black literature. *The Nickel Boys* demonstrates the physical, social, political, psychological impact of racism that has deeply rooted in the psyche of white (children). Elwood is nabbed as a car thief, who the white officer does not speak a single word with in a long distance; when he speaks with white boys there is an insult to the black boy. "The officer told the white boys that they were sitting with a car thief and Bill laughed" (47). Bill is a white boy who is involved in vandalism with a bunch of bad apples. Both have been carried to Nickel Academy but Bill, being white, finds himself different and superior to Elwood. "He snorted when he got a look at Elwood, and whenever their legs touched on the drive, Bill pulled back as if he'd leaned against a hot chimney stove" (46). Here, Bill represents white children who have been brainwashed by racism that blacks are malicious and wicked. They can't remain together, let alone the friendship. The practice of segregation means the detaching and distancing from the black. Whitehead, in the novel, manifests the evil of segregation through the mind of children and it indicates infiltrative injustices in America.

Black writers are undisputed in their voice that the discrimination and segregation prevailed in American society can be ended by documenting the related events in literary texts. In this regard, black aesthetic uses past as well as recent political and social events in order to project the future. The projected future of the black is the undiscriminating society that entails freedom, justice and equality. Whitehead has intensified the need of the end of racism and segregation through his novel. This novel recurrently demonstrates the events of racism and segregation to arouse and call for struggle against injustice. He shows the past of Harriet, the

grandmother of Elwood that “Rarely did Harriet make proper goodbyes to her loved ones. Her father died in jail after a white lady downtown accused him of not getting out of her way on the sidewalk. *Bumptious contact*, as Jim Crow defined” (70). Jim Crow, the law of discrimination, keeps black people away from whites as white people have done injustice to black population and so feel unsecured from them.

Harriet’s father was sent to prison and made to commit suicide after he gets tired of getting appointment with judge. White people would feel secured from the black after sending them to Jail. “Niggers and Jail” (70) is the proper provision of security for the oppressors. As far as the whites are concerned, they feel secured and free when they become able to keep black population in prison and custody. It is the psychological thing that one feels good when their supposed enemy is in jail. Whites have tormented the black in irrational manner and they have fear of being retaliated from them and their safety is vulnerable.

Moreover, black aesthetic produces broad knowledge about the societies in which black literature becomes a witness to the crisis within the historical moments. Critical situations of the past have been documented in black literature and it has become an evidence for present and future readers. Various texts on slavery and racism have served multiple issues of Negro suffering in America and *The Nickel Boys* offers injustices in an academic institution and to black children who are not different from white children except in color. White children having bad records are free from trouble, worry and care in the reformatory school but Elwood always remains tainted and never earns any ranks though he is sincere and hardworking. Elwood meets with segregation in Nickel Academy that “The school had more than six hundred students; the white boys went down the hill and the black boys went up the hill” (50). Nickel Academy is an academic institution from outside, but this school

practices racism and segregation. Such dual layer of an academic organization is the sin and shame of America. This novel, by presenting such educational organization, reveals whites' tricks of keeping black population down. They do not let the black raise their head and it is the duty of black artist to help their people rise from the quicksand of racism.

While struggling for change, there might be the use of violence as a tool which contrary to the oppressed the oppressors have adopted against the black. The urgency of the black is change for justice, not violence and the reference of King, here, is to render good for evil. King believes in love as a powerful force that can bend the rod of brutality which is prevailing in white people for a long time. Elwood is highly influenced by King and in Nickel Academy, where the evils of racism are dominant, he thinks of King's appeal for peace and humanity. Elwood believes in sustainable change which is possible only through unconditional love to others as fellow humans. Such assumption in Elwood develops from the speech of King:

He was thinking of Dr. King's speech to high school students in Washington, DC, when he spoke of the degradations of Jim Crow and the need to transform that degradation into action. It will enrich your spirit as nothing else can. It will give you that rare sense of nobility that can only spring from love and selflessly helping your fellow man. Make a career of humanity. Make it a central part of your life. (64).

Selflessness and humanity are moral forces which are unyielding in front of atrocity in any form. Whitehead presents King, in the novel, to struggle for justice and change through love. Black aesthetic illustrates national heroes whom the liberation of their brethren is the supreme condition. The true liberation of human kind is apparent in that society where justice and freedom rule.

The emancipation of the black from the chains of discrimination and segregation is the focus of King in his speeches. He advocates action when other modes of struggle do not work. And this action does not mean the hatred created by action but rather a pressure to the oppressors to meet with the need of justice. King, in his 'Letter from Birmingham Jail,' submits the tenacity of action that "The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue" (809). King is always worried about his brethren that they have been stuck in a situation to hear not to be heard. This situation has kept black community in status quo and this condition of black community needs to be eliminated. The end of immobility of black community helps oppressors gain dignity that they have lost from the time their ancestor were brought to this country. King's speech that Elwood hears is the realization of the end of discrimination and injustice.

Moreover, this novel demonstrates America as a country big in size but small in humanity and justice. American practice of justice for black community is delayed justice and it is an injustice. Whitehead, in the novel, produces a white lawyer, Mr. Andrews whom Harriet pays for Elwood's appeal, but he takes money and goes to Atlanta without a word. The thing that white lawyers are doing regarding black people is "What they had on their hand was a classic miscarriage of justice" (157). In the domain of law and justice 'justice delayed is justice denied.' In America justice for black people has been denied for a long time. Black people neither get justice nor can protect their property from the whites. The lingering of the end of this situation causes loss for the nation and about it black authors are informed, and so such incidents are amplified in black literature.

Black literature, to end the lingering justice, serves political leaders to its readers to mean the long journey of struggle against racism and discrimination and the promotion of black population in racial society. Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. are the inspiring heroes of the black. Their contribution and sacrifice for their people is exemplary in Negro community. Whitehead presents King frequently in the novel to suggest who black people are and what they want. The reference of Zion Hill speech magnifies the reality of the black and their commitment:

Throw us in Jail, and we will still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and, as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities after midnight hours, and drag us out onto some wayside road, and beat us and leave us half-dead, and we will still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and one day we will win our freedom. (italics original, 172)

Black people are veterans of suffering and pain. Since they were captured and transported from Africa, they have been undergoing hardship and agony chronically and they are capable of bearing any pain but their ultimate goal of freedom and justice should be achieved. The legendary figures are the driving forces for these people to withstand any horror produced by racism and segregation.

So the heroes and legends of black communities ignite their people to march ahead with a determination that is to end the degradation of black people and raise their head with dignity. They can raise their head high with dignity if they are free from the shackles of discrimination. The oppressors are always making the tricks of keeping the black in the labyrinth of racism, but Elwood suggests “Walk with your head up no matter what they throw at you” (174). Action with positive thoughts is the

demand of time to end the atrocity of oppressors. Elwood trusts on moral force that, one day, bends brutal stick of racial whites. Whitehead presents Elwood as the legacy of King, who won the heart of the world and created pressure against whites' behavior toward the black.

Whitehead, in this novel, manifests the extreme of whites' brutality in Nickel and it represents the whole history of punishment and pain of black communities. Elwood has been beaten severely and it reminds all kinds of racial brutality in American history. "They had whipped Elwood. But he took the whipping and he was still here. There was nothing they could do that white people hadn't done to black people before . . ." (180). White people have not left anything to do against the black. They have repeated the same way of corporal punishment that has become customary to black communities and such incidents have helped black people know that there is no power in physical force and change is possible through moral force. They know that "*Darkness cannot drive out darkness . . . only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that*" (italics original 178). Love is moral force that King intensifies recurrently in his speech. He means to say that whites are spreading hatred in the society and it can be driven out with love.

Whitehead, in this novel, projects the speech of King through Elwood Curtis and his experience in the Nickel Academy. The speech of King and racial brutality in the reformatory school indicate the need of justice and freedom in America. The reference of speech means the way of achieving them, that is love and self-dignity. Love is rare in white community since they have been taught to become violent from their childhood. "Their daddies taught them how to keep a slave in line, passed down this brutal heirloom, take him away from his family, whip him until all he remembers is the whip, chain him up so all he knows is chains" (191). Such schooling to white

children can never implant peace and harmony in the society. It has become the responsibility of the black to spread love and harmony in the society and end prejudice and hostility fostered by racism.

Thus, *The Nickel Boys* bears the value of black aesthetic in revealing the dishonesty of whites, as Malcolm X claims America practices hypocrisy, not democracy, identifying the common problems of black population and developing solidarity among the black for the common goal of freedom and justice. Whitehead, with the help of the central character, Elwood, demonstrates the real picture of oppression, exploitation and degradation of the black in modern society. Whites are still practicing racism artfully by misleading the world that they are concerned with social grace and harmony. The Nickel Academy, in the form of reformatory school, discriminates black children and imposes injustice and brutality. Black aesthetic, serving the examples of prejudices, violence and brutality, claims the need of uniformity to end the discriminatory act of racism. It works with a goal of providing black people with a sense of dignity, unity, racial pride and the feeling of togetherness in struggle.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Black Writers' Repudiation of Racial Oppression and Cry for Social Justice

With regard to the title of this study, research questions, hypothesis and objectives as well as the critical responses and theoretical concepts in the preceding chapters, this study has finally asserted that Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys* have opened new possibilities of meaning in black novels. To mean it differently, the study has finally met its primary objective by solving primary question: how do these novels employing black aesthetic that propagates the idea of changing society for social justice?

Before analyzing the primary texts to pursue answers to the research questions, the study has first sketched overture of the dissertation in the first chapter comprising statement of problem, hypothesis, objectives, delimitation and methodology. In the same chapter, it has reviewed of available literature on the primary texts and concluded it with a general overview. In the second chapter, the study has charted the historical evolution of black aesthetic, definition of black aesthetic and its domains in literature. After this, in the consecutive three chapters, the study has examined and analyzed primary texts on the basis of research questions, hypothesis and objectives. And ultimately, this chapter is about the conclusion and the recapitulation of the whole study.

By serving the evidences from the primary texts, the study has arguably met the specific objectives by answering the specific questions concerning the primary texts. The specific questions were: why do Sethe in *Beloved* and Cora in *The Underground Railroad* suffer and later decide to escape? What prevents Elwood from being a good boy in *The Nickel Boys* to white authority? How does the past become a

source of black matter? Why are horror and a sense of insecurity perpetual in black experiences?

In response to the research questions and the objectives, the study has found out that Sethe and Cora bear the burden of slavery and racism and to evade the affliction of these institutions they decide to run away. Elwood, a promising black boy, cannot equate himself with whites because of his skin color and whites' automatic attitude to this color. Since black population has a long history of alienation and suffering in the New World, black novels germinate from the history of suffering and serve the experience of horror and the sense of insecurity in order to end this situation by rationalizing black community for social justice. In conclusion, these answers to the specific questions about the individual texts lead to the answer of the primary question as mentioned above. All these selected texts have added new domain— functional value— of literature in changing society by departing from the classical value of literature—"art for art's sake."

Black literature is the renewed interest in history in which authors imagine the physical, psychological and spiritual lives of the black during racism, slavery and Jim Crow. *Beloved* and *The Underground Railroad* fantasize black history haunting the black community in all periods of time. The principle of black literature provides its people with information about their past, which is tragic, and protest against it by speaking tacitly about political and social programs since any art does not explicitly speak for a political and social program. Morrison and Whitehead in their novels involve the history and psychological development of black community, and work as instruments of good public relations.

Black aesthetic, the principle of black art, assumes that literature is useful, collective and committing emerged from the people and must return to people and

commit people to revolution and change. Literary texts, directly or indirectly, are associated with the lives and actions of people and they are connected to contexts and society as well. They emerge from society and go back to society with the message of change or reformation. Black literature cannot be alienated from the black life-world and black aesthetic abrogates a literary text if it does not raise the question of freedom. So, all these three novels: *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys*, are committed to rationalizing the black population to struggle for justice, which is absent in black community.

Since whites assume black people susceptible to social evils and bear subhuman characters—below the level human beings and close to bestial characters—black people have been oppressed, exploited, and stereotyped to drugs, thievery, criminals, evil aspects of human beings. The reason behind such labeling of black people is their color rather than other traits of human beings. Different traits of the black have been exoticized and marked as uncivilized, evil and inferior and black population has been treated on this assumption. Such assumption of the oppressors has guided them to exclude black population from social, political, economic, and cultural activities and this prevention has caused suffering of the black and stagnated their development and progress. Oppressed people cannot remain silent to the injustice imposed upon them for long and thus black community is coming out of white constructed boundary of racism and changing the society with justice and freedom to all.

There are different ways of changing society, and one of them is literature. Literature is a cultural product, so the subject of literature varies from culture to culture. Literature is produced as a social document by representing the society with its norms and values. These values are the cultural aspects of that society. Human

beings are biologically one but they are different culturally. In this sense, the perception of people varies as per the experience of the people living in that society. For black scholar Hoyt W. Fuller, literature comes into existence from the experience of the people of particular community. Authors, in order to give literature a unique character that reflects particular society, use imagination and wit and these phenomena help the literary work become new to the readers though the issues are old and known. Literature, in different period of time and culture, has its own principle and values which define the significance of literature.

One of the values of contemporary literature is black aesthetic—principle of black art. This principle of literature entails social values that define and present the condition of black community. Black aesthetic includes a value system in a literary work that was beyond the concern of traditional aesthetics and it functions with the existing actuality of black community. Aesthetics, derived from Greek word, means in a broad sense the aesthetic effect of anything that is sensed and perceived. Slowly and gradually this concept has been narrowed down in ‘perception of the beautiful’ from sense perception, and ‘good taste.’ The development of the notion of aesthetics, later, has been attributed to the notion of ‘the sublime’ and ‘the beautiful’; such values of aesthetics do not include the norm of general public. The shifting nature of the philosophy of literature suggests that the principle of art and literature is not static and eternal; it changes over time and place as it is demanded by the situation. In this sense, traditional aesthetics cannot subsume contemporary values because of its exclusive nature; since it evolves from European ground, it only entails the values as established by whites.

Black aesthetic is a revolt against traditional/classical aesthetics. It is concerned with the problem of the black and dedicated to liberate black community

from the chains of racial bigotry and exclusion that have been persisting from the time of the Middle Passage and slavery. The Middle Passage alienated black people from their motherland, culture and heritage, and slavery relegated them to zero position in the New World. From the time black people have been brought to the New World, they have lost their freedom and justice and cultural integrity. It means that they have been excluded and enervated from personal, relationship, spiritual and political, and social, cultural and economic rights. They have lost freedom and equality, family and nation, social security and cultural and economic activities. They have been put into subhuman positions and accordingly they have been given roles to perform. Basic human rights- to be, to do, and to have- have been confiscated so that they could never be equal to whites.

Black aesthetic rationalizes the black community to understand these tricks and struggle for change. The change that black population is seeking in racial society are freedom, justice and equality and the end of violence, brutality and discrimination. Black community, to end proscription and prejudice practiced by racism, is working together via art, music and literature. These media collaborate to orient black community for love and spirituality which can unite the community to promote force to end social, political and economic deprivation that black community has undergone. The principle of black art projects literature as a dynamic force which documents social activities and unites people to struggle against the evils that divide human race and exploit them. In this sense, black aesthetic assumes literature as a political force which functions to lead victims of the society to struggle against the evils practiced upon them.

Black aesthetic, while making aware of the situation they have borne in the society, unfolds the historical events which manifest the enervation of black people. It

not only serves history of suffering, it presents their history and heritage of their motherland, Africa and helps them realize the significance of their tradition. Black people are inculcated, through literature, to protect their history and heritage while fighting for their freedom and justice. They have been made aware of their dual responsibility of liberating their brethren without damaging cultural integrity. In black literature, writers exert their colorful history, art, music, folktale in order to unite them and feel the necessity of their pristine culture with freedom, justice and equality in the New World. Black aesthetic intends black writers to pay attention to their history and heritage, which they have lost in America.

In this manner, black aesthetic has a functional value that the traditional aesthetics nullifies. Black literature means to rationalize black people to the commitment for a struggle to change society. The demand of social justice is tacit in black literature since it does not put the political voices overtly. The function of literature is to document all the practices that have been hidden from the history to make a particular community voiceless. Black community has experience of injustice and atrocity for generations and these are the subject matters of black literature. Black literature in whatsoever form, mostly in fiction, serves what the black community is bearing and how they have been shattered physically and mentally in the New World by practicing racism and slavery. The black community has bitter and nauseating experience with slavery and it has been a collective experience of the community. Such collective experience of the black population is the subject matter of these primary texts.

Beloved entails the principle of black literature in which black history and heritage, their condition in the New World and testimonies of revolts against racial atrocity have been the subjects of the novel. Morrison has projected Sethe as a central

character in order to represent the history of slavery and the revolt against it. She chooses the death of her child over being captured by slavery. The projection of Sethe in the novel intensifies the condition of black people in America that death is highly acceptable among black people than the brutality of slavery and racism. Baby Suggs is the live history of slavery and the African heritage, which is spiritual and full of humanity. She helps her people release trauma caused by slavery in the Clearing, away from the crowd of people. She teaches her people to love themselves and so their struggle against slavery and racism becomes vigorous. Morrison, in the novel, serves racial attitude and practice in the form of a Schoolteacher, who exerts hypocrisy in terms of black people. Morrison ridicules American education system which is racial and against humanity. *Beloved* is the social document of collective experience of slavery and racism and it rationalizes black community for freedom, justice and equality. This novel is strongly connected with the problems of the black and their struggle for social justice.

Likewise, *The Underground Railroad* includes the subject of social injustice fertilized by slavery. The title of the novel itself means the problem of black people and their attempt to help save their people while escaping from the oppressors. Whitehead projects Cora as the central character who completes her odyssey for freedom and justice. While presenting the subject matter of the novel, Whitehead unfolds the history of black during the Middle Passage, when many black people were isolated from their homeland and shattered from their family and community and cultural residue in the community. Jockey, who is more than hundred years old, is the living history of slavery and his birthday celebration with music and dance reminds African heritage that is in the blood of each and all blacks. While others are singing and dancing Jockey is sitting in the chair and tapping his bare feet. Whitehead is

mindful, while offering the subject of black people, about the political goal and the cultural integrity of his people.

In the same manner, *The Nickel Boys* offers the history of racism which spread its roots in academic institutions, too. This novel presents how innocent and potential black children are tricked and trapped in racism. Elwood Curtis, as claimed by black aesthetic, bears African attitude of love and humanity, thinks of changing the world with good deeds. His positive attitude toward this world becomes victim of white culture of sexual abuse, corruption and corporal punishment. Whitehead projects Elwood to dramatize Martin Luther King, a campaigner of the civil rights movement. He advocates non-violent movement for social change and intensifies the belief and confidence in his people that black people are as good as whites and deserve equal rights and benefits. King teaches his people to fight with love, which is absent in whites. The recurrent reference to King in the novel indicates the humanistic values in the black community and the sterility of humanity in the white community. Hence, struggle for justice in any form is the motive of black aesthetic and Whitehead, by projecting historical figures, denudes racism and slavery as inhuman and barbarous and raises voice for justice and equality. The racial atrocity in school during Jim Crow period shocks the world and makes them pray for justice which is missing from black community over ages.

The researcher's finding regarding these three novels, *Beloved*, *The Underground Railroad*, and *The Nickel Boys* is that these novels, as the assumption of black aesthetic, are inseparable from society and the value system they belong to. All these novels are written in principle of black aesthetic connecting past with present and anticipates the future of freedom, justice and equality. These novels have been written on the functional value of changing society. Society with justice means a

transformed society in which people are not enervated on the basis of race, gender, sex, ethnicity, or class. Sethe, Cora and Elwood are projected in the novels in order to present the severity of racism and slavery, and the urgency of justice. These three characters function as role models to defy slavery and racism and motivate their people to struggle against injustice. In addition to this, the projection of old slaves, music and cultural rites in the novels demonstrates the rational of black people in the New World to their history and heritage. These novels have revived blacks' history of woes and wails, and the heritage of humanity, communality and spirituality.

Finally, the present study focusing on the study of the dichotomous relationship between the whites and the black opens up a new avenue for struggling for social justice and freedom in order to create a just and fair society. Moreover, it makes it easier for further researchers to explore the voices of margins in literary works by having the insights of black aesthetic for social change. This research work manifests literature as the voice of subservient for social justice in any cultural production.

Works Cited

- Abarry, Abu. "The Afro-American Legacy in American Literature." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4, June 1990, pp. 379-98.
- Angelou, Maya. "Graduation." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite et al., 14th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 45-54.
- Aristotle. "Poetics." *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Stephen David Ross, 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987, pp. 69-78.
- Austin, Regina. "The Black Community," Its Lawbreakers, and a Politics of Identification." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 389-98.
- Baker, David. "The Sublime: Origins and Definitions." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 58, no. 2, summer 2004, pp. 303-9.
- Baldwin, James. "Notes of a Native Son." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, vol. 2, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 400-13.
- - -. "Stranger in the Village." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite, et al., 14th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 251-60.
- Baraka, Amiri. "Afro-American Literature & Class Struggle." *Black American Literature Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, spring 1980, pp. 5-14.
- - -. "Black Art." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1987, pp. 23-30.
- - -. "The "Blues Aesthetic" and the "Black Aesthetic": Aesthetics as the Continuing

Political History of a Culture.” *Black Music Research Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, autumn 1991, pp. 101- 9.

Battersby, Eileen. *The Underground Railroad Review: The Run of Her Life.*” *Irish Times Book Club*, 1 October 2016, pp. 1-4.

Baum, Joan. “Book Review: *The Nickel Boys.*” *WSHU*, 16 Jan. 2020.

Bell, Derrick A. "After We're Gone: Prudent Speculations on America in a Postracial Epoch." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 9-14.

Boucher, David, and Paul Kelly. “Introduction.” *Social Justice: From Hume to Walzer*, edited by David Boucher and Paul Kelly, Routledge, 2005.

Broad, Robert L. “Giving Blood to the Scraps: Haints, History, and Hosea in *Beloved.*” *African American Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1994, pp. 189-96.

Brooks, Roy L., and Kristen Widner. "In Defense of the Black-White Binary: Reclaiming a Tradition of Civil Rights Scholarship." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 499-510.

Brown, William Wells. *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter.* *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W.W. Norton, 2014, pp. 270-90.

Butler, Paul. "Racially Based Jury Nullification: Black Power in the Criminal Justice System." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 282-90.

Capuano, Peter J. “Truth in Timbre: Morrison’s Extension of Slave Narrative Song in *Beloved.*” *African American Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2003, pp. 95-103.

- Carmichael, Stokely. "Toward Black Liberation." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 119-32.
- Carroll, Noel. "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 70, no. 2, spring 2012, pp. 165-77.
- Carroll, Rebecca. "Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* is Timely, Necessary and Shattering." *Los Angeles Times*, 26 August 2016, pp. 1-10.
- Charles, Ron. "In Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, an idealistic black teen learns a harsh reality." *The Washington Post*, 9 July 2019.
- Christian, Barbara. "Beloved, She's Ours." *Narrative*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1997, pp. 36-49.
- Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Stephen David Ross, 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987, pp. 573-83.
- Clarke, John Henrik. "Reclaiming the Lost African Heritage." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 11-18.
- Conner, Marc C. "Introduction: Aesthetics and the African American Novel." *The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable*, edited by Marc C. Conner, Mississippi UP, 2000, pp. ix-xxviii.
- Cooper, Wayne. "Claude McKay and the New Negro of the 1920's." *Phylon*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1964, pp. 297-306.
- Corey, Susan. "Toward the Limit of Mystery: The Grotesque in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable*, edited by Marc C. Conner, Mississippi UP, 2000, pp. 31-48.
- Cruse, Harold. "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American." *Black Fire: an Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, edited by Amriri Baraka and Larry Neal, Black Classic Press, 1968, pp. 39-63.

- DeCoursey, Matthew. "The Aesthetic as Intrinsic Motivation: The Heart of Drama for Language Education." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 50, no. 3, fall 2016, pp. 13-26.
- Delany, Martin R. "The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W.W. Norton, 2014, pp. 201-21.
- Delgado, Richard. "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 71-80.
- Dischinger, Matthew. "States of Possibility in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*." *The Global South*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2017, pp. 82-99.
- Dobbs, Cynthia. "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Bodies Returned, Modernism Revisited." *African American Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1998, pp. 563-78.
- Dobie, Ann B. *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Thomson Learning, 2002.
- Douglass, Frederick. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 330-93.
- Dubey, Madhu. *Black Women Novelists & the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Indiana UP, 1994.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Millennium Publications, 2014.

- Dudziak, Mary L. "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 136-46.
- Eckstein, Lars. "A Love Supreme: Jazzthetic Strategies in Toni Morrison's "Beloved." *African American Review*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2006, 271-83.
- Edmondson, Belinda. "Black Aesthetics, Feminist Aesthetics, and the Problems of Oppositional Discourse." *Cultural Critique*, no. 22, autumn 1992, pp. 75-98.
- Edward, Art. "The Carrot and the Stick: On Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 31 July 2019, pp. 1-6.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Penguin Books, 2001.
- Fabio, Sarah Webster. "Tripping with Black Writing." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 173-81.
- Fain, Kimberly. "Review: Colson Whitehead Brilliantly Reimagines *The Underground Railroad*." *The National Book Review*, 2018, pp. 1-8
- Ferguson, Elizabeth A. "Race Consciousness among American Negroes." *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 1938, pp. 32-40.
- Fine, Elsa Honig. "Mainstream, Blackstream and the Black Art Movement." *Art Journal*, vol. 30, no. 4, summer, 1971, pp. 374-75.
- Foner, Eric. *Give Me Liberty: An American History*. 4th ed., vol. 2, Norton and Company, 2014.
- Forna, Aminatta. "*The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead Review- essential Follow-up to *The Underground Railroad*." *The Guardian*, 26 July 2019, pp. 1-6.
- Fryar, Imani L. B. "Literary Aesthetics and the Black Woman Writer." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4, The African Literary Imagination, June 1990, pp. 443-66.

- Fuller, Hoyt W. "The New Black Literature: Protest or Affirmation." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 327-48.
- Gardner, E. Clinton. "John Locke: Justice and The Social Compact." *Journal of Law and Religion*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1992, pp. 347-71.
- Garvey, Marcus. "The Future as I See It." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed, vol. 1, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 989-92.
- Gayle, Addison, editor. "Introduction." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. xv-xxiv.
- George, Sheldon. "Approaching the "Thing" of Slavery: A Lacanian Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *African American Review*, vol. 45, no. 1/2, 2012, pp. 115-30.
- Gina, Wisker. *Toni Morrison: A Beginner's Guide*. Edited by Rob Abbott and Charlie Bell, Hodder and Stoughton, 2002.
- Goldman, Alan H. "The Broad View of Aesthetic Experience." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 71, no. 4, fall 2013, pp. 323-33.
- Greenbaum, Vicky. "Teaching *Beloved*: Images of Transcendence." *The English Journal*, vol. 96, no. 6, July 2002, pp. 83-87.
- Griebinger, Emily. "Why Baby Suggs, Holy, Quiet Preaching the World: Redemption and Holiness in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2001, pp. 689-702.
- Gupto, Arun. "Introduction." *Literary Theory and Criticism: Recent Writings from South Asia*, edited by Arun Gupto, Routledge, 2022.

- Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Hafi, Fethia El. "Punished Bodies in Soyinka's *The Bacchae* of Euripides and Morrison's *Beloved*." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2010, pp. 89-107.
- Hamilton, Cynthia S. "Revisions, Rememories and Exorcisms: Toni Morrison and the Slave Narrative." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1996, pp. 429-45.
- Handley, William R. "The House a Ghost Built: "Nommo," Allegory and the Ethics of Reading in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 36, no. 4, winter 1995, pp. 676-701.
- Hanson, Mat. "Book Review: *The Nickel Boys*- keeping the Faith." *The Arts Fuse*, 20 Aug. 2019, pp. 1-10.
- Hare, Nathan. "Brainwashing of Black Men's Minds." *Black Fire: an Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, edited by Amriri Baraka and Larry Neal, Black Classic Press, 1968, pp. 178-86.
- Heffernan, Teresa. "Beloved" and the Problem of Mourning." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1998, 558-73.
- Hinson, D. Scott. "Narrative and Community Crisis in "Beloved." *MELUS*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2001, pp. 147-67.
- hooks, bell. "An Aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and Oppositional." *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry*, vol. 1, 1995, pp. 65-72.
- - -. *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. New Press, 1995.

- Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed, vol. 1, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 1320-24.
- Humann, Heather Duerre. "Bigotry, Breast Milk, Bric-a-Brac, a Baby, and Bit in "Beloved": Toni Morrison's portrayal of Racism and Hegemony." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2004, pp. 60-78.
- Kakutani, Michiko. "Review: 'Underground Railroad' Lays Bare Horrors of Slavery and Its Toxic Legacy." *New York Times*, 2 Aug. 2016, pp. 1-3.
- Kant, Immanuel. "Critique of Judgment." *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Stephen David Ross, 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987, pp. 101-44.
- Karenga, Ron. "Black Cultural Nationalism." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 31-37.
- Kelly, Adam. "Freedom to Struggle: The Ironies of Colson Whitehead." *Open Library of Humanities*, vol. 4(2), no. 22, 2018, pp. 1-35.
- Kelly, Eugene. "Philosophy, Aesthetic Experience, and the Liberal Arts." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1983, pp. 5-17.
- King, Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream." *The Heritage of Words*, edited by Shreedhar Lohani, et al., Ekta Books, 1998, pp. 73-74.
- - -. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite et al., 14th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 806-19.
- Kirk, Rylee. "Book Review: *The Underground Railroad* Is Underwhelming." *The Cluster*, 22 Apr. 2018.

- Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell. *Literature: Reading, Reacting, and Writing. Instructor's Resource Manual*, 6th ed., Thomson Corporation, 2007.
- Koolish, Lynda. "To be Loved and Cry Shame: A Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *MELUS*, vol. 26, no. 4, winter 2001, pp. 169-95.
- Krumholz, Linda. "The Ghost of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Morrison's *Beloved*." *African American Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1992, pp. 395-408.
- Labrie, Peter. "The New Breed." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 64-77.
- Lacy, Leslie Alexander. "African Response to Malcolm X." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 19-38.
- Lash, John H. "The Race Consciousness of the American Negro Authors: Toward a Reexamination of an Orthodox Critical Concept." *Social Forces*, vol. 28, no. 1, Oct. 1949, pp. 24-34.
- Li, Stephanie. "Genre Trouble and History's Miseries in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*." *MELUS*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-23.
- Lindberg, John. "Black Aesthetic": Minority or Mainstream?" *The North American Review*, vol. 260, no. 4, winter 1975, pp. 48-52.
- Loewen, Gladys, and William Pollard. "The Social Justice Perspective." *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2010, pp. 5-18.
- Liotard, Jean Francois. "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Richard J. Lane, Routledge, 2013, pp. 202-4.

- Marcuse, Herbert. "The Aesthetic Dimension." *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Stephen David Ross, 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987, pp. 550-59.
- Marshall, John S. "Art and Aesthetic in Aristotle." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1953, pp. 228-31.
- Matsuda, Mari J. "When the First Quail Calls: Multiple Consciousness as Jurisprudential Method." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stenfancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 31-34.
- Mayfield, Julian. "You Touch My Black Aesthetic and I'll Touch Yours." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 23-30.
- McGee, Julie L. "The Evolution of Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950": David C. Driskell and Race, Ethics, and Aesthetics." *Callaloo*, vol. 31, no. 4, fall 2008, pp. 1175-85.
- Miller, Adam David. "Some Observations on a Black Aesthetic." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 374-80.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved: Reading Guide Edition*. Vintage, 2004.
- - -. "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, vol. 2, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 1067 – 71.
- - -. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, vol. 2, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 1078-1101.
- Muyumba, Walton, Reviewer. *The Nickel Boys*. *The Barnes & Noble Review*, 23 July 2019, pp. 1-8.

- National Book Foundation, reviewer. *The Underground Railroad*. pp. 1-6.
- Naylor, Gloria. "Mommy, What Does 'Nigger' Mean?." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite et al., 14th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 481-83.
- Neal, Larry. "And Shine Swan On." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 638-56.
- - -. "The Black Art Movement." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 272 – 90.
- Newman, David M. *Identities and Inequalities: Exploring the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality*. 2nd ed., McGraw Hill, 2012.
- Northrup, Solomon. "Twelve Years a Slave." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, vol. 1, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 190-98.
- Norvell, Stanley B., and William M. Tuttle. "Views of a Negro during "The Red Summer" of 1919." *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 51, no. 3, July 1966, pp. 209-18.
- O'Neal, John. "Black Arts: Notebook." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 46-56.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. Edited by Alfred J. Drake, electronic version 1.0, dated 7-11-02.
- Perry, Stephen. "Understanding Aesthetic." *Landscape Architecture Australia*, no. 136, 2012, pp. 19-20.
- Piehal, Norah, Reviewer. *The Nickel Boys*. *Bookreporter*, 19 July 2019, pp. 1-2.

- Plato. "Republic II, III, X." *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Stephen David Ross, 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987, pp. 9-46.
- Plummer, Ken. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds*. Routledge, 1995.
- Pope, Rob. *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Revised Edition, Harvard UP, 1971.
- Reed, Roxanne R. "The Restorative Power of Sound: A Case for Communal Catharsis in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Journal in Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2007, pp. 55-71.
- Rhodes, Jewell Parker. "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Ironies of a "Sweet Home" Utopia in a Dystopian Slave Society." *Utopian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1990, pp. 77-92.
- Richmond, Samantha. "Moving Ever Forward: Reading the Significance of Motion and Space as a Representation of Trauma in Toni Morrison's *Songs of Solomon* and Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*." Florida Atlantic University, May 2017, pp. 1-45.
- Robinson, Dean E. *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought*. Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Rolingher, Louise. "A Metaphor for Freedom: Olaudah Equino and Slavery in America." *Canada journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2004, pp. 88-122.
- Ross, Stephen David, editor. *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*. 2nd ed., State U of New York P, 1987.

- Rushdy, Ashraf H. A. "Daughters Signifyin(g) History: The Example of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *American Literature*, vol. 64, no. 3, 1992, pp. 567-97.
- Ryan, Michael. *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction*. 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Scarpa, Giulia. "Narrative Possibilities at Play in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *MELUS*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1991-1992, pp. 91-103.
- Schaefer, Richard T. "The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change." *Phylon*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1971, pp. 143-57.
- Schapiro, Barbara. "The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1991, pp. 194-210.
- Schaub, Michael. "For the 'Nickel Boys,' Life Isn't Worth 5 Cents." *NPR Review*, 18 July 2019, pp. 1-7.
- Schomburg, Arthur A. "The Negro Dig Up His Past." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 945-49.
- Schopp, Andrew. "Narrative Control and Subjectivity: Dismantling Safety in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *The Centennial Review*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1995, pp. 355-79.
- Scruton, Roger. *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Sen, Amartya. "Well Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 82, no. 4, Apr. 1985, pp. 169-221.
- Shakur, Assata. *Assata: An Autobiography*. Lawrence Hill Books, 1988.
- Smith, David L. "Amiri Baraka and the Black Arts of Black Art." *Boundry 2*, vol. 15, no. 1/2, autumn 1986, winter 1987, pp. 235-54.

- Smith, David Lionel. "The Black Arts Movement and Its Critics." *American Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 1, spring, 1991, pp. 93- 110.
- Smythe, Hugh H. "The Concept of "Jim Crow." *Social Forces*, vol. 27, no. 1, Oct. 1948 - May 1949, pp. 45-48.
- Staples, Brent. "Black Men and Public Space." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite, et al., 14th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 267-69.
- Stewart, James T. "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist." *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, Black Classic Press, 1968, pp. 3-10.
- Stewart, Jimmy. "Introduction to Black Aesthetics in Music." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 77-91.
- Stewart, Maria W. "Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall Boston, September 21, 1832." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 183-86.
- Story, Ralph D. "Sacrifice and Surrender: Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *CLA Journal*, vol. 46., no. 1, Sept. 2002, pp. 21-29.
- Tariq, Modood. "Racial Equality: Colour, Culture and Justice." *Social Justice: From Hume to Walzer*, edited by David Boucher and Paul Kelly, 1998, pp. 203-17.
- Taylor, Paul C. *Black Is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*. WILEY Blackwell, 2016.
- Toure, Askia M. "Black Male/Female Relations: A Political Overview of the 1970s." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 10, no. 8/9, May/June 1979, pp. 45-48.

- Turner, Darwin T. "Afro-American Literary Critics: An Introduction." *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, Doubleday and Company, 1971, pp. 57-74.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2006.
- Wade, Melvin, and Margaret Wade. "The Black Aesthetic in the Black Novel." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, June 1972, pp. 391-408.
- Walker, David. "David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 1, W.W. Norton, 2014, pp. 161-71.
- Walker, Margaret. "The Humanistic Tradition of Afro-American Literature." *American Libraries*, vol. 1, no. 9, Oct. 1970, pp. 849-54.
- West, Alzo David. "North Korean Aesthetic Theory: Aesthetics, Beauty, and "Man." *The Journal of the Aesthetic Education*, vol. 47, no. 1, spring 2013, pp. 104-10.
- Whitehead, Colson. *The Nickel Boys*. Doubleday, 2019.
- - -. *The Underground Railroad*. Anchor Books, 2016.
- Williams, Brandson, curator. "Reading through the Awards: *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead." *Masters Review*, 2021, pp. 1-4.
- Williams, Patricia. "The Death of the Profane: The Rhetoric of Race and Rights." *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*, edited by Melissa A. Goldthwaite, et al., 14 ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 261-65.

- Williams, Patricia J. "Alchemical Notes: Reconstructing ideals from Deconstructed Rights." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 3rd ed., Temple UP, 2013, pp. 97-106.
- Wolfe, Joanna. "Ten Minutes for Seven Minutes": Song as Key to Narrative Revision in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Narrative*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2004, pp. 263-80.
- Womack, Ytasha L. *How A New Generation is Defining African American Identity*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2010.
- Wright, Michelle M. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Duke Up, 2004.
- X, Malcolm. "The Ballot or the Bullet." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, et al., 3rd ed., vol. 2., W.W. Norton, 2014, pp. 79-90.
- - -. "Literacy behind Bars." *The Norton Field Guide to Writing with Readings* by Richard Bullock and Maureen Daly Goggin, 3rd ed., W. W. Norton, 2013, pp. 640-43.
- Zanlin, Alex. "Beloved Citizens: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Racial Inequality, and American Public Policy." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 42, spring/summer 2014, pp. 205-11.